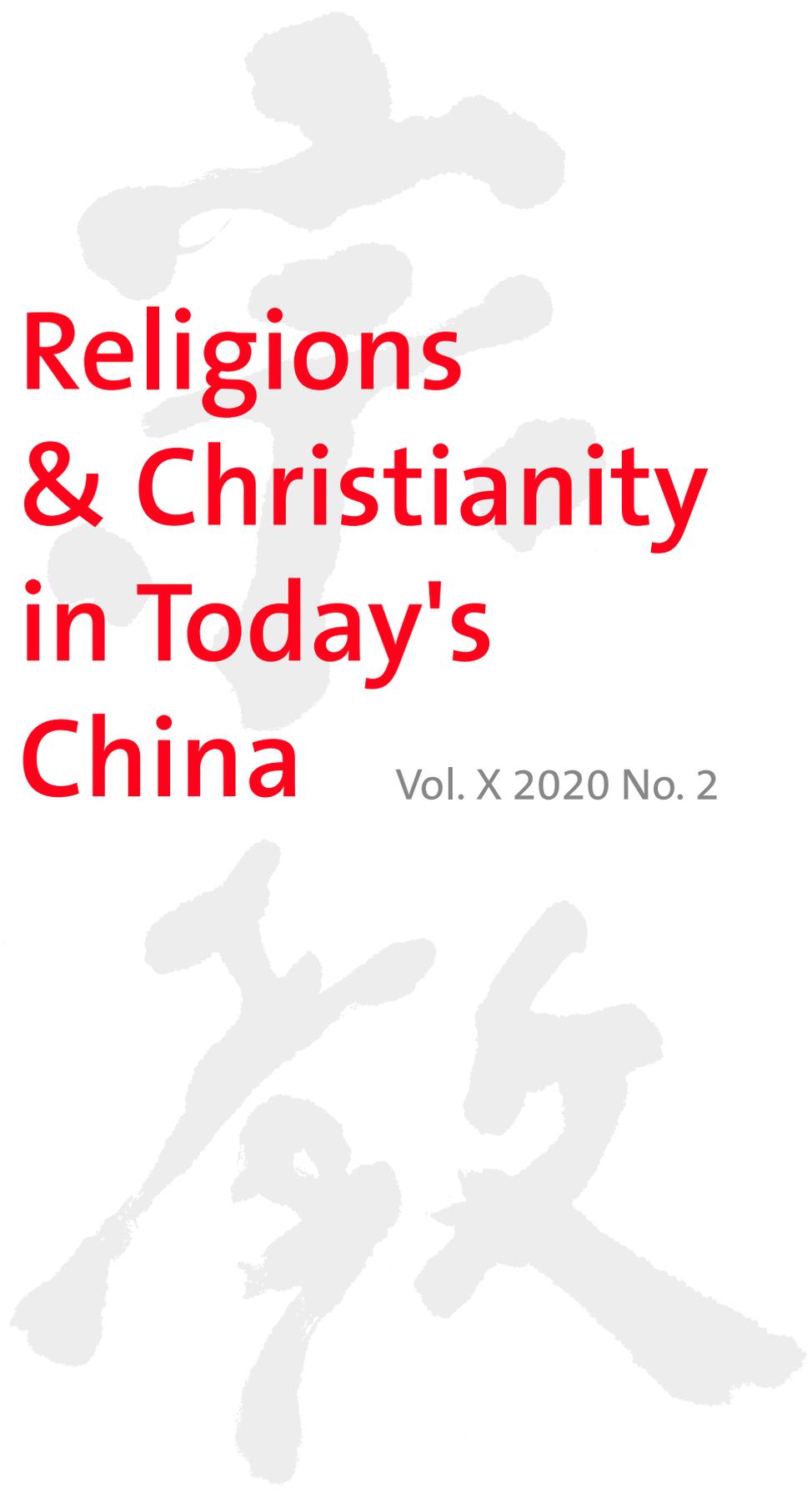


中國宗教評論



Religions & Christianity in Today's China

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Contents

Editorial | 2

News Update on Religion and Church in China

November 11, 2019 – April 18, 2020 | 3

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

Statistics on Religions and Churches in the People's Republic of China

– Update for the Year 2019 | 21

Katharina Wenzel-Teuber

In memoriam

Rolf G. Tiedemann (1941–2019) | 42

Dirk Kuhlmann

Imprint – Legal Notice | 46

Editorial

Dear Readers,

Today we present to you the second issue 2020 of *Religions & Christianity in Today's China* (中国宗教评论).

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

This year Katharina Wenzel-Teuber has again compiled "Statistics on Religions and Churches in the People's Republic of China" with an "Update for the Year 2019." Besides many details and trends of the various numerically measurable developments in the religions of China, the article gives above all a summary of the interesting findings from the China Family Panel Studies concerning the question "How Many Protestants Are There Really in China?"

We conclude with an obituary by Dr. Dirk Kuhlmann (Monumenta Serica Institute) for Prof. Dr. R.G. Tiedemann, the renowned historian and expert on the history of the Yihetuan uprising (Boxer Uprising) and Christianity in China, who died in August 2019. In 2018 we had published in this journal (issue 2018, No. 2) his article "Chinese Female Propagators of the Faith in Modern China. The Tortuous Transition from the 'Institute of Virgins' to Diocesan Religious Congregations."

Religions & Christianity in Today's China is freely available on the website of the China-Zentrum, 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, June 2020

The Editors

News Update on Religion and Church in China November 11, 2019 – April 18, 2020

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

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). – The last “News Update” (RCTC 2020, No. 1, pp. 3-16) covered the period September 23 – December 12, 2019.

Politics, Law, Human Rights

December 15, 2019:

New government provisions on internet ecology aim at the spread of positive energy

The purpose of the new regulations is to create a “positive online ecosystem” in which “positive energy” is promoted (§ 1 and 2). The provisions distinguish three types of information: “desired,” “illegal” and “negative” (literally: “not good,” *buliang* 不良). In particular, content is encouraged that spreads Xi Jinping’s thoughts and party policies, helps to guide the public in forming agreement, promotes responsibility and goodness or increases the international influence of Chinese culture (§ 5). Included under “illegal” information are threats to national security, incitement to terrorism, extremism and ethnic hatred but also “content harming the nation’s honor and interests” and the “dissemination of rumors.” “Content undermining the nation’s policy on religions, or promoting cults and superstitions” is also included (§ 6). Negative content to be prevented includes sensationalizing, “content that has sexual innuendo,” “content that might lead minors to imitate unsafe behaviors or behavior that violates social mores, or that induces bad habits for minors, that seduces young people,” as well as “improper comments on natural disasters, major accidents, or other disasters” (§ 7). The “Provisions on the Governance of the Online Information Content Ecosystem” 网络信息内容生态治理规定 were enacted by the State Internet Information Office on December 15 and came into force on March 1, 2020 (English translation and the original are available at: www.chinalawtranslate.com/en/provisions-on-the-governance-of-the-online-information-content-ecosystem).

The concept of maintaining an ecological balance is also used in Chinese religious theory and politics. Several Catholic webmasters in mainland China interviewed by *UCAN* expressed concern about the new regulations (*MERICS China Update* 2020, No. 5; *UCAN* March 6, 2020).

December 28, 2019:

China abolishes “custody and education” measures for sex workers and passes “community correction” law

The Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress has passed two legislative innovations designed to reduce detention in prisons or other institutions. According to the MERICS research institute, such measures had been repeatedly called for by the UN. Under the now abolished provisions for “custody and education” (*shourong jiaoyu* 收容教育), sex workers and their clients could have been detained in so-called education centers for up to two years, where, according to the *BBC*, they also had to do forced labor. This punishment could be imposed by the law enforcement authorities (police) without trial – similar to the “re-education through labor” (*laojiao* 劳教), which was abolished in 2013. However, prostitution continues to be illegal in China.

The “community correction” (*shequ jiaozheng* 社区矫正) is a penal system outside the prison, in the community, i.e. the neighborhood community (*shequ*) where the convicts reside. The new law on community correction will take effect on July 1, 2020. According to *Xinhua*, “community correction targets criminals who were sentenced to public surveillance, given a reprieve, released on parole, or permitted to temporarily serve their sentences outside prison.” The decision on this is made either by the people’s courts or correctional services or public security organs. The first pilot programs had already started in 2003 (*BBC* Dec. 28, 2019; MERICS *China Update* 2020, No. 1; *Xinhua* Dec. 28, 2019; www.chinalaw-translate.com/community-corrections-law-2/?lang=en; see also *RCTC* 2015, No. 1, p. 15).

January 1, 2020:

Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) passes ethnic unity law

The “Regulations on the Establishment of a Model Area for Ethnic Unity and Progress in the Tibet Autonomous Region” 西藏自治区民族团结进步模范区创建条例 were adopted by the People’s Congress of the TAR. The norm, which takes effect on May 1, “makes it clear that Tibet has been an inalienable part of China since ancient times,” commented the party-affiliated *Global Times*. The document designates September as the publicity month for ethnic unity and progress in Tibet (§ 25). Religion is mentioned several times: Religious organizations, sites for religious activities and assembly and institutes for religious education should practice Sinicization and respect other religions and non-believers (§ 19). The religious authorities are to instruct religious organizations, sites for religious activities and institutes for religious education to educate religious personnel in a progressive way of thinking about ethnic unity, legal awareness as well as minority and religious policies, and to consciously reject infiltration by foreign religious forces (§ 30). Tibetan groups in exile feared that the law would further undermine Tibetan national and cultural identity (*Global Times* Jan. 1, 2020; *Radio Free Asia* Jan. 15, 2020; the document can be found online at http://tibet.news.cn/ywj/2020-01/15/c_138705916.htm).

January 8, 2020:

Falun Gong publishes number of adherents killed in China in 2019

According to the Minghui Falun Gong Network, 96 Falun Gong practitioners died in China in 2019 due to persecution by the authorities, of whom 19 died in prisons, detention centers or police stations. Most of the deaths, according to Minghui, were recorded in Shandong Province (16), followed by Hei-

longjiang (11) and Liaoning Province (10). According to Minghui (www.minghui.org Jan. 8, 2020) a total of 4,363 Falun Gong followers have been killed for their beliefs over the past 20 years. The numbers cannot be checked independently.

The Falun Gong meditation movement, based on traditional Qigong, has been banned in China since July 22, 1999, and is being actively suppressed by the authorities as an “heretical cult.”

February 6/7, 2020:

Li Wenliang, Ophthalmologist and “whistleblower” dies in Wuhan

Ophthalmologist Li Wenliang, one of the first doctors in China to draw attention to the outbreak of the novel SARS-CoV-2 virus at the end of December 2019, has himself died as a result of the disease in the central hospital in Wuhan, capital of Hubei Province. His death provoked national outrage and grief because Li was initially warned by the local police against “spreading rumors.”

Li Wenliang reported on December 30, via the popular WeChat news service, to a group of eight colleagues about patients with SARS-like respiratory disease. On January 3, he was detained by the security authorities and forced to sign a document that he “was seriously disrupting public order.” He continued to work in the hospital treating COVID-19 patients until he himself was diagnosed with the disease in January.

The news of Li’s death spread on social media on the evening of February 6 and was announced by official press outlets such as the *Global Times* and *People’s Daily*, but was withdrawn shortly thereafter. Instead, it said Li was in critical condition and was being treated in intensive care. His death was finally confirmed in the early hours of February 7.

In many reactions to Li Wenliang’s death, the doctor was declared a martyr and an “everyday hero.” On the night of his death, many of the residents of Wuhan, who had already been curfewed, took part in an appeal to commemorate the deceased doctor: they switched off the lights in their apartments and agreed to a whistle concert. In an open letter on the Internet, some Chinese academics argued that Li Wenliang’s day of death should be declared “Freedom of Speech Day” so that Li would not have died in vain. Protests of this type on the Internet were immediately deleted by the censorship authorities.

According to an official investigation by the Beijing National Supervisory Commission, Li Wenliang was cleared posthumously in March of earlier allegations of spreading rumors. The police in Wuhan apologized to his family for treating Li badly. Critical voices, among whose was that of the lawyer Xu Baolu, bemoaned the fact that no investigation has ever been carried out into the laws that made such police action possible in the first place. According to Nicholas Bequelin, regional director of Amnesty International, the incident provides tragic proof of how Chinese authorities suppress vital information. Li, 34, from Liaoning Province in northeast China, leaves behind a wife and five-year-old son. His wife is expecting their second child in June.

Among the notable tributes to Li Wenliang is a folk song by the blind singer Liu Hongquan in Shaanxi Province, which mourns the doctor’s death with the following verses: “... First they sealed your lips, oh brother, then they sealed the city. [...] Now that the whole nation has awakened, oh brother, you are already far away” (*AsiaNews* Feb. 7, 8, 2020; *MERICs China Update* 2020, No. 3; *Sixth Tone* Feb. 1; March 19, 2020; *StephenJones.blog* Feb. 15, 2020; *UCAN* March 24, 2020).

February 15, 2020:

Arrest of human rights activist Xu Zhiyong

In Guangzhou, the anti-regime lawyer Xu Zhiyong was arrested during a health checkup as part of the corona epidemic. Xu published an indictment against Xi Jinping on February 4, entitled “Chairman Xi, it’s time to go.” In it he accuses the head of state and of the party of, among other things, mismanagement of the Corona crisis, the trade war with the United States and the pro-democratic protests in Hong Kong. In general, he accuses Xi of political inability and lack of a comprehensive vision. When Xu Zhiyong published his open letter, he was already in hiding. His current arrest is not the first; he was arrested in summer 2013 for his commitment to political reform and human rights and sentenced to a four-year prison sentence in January 2014. 46-year-old Xu previously worked as a law lecturer at Peking University and is one of the co-founders of the “New Citizens’ Movement,” which campaigns against corruption and in favor of China’s peaceful transition to a constitutional state. In connection with the criticism of the restrictive information policy of the Chinese government in the Corona crisis, further arrests of Chinese civil rights activists, journalists and bloggers have also been reported (*Asia-News* Feb. 18, 2020; *ChinaFile* Feb. 26, 2020; MERICS *China Update* 2020, No. 4).

February 17, 2020:

Various Western newspapers publish a list leaked from Xinjiang containing detailed information on 311 people sent to the “Vocational Training Centers” for re-education

According to the newspapers involved – including the *Financial Times*, *New York Times* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung* – as well as the researcher Adrian Zenz, who carried out the evaluation, the document is a list with the heading “Students sent to re-education [who are] family members of those who went abroad and have not returned.” Those 311 persons listed were sent to the training centers. Alongside each name, there are the person’s ID card data, the reason for their being sent to the camp and information about his / her “three circles” (family members, friends and neighbors – again with personal data and brief assessment – as well as each one’s religious situation). Another column contains recommendations as to whether or not the stay in the training center should be continued. All 311 on the list originate from the district of Qaraqash (Karakax) (hence the name “Qaraqash List” in the media); the dates of their arrival at the re-education camps lie between 2017 and March 2019. The document is a PDF file without the head of any authority or other information as to its provenance. Attempts were made to check the document’s authenticity by comparing the IDs provided with other known data and by interviewing relatives of the persons listed who are currently living abroad. Zenz’s analysis showed that the most common reason for being sent to a re-education facility was violation of birth control policies, followed by “untrustworthy” and other reasons categorized by Zenz as being “religion-related.” In one available section of the list, among the reasons for re-education are: “1. Wife used to wear veil; 2. four children over the quota.”

The party-affiliated *Global Times* described the list as fake and stated that the majority of the people on the list have never even been to a training center (*Global Times* Feb. 23, 2020; MERICS *China Update* 2020, No. 4; *New York Times* Feb. 17, 2020; *UCAN* Feb. 24, 2020; www.jpolorisk.com/karakax [Zenz’s report]). – For the so-called “China Cables” leaked in November 2019 about the re-education centers in Xinjiang, see *RCTC* 2020, No. 1, pp. 4-5.

Religious Policy

From January 23, 2020:

All religious sites in China are closed due to the COVID-19 epidemic

Since about Chinese New Year (January 25) – various media use January 23 as the deadline – the cult sites of all religions across China have been closed to prevent contagion with the new Corona virus. Collective religious activities are not allowed. This was done by order of the government authorities. The official bodies of the five religions issued corresponding notices, such as the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and the Chinese Catholic Bishops' Conference on January 24. The institutes for religious education, such as theological seminaries or Buddhist academies, have also been closed and the start of studies has been postponed indefinitely. These measures, officially called “Two suspensions and one postponement” (双暂停一延迟), still applied at the end of April, and it is uncertain when they will be lifted (chinacatholic.cn Jan. 24, 2020; gov.cn April 8, 2020). More information on this and on how the religious communities are dealing with the situation can be found in *China heute* 2020, No. 1, pp. 4-10 (in German).

February 1, 2020:

“Measures for the Administration of Religious Groups” take effect

The “Measures for the Administration of Religious Groups” (宗教团体管理办法) are detailed provisions of a section of the revised “Regulations on Religious Affairs” that have been in force since February 2018. So far, there have been no separate provisions on “religious groups” (宗教团体 – which refers to the five official umbrella organizations of the recognized religions), whose key role in state supervision over religious affairs has been expanded in the revised “Regulations.” Parts of the new legal norm correspond to what is already laid down in the overarching “Regulations” or in the statutes of the various associations of the five religions (such as the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association). However, they also contain further intensification that goes far beyond them. Thus, the new measures oblige the religious groups to “educate and guide religious professionals and religious citizens towards supporting the leadership of the Communist Party of China and the socialist system” (§ 17), they should also “complete mechanisms for rewards and punishments of religious professionals” (§ 23). Also new is the extensive list of competences that the religious affairs departments of people's governments have towards religious groups (§§ 25-27). These include the supervision of religious groups in formulating their own system of rules. This, in turn, as it already says in the “Regulations on Religious Affairs,” must be observed by the institutes for religious education, the sites for religious activities and the clergy. Approval by the authorities must be obtained for “holding major meetings, activities, trainings, as well as carrying out diplomatic exchange activities.” Also noteworthy is the provision that “Religious groups must not set up regional branches” (§ 14). Yang Fenggang from the Center for Religion and Chinese Society at Purdue University told *China Source* that the associations of the religions at different administrative levels (province, county) are not branches of the nationwide associations, but separate associations that are responsible to the local authorities.

The new measures were adopted by the State Administration for Religious Affairs (text of the “Measures” and unofficial English translation at www.chinalawtranslate.com/en/measures-for-the-administration-of-religious-groups; *AsiaNews* Dec. 31, 2019; *China Source Blog* Feb. 2, 2020; *UCAN* Jan, 3, 2020; see also *RCTC* 2019, No. 4, p. 7 regarding the draft of the “Measures”).

February 13–17, 2020:

China's United Front Department of the Chinese Communist Party publishes figures on Corona donations from religious circles

In five reports on the contributions of the five major religions in the fight against the Covid-19 epidemic, the following figures are given: By around mid-February, Buddhist circles had donated 207 million yuan, Daoists 50 million yuan, Muslims 86.09 million yuan, Catholics 12.8 million yuan and the Protestants 115.3 million yuan. In addition, donations totaling 60 million yuan (including pledged donations) were collected from the Protestant-inspired Amity Foundation. Religious organizations also provided large amounts of donations in kind – millions of face masks, hundreds of respirators and oxygen devices, plus protective suits, disinfectants, etc. (*Tongzhan xinyu* 统战新语 [United Front] according to sara.gov.cn Feb. 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 2020). - See also further information in the sections on Protestantism and Catholic Church as well as the contributions in *China heute* 2020, No. 1, pp. 4-10 (in German).

Buddhism

January 2, 2020:

The International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) announces closure of Buddhist study network founded by the Larung Gar Buddhist Academy

In what appeared to be a surprise announcement, on December 30, 2019 Khenpo Sodargye announced the closure of the Bodhi Institute (Puti xuehui 菩提学会, Bodhi Institute of Compassion and Wisdom) which he had founded and which has branches in China and other countries. In a Chinese-language post that appeared on his Larung Gar website (ICT published a screenshot), Sodargye justified this by saying that, in recent years, some people have allegedly undertaken illegal and criminal activities in the name of the Bodhi Institute. He stated that he would dissolve the Bodhi Institute and all of its “Dharma Dissemination Offices” and that all branches and groups established in the name of the Bodhi Institute should suspend and discontinue their websites. He declared that he would continue to “love the nation as well as the religion” and serve the faithful.

A source confirmed the closings to the ICT, but said the reasons provided by Sodargye were apparently written at the direction of the authorities. The source continued that Sodargye and another Abbot of Larung Gar were interrogated by the authorities in November 2019 and that the closure was related to these interrogations. ICT, which described Sodargye as one of the leading Tibetan Buddhist voices within the PRC, suspected that the closing of the centers was intended to limit his growing influence. Sodargye (Sönam Dargyé, Chinese: Suodaji 索达吉), born in 1962, was a close student of the founder of the Larung Gar Academy, Jigme Phuntsok, and since the latter's death in 2004 has been a member of the team of abbots that continues the work of the academy. As Ester Bianchi of the University of Perugia, who did research in Larung Gar, wrote in an article published in 2018, Sodargye is responsible for teaching Chinese monks there. In 2006 he founded Puti xuehui, which aims to spread Tibetan Buddhism among Han Chinese and has developed into a network of Buddhist groups and individuals throughout China [and, according to the ICT, also internationally]. At khenposodargye.org you can find reports about Sodargye's trips abroad, most recently from 2018, when he traveled to Africa, Europe and the USA. There are many videos of Khenpo's instruction to well-filled auditoriums abroad, including videos where he lectures in Chinese to Chinese audiences.

Larung Gar is located in Sertar County, Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province. In 2016–2017, over 4,800 people were expelled from the academy, where around 10,000 followers of Tibetan Buddhism (including many Han Chinese) were living and studying before 2016 (savetibet.org Jan. 2, 2020; see Ester Bianchi, “Teaching Tibetan Buddhism in Chinese on Behalf of Mañjuśrī” in F. Jagou [Ed.], *The Hybridity of Buddhism. Contemporary Encounters between Tibetan and Chinese Traditions in Taiwan and the Mainland*, Paris 2018, pp. 109-131; see also *RCTC* 2016, No. 4, pp. 3-4, und 2017, No. 4, pp. 8-9).

Protestantism

December 26, 2019:

Pastor Wang Yi sentenced to nine years in prison

On December 26, Pastor Wang Yi, director of the Early Rain Covenant Church in Chengdu, who was critical of the regime, was sentenced to 9 years in prison in a closed trial. The date coincides not only with Christian Christmas, but also with the birthday of state founder Mao Zedong and can be understood as a demonstration of the prevailing ideology. In addition to the prison sentence, Pastor Wang's rights as a citizen were revoked for a period of three years and personal items worth the equivalent of 6,500 Euros were confiscated. The verdict was justified with the charge of “inciting the overthrow of state power” and “illegal trade in religious printed matter.” His wife Jiang Rong is under house arrest together with their son. After a large-scale raid and arrests in the church community, most of the members were quickly released. In November of 2019, Qin Defu, a church leader from the Early Rain Covenant Church, was sentenced to four years in prison for “illegal business” (*New York Times* Dec. 30, 2019; *UCAN* Jan. 3, 2020).

Isabel Friemann, China InfoStelle

January, March and April 2020:

Removal of crosses in Anhui Province

Local authority officials dismantled crosses of Christian churches in Anhui Province, including in the capital Hefei (January 9), in Woyang 涡阳 (March 13), Bangbu 蚌埠 (end of March), Fuyang 阜阳 (April 1) and Feixi 肥西 (April 15). The demolitions are being justified with the demands of the Sinitization process. Religions are supposed to jettison any foreign influences and all symbols that are foreign to Chinese culture. Reports of attacks and restrictions by local authorities are also increasing in other provinces. The Xiangbaishu Church was completely demolished on March 13 in Yixing, Jiangsu Province. On Easter Sunday, April 12, the Antioch Church was banned in Zhengzhou, the capital of Henan (boxun.com Jan. 9, 2020; chinaaid.net March 15, 2020; christiantimes.org.hk March 27, 2020; cmcn.org/archives/47997).

Isabel Friemann, China InfoStelle

January 21, 2020:

Germany: Workshop held on the sect “Church of Almighty God” using social networking

In response to user questions by adherents of the “Church of Almighty God” (CAG) on social networks such as Twitter, Facebook or Instagram, Jens Haverland, ecumenism pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran

Church in northern Germany, organized a workshop at Hansebarcamp on January 21, 2020 under the title “Help, a sect is following me.” The new religious movement which arose in the mid-1990s in China and is also known under the name “Eastern Lightning,” since 2015 manifests itself more and more also in Germany. So far, there is a certain accumulation in Protestant communities and refugee accommodation around the cities of Stuttgart and Esslingen in South Germany.

Because they share certain common elements with Christianity, the sect’s missionary efforts are often directed towards parishes and clergy. But, and in this the doctrine differs fundamentally from Christianity, the followers of “Almighty God” believe that Jesus has come back in the form of a young woman and that the end time is imminent. The focus of the proclamation is not the Good News of the liberating Gospel, but the subordination of one’s own needs in the face of the struggle between “Almighty God” and the demons. In publications and especially in YouTube videos, reports are given on how Jesus revealed himself and how his followers are persecuted by the Chinese police, who is identified as an “apocalyptic red dragon.”

Reports from former members describe the group’s approach and how it led to social isolation. In their missionary activities, the members of the “Eastern Lightning” do not initially pretend to be missionaries as such, but usually try to build good relationships and collect information over years before they begin to do missionary work. They pretend to be Christians of the house church movement, who are politically persecuted because of their beliefs. The sect is also organized in Germany in the “Association for the Defense of Human Rights and Religious Freedom.” In Stuttgart’s city center the sect tries to build up trust among the public by presenting their concerns alongside the human rights violations in Xinjiang.

“I find it questionable if, for example, representatives of the North Church knowingly or unknowingly follow CAG profiles with their Twitter account,” said Haverland. “At first I found it difficult to block someone based on a different worldview. But I also don’t want to be misused to be part of a network that obviously stresses the relationship between Christianity and the Chinese state rather than promoting human rights” (nordkirche.de/nachrichten/nachrichten-detail/nachricht/session-hilfe-mir-folgt-eine-sekte-am-beispiel-church-of-almighty-god/).

Isabel Friemann, China InfoStelle

From January 25, 2020:

Amity Foundation contributes to fight against Corona

On January 20, the Amity Foundation began collecting data and facts about the novel Corona virus and its spread in Hubei province. The Amity team began discussing initial considerations about what form their relief efforts could take. Only four days later, even before the start of the Chinese New Year on January 25, the first transport of aid materials was underway. By March 12, products had been delivered to more than 300 hospitals, medical centers and village communities, including seven ambulance vehicles with vacuum cabins for the safe transport of infected people. Aid teams distributed more than 130,000 meals to medical personnel on the front line. With the help of online fundraising, support from local companies, Chinese churches and foreign partners, Amity raised the equivalent of almost 10 million Euros in donations by March 23. In the meantime, requests for help have also come from abroad (www.amity.org.cn; www.amityfoundation.org/eng/coronavirus-updates-amitys-work-march). See also the report by Martin Lachmann, Amity Office Hong Kong, dated March 18, 2020).

Isabel Friemann, China InfoStelle

February 17, 2020:

Party praises the commitment of Protestant Christians

On its microblog on February 17, the CCP's United Front Authority published a positive response to efforts by Chinese Protestant churches and organizations to help curb the virus. It gave special emphasis to the fact that the rapid and comprehensive willingness of Protestant Christians to help was in accord with the guidelines of President Xi Jinping. It was also praised that the churches had given sober, scientifically clear information about dealing with the virus, opposed rumors and denied interpretations that the virus was a sign of "sin" or even the beginning of the "end time." By February 16, the Chinese Christian Council and the Three-Self Movement have made a total of almost 16 million Euros in donations of money and goods available at the local and national level. The donations of the Protestant churches in the most affected Hubei Province alone amounted to 2.25 million Euros. At that time, the Amity Foundation had raised an additional 8 million Euros in cash and in-kind donations (*Tongzhan xinyu* Feb. 17, 2020).

Isabel Friemann, China InfoStelle

March 17, 2020:

Protestant umbrella organizations warn of the new religious movement Shincheonji

On March 17, the website of the Protestant umbrella organizations CCC / TSPM published a call for the defense of true Christian teaching and resistance to heretical cults. Above all, the Church of the "New Heaven and New Earth" from South Korea (Shincheonji Church of Jesus) took advantage of the special circumstances of the Corona epidemic to become active among Chinese believers and to attract new followers. The spread of the new virus in South Korea in connection with a representative of this sect, who continued to attend services despite confirmed infection, is damaging the image of Christian communities, thus the website. The criteria according to which the orthodox teaching of Christianity is to be distinguished from new religious movements are explained (www.ccctspm.org/newsinfo/13229).

Isabel Friemann, China InfoStelle

Catholic Church

November 11–13, 2019:

6th Theological Forum on Sinicization of Catholicism in Chengdu

The forum was themed "The Sinicization of Catholicism – How do we do it?" 140 people from all over China, including (non-Church) experts, priests and laity, took part, according to the official conference report on the website of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and Bishops' Conference. According to the report, after the opening speeches, there was a "top five religions talk about Sinicization," each with a high-level representative of the national organizations of Daoism, Buddhism, Islam, Protestantism and Catholicism as well as Zhuo Xinping, chairman of the Chinese Association of Religious Studies. The next day there were numerous lectures by university and Church scholars on the subject of "Merging Catholicism and Chinese Culture." The morning session on November 13 dealt with the subject of "Sinicization of Catholic Architecture and Art" and was held at Chengdu Cathedral, which has an area of courtyards and outbuildings in traditional Sichuan style (the church itself is classicist).

There followed a session on “Sinicized Catholic preaching.” In a “sermon exchange,” selected priests from 12 provinces showed “how Catholic clerics [...] interpret Catholic teachings and regulations in a subtle and quiet manner in accordance with Chinese society and culture.” The report does not reveal anything about the content of the lectures.

One priest who attended the conference told *UCAN* that the forum had a political mission, there were few lectures on theology and many on political issues. Another participant named Paul told *UCAN* that in a discussion on Sinicization the viewpoint had been taken that priests should not wear vestments when raising the national flag and singing non-Church songs. Most priests, however, would have favored a Sinicization of Catholicism, he continues (*chinacatholic.cn* Nov. 16, 2019; *UCAN* Nov. 21, 2019).

December 18, 2019:

Working report of the official Catholic governing bodies for 2019 speaks of holding on to the independence of the Church

At a meeting of the standing committees of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA) and the Bishops’ Conference of the Catholic Church in China (BCCCC) in Jinan (Shandong), Bishop Ma Yinglin, chairman of the BCCCC, presented the working report of the bodies for 2019. According to a report on the CCPA-BCCCC official website, Bishop Ma said that in the 70th year of the founding of the New China, CCPA-BCCCC, led by the party and government and guided by Xi Jinping’s thoughts on socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era, had completely implemented the spirit of the 19th Party Congress and the 2nd, 3rd and 4th plenary sessions of the 19th CCP Central Committee; studied the major discourses of Secretary General Xi Jinping on religious work; effectively communicated and implemented the revised “Regulations on Religious Affairs”; upheld the flag of love for country and religion; adhered to the principle of independence and self-government of the Church and orientation towards Sinicization; achieved good results in strengthening the ideological construction, the systemic construction, the personnel training, the welfare organizations and the exchange with foreign countries. These achievements were rated positively by the leaders at all levels, Ma continued. Mr. Liu Yuanlong, vice chairman of the CCPA, presented the 2020 work plans. Bishop Shen Bin, vice-chairman of CCPA and BCCCC, promised at the meeting that the bodies, led by the party and government and in the light of the Holy Spirit, would continue to abide by the principles of patriotism, Church independence, Sinicization, etc. Representatives of the Party’s United Front Work Department attended the meeting (*chinacatholic.cn* Dec. 18, 2019).

End of 2019 / Beginning of 2020:

Pastoral mottoes for 2020 in various Chinese dioceses – Focus on families and the Bible

A “Year of Marriage and Family” was proclaimed in 2020 in Zhouzhi Diocese (Shaanxi). As diocesan Bishop Wu Qinjing said in a pastoral letter, there are many difficulties in marriages and families: family conflicts and breakups, divorce and remarriage, domestic violence, older single people who cannot find a spouse, support for older people in the family and the problem of the children left behind. The life of the Church depends heavily on how they deal with these problems in their families, the bishop said. The Nanjing Diocese proclaimed a year of Bible study, inaugurated on November 17. As Diocesan Bishop Lu Xinping explained in an interview with *Xinde*, among others Bible groups would be set up in all parishes and would meet at least twice a month. The Diocese of Xingtai in Hebei, which currently

has no bishop, declared in a pastoral letter that 2020 would be the “Year of Matthew,” referring among others to the Apostolic Letter of Pope Francis “Aperuit illis,’ Instituting the Sunday of the Word of God” (*Xinde* 2019, No. 44, p. 1; 2020, No. 1, pp. 1-2).

However, with the outbreak of the Corona epidemic and the continued closure of all religious sites, the implementation of these diocesan plans may prove to be extremely difficult.

January 20, 2020:

***AsiaNews* reports the temporary release of Underground Bishop Cui Tai**

The 69-year-old coadjutor bishop Augustinus Cui Tai from Xuanhua (Hebei Province) was released, according to some priests, to spend Chinese New Year with his sister. After the New Year holidays, the police would return the bishop to isolation, the priests said. Since 2007, Bishop Cui again and again has been held in secret detention centers or hotels or put under house arrest by the authorities without trial. Most recently, he was “taken away” on March 29, 2019 (*AsiaNews* Jan. 20, 2020; see also *RCTC* 2019, No. 2, pp. 15-16).

January to April 2020:

Developments in the Diocese of Mindong

According to *AsiaNews*, at least five parish churches in the diocese, the majority of whose clergy and believers originally belonged to the underground, were closed by the authorities during the month of January. Their electricity and water had been turned off, allegedly for reasons of fire protection. According to *AsiaNews* these include two very large parishes, Fu’an with over 10,000 believers and Saiqi with 3,000 faithful, as well as the Shuangfeng parish. A Catholic home for the elderly was also closed in Saiqi. Fu’an’s parish priest Liu Guangpin and Saiqi’ parish priest Huang Jintong had to leave their parish work. According to *AsiaNews*, Fr. Huang was “taken away” by security forces on April 3 and taken to an unknown location – presumably to convince him to sign a government-demanded declaration of Church independence. According to *AsiaNews*, he is one of about 20 of the diocese’s originally 57 underground priests who have so far refused to sign such a declaration. The former underground bishop, Bishop Guo Xijin, also received an eviction order from his bishop’s house on January 15. However, according to *AsiaNews*, in order to avoid bad publicity, the authorities finally refrained from driving him out of the residence. Since then (as of April 6) he has lived there without running water, electricity and gas. When he leaves the house to fetch water, he blesses his controllers by means of the security camera (video at *AsiaNews*). Some priests told *AsiaNews* in January that the authorities had kept Bishop Zhan Silu of Mindong in the dark about eviction orders from Bishop Guo’s residence and the parishes.

Meanwhile, on the web portal of the Patriotic Association and the Bishops’ Conference again and again there are reports about political meetings in the official part of Mindong Diocese. On January 20, the deputy chairman of the Political Consultative Conference of the city of Ningde which is located in the area of the diocese wished Bishop Zhan Silu for the New Year “even more success in working for [Church] unity.” On March 25, a religious policy training session took place in the residence of the bishop, in which 50 priests, sisters and lay people, as well as representatives of the authorities took part in addition to the bishop. The meeting was chaired by Vicar General Zhu Ruci – who, according to the *Guide to the Catholic Church in China 2014*, originally belonged to the underground community of the diocese (*AsiaNews* Jan. 16; April 6, 2020; chinacatholic.cn Jan. 20; March 27, 2020).

In December 2018, at the request of the Pope, Bishop Guo Xijin, who was not recognized by the government, has accepted to be demoted in favor of the former illegitimate Bishop Zhan Silu, who had been pardoned by the Pope. Despite this, Bishop Guo continued to be denied recognition by the government as Zhan's auxiliary bishop. In May 2019, due to constant pressure from the authorities on his underground priests, Bishop Guo finally withdrew his application for state recognition. The diocese was seen as a kind of pilot project for the implementation of the September 22, 2018 Sino-Vatican agreement on the appointment of bishops (see *RCTC* 2019, No. 2, pp. 11-12; 16; No. 3, p. 13; No. 4, p. 13; 2020, No. 1, p. 10).

From January 25, 2020:

Jinde Charities starts donation campaign for Corona-virus aid in China

Many parishes and dioceses in China, but also Catholic and non-Catholic individuals participated in the fundraising. Between January 25 and April 23, 15,285,944 yuan, nearly 2 million Euros, were raised in donations for disaster relief within China, according to the website of Jinde, the largest Catholic aid organization in mainland China. On January 28, the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and the Chinese Bishops' Conference called on all Catholics in the country to donate to fight the epidemic, either through the Red Cross, through Jinde or directly to their local church (*chinacatholic.cn* Jan. 28, 2020 ; www.jinde.org/Project/show/id/4200.htm [Project Wuhan]).

From March 11, 2020:

Jinde Charities starts overseas aid project to fight the pandemic



On April 14 the China-Zentrum in Sankt Augustin, Germany, has received thousands of protective masks and some protective gear for the infirmaries and old-age homes of the Divine Word Missionaries. From left to right: Sr. Marinka, Fr. Liebscher, Sr. Ivana, Fr. Welling, J. Bewermeier, Paul Li. Photo: China-Zentrum.

By April 23, around 8.4 million yuan (1 million Euros) had been raised in donations and 12.3 million yuan (1.5 million Euros) had been disbursed in aid for countries abroad, according to Jinde's website. The aid went to South Korea, Italy and other countries affected by the epidemic. Two aid deliveries to Italy, sent from China on March 16 and 26, were made through the Vatican Pharmacy with the support of the responsible Chinese and Italian authorities (www.jinde.org/Project/show/id/4212.html; [overseas project]; jinde.org March 16, 17, 18, 27; April 3, 2020).

For details and further appeals for donations, see the contributions in *China heute* 2020, No. 1, pp. 4-10 (in German).

March 25, 2020:

Bishop Ma Zhongmu, the only Mongolian-born bishop in the world, dies at 100



Bishop Ma Zhongmu wearing his Mongolian bishop's hat. Photo: nxpeteryu.

Bishop Ma Zhongmu 马仲牧 (Mongolian name: Tegusbeleg) was bishop of the Diocese of Ningxia in northwest China from 1983 to 2005; however, he was only recognized by the government as a priest. He was the oldest living bishop in China. Ma Zhongmu was born on November 1, 1919 in the community of Chengchuan (Mongolian: Porobalgason, Otog Front Banner, Ordos) in Inner Mongolia. He came from a traditionally Catholic Mongolian family of 12 children. His older brother Ma Yuanmu 马元牧 (1906–1979) was also a priest and three of the girls in the family became religious sisters. Ma Zhongmu studied philosophy and theology in the seminaries of Suiyuan (Hohhot) and Datong. On July 31, 1947 he was ordained a priest by Bishop Charles Joseph van Melckebeke CICM. From 1948 he studied for two years at the agricultural faculty of Fu Jen Catholic University in Peking. He then worked as a pastor and later as a lecturer in Suiyuan's seminary. In 1958, together with many other priests in Suiyuan, he was declared a counter-revolutionary and sent to the labor camp. He was not rehabilitated until 1979. In 1980 he returned to the diocese. In 1983, he was secretly ordained Bishop of Ningxia. Since his retirement in 2005, he has lived, during the last years gravely ill, in his home town of Chengchuan.

Two bishops remain in the region after Bishop Ma's death: Bishop Li Jing of Ningxia and Bishop Du Jiang of Bameng (Bayan Nur Banner, Inner Mongolia). Both are recognized by the Pope and the government. The Bameng Diocese, in which also Chengchuan is located, formerly belonged to the Ningxia Diocese. As in many areas of China, Vatican and [official] Chinese diocesan borders do not match. The administrative functions of the three bishops had overlapped and the Catholics had each gone to the bishop to whom they felt they belonged, Hong Kong Catholicism expert Anthony Lam told *UCAN*. There were also occasions when the three bishops performed together, such as for the ordination of an ethnic Mongolian priest in Chengchuan in 2013. According to Lam, Bishop Ma had a good relationship with the local authorities who respected him.

As *UCAN* reported, only Bishop Meng Qinglu of Hohhot and two priests and a few lay people were allowed to attend Bishop Ma's funeral on March 27. The religious authority justified this restriction by citing the measures in force to contain the Corona virus.

Bishop Ma Zhongmu was the only bishop of Mongolian ethnicity in the history of the Church in China. In photos you can see him with Mongolian clothes and a Mongolian hat with a cross. He translated the Mass texts into Mongolian and submitted them to the Vatican, where – according to various obituaries – until now they could not be approved due to the lack of experts in the Mongolian language at the Vatican.

Tibetan Buddhism is the most widespread religion among the Mongols. Most Mongolian Catholics of Inner Mongolia live in the Otog Front Banner district, where Chengchuan is also located (*AsiaNews* March 26, 2020; Blog Jinan yongren 冀南庸人 March 27, 2020; *China heute* 2008, No. 6, pp. 197-198 [in German]; *RCTC* 2013, No. 2, pp. 15-16; 2013, No. 4, p. 7; facebook.com/UCANChina March 26, 2020; *UCAN* March 27, 2020).

Sino-Vatican Relations

January 8 / February 26 / March 1, 2020:

Cardinal Zen's call to all cardinals around the world to save the Chinese Church leads to open confrontation with the Dean of the College of Cardinals

Cardinal Joseph Zen SDB, bishop emeritus of the Diocese of Hong Kong, had already written an initially unpublished letter to his fellow cardinals around the world on September 27, 2019. In it he expresses his concern that the “Pastoral guidelines of the Holy See concerning the civil registration of clergy in China” published by the Holy See on June 28, 2019 (English text see <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2019/06/28/190628c.html>; see also *China heute* 2019, No. 2, pp. 72-73, 87-88 [in German]) encouraged the clergy and faithful in China to be members of a schismatic Church that was independent from the Pope and obedient to the communist party. Among other things, he criticizes the statement (attributed by Zen to Cardinal Parolin) made in the Pastoral Guidelines that “independence” of the Church in China after the agreement, since it recognizes the special role of the Pope, is no longer to be understood as absolute. Zen’s appeal to the cardinals ends with the words: “Can we assist silently to this complete destruction of the Church in China at the hand of those who have the sacred duty of protecting it?” Cardinal Zen added his “Dubia” (critical analysis) to the Pastoral Guidelines, which he according to his own words had already presented to Pope Francis on July 1, 2019. On February 26, 2020, Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, the Dean of the College of Cardinals, replied to the cardinals of the world with a letter saying that he felt obliged “to share some considerations and to offer some elements which favor a serene evaluation of the complex questions regarding the Church in China.” In particular, he points to a “profound symphony” in attitudes towards the Church of China in the last three pontificates, all of which have favored dialogue. Cardinal Re rejects Zen’s conjecture that the agreement signed in 2018 is the same that Pope Benedict refused to sign; rather, according to Re, after research in the archives of the Secretariat of State, he became convinced that “Pope Benedict XVI had approved the draft Agreement on the appointment of Bishops in China, which was only possible to sign in 2018.” Cardinal Zen responded on March 1 with an open letter to Cardinal Re. In it he explains, among other things, that John Paul II and Benedict XVI both regarded a policy of compromise against communism in the sense of the “Ostpolitik” as wrong. Zen also added that if he is wrong in his assumptions about the agreement, then someone should show him the text. Zen further wrote that he had evidence that Cardinal Parolin was “manipulating” the Holy Father. “A dialogue between the two cardinals about the Sino-Vatican agreement is urgently needed,” wrote Bernardo Cervellera, editor-in-chief of *AsiaNews*, on March 3 in a comment (<https://oldyosef.hkdavc.com/?p=1264>; <https://oldyosef.hkdavc.com/?p=1400>; www.asianews.it/news-en/Card.Re-against-Card.-Zen:-There-is-a-profound-harmony-between-Benedict-XVI-and-Francis-on-China-49452.html; <https://oldyosef.hkdavc.com/?p=1356>).

January 26, 2020:

Pope Francis prays for Corona victims in China

“I also wish to be close to and to pray for the victims of the virus that has broken out in China. May the Lord receive the deceased in his peace, comfort the families and support the great commitment of the Chinese community, which has already been set in motion to fight this epidemic,” said the Pope after the Angelus prayer in St. Peter’s Square (w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/angelus/2020/documents/papa-francesco_angelus_20200126.html).

February 3, 2020:

News: Vatican sends hundreds of thousands of medical masks to China

At the initiative of the Office of Papal Charities and the Missionary Center of the Chinese Church in Italy, “hundreds of thousands” of masks were sent to China in the particularly affected provinces of Hubei, Zhejiang and Fujian, the Holy See Press Office reported on February 3. (The exact number is unclear; other reports mentioned 600,000 or 700,000 masks.) According to *AsiaNews*, the Holy See and Chinese Christian communities in Italy had paid for the masks, the Vatican Pharmacy had organized collection and shipment, and China Southern Airlines had taken charge of transporting them for free. One of the organizers was the priest Vincenzo Han Duo from Mindong Diocese, who is currently the vice-rector of the Pontifical Urban College in Rome. He was interviewed by the party-affiliated *Global Times*, which also reported in detail on February 3 about the Vatican donation (*AsiaNews* Feb. 3, 2020; *globaltimes.cn* Feb. 3, 2020; *UCAN* Feb. 4, 2020; *vaticannews.va* Feb. 3, 2020).

February 14, 2020:

The “Foreign Ministers” of China and the Holy See meet on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference

Commentators described this as the highest-ranking meeting between representatives of both sides since the founding of the People’s Republic of China (according to Bernardo Cervellera in *AsiaNews* it was the highest-ranking meeting since the expulsion of the Papal Nuncio Riberi in 1951). Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States within the Holy See’s Secretariat of State, and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi had both traveled to Munich to attend the Security Conference. On the same day, the press office of the Holy See published a press release on the encounter. It says: “During the discussion, which took place in a cordial atmosphere, the contacts between the two Parties, which have developed positively over time, were evoked. In particular, the importance of the *Provisional Agreement on the appointment of Bishops*, signed on 22 September 2018, was highlighted, also reiterating the wish to continue bilateral institutional dialogue to promote the life of the Catholic Church and the good of the Chinese people. Appreciation was expressed for the efforts that are being made to control the coronavirus epidemic, along with solidarity with the afflicted population.” The text continues: “Finally, the hope was expressed for greater international cooperation in order to promote civil co-existence and peace in the world, and considerations were exchanged on intercultural dialogue and human rights.” A day later, there was a Chinese-language announcement on the Chinese side from the official *Xinhua* news agency, which also appeared on the website of the Chinese State Council. There it was said, among other things, that Gallagher, on behalf of the Pope and the Secretary of State [i.e. Cardinal Pietro Parolin], conveyed the respect and support of the Curia to the Chinese side and said that it is believed that “China has the wisdom and courage to overcome the epidemic soon.” Wang Yi, *Xinhua* said, thanked the Curia for their expression of sympathy and said he believed that the Vatican would “play a constructive role in promoting the international community in order to support China’s efforts to fight the epidemic with an objective, rational and scientific attitude.” *Xinhua* continued: “Wang Yi said Pope Francis has repeatedly expressed his love and blessings for China. Today’s first meeting between the Chinese and Vatican foreign ministers opens up more space for future exchanges between the two sides. The provisional agreement on the appointment of bishops signed by both sides has been a groundbreaking event with positive results.” China would be ready to further improve understanding with the Vatican. The meeting of the foreign ministers was thus recognized

by the Chinese official press far more extensively than, for example, the conclusion of the provisional agreement in 2018.

The semi-official *Global Times* also reported on the meeting. The paper quoted Catholicism expert Wang Meixiu (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences) as saying that cooperation in the health sector had obviously enhanced bilateral relations between the two sides. Such friendly cooperation would also be helpful for the renewal of the agreement. Francesco Sisci from Renmin University of China told the newspaper that the meeting between the two foreign ministers might lead to a higher level meeting between the two sides (Vatican report: <http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2020/02/14/200214d.html>; announcement *Xinhua*: www.gov.cn/guowuyuan/2020-02/15/content_5479216.htm; *America Magazine* Feb. 14, 2020; *AsiaNews* Feb. 15, 2020; *Global Times* Feb. 15, 2020).

April 1, 2020:

Statement by Cardinal Charles Bo, Archbishop of Yangon (Myanmar), blames China's Communist Party for the Corona pandemic

The Chinese Communist Party regime has prime responsibility for the pandemic, the Cardinal wrote in his sharply worded statement. He justified this with the initial suppression of news about the virus and action taken by the Chinese government against anyone who raised the alarm. His country Myanmar is extremely vulnerable to Covid-19, said the Cardinal. "Through its inhumane and irresponsible handling of the coronavirus the CCP has proven what many previously thought: that it is a threat to the world," Bo wrote. The Chinese regime – not the people – "owes us all an apology, and compensation for the destruction it has caused," said the Cardinal; at least it should write off the debts of other countries to cover the cost of Covid-19. In his letter, he also denounced violations of freedom of expression and religion in China and the incarceration of at least one million Uighurs in camps.

The 71-year-old Cardinal Charles Maung Bo, a Salesian, was appointed Cardinal by Pope Francis in 2015. He is the current chair of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC). However, the statement did not appear on their website or in their name, but on the website of the Archdiocese of Yangon (www.catholicarchdioceseofyangon.com/newview.php?id=94; *UCAN* April 15, 20, 2020; *Vatican News* April 3, 2020).

April 9, 2020:

Holy See Press Office expresses gratitude for medical supplies from China

Matteo Bruni, director of the Holy See Press Office, said: "In recent days, donations of medical supplies have arrived from China, in particular through the organisations of the Red Cross Society of China and the Hebei Jinde Charities Foundation, to the Vatican Pharmacy as an expression of the solidarity of the Chinese people and Catholic communities with those involved in the relief of those affected by Covid-19 and the prevention of the current coronavirus epidemic. The Holy See appreciates this generous gesture and expresses its gratitude to the bishops, the Catholic faithful, the institutions and all other Chinese citizens for this humanitarian initiative, assuring them of the esteem and prayers of the Holy Father" (<http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2020/04/09/200409b.html>).

Hong Kong

From January 23, 2020:

Measures taken by the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese regarding the Corona virus

After the diocese published detailed sanitary requirements for Church services on January 23, it suspended all public Sunday and weekday masses from February 15. This regulation was still in effect at the end of April. Sunday and weekday Masses, rosary, angelus, vespers and other prayers are broadcast via YouTube, Facebook or Instagram. The churches are open for private prayer, weddings and funerals can be held. Cardinal John Tong, the Apostolic Administrator of the diocese, addressed the faithful several times. In the Lenten pastoral letter of February 11, he wrote: “Since last June, the entire Hong Kong society seems to be living in the wilderness, losing its confidence and feeling sad and helpless. Firstly was the turmoil triggered by the ‘anti-extradition bill’ movement, and then the panic caused by the spread of the epidemic virus. When temptations seem to be overwhelming us, it is an opportunity for us to turn our gaze to Christ and renew our trust in him”(catholic.org.hk Jan. 23, 2020; *Sunday Examiner* Feb. 6, 21; April 7, 10, 2020; video speeches of Cardinal Tong Jan. 31; Feb. 13, 2020).

February 16 / April 18, 2020:

Xia Baolong appointed Director of the State Council’s Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office – Arrest of 15 Pro-Democracy activists

Xia is considered to be closely associated with Xi Jinping and a political hardliner. From 2003 to 2017 he worked in Zhejiang Province, initially as deputy party secretary under the then party secretary Xi Jinping, and from late 2012 as party secretary. During Xia’s tenure, between 2014 and 2016 around 1,600 crosses were forcibly demolished from church roofs in Zhejiang. His appointment as head of the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office (HKMAO) is seen as an indication that the central government wants to get a firmer grip on Hong Kong’s administration and politics after mass protests had broken out there against the Beijing-related administration under Carrie Lam in the summer of 2019. On April 18, 2020, Hong Kong police arrested 15 prominent pro-democracy activists, including lawyer Martin Lee, MP Albert Ho and media entrepreneur Jimmy Lai, editor of the pro-democratic *Apple Daily*, for organizing and participating in unauthorized protests; all were later released on bail. According to *UCAN*, there are also concerns that Xia’s appointment could affect Christian life in Hong Kong. However, this would depend on the degree of threat the central government perceives from Christians in the island city, Porson Chan from the Justice and Peace Commission of the Hong Kong Diocese told *UCAN* (*AsiaNews* March 4; April 19, 2020; *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* April 20, 2020; *UCAN* Feb.14, 28, 2020). – The HKMAO is an agency of the Beijing central government which maintains liaison offices in both Hong Kong and Macau.

Macau

December 20, 2019:

20th anniversary of the former Portuguese colony of Macau’s return to China

Chinese President Xi Jinping delivered a speech in Macau to mark the anniversary. In it, he said that the people and government of Macau have always been patriotic and really understood the concept of “one

country, two systems.” They had the nation’s and Macau’s interest in mind, he said. Xi praised Macau’s economic success and patriotic education in schools. He said that the sense of national identity has been deeply rooted in the heart of young people.

Macau has been a Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China since December 20, 1999 (*AsiaNews* Dec. 20, 2019).

Taiwan

March / April, 2020:

Taiwan donates respirators and tuna to the Vatican

On March 23, Taiwan’s Ambassador to the Holy See, Matthew Lee, made a donation of 600 cans of tuna to the Office of Papal Charities for distribution to the poor. Taiwan also donated 280,000 face masks to the Holy See and later another 200,000. At a ceremony held on April 22 at the Taiwanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs to mark the second donation, the Vatican’s Chargé d’Affaires in Taiwan, Msgr. Arnaldo Catalan, thanked Taiwan for the donation and conveyed Pope Francis’ best wishes to the Taiwanese people.

More than 20,000 people in Taiwan responded to an appeal by the Camillian missionary Fr. Giuseppe Didone on April 2 and within just 5 days donated NTD 120 million, or about 3.7 million Euros, to the Italian areas hardest hit by the Corona virus (*focustaiwan.tw* April 22, 2020; *taiwantoday.tw* April 8, 2020). – For the situation of the religions and of the Catholic Church in Taiwan in the pandemic, see W. Boehi’s contribution in *China heute* 2020, No. 1, pp. 10-11 (in German).

Statistics on Religions and Churches in the People's Republic of China – Update for the Year 2019

Katharina Wenzel-Teuber
Translated by Jacqueline Mulberge

This year's statistical update on religions in China focuses on recent results from the China Family Panel Studies. In addition, we present figures on the individual religions from 2019 or – as new figures are not available for each religion every year – from previous years.

1. News from the China Family Panel Studies – “How Many Protestants Are There Really in China?”

In an essay published in 2019, based on surveys conducted by the China Family Panel Studies in 2012, 2014 and 2016, the authors arrive at an estimated number of almost 40 million Protestant Christians in China.¹ Since their analysis probably contributed significantly to the very substantial correction and increase in the estimated number of Protestants in the China State Council's White Paper on freedom of religious belief published in 2018 (more on this later), it will be presented in detail below.

The “Statistical Update” in *Religions & Christianity in Today's China* has reported twice on the China Family Panel Studies (*Zhongguo jiating zhuzong diaocha* 中国家庭追踪调查, abbr.: CFPS). The endeavour is a “nationally representative, annual longitudinal survey,” which focuses on the “economic and non-economic well-being of the population.” It is financed by the Chinese government through Peking University. Since 2010, the Institute of Social Science Survey of Peking University has regularly surveyed a fixed panel of families and individuals in 25 of the 31 provinces, direct-controlled municipalities and autonomous regions of [Mainland] China, i.e. all except Xinjiang, Tibet, Qinghai, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia and Hainan. The survey has a target sample size of 16,000 households.² Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan are not included in the survey.

In the panel surveys of 2012 and 2014 (hereafter: CFPS 2012 and CFPS 2014) there were already different question modules on religion.³ In the survey of 2016 (hereafter: CFPS 2016) the question about religion was asked again. Based on the results of CFPS

1 Lu Yunfeng – Wu Yue – Zhang Chunni 2019, p. 175.

2 See the self-presentation on the project website: www.issp.pku.edu.cn/cfps/en/about/introduction/index.htm (English) and www.issp.pku.edu.cn/cfps/index.htm (Chinese) and also Lu Yunfeng – Wu Yue – Zhang Chunni 2019, pp. 167-168.

3 See discussion of the results in Wenzel-Teuber 2015, pp. 21-28, and *idem* 2017, pp. 26-28.

2016 in combination with the results of the two older surveys CFPS 2012 and CFPS 2014, researchers Lu Yunfeng, Wu Yue and Zhang Chunni attempt to find an answer to the controversial, long-standing question: “How many Protestant Christians are there really in China?”⁴ According to their own account, their study was first presented in November 2017;⁵ here we refer to the version of their essay that appeared in the 2019, No. 1 issue of the journal *Kaifang shidai* 开放时代 (*Open Times*) in Guangzhou. All three researchers belong to the Department of Sociology of Peking University.

1.1 Questions on the Topic of Religion

In CFPS 2012 the first question of the religion module was: “To which religion do you belong?” 您属于什么宗教? Possible responses were: 1. Buddhism; 2. Daoism; 3. Islam; 4. Protestantism; 5. Catholicism; 6. No religion; 7. Other (please specify). CFPS 2014 formulated the first question as: “In what do you believe?” 您信什么? Possible responses were: 1. Buddha, Bodhisattva[s]; 2. Daoist gods and immortals 道教的神仙; 3. Allah 安拉; 4. The God of the Catholics 天主教的天主; 5. The God of the Protestants 基督教的上帝 [for mission historical reasons Catholics and Protestants in China use different names for “God”]; 6. Ancestors 祖先; 7. None of the above. A multiple answer was possible.⁶ As Lu and Zhang explain, CFPS 2014 did not, as in 2012, ask directly about religious affiliation but, since systematic identification with a religion is not very pronounced among the Chinese, it made the deities its focus, in order to come closer to the actual percentage of religious believers.⁷ The third round of questioning, CFPS 2016, returned to the 2012 manner of questions: “To which religion do you belong?” In addition, the frequency of religious practice – worship/prayer (*zuo libai* 做礼拜) for Protestants, Catholics and Muslims, as well as incense offerings or Buddha worship for the other religions – was also asked (unfortunately the exact formulation of the question and possible answers is not mentioned in the essay). This question on the frequency of religious practice was also addressed to those who had previously stated that they were not affiliated to any religion. Since the CFPS always survey approximately the same households and persons over the years, it is possible to observe how they react to changes in the questions.⁸

1.2 Open, Hidden, Nominal and Committed Believers

In order to get a better idea of the real number of Protestants in China, the researchers Lu, Wu and Zhang distinguish four types on the basis of the CFPS data: “open Protestants” (*gongkai de jidutu* 公开的基督徒) and “hidden Protestants” (*yinzang de jidutu* 隐藏的基督徒), “nominal Protestants” (*mingyi de jidutu* 名义的基督徒) and “committed [Chinese literally: ‘pious’] Protestants” (*qiancheng de jidutu* 虔诚的基督徒). Although the authors

4 Lu Yunfeng – Wu Yue – Zhang Chunni 2019.

5 *Ibid*, p. 175.

6 *Ibid*, p. 168.

7 Lu Yunfeng – Zhang Chunni 2016, pp. 38 and 46; cf. Wenzel-Teuber 2017, p. 27.

8 Lu Yunfeng – Wu Yue – Zhang Chunni 2019, p. 168.

make this distinction in full only for the Protestants, because that is what they focus on, they also give figures for the other religions which are of interest to us here.

1.2.1 “Open” Protestants and Adherents of Other Religions

With this expression the authors refer to those who openly indicated in the three rounds of questioning that they adhere to Protestantism (or one of the other religions) (CFPS 2012 and CFPS 2016) or believe in the “Protestant God” (or the subject of believe of one of the other religions) (CFPS 2014). They summarize the results in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of Religious Belief among the Adult Population of China (%)

	2012	2014	2016
Buddhism	6.93	15.82	8.96
Daoism	0.33	0.74	0.45
Islam	0.38	0.38	0.50
Protestantism	1.78	2.05	2.06
Catholicism	0.35	0.32	0.46
Other	0.10	\	0.35
Ancestor veneration	\	5.85	\
Multiple beliefs	\	0.74	0.05
No religious faith	90.13	74.10	87.17
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00
Sampling size	30,859	29,572	30,550

Note: The data for 2012, 2014 and 2016 are from the nationwide overall sample of CFPS, they are already weighted.

Source: Lu Yunfeng – Wu Yue – Zhang Chunni 2019, p. 170, Table 1.

The researchers calculate the number of “open Protestants” from the percentage of 2.06% of CFPS 2016, based on the total population according to the 2015 micro-census and assuming that the distribution of faith among minors is the same as among adults. They conclude that “in 2016 the number of ‘open Protestants’ in China was 28.29 million.”⁹

Moreover, Lu Yunfeng pointed out as early as 2014 that the proportion of Buddhists and Muslims in the total population as determined by the CFPS surveys is probably too low, since Xinjiang, Tibet, Qinghai, Inner Mongolia and Ningxia are excluded from the survey, and they are regions in which a particularly large number of Buddhists and Muslims live.¹⁰ Conversely, the fact that in these regions there are usually fewer Christians in percentage terms than in other parts of the country could increase the proportion of Christians in the data retrieved by CFPS.¹¹

9 Lu Yunfeng – Wu Yue – Zhang Chunni 2019, p. 170. According to the 2015 micro-census, the total population of the PR China was around 1,373.49 million; see *ibid.*, p. 178, note 23.

10 Lu Yunfeng 2014, pp. 12-14; cf. Wenzel-Teuber 2015, p. 22.

11 Lu Yunfeng – Wu Yue – Zhang Chunni 2019, p. 176.

1.2.2 “Hidden” Protestants – With a Glance at the Data on the Other Religions

In order to also “track down” those Protestants who may not be willing to openly identify themselves as Protestants in surveys (especially members of unregistered house churches), the researchers use the following two methods:

First, the question of the frequency of religious practice. In the CFPS 2016 survey, all participants were asked about their religious practice – even those who in the same survey stated that they did not belong to any religion. The researchers based their considerations on the assumption that “in general, Protestant Christians must attend worship services every week.” If a CFPS participant in the 2016 survey stated on the one hand that he had no religion and on the other hand admitted to attending worship services at least two or three times a month, the researchers assumed that he was a “hidden Protestant.” 87.17% of CFPS 2016 respondents said they did not belong to any religion, but 0.41% of those 87.17% said they attended a worship service at least two to three times a month or more. Based on the above premise, Lu, Wu and Zhang calculated a rate of 0.36% “hidden Protestants” among all respondents.¹²

Secondly, the change in questioning from CFPS 2014 to CFPS 2016. As Lu, Wu and Zhang write, it was assumed that while some Protestants might not want to openly declare their religious affiliation, hardly any Protestant would deny his faith in God. So they filtered out those who in 2016 had declared themselves to be without religion, but who in 2014 had stated their belief in the Protestant God. The researchers assumed that the people in this group – 0.49% of those surveyed in 2016 – were also “hidden Protestants.”¹³

Through the same method, suspected “hidden believers” of the other religions could be found. Of those who said in 2016 they had no religion, 7.21% said in 2014 they believed in Buddha or Bodhisattvas, 0.48% in Daoist gods and immortals, 0.03% in Allah and 0.08% in the Catholic God (see Table 2).¹⁴

Table 2: Change in the Responses of the CFPS’s Tracked Subjects in the Surveys of 2014 and 2016 (%)

2014	2016	Buddhism	Daoism	Islam	Protestantism	Catholicism
N / 0	N	79.96	86.69	87.14	86.68	87.09
Y	Y	4.54	0.07	0.28	1.21	0.18
Y	N	7.21	0.48	0.03	0.49	0.08
N / 0	Y	4.48	0.42	0.22	0.86	0.28
Y	R	3.82	12.34	12.33	10.76	12.37

Note: N stands for no religious belief, Y stands for belief in a specific religion (CFPS 2016) or in the deity of the corresponding religion (CFPS 2014), 0 stands for no response, R means that a different religion was named than the religion [whose deity was] chosen in 2014. The data come from the nationwide overall sample of CFPS with the overall sample of the year 2016 as a basis; they are already weighted.

Source: Lu Yunfeng – Wu Yue – Zhang Chunni 2019, p. 173, Table 3.

12 Lu Yunfeng – Wu Yue – Zhang Chunni 2019, pp. 171-172. However, the authors pointed out that among the “hidden Protestants” identified in this way there could also be Catholics, Orthodox or Mormons (*ibid.*)

13 *Ibid.*, p. 172.

14 *Ibid.*

To find the total number of “hidden Protestants,” the three researchers added the 0.36% “hidden Protestants” identified by their religious practice and the 0.49% “hidden Protestants” identified as a result of the change in the question, which (after deducting a few overlaps) resulted in a total of 0.85% of CFPS 2016 respondents. Extrapolated to the total population, they came to an estimated 11.67 million “hidden Protestants” in China.¹⁵

1.2.3 “Nominal” Protestants and Adherents of Other Religions

Lu, Wu and Zhang define as “nominal Protestants” those participants in the CFPS 2016 survey who had stated in at least one of the three rounds of questioning that they adhered to Protestantism (CFPS 2012, CFPS 2016) or believed in the Protestant God (CFPS 2014).¹⁶ The authors also give corresponding data for the four other major religions (see Table 3).

Table 3: Responses of the Tracked Subjects of CFPS 2016 to the Question about Their Faith in the Three Rounds of Questioning (%)

	Specified the faith in question at least once	Specified the same faith unchanged in all three surveys
Buddhism	17.7	1.89
Daoism	1.27	0.02
Islam	0.55	0.23
Protestantism	2.89	0.92
Catholicism	0.69	0.15

Note: The nationwide overall sample of CFPS 2016 was taken as a basis, the data are already weighted.

Source: Lu Yunfeng – Wu Yue – Zhang Chunni 2019, p. 173, Table 4.

As Table 3 shows, 2.89% of the respondents surveyed declared a Protestant faith in at least one of the three rounds of questioning. From this percentage of 2.89%, Lu, Wu and Zhang extrapolate an estimated number of around 39.69 million “nominal Protestants” in China.¹⁷

1.2.4 “Committed Protestants” and the Phenomenon of “Faith without Practice” in All Five Religions

The three researchers regarded religious practice as the criterion for a “committed Protestant”: Those among the “nominal Protestants” who had also stated that they practised [i.e. participated in worship services] at least two or three times a month, were considered to be “committed Protestants.” They amounted to 1.54% of the interviewees, which, extrapolated to the total population, corresponds to 21.15 million people.¹⁸

¹⁵ Lu Yunfeng – Wu Yue – Zhang Chunni 2019, p. 172.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

As Lu, Wu and Zhang report, the phenomenon “faith without practice” was found in all the religions. The CFPS 2016 survey showed that a large percentage of those who described themselves as belonging to a particular religion also stated that they never participated in religious activities. In Catholicism this phenomenon was the most pronounced: 45.1% of those who described themselves as Catholics stated that they never participated in religious activities. That was followed by Islam with 43.3%, Protestantism with 34.0%, Buddhism with 27.3% and Daoism with 23.3% self-declared adherents who stated that they never participated in religious activities. The authors suspected that in this group of people, religious identity might have been passed on by the family from one generation to the next and been taken over from the parents, while the respondents themselves no longer showed any commitment or participation. However, since the CFPS does not ask about the faith of the parents, proof is still pending, the authors say.¹⁹

1.3 So How Many Protestants Are There Really?

To provide an answer to this question, the authors present their results in the following table:

Table 4: Estimates of the Number of Protestants in China

	Method of Estimation	Percentage	Scale (Million)
Estimate 1	Open Protestants	2.06	28.29
Estimate 2	Hidden Protestants	0.85	11.67
Estimate 3	Nominal Protestants	2.89	39.69
Estimate 4	Committed Protestants	1.54	21.15
Estimate 5	Open + hidden Protestants	2.91	39.97

Source: Lu Yunfeng – Wu Yue – Zhang Chunni 2019, p. 174, Table 5.

Estimate 1 – “open Protestants”: Those who were willing to openly declare their affiliation to Protestantism in CFPS 2016. In the opinion of the authors, these can be members of the “Three-Self Churches” as well as of the “house churches.”²⁰ The authors point out that also in many other, older studies the proportion of respondents who openly described themselves as Protestants was around 2%.²¹

19 Lu Yunfeng – Wu Yue – Zhang Chunni 2019, pp. 173-174. – This assumption seems plausible, since a large number of Catholics comes from families that have been Catholic for generations and, in the case of Muslims, religious identity is also very strongly connected with ethnic-family origin, while – due to the rapid growth of congregations in recent decades – many Protestants are believers of the first or second generation.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 174.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 170. The authors refer, among others, to the surveys of the Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS, 中国综合社会调查) (latest 2015: 2.13%); the World Value Service (WVS, 世界价值观调查) (latest 2012: 2.61%) and the household survey conducted in 2008/2009 and published in 2010 by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences CASS (1.8%); see *ibid.*, p. 171, Figure 1, legend. At this point the authors also cite the estimate of the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life (PFRPL, Washington DC) (2011: 4.3%). On the CASS household survey, see Malek 2011, pp. 32-33 and 51-53, and Wenzel-Teuber 2012, pp. 30-32. On the PFRPL Christianity Report of 2011, see Wenzel-Teuber 2013, pp. 21; it estimated 4.3% (58.04 million) Protestants and 0.7% (9 million) Catholics in Mainland China.

Estimate 2 – “hidden Protestants”: Those who stated in CFPS 2016 that they did not belong to any religion but at the same time said they practiced regularly, or had stated in CFPS 2014 that they believed in the Protestant God. The authors suspect that they are very likely members of house churches.²²

Estimate 3 – “nominal Protestants”: These are the participants interviewed within CFPS 2016 who had answered the question about the Protestant faith positively in at least one of the three rounds of interviews.

Estimate 4 – “committed Protestants”: These are the participants who stated in CFPS 2016 that they adhered to Protestantism and practiced regularly.

Estimate 5 – addition of the “open” and “hidden” Protestants, that is of Estimates 1 and 2. The result is 2.9%; extrapolated 39.97 million.

Estimate 3 and Estimate 5 are almost identical. On the basis of these two estimates “we can say, although not with the greatest precision, that in 2016 there were about 40 million Protestants in China.”²³

1.4 “Figures Controversy,” Self-Declared Concern and Reception of the Study

Lu Yunfeng, Wu Yue and Zhang Chunni speak at the beginning of their essay about the “figures controversy” (*shuzi zhi zheng* 数字之争, this term is in my opinion an allusion to the [Chinese] “Rites Controversy” of the early China Mission of the Jesuits), which has long prevailed in China in terms of the number of Protestants and which they want to put on a scientific, rational basis. They quote the following figures: According to government figures, there were 700,000 Protestants in China in 1949 (0.17% of the then population). According to “Document No. 19” of the Central Committee of the CPC of 1982, there were 3 million Protestants and 3 million Catholics. According to the State Council’s White Paper on freedom of religious belief of 1997 there were 10 million Protestants. The website of the central government spoke of 16 million Protestants in 2005, and the White Paper on freedom of religious belief of 2018 (State Council 2018) gives the number of 38 million Protestants. The authors compare these official figures with foreign estimates that are several times higher: about 80 million Christians in David Aikman’s book *Jesus in Beijing. How Christianity is Transforming China and Changing the Global Balance of Power* (Washington 2003) or 83.5 million Protestant Christians in an estimate of the [evangelical missionary organization] Asia Harvest of 2010. The authors also mention – as an unproven rumour that is circulating abroad – that Ye Xiaowen, director of the State Administration of Religious Affairs at the time, is reported to have said in 2006 at two internal meetings in the Institute for World Religions of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) that there are 130 million Christians in China.²⁴

22 Lu Yunfeng – Wu Yue – Zhang Chunni 2019, p. 174.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 175.

24 *Ibid.*, pp. 165-166. – According to the authors, the alleged statement by Ye Xiaowen was first published in 2008 by X. [Bob] Fu in “China’s Persecution of Protestant Christians during the Approach of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games,” China Aid Association, 2008. It has been in circulation for ten years and is widely quoted, but there is no evidence of it and according to participants at the meetings, Ye did not say that, according to the authors; *ibid.* p. 166 with note 12. [A text by Bob Fu with this title can be found here: www.cecc.gov/sites/chinacommission.house.

As reasons for these large differences in numbers, the authors mention first of all “differing statistical ranges”: They argue that government statistics were based on the figures reported by the “Three-Self Churches,” whereas foreign estimates try to include the independent house churches, and thus arrive at higher figures. According to the authors, different interests also play a role: Religious authorities prefer low numbers in order not to be seen as inefficient. Foreign missionary organizations in turn want to justify their work and hope for a Christianisation of China. The authors claim that the very high numbers of believers reported by some foreign organisations have led to an increased vigilance within China against the growth of Protestant Christianity. The authors point to representatives of the theory that an excessive growth of Protestantism in the countryside has destroyed the balance of China’s “religious ecology” (*zongjiao shengtai* 宗教生态). This theory regards Protestant Christianity as a “threat,” it is quite widespread in Mainland China, the authors write.²⁵

The results of the study on the number of Protestants in China, carried out by Lu Yunfeng, Wu Yue and Zhang Chunni on the basis of CFPS data, were widely received. As mentioned above, the authors stated that they had already presented their findings at a meeting in November 2017. In March 2018 Lu Yunfeng presented the study at the conference “Christianity in China. Impact, Interaction and Inculturation” at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, where according to a conference report he gave the number of 38 million Protestants,²⁶ and in October 2018 at the “Forum for Research into Christianity 2018” organised by the CASS.²⁷

The White Paper “China’s Policies and Practices on Protecting Freedom of Religious Belief,” published by the State Council on 3 April 2018, also mentions the number of 38 million Protestants in China (State Council 2018) – which amounts to a doubling of the numbers officially reported by the state until then.²⁸ It is reasonable to assume that the White Paper adopted the findings of the CFPS study presented here. The authors Lu, Wu and Zhang indirectly support this assumption.²⁹ A report in *Fuyin shibao* (*Gospel Times*) states directly that the White Paper incorporated the estimate [presented by Lu Yunfeng].³⁰

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- gov/files/documents/hearings/2008/CECC%20Hearing%20Testimony%20-%20Xiqiu%20Bob%20Fu%20-%206.18.08.pdf. There it says that Ye Xiaowen had spoken of 130 million Christians, among them 20 million Catholics.]
- 25 Lu Yunfeng – Wu Yue – Zhang Chunni 2019, pp. 166-167. In this section the authors quote from essays by various other scholars. – The founder of the theory of religious ecology is Mou Zhongjian, professor of religious studies at the Minzu University of China. Mou calls for the promotion of traditional folk beliefs and the sinicization of Christianity as a means of preventing the loss of the ecological balance of religions. He argues: “Western hostile forces are trying to christianize China, our countermeasure is the sinicization of Christianity.” See Mou Zhongjian 2012, esp. pp. 8-10. On Mou’s theory see also Mohseni Kabir Bäckström 2019.
- 26 Cf. the conference report by Monica Romano in *La Gregoriana* XXIII, No. 53, pp. 24-26, online at https://issuu.com/unigregoriana/docs/lagregoriana53-eng_web/24.
- 27 “Kan Baoping mushi: Bu yao jujiao yu neidi jidutu shuliang zhenglun, yao jieli jianzao jiankang jiaohui” 2018.
- 28 In recent years, up to 2018, state sources usually put the number of Protestant Christians in China at 23.05 million – this was the result of a household survey conducted by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in 2008/2009 and published in 2010. See also Wenzel-Teuber 2018, p. 38.
- 29 They write: “If it is said that there is a connection between our research and the White Paper, then, from a chronological point of view, the reasonable assumption should be that our research results may have influenced the latter and not the other way round.” Lu Yunfeng – Wu Yue – Zhang Chunni 2019, pp. 175-176.
- 30 “Kan Baoping mushi: Bu yao jujiao yu neidi jidutu shuliang zhenglun, yao jieli jianzao jiankang jiaohui” 2018.

According to *The China Christian Daily*, at the above-mentioned CASS Forum on Christianity Studies 2018, some participants even spoke of a decline in the numbers of Protestant Christians. For example, a pastor from Shandong reported that in Shandong the number of Protestant Christians, at least in the “Three-Self Church,” was decreasing rather than increasing. As reasons for overestimates he cited the double counting of Protestants who had migrated from the countryside to the city, failure to remove the deceased from membership lists, baptised but not practising Christians and exaggeration of the figures due to social discrimination. According to *The China Christian Daily* the new figures from the CFPS survey triggered a debate among Chinese Protestants; many regarded them as manipulated by the government while some considered them worthwhile reflecting on.³¹

1.5 Our own Observations

In their essay, Lu Yunfeng, Wu Yue and Zhang Chunni several times give CFPS data on the other religions but without extrapolating it to the total population of China. In the following, the author of this “Statistical Update” (kwt) attempts to find out the number of believers of the other religions in China, by using the ratio indicated by Lu, Wu and Zhang for the Protestants of the percentage of people interviewed by CFPS to the total population on the CFPS percentage data of the other religions. Of course, this provisional procedure does not lay claim to scientific accuracy. The idea of this experiment is to get an indication of what the results of the CFPS might mean for the other religions and whether they appear plausible.

“Open” Religious Adherents (cf. Table 1)

“Open Protestants”: 2.06% of the CFPS 2016 sample, corresponding to 28.29 million people;

calculated analogously by kwt:

“Open” Buddhists: 8.96% of the sample, corresponding to 123.05 million people;

“Open” Daoists: 0.45% of the sample, corresponding to 6.18 million people;

“Open” Moslems: 0.5% of the sample, corresponding to 6.87 million people;

“Open” Catholics: 0.46% of the sample, corresponding to 6.32 million people.

“Nominal” Religious Adherents (cf. Table 3)

“Nominal Protestants”: 2.89% of the CFPS 2016 sample, corresponding to 39.69 million people;

calculated analogously by kwt:

“Nominal” Buddhists: 17.7% of the sample, corresponding to 243.08 million people;

“Nominal” Daoists: 1.27% of the sample, corresponding to 17.44 million people;

“Nominal” Muslims: 0.55% of the sample, corresponding to 7.55 million people;

“Nominal” Catholics: 0.69% of the sample, corresponding to 9.48 million people.

31 Zhang, Cindy – Ruth Wang 2019.

As shown above, the figure for Protestantism in the latest White Paper on freedom of religious belief (State Council 2018) corresponds to the number of “nominal Protestants” in the CFPS study by Lu, Wu and Zhang, or was probably even adopted from that study. There is no such correlation for the other religions. The number of “nominal” Buddhists alone, as calculated by analogy, exceeds by far the total number of 200 million for believers of all religions as stated in the White Paper. The extrapolated figure of 7.55 million “nominal” Muslims in China seems far too low – the White Paper speaks of over 20 million Muslims (corresponding to the population of the 10 ethnic groups considered to be Muslim). This is probably due to the fact that, as mentioned above, the areas of Xinjiang, Ningxia and Qinghai, which are dominated by Islamic ethnic groups, are not covered by the CFPS. For Catholicism, the White Paper’s figure of 6 million followers corresponds to the number of 6.32 million “open” Catholics calculated from the CFPS data – whereas, interestingly, the number of “nominal” Catholics of 9.48 million is close to the total number of 10 million Catholics (for official Church and underground Church combined) estimated by the Holy Spirit Study Centre of the Diocese of Hong Kong.

Whether Lu, Wu and Zhang did not extrapolate the number of adherents of the four other religions to the total population simply because they were mainly interested in Protestantism, or whether the data for the four other religions seemed less plausible to them, remains an open question.

Perhaps the results will become clearer in the future as those who design the CFPS survey continue to refine the religious belief question module. Lu, Wu and Zhang have already announced one change in their essay: the new CFPS 2018 questioning round again uses the question mode of CFPS 2014, “In what do you believe?”, but with the following modification: In 2014 different answers were provided for Protestants and Catholics – the “Protestant God” and the “Catholic God.” CFPS 2018 offered one clear answer for Chinese Christians of all denominations: “Yesu Jidu” 耶穌基督 (Jesus Christ).³² The result should be interesting.

2. Buddhism, Daoism and Folk Beliefs

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

A certain orientation for this largest sector of religious life in China is provided by surveys. In addition to the CFPS discussed above, the 2007 Chinese Spiritual Life Survey (CSLS)³³ should be mentioned; it arrived at the following numbers:

32 Lu Yunfeng – Wu Yue – Zhang Chunni 2019, p. 177.

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

- 185 million consider themselves 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.
- 173 million have exercised some Daoist practices or taken part in such, but these are difficult to distinguish from popular belief.



Xiahaimiao in the Hongkou district of Shanghai. It is registered as a Buddhist temple, but also houses a statue of the goddess Mazu, patron saint of seafarers, which is attributed to the popular religion. Photo: China-Zentrum Archives.

2.1 Buddhism

- 34,100 registered Buddhist sites for religious activities according to NRAA database 2020³⁴ (33,500 according to State Council 2018), of which:
 - 28,538 Han-Chinese Buddhism (28,000, State Council 2018)
 - 3,857 Tibetan Buddhism (3,800, State Council 2018)
 - 1,705 Theravada-Buddhism (1,700, State Council 2018)
- 222,000 Buddhist religious personnel (monks and nuns) recognized and registered with the authorities according to NRAA database 2020 (also State Council 2018), of whom:
 - 72,000 Han-Chinese Buddhism
 - 148,000 Tibetan Buddhism
 - 2,000 Theravada-Buddhism
- 41 Buddhist academies (State Council 2018)

34 NRAA database “Zongjiao huodong changsuo jiben xinxi” 宗教活动场所基本信息 (Basic Data on Sites for Religious Activities), www.sara.gov.cn/zjhdcjsjbx/index.jhtml, data retrieved on March 30, 2020. The figures are unchanged from the last access on February 27, 2018 (Wenzel-Teuber 2018, p. 34); in other words, the database has not been updated in the last two years. 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.

2.2 Daoism

- 8,349 registered Daoist sites for religious activities according to NRAA database 2020 (9,000 according to State Council 2018), of which:
 - 4,011 Quanzhen tradition
 - 4,338 Zhengyi tradition
- ca. 40,000 Daoist religious personnel (State Council 2018)
- 10 Daoist academies (State Council 2018)

3. Islam

In the multi-ethnic state of the People’s Republic of China, ten ethnic groups are considered Muslim. In the statistics presented by Chinese authorities and academics their population numbers are generally equated with that of the Muslims in China. According to the census of 2010, approximately 23 million people belong to the 10 ethnic groups rated as Muslim, that is 1.74% of the total population,³⁵ distributed as follows:

Table 5: Muslim Population according to Ethnicity

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

According to the White Paper (State Council 2018), “The 10 minority ethnic groups, the majority of whose population believe in Islam, total more than 20 million [...]” Furthermore, according to the White Paper, 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]

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

4. Protestantism

In point 1 above, the new results of the China Family Panel Studies on the number of Protestants in China have already been presented, which in all probability also influenced the new official figures on this. In the following, the figures from the working 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) as well as from the White Paper on freedom of religious belief (State Council 2018) are listed:

- 38 million believers (Gao Feng 2018 and State Council 2018)
- 60,000 churches (Gao Feng 2018 and State Council 2018)
- 14,000 professional clerics (pastors, teachers, presbyters) and 22,000 preachers (Gao Feng 2018)
- 57,000 religious personnel (State Council 2018)
- 22 theological seminars (Gao Feng 2018);
(21 institutes for religious education according to State Council 2018)

There is a surprisingly large discrepancy between the work report of the Protestant bodies and the White Paper of the State Council with regard to the number of clergy / religious personnel.

For the higher estimates of the number of Protestants in China by various organisations outside China, see point 1.4 above and note 21.

5. Catholic Church

The following figures regarding the Catholic Church in Mainland China in 2019 are based on data from the Holy Spirit Study Centre (HSSC) of the Diocese of Hong Kong,³⁶ which specialises in studies on the Catholic Church in Mainland China. Account is also taken of the information provided by the official Catholic governing bodies, specifically their working report presented in 2016 to the 9th National Assembly of Representatives of the Chinese Catholic Church (Ma-PA-BiCo 2016), and the White Paper on freedom of religious belief (State Council 2018). Other important sources are the Catholic newspaper *Xinde* 信德 (*Faith*) (*xdb*), based in Shijiazhuang (Hebei Province), and its website www.chinacatholic.org (*xdo*, other Web address: www.xinde.org) and the Faith Institute for Cultural Studies (FICS) that works under the same roof.

5.1 General Data

Faithful

- ca. 10 million total number of Catholics, including both the official part of the Church and the Catholics in the underground, according to the estimate of the HSSC.

36 I thank the Holy Spirit Study Centre for making available its figures for the Catholic Church in Mainland China (as of the end of 2019) quoted in the following.

- over 6 million number of Catholics according to the official Catholic governing bodies (Ma-PA-BiCo 2016).
- 6 million number of Catholics according to state data (State Council 2018).
- 40,000–50,000 adult baptisms annually,³⁷ without the number of baptised infants (HSSC).

Dioceses

- 146 (115 Dioceses and 31 other administrative regions) (according to HSSC, corresponding to the Catholic hierarchy as of 1950)
- 96 according to the official Church (HSSC)
- 98 according to state data (State Council 2018)

Bishops

- 100 (78 in office) (HSSC), of whom
 - 69 bishops in the official Church (62 in office) (HSSC)
 - 31 bishops in the underground Church (16 in office) (HSSC)

In the previous year the HSSC gave the number of bishops in the official church as 64 and bishops in the underground as 36. Since September 8 (publicly announced on September 22) 2018 all Chinese bishops are recognized by the Pope. About 40 dioceses have no bishop.

Priests

- 4,950 in total (the number of priests who refuse [the state required] registration is unknown) (HSSC)

Seminaries and Seminarians

- 6 major seminaries (theological seminaries) with a total of 370 seminarians (HSSC)
- 6 underground seminaries with a total of approx. 100 seminarians (HSSC)

This means that of the original 10 major seminaries in the official Church of Mainland China, *de facto* only six are still working (the same information can also be found in *xdb* 2019, No. 25, July 9, 2019), even if government agencies (e.g. State Council 2018) continue to quote their number as nine. According to the HSSC, the underground seminars are under severe pressure.

Sisters

- 4,630 in total, of whom
 - 3,270 in the official Church, in 87 congregations (HSSC)
 - 1,360 in the underground Church, in 40 congregations (HSSC)

³⁷ The HSSC also states that the number of deaths is not counted; in other words, the number of baptisms does not mean that the Church is growing by the same number of believers.

Churches

More than 6,000 churches and oratories (Ma-PA-BiCo 2016 and State Council 2018)

5.2 Baptisms

For the first time in more than ten years, the FICS did not publish statistics in 2020 for baptisms in 2019. From 2008 on, it had published statistics on baptisms in the dioceses of Mainland China at Easter every year, and since 2017 it published baptism statistics for the entire year. The last available statistics state the number of 48,365 baptisms for the year 2018.³⁸

In a statistic dated August 31, 2019, the **Diocese of Hong Kong** stated that the number of baptisms in the year was 5,686. 795 of those baptized were up to one year old, 1,791 were between one and seven years old and 3,100 were over seven years old. The diocese estimated the number of Catholics among local Hong Kong residents at 403,000, plus some 183,000 Filipino and Filipina Catholics and an estimated 34,000 other Catholic foreigners living in Hong Kong.³⁹

5.3 Priestly Ordinations

48 deacons were ordained priests in Mainland China in 2019 (see Table 6). This was by far the lowest number in recent years; the decline in priestly vocations is now reflected in the number of ordinations. In 2018 there were 75 ordinations; 97 in 2017; 61 in 2016; 59 in 2015; 78 in 2014; 66 in 2013; and 78 in 2012. The number is doubtless incomplete; there were probably additional priestly ordinations in the underground Church.



New priest Wang Zhibin in Bameng with his parents and little sister. Photo: *xdo*.

38 Cf. Wenzel-Teuber 2019, p. 24.

39 "Statistics of the Diocese of Hong Kong 2019-8-31," <https://catholic.org.hk/en/香港教區教務統計-2>.



In Nanjing, Wang Jun’s mother robes her son in the chasuble, and on the left is the father. Photo: xdo.



Map: d-maps.com/carte.php?num_car=27749&lang=de

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

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

Table 6: Priestly Ordinations in the Catholic Church in Mainland China in 2019

Province / Metropolis	Diocese	Number of Ordained	Date of Ordination	Ordaining Bishop*	Names of Those Ordained
BJ	Beijing	4	Aug. 24	Li Shan	Chen Julong 陈聚龙, Jia Nannan 贾男男, Pan Haijing 潘海静, Yan Xian'en 闫献恩
FJ	Minbei	1	Oct. 28	Zhan Silu (Mindong)	Zhang Qingsheng 张清生
	Mindong	1	Oct. 28	Zhan Silu	Chen Ming 陈铭
GS	Tianshui	1	Dec. 15	Han Jide (Pingliang)	Li Jiangan 李建刚
GD	Guangzhou	3	Nov. 30	Gan Junqiu	Huang Xiaokun 黄晓昆, Huo Tesi 霍特思, Zhang Shuanma 张拴(栓)马
	Meizhou	1	May 24	Liao Hongqing	Zheng Yongfeng 郑永烽
GX	Cath. Church of GX	2	May 3	Tan Yanquan	Yang Yi 杨艺, Zheng Lue 郑略 (both ethnic Zhuang)
GZ	Guiyang	3	Nov. 24	Xiao Zejiang	Liu Xueyang 刘学洋, Zhang Zihao 张梓浩, Zhao Jie 赵杰
Heb	Cangzhou	5	Jan. 25	Li Liangui	Dong Lichun 董立春, Jin Baode 金宝德, Wang Shengli 王胜利, Yang Wei 杨微(威), Yu Hailong 于海龙
	Handan	1	Feb. 22	Sun Jigen	Zhang Chongshuai 张宠帅
	Handan	5	May 31	Sun Jigen	Feng Gangyi 冯刚毅, Wang Yongle 王永乐, Wu Chong'ai 武宠爱, Zhang Chao 张超, Zhang Lifeng 张利锋
	Hengshui	3	March 25	Feng Xinmao	Duan Xiangyang 段向阳, Liu Xiangkuo 刘向阔, Wen Shengxing 温圣行
	Xingtai	2	Oct. 18	Ma Yinglin (Kunming)	Li Chunyu 李春雨, Xie Zhongchao 谢忠朝
	Zhaoxian	2	Aug. 22	Feng Xinmao (Hengshui)	Han Yanguang 韩彦光, Min Bohao 闵博豪
	NM	Bameng	1	May 31	Du Jiang
	Xuzhou	2	Dec. 12	Wang Renlei	Ou Zhengfang 欧正方, Zhu Zhengdao 朱正道
JL	Jilin	2	Feb. 22	Pei Junmin (Shenyang)	Feng Zhao 冯昭, Meng Xiaoliang 孟晓亮
JS	Nanjing	1	May 11	Lu Xinping	Wang Jun 王俊
SC	Leshan	1	Sept. 30	Lei Shiyin	Lei Ke 雷科
	Yibin	1	Nov. 30	Luo Xuegang	Shi Wenlong 师文龙
SN	Sanyuan	2	April 25	Han Yingjin	Li Yunfeng 李云峰, Lin Pingjun 林平军
	Sanyuan	2	Dec. 3	Han Yingjin	Ma Bo 马博, Zong Xuefan 宗学凡
SX	Jinzhong	1	Oct. 22	not given	Chen Jianwei 陈建伟
ZJ	Hangzhou	1	Dec. 5	Cao Xiangde	Chang Zhenguo 蔡振国
Total		48			

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

Sources (2019): chinacatholic.cn May 27; Oct. 8., 22; Dec. 14; chinacatholic.org April 26; June 1; Aug. 26; Dec. 2, 8, 18; knews.cc Feb. 22; xiaozhushou.org Nov. 26; Dec. 2; xinde.org Jan. 25; May 7, 14; June 3; Nov. 2; Dec. 4; http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_500cf6040102y8yn.html, accessed on April 1, 2020.

As the table shows, 8 of the 48 new priests of 2019 were not ordained by their local bishop, but by a bishop invited from another diocese. This number highlights the fact that many dioceses in China still have either no bishop or a bishop who cannot ordain (publicly) because he is working in the “underground.”

5.4 Bishops

Bishops Who Died in Mainland China in 2019

Jin Daoyuan 靳道远, Andrew (1929–2019), Changzhi (SX).

Li Side 李思德, Stephen (1926–2019), Tianjin.

Bishops Consecrated in Mainland China in 2019

Yao Shun 姚顺, Anthony (b. December 1965), bishop of Jining (NM), August 26.

Xu Hongwei 胥红伟, Stephen (b. January 16, 1975), co-adjutor bishop of Hanzhong (SN), August 28 [local ordinary from January 18, 2020].

Both ordinations had the agreement of the Pope and the civil authorities.



Bishop Stephen Xu Hongwei, one of the two bishops consecrated in 2019. Photo:xdo.

Partial Official Recognitions of Former Underground Bishops by the Authorities in 2019

Bishop Peter Jin Lugang 靳禄岗 of Nanyang (Henan), secretly consecrated as co-adjutor in 2007, appointed local ordinary by the Pope in 2010, on January 30, 2019 officially installed as co-adjutor bishop.

Bishop Peter Zhuang Jianjian 庄建坚 of Shantou (Guangdong), secretly consecrated bishop of Shantou in 2006, officially emeritus on January 22, 2019, i.e. recognized by the authorities as bishop emeritus. On December 12, 2018, Pope Francis had recognized Bishop Huang Bingzhang, who until then had been an illegitimate bishop from the ecclesial point of view, as the diocesan bishop of Shantou.

In both cases the Chinese authorities recognized the bishops concerned not in their original papally conferred function as diocesan bishops but only in subordinate functions (as co-adjutor bishop or bishop emeritus). In a third case the original (underground) Bishop of Mindong (Fujian), Guo Xijin 郭希锦, was at first willing at the request of the Pope to be downgraded as auxiliary bishop and to be recognized as such by the authorities. In mid-2019, however, due to the pressure of the authorities on his priests, he withdrew his application for recognition. At the end of 2019, according to the data of the HSSC, there were still 31 bishops in the underground Church appointed by the Pope (16 of them still in office) not recognized by the government.

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In memoriam

Rolf G. Tiedemann (1941–2019)

Dirk Kuhlmann

Translated by Jacqueline Mulberge SSps



Professor Rolf Tiedemann at the conference „I have called you by name.’ Contribution of Chinese Women to the Church“ in Sankt Augustin in September 2014.
Foto: China-Zentrum Archives.

In August 2019, the renowned historian and expert on the history of the Yihetuan uprising (Boxer Uprising) and Christianity in China, Professor Rolf Gerhard (Gary) Tiedemann passed away (in Chinese he published under the name Di Deman 狄德滿).

Tiedemann was born in a village in Holstein/Germany as the son of the farm worker Hinrich Tiedemann and his wife Hertha (née Kroos). There he grew up in very modest conditions which were exacerbated by the effects of the Second World War. It was nevertheless possible for

him to complete his schooling and take up a commercial apprenticeship in Hamburg. After moving to the USA, he worked in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, initially also in the commercial sector. During his military service there in the 1960s, Tiedemann had the opportunity to study Chinese history, which eventually led him to Great Britain, where he earned his master’s degree and spent most of his academic life. Here he also received his doctorate in 1991 with the study “Rural Unrest in North China 1868–1900: With Particular Reference to South Shandong” at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London. For more than twenty years until his retirement in 2006, Tiedemann was also a lecturer on the history of modern China at the SOAS.

Apart from a few, very brief encounters in the context of conferences, the author of this obituary, like many other researchers of Christianity in China, came close to Tiedemann mainly through his work. Here we are all especially indebted to him: The existence of this field of research is in no small part his merit. Through his publications, Tiedemann

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made a significant contribution to the development of the history of Christianity in China in its various facets from a marginal topic to a recognized and extremely lively field of study within Sinology and Chinese Studies. This was due substantially to five monographs which he published as author or editor, in particular the standard reference works *Reference Guide to Christian Missionary Societies in China: From the 16th to the 20th Century* (Armonk, N.Y. 2009) and the *Handbook of Christianity in China, Vol. Two: 1800–Present* (Leiden 2010) – half of the entries in the extensive *Handbook* (1050 pp.) were written by himself – as well as *The Boxers, China and the World* (Lanham, Md. et al. 2007, published together with Robert Bickers), *Huabei de baoli he konghuang: Yihetuan yundong qianxi jidujiao chuanbo he shehui chongtu* 华北的暴力和恐慌: 义和团运动前夕基督教传播和社会冲突 (Violence and Fear in North China: Christian Mission and Social Conflicts on the Eve of the Yihetuan-Uprising) (Nanjing 2011) and *Xiwen Yihetuan wenxian ziliao huibian* 西文义和团文献资料汇编 (Bibliography of Documents and Materials on the Yihetuan in Western Language) (Jinan 2016).

Early on Tiedemann focused on Christian mission as an important factor in understanding recent Chinese history. This became clear already in his first published article: “A Short Note on the Archives of the London Missionary Society,” in: *Ch’ing-shih wen-t’i* 3 (November 1976) 5, pp. 86-90, highlighted the value of mission archives as sources of Sinological research. In 61 articles, which appeared in journals and anthologies, Tiedemann analysed the historical development of Christianity as a religion in China from different perspectives, including that of its indigenisation and contextualisation, especially in rural China. In his observations Tiedemann evaluated with a proven eye for detail in particular interaction and conflicts between missionaries, Christian and non-Christian population and the social elite of the Qing Empire, e.g., in: “Christianity in a Violent Environment: The North China Plain on the Eve of the Boxer Uprising,” in: Jeroom Heyndrickx C.I.C.M. (ed.), *Historiography of the Chinese Catholic Church: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Louvain 1994), pp. 138-144.

In addition to various local historical contexts, his research took into account a broad spectrum of Christian denominations – Catholic, Protestant and the Pentecostal movement – as shown in his articles “Yihetuanmin yu tianzhujiaotu zai Huabei de wuzhuang chongtu” 义和团民与天主教徒在华北的武装冲突 (Armed Clashes between Boxers and Catholics in North China), in: *Lishi yanjiu* 2002, No. 5, pp. 79-93; “Protestant ‘Missionary Cases’ (*jiao’an*) in Shandong Province, 1860–1900,” in: *Ching Feng*, New Series 8 (2007) 1-2, pp. 153-195; and “The Origins and Organizational Developments of the Pentecostal Missionary Enterprise in China,” in: *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 14 (2011) 1, pp. 108-146.

Tiedemann never regarded the history of Christianity in China as a completed field of research but always provided new impulses for its further differentiation: Not only did he point out the gaps in research, he also pioneered work to close them. In his own studies he made the change from a missionary-centred perspective to a focus on the Chinese Christians, and then finally to address within this group the specific topic of the active role of women in the history of China’s Catholic Church. These women, especially in the 18th to early 19th century, were very much present as catechists, preachers, etc., until as a

result of the Synod of Sichuan (1810) western mission societies endeavoured to contain and repress their influence. Tiedemann sketched that process in “Controlling the Virgins: Female Propagators of the Faith and the Catholic Hierarchy in China,” in: *Women’s History Review* 17 (September 2008) 4, pp. 501-520, and in “Chinese Female Propagators of the Faith in Modern China: The Tortuous Transition from the ‘Institute of Virgins’ to Diocesan Religious Congregations,” published in Piotr Adamek, S.V.D. – Sonja Huang Mei Tin (eds.), *The Contribution of Chinese Women to the Church. Proceedings of the Conference ‘I Have Called You by Name,’ September 25–26, 2014, Sankt Augustin (Germany)* (Sankt Augustin 2019), pp. 145-175, – this article was his contribution to the conference on the role of women in the Chinese Churches organized by the Institute Monumenta Serica and the China-Zentrum with the collaboration of the Philosophical-Theological Faculty S.V.D. Sankt Augustin. As a panellist there at the concluding round table, he once again presented perspectives for future research.

As an author, Rolf G. Tiedemann time and again contributed in-depth articles to the publications of the China-Zentrum and the Monumenta Serica Institute over many years: Thus he published in *China heute* 31 (2012) 1, pp. 47-56, the German translation of: “Foreign Missionaries, Chinese Christians and the 1911 Revolution,” *Tripod* 31 (2011) 162, pp. 12-34. In the different publications of the Institute Monumenta Serica we find the following articles by Tiedemann: “Christianity and Chinese ‘Heterodox Sects’: Mass Conversion and Syncretism in Shandong Province in the Early Eighteenth Century,” in: *Monumenta Serica* 44 (1996), pp. 339-382; “Missionarischer Einzelgänger oder Visionär? Die Missionsmethode Gützlaffs,” in: Thoralf Klein – Reinhard Zöllner (eds.), *Karl Gützlaff (1803–1851) und das Christentum in Ostasien: Ein Missionar zwischen den Kulturen* (Nettetal 2005), pp. 193-231; “The Papacy, Foreign Missionaries, and Chinese Catholics. Conflict and Accommodation between *Maximum Illud* and *Ad Sinarum Gentem*,” in: Barbara Hoster – Dirk Kuhlmann – Zbigniew Wesołowski S.V.D. (eds.), *Rooted in Hope: China – Religion – Christianity / In der Hoffnung verwurzelt: China – Religion – Christentum / Festschrift in Honor of Roman Malek S.V.D. on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday* (Abingdon, Oxon – New York 2017), Vol. 1, pp. 383-410. Tiedemann was also willing to support the works of other authors and so wrote, for instance, the article “The Mission Political Context in South Shantung on the Eve of the Boxer Uprising in China” as an epilogue to Stephan Puhl’s *Georg M. Stenz SVD (1869–1928): Chinamissionar im Kaiserreich und in der Republik* (Nettetal 1994), pp. 275-312.

Just as important as his publishing activity were Tiedemann’s many years of teaching, especially as a professor at SOAS, during which he was able to unfold his great gift as a teacher and mentor. Tiedemann’s publications show that he saw teaching itself as the focus of his work. His monographs all appeared only after his retirement, when he had more time to write. The exchange with students was obviously so important to him that he explicitly mentions this aspect in his autobiography (<https://rgtiedemann.com/2017/04/15/min-modersprak/>).

Numerous condolences from pupils and other companions of Tiedemann confirm this. They testify that contacts with Tiedemann were often lasting encounters in which he opened up new research paths for his interlocutors with detailed knowledge of the sub-

ject and the corresponding literature. Although he was already marked by illness during his last years, Tiedemann did not allow it to deter him from sharing and passing on his knowledge to others. After his retirement from SOAS, he taught at Chinese universities, including Shanghai University (2008), Central China Normal University, Wuhan (2010) and from 2012 at Shandong University, Jinan. Together with Professor Lu Yao 路遙, the doyen of Yihetuan studies in the People's Republic of China and director of the Center for the Study of the Yihetuan Movement and the Society of Modern China, as well as with Professor Liu Jiafeng 刘家峰 he continued the critical evaluation of this significant field to date – not least as an element in the interpretation of recent Chinese history as the history of an evolving revolutionary movement.

The death of Rolf G. Tiedemann in 2019 came in a year that dealt several harsh blows to research into the history of Christianity in China with the deaths of Daniel H. Bays (1942–2019) and Roman Malek S.V.D. (1951–2019), with whom he also had a close friendship. Another great scholar has passed away, for Tiedemann's work is by no means merely a "voice from the margins," as he, in his own modesty, noted in his autobiography: it will continue to support, accompany and inspire prospective as well as established researchers in this field on their own pathways.

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