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## A Perpetual Migrant Church? 125 Years of Orthodox Mission in Taiwan

Piotr Adamek

Translated by Jacqueline Mulberge SSPS

“You are sent by the Council to Formosa not so much for the Christians, of whom there are very few, but precisely for the evangelisation of the pagans”<sup>1</sup> – this programmatic instruction of the great Orthodox missionary, St. Nikolaj of Japan (Ivan Dmitrievič Kasatkin, 1836–1912),<sup>2</sup> to the first permanent priest in Taiwan, Tit Kosiyama, could hardly be realised in the last more than 100 years. Due to the lack of missionaries, the Orthodox Church has remained a migrant church throughout Taiwan’s turbulent history. The 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Orthodox mission in Taiwan is an opportunity to look back at its history and its present situation.

### Research and Prehistory

The history of the Orthodox Church in Taiwan is still poorly researched. No detailed publications on this subject could be found.<sup>3</sup> Brief accounts of Taiwanese Orthodox mission history have been published on only a few websites in Chinese, English or Russian.<sup>4</sup> Some information on the beginnings of the mission can be found in the diaries of the holy Bishop Nikolaj of Japan<sup>5</sup> and in the bulletin of the Orthodox Church in Japan, *Seikyō jihō* 政教時報.<sup>6</sup> The life of the Orthodox faithful in Taiwan in the post-war period was briefly

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1 Nakamura 2004, Vol. 5, p. 814 (Dec. 6, 1911).

2 Nikolaj Kasatkin was born in 1836 near Smolensk in western Russia. In 1860 he became a monk and also received priestly ordination in the same year. He was appointed priest of the church at the Russian consulate in Hakodate (Japan), where he came in 1861 and learned the Japanese language and culture. At his request, the Russian spiritual mission in Japan was opened in 1870 and he himself was ordained bishop in 1880. Through his active missionary work, over 200 Orthodox parishes with over 18,000 believers were established in Japan by 1890 (cf. [www.pravoslavie.ru/orthodoxchurches/39675.htm](http://www.pravoslavie.ru/orthodoxchurches/39675.htm)).

3 In an unpublished master’s thesis of 2005, Semen Eryšev (Семён Ерышев) ventured the only presentation to date of the Japanese and Russian periods of the Orthodox mission in Taiwan (Eryšev 2005). A Japanese article about the beginnings of the mission in Taiwan could unfortunately not be consulted by the author (Tsukamoto 2005). After the publication in German the author received a newly issued interesting contribution on the topic, the material of which could, however, no longer be processed in the article (Chiang 2020).

4 [www.orthodoxchurch.tw](http://www.orthodoxchurch.tw); [www.orthodoxwiki.org/Orthodoxy\\_in\\_Taiwan](http://www.orthodoxwiki.org/Orthodoxy_in_Taiwan); [www.zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/台灣東正教](http://www.zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/台灣東正教); [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern\\_Orthodoxy\\_in\\_Taiwan](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Orthodoxy_in_Taiwan); und Maksimov 2014.

5 Nakamura 2004, Vols. 1-5.

6 The issues Nos. 1-107 (1899–1903) of the bulletin can be accessed at [www.chikazumi.cc.osaka-kyoiku.ac.jp/01/](http://www.chikazumi.cc.osaka-kyoiku.ac.jp/01/).

outlined in the notes of the journalist Gleb Rar (1922–2006), who lived in Taiwan for three years.<sup>7</sup> For information on the development in the last two decades and the current situation of the parishes of the Orthodox Church in Taiwan, among others, research can be done and followed up on their own websites.<sup>8</sup>

There is no evidence of a possible presence of the Eastern Church in Taiwan before the 19th century. The Orthodox Church points to the legendary missionary work of St. Thomas the Apostle in China<sup>9</sup> and to the documented “Nestorian” presence in Quanzhou in the neighbouring province of Fujian.<sup>10</sup> Its possible impact on Taiwan, however, is highly questionable.

Even if “Ilha Formosa” had been known to the Portuguese since 1517 at the latest, this knowledge of distant Taiwan was for a long time very limited in Orthodox countries.<sup>11</sup> The first brief mention of Taiwan in Russian literature is attributed to the Moldovan diplomat Nikolaus Milescu Spatharius (1636–1708), who went to Peking in 1675 as envoy of the Russian Tsar.<sup>12</sup> The Russian Orthodox Peking Mission, established in 1715, showed little interest in Taiwan. The well-known Orthodox missionary in Peking, Hyacinth Bitschurin (1777–1853), makes only three brief remarks about Taiwan in his *Statistical Description of the Chinese Empire*.<sup>13</sup> The first documented encounter of Orthodox Russians (including the son of a priest)<sup>14</sup> with the Taiwanese population took place on August 16, 1771, when a ship with Siberian rebel exiles under the command of Moritz Benjowski, fleeing from Kamchatka, anchored near Hualian in eastern Taiwan.<sup>15</sup> However, this rather unfortunate encounter, which also claimed lives on both sides, had no significance for the Orthodox mission in Taiwan.

## Japanese Mission

The actual Orthodox mission began in 1895, when China had to cede Taiwan to Japan after the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895) and the Treaty of Shimonoseki. Many Japanese soldiers, engineers and civil servants were sent to Taiwan, which was declared a “model colony,” among them several Orthodox believers who remained in contact with St. Nikolaj of Japan – the founder and bishop of the Japanese Orthodox Church. Nikolaj participated from the beginning in the life of the community that was being established in Taiwan and their families who remained in Japan. He noted in his diaries meetings with soldiers fighting in Taiwan and their Orthodox parents,<sup>16</sup> and prayed and celebrated liturgies for those

7 Rar 2011.

8 [www.orthodox.cn](http://www.orthodox.cn); [www.theological.asia](http://www.theological.asia); [www.orthodoxchurch.com.tw](http://www.orthodoxchurch.com.tw); [www.orthodoxchurch.tw](http://www.orthodoxchurch.tw).

9 Cf. [www.orthodoxchurch.tw](http://www.orthodoxchurch.tw)/台灣教會/台灣基督正教會簡史.

10 On this see Lieu 2006, pp. 277–291.

11 For more on the history of Russian knowledge of Taiwan see: Golovačov 2018, pp. 16–60.

12 Spafarij 1882, p. 154.

13 Bičurin 2002, pp. 73, 177, 355.

14 [www.orthodoxchurch.tw](http://www.orthodoxchurch.tw)/台灣教會/台灣基督正教會簡史.

15 Benyowsky 1790, pp. 23–65.

16 Nakamura 2004, Vol. 3, p. 209 (Nov. 24, 1895), p. 213 (Dec. 3, 1895).

who had died there.<sup>17</sup> Already in the first year, a festive Orthodox Christmas was celebrated in Taiwan, prepared and publicly proclaimed by Jakov Komabara and Mark Oogava, among others. Taiwanese non-Christians were also invited. About forty people took part in the prayer and the banquet that followed. When the news reached Bishop Nikolaj, he wrote in his diary: “We should send missionaries to Korea and Formosa. But whom? They will be found [...]”<sup>18</sup>

The Orthodox faithful in Taiwan gathered for prayer,<sup>19</sup> were sent icons and Orthodox books by Bishop Nikolaj<sup>20</sup> and asked for a missionary, but one could not be found at first.<sup>21</sup> Also “many of the locals became zealous Christians.”<sup>22</sup> In 1898, a catechist, Jakov Adaci, declared himself willing to go to Taiwan as a missionary, but was not sent as he was considered unsuitable.<sup>23</sup> In his letter in 1900, the former catechist Jakov Macudaira Niva, who was in charge of a hospital in Taiwan, asked on behalf of the approx. 15 believers for a catechist to preach the faith and a priest for the sacraments. He repeated his request several times and also sent a petition to the Council of the Orthodox Church in Japan.<sup>24</sup> In accordance with the decision of the Council in Tokyo, a Christ the Redeemer parish was established on September 4, 1901 and Fr. Simeon Yukawa Kintarō 湯川金太郎 (1851–1934) was sent as the first Orthodox priest to visit Taiwan for one month.<sup>25</sup> After his return, he told of an Orthodox parish of 29 believers in Taihoku (Taipei) who participated in the liturgy he celebrated. Fr. Yukawa helped to solve some practical issues of the parish, such as e.g. the place of prayer, the custodian of the church books and the appointment of a contact person. He also went to other cities in Taiwan to meet the believers there, such as Moisej Asano, who served as a soldier in Unrin (Yunlin 雲林). According to Fr. Yukawa, there was no need to send a catechist to Taiwan for the time being, as the Japanese there often moved to different places and learning the local language was indispensable for preaching to the locals. Since there was at first no such “permanent catechist who would sacrifice his whole life for evangelisation on Formosa,” Bishop Nikolaj decided for the time being to send a priest to Taiwan once a year.<sup>26</sup>

In the following ten years, everything probably went according to that pattern, even if one can read in St. Nikolaj’s diaries of only one visit by Fr. Yukawa to Taiwan in October 1903, where he once again held a liturgy with 44 faithful and which was also reported in

17 Nakamura 2004, Vol. 3, p. 220 (Dec. 15, 1895), p. 274 (March 14, 1896).

18 Nakamura 2004, Vol. 3, p. 242 (Jan. 24, 1896).

19 Nakamura 2004, Vol. 3, p. 292 (April 19, 1896).

20 Nakamura 2004, Vol. 3, p. 377 (Sept. 29, 1896).

21 Nakamura 2004, Vol. 3, p. 406 (Nov. 20, 1896).

22 Nakamura 2004, Vol. 3, p. 420 (Dec. 16, 1896).

23 Nakamura 2004, Vol. 3, p. 696 (April 13, 1898).

24 Nakamura 2004, Vol. 4, pp. 258-259 (May 29, 1900); p. 449 (May 14, 1901); p. 469 (June 20, 1901). Jakov Macudaira Niva is described as a very controversial person by St. Nicolaj. Later on, in 1903, he fled Taiwan because of debts. Nakamura 2004, Vol. 4, pp. 897-898 (Dec. 5, 1903).

25 Nakamura 2004, Vol. 4, pp. 507-508 (Aug. 25, 1901); p. 512 (Sept. 2, 1901). Fr. Yukawa (sometimes called Okava in St. Nikolaj’s memoirs) was born in Edo (now Tokyo) into a Samurai family. In 1876 he learned about the Orthodox faith and was baptized a year later. He worked as a catechist until 1887, when he was ordained a priest and assigned as a pastor in Tokyo. Cf. his biography: [www.drevo-info.ru/articles/13676985.html](http://www.drevo-info.ru/articles/13676985.html).

26 Nakamura 2004, Vol. 4, pp. 538-540 (Oct. 16, 1901).

the local press. Among others, the former catechist Grigorij Macuyama and church singer Mark Odadzima, who had found their way back to the church in Taiwan, took part in the liturgy. Seven people were baptised.<sup>27</sup> After 1903, no news from Taiwan is noted in the diary for several years, probably due to the difficult situation of the Orthodox mission in Japan during the time of the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905), when many Orthodox Japanese were suspected of being Russian spies.<sup>28</sup> Every year, the Orthodox faithful of Taiwan asked for a priest and a catechist.<sup>29</sup> In 1902, a young 20-year-old Japanese catechist, Lin Takahasi, had offered himself several times for the mission to Taiwan, but Bishop Nikolaj had not allowed it.<sup>30</sup> In 1903, they considered sending Nikolaj Takagi – a catechist from Ionako – to the Taiwanese mission. But Bishop Nikolaj had to refuse this too, as there was no replacement for him.<sup>31</sup> It was not until the Council in July 1911, attended by priests, catechists and church representatives, that a missionary for Taiwan was appointed – Tit Kosiyama.<sup>32</sup> He was a catechist and led the Orthodox Youth Association in Tokyo. He was ordained priest already on August 13, 1911,<sup>33</sup> received an antimension<sup>34</sup> and went to Taiwan as the first permanent priest. However, the choice of Fr. Tit Kosiyama soon proved problematic. He was able to open a second parish (Transfiguration of the Lord) in Taizhong,<sup>35</sup> but was very passive in preaching and too concerned about the finances of the mission. Already in December 1911, he went back to Japan against the bishop's request. After a long discussion with Bishop Nikolaj, he was asked to make a decision: either to become more involved in spreading the faith or to stay in Japan.<sup>36</sup>

The further development of the Japanese Orthodox mission in Taiwan is only sparsely reported. Bishop Nikolaj, who had greatly promoted the Taiwanese mission, died in February 1912. His successor, Metropolitan Sergius (Georgij Alekseevič Tihomirov, 1871–1945), had to solve numerous acute problems of the young Japanese Church after the communist October Revolution of 1917 and the interruption of support from Russia. According to the website of the Orthodox Church in Taiwan, however, the development of the community continued to be stable during the Japanese period.<sup>37</sup> In the years 1911–1914, Fr. Tit Kosiyama and Fr. Antonij Takai Makio 高井萬龜尾 (1874–1966) alternately looked after the faithful in Taiwan until the pastoral charge was handed over to Fr. Foma Maki, who came there once a year in the years 1915–1931.<sup>38</sup> In 1917, the Orthodox Church in Taipei was officially recognised and registered by the local authorities, and there are said to have been

27 Nakamura 2004, Vol. 4, p. 886 (Nov. 4, 1903); pp. 887-888 (Nov. 8, 1903).

28 Suhanova 2013, p. 24.

29 Nakamura 2004, Vol. 5, p. 443 (Oct. 6, 1908); p. 723 (Jan. 15, 1911).

30 Nakamura 2004, Vol. 4., p. 651 (July 4, 1902).

31 Nakamura 2004, Vol. 4, p. 836 (July 15, 1903).

32 Nakamura 2004, Vol. 5, p. 780 (July 18, 1911).

33 Besstremânnâ 2009, p. 207, fn. 65.

34 Nakamura 2004, Vol. 5, p. 787 (Aug. 19, 1911). Antimension is the altar cloth in which the relic of a saint was sewn. It is essential for the celebration of the Orthodox liturgy.

35 "Sorabotniki Božemu promyslu. Pravoslavie na Tajvane" [2015], p. 6.

36 Nakamura 2004, Vol. 5, pp. 814-815 (Dec. 6, 1911).

37 [www.orthodoxchurch.tw/](http://www.orthodoxchurch.tw/)台灣教會/台灣基督正教會簡史.

38 Besstremânnâ 2009, p. 159.

three parishes there. There were also churches or prayer halls in other Taiwanese cities.<sup>39</sup> It is reported that the parish priest of Nagasaki, Fr. Antonij Takai Makio, who took over the pastoral care again in 1932–1940, visited the parishes in Taiwan and Korea once a year.<sup>40</sup> In an article of the Japanese Orthodox journal *Seikyō jihō* from 1933, he reported on the visits of the faithful to various places in Taiwan.<sup>41</sup> In the same year, 177 faithful are reported for the Taipei parish, including 30 Taiwanese.<sup>42</sup>

Soon, however, the war began and the meetings of the parishes became irregular. The visits of the priests and the celebration of the liturgy were also no longer possible. There is hardly any information from this time. With Japan's capitulation and the transfer of Taiwan to the administration of the Republic of China in 1945, the Japanese period of the Orthodox mission there also ended. In June 1946, there were still reported to be 200 Orthodox faithful in Taiwan who officially belonged to the parish in Nagasaki.<sup>43</sup> Soon, however, most of them were repatriated and the parish effectively dissolved. The formal link with the Japanese Orthodox Church was also probably severed when, in July 1946, the council there struck the Japanese faithful in Taiwan, Korea, Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands off the church records.<sup>44</sup> Even though St. Nikolaj's hope of evangelising the Taiwanese could hardly be fulfilled, the Orthodox community remained alive during the Japanese period of the Taiwan mission. It is certainly no coincidence that a later Japanese Orthodox archbishop, Nikolaj Sayama Peter Dairoku 佐山ペトル大麓 (1914–2008), came precisely from Taihoku (Taipei) in this period, whose father researched the culture and mythology of the Taiwanese natives as a sociologist before finally leaving Taiwan with his family in 1926.<sup>45</sup>

## Russian Mission

After the Communist victory in Mainland China in 1949, many foreigners were evacuated to Taiwan along with the supporters of the Kuomintang, including several thousand Russians, many of whom were Orthodox. In the memoirs<sup>46</sup> of the journalist Gleb Rar, who worked for the radio station “Svobodnaâ Rossiâ” (Free Russia) in Taiwan in the years 1957–1960, Rar reports on the life of the Orthodox community there. An important role was played by Georgij Konstantinovič Elsner (1891–1973) – the co-owner of the famous Cafe Astoria (Mingxing kafeiguan 明星咖啡館) in Taipei, which was often visited by lead-

39 [www.orthodoxchurch.tw/](http://www.orthodoxchurch.tw/)台灣教會/台灣基督正教會簡史. According to this website of the Orthodox Church in Taiwan, a few years beforehand a 91 year old Russian Orthodox man related about the participation in the liturgy in Taipei in the years 1927–1932.

40 Besstremânnâ 2009, p. 159; Suhanova 2013, pp. 58 and 163, fn. 244.

41 *Seikyō jihō* 22 (1933) 3, pp. 15–20.

42 [www.orthodoxchurch.tw/](http://www.orthodoxchurch.tw/)台灣教會/台灣基督正教會簡史 (another source quotes for 1933 for the communities in Taipei and Taizhong 152 faithful, including 17 native Taiwanese: “Sorabotniki Božemu promyslu. Pravoslavie na Tajvane” [2015], p. 5).

43 Suhanova 2013, p. 132, fn. 143.

44 Kharin 2011, p. 254.

45 Suhanova 2013, p. 210.

46 Rar 2011.

ing state officials<sup>47</sup> and intellectuals and also represented the centre and meeting place of Russian emigrants in Taiwan. Even though he himself was a Protestant, he was very supportive of the Orthodox community and participated in its life. Another was Ūrij Romanič Larikov, who had worked for the army of the Chinese Republic. There were Russian women from Shanghai in the Orthodox community who were married to American air-men, and a large group of Russian women from Xinjiang – the wives of officers in the Chinese National Army – who came to Taiwan via India. There was also an Orthodox Chinese from Harbin – Petr Cheng, who came to Taipei with his Russian wife and her mother.<sup>48</sup> It remains unclear whether the few Taiwanese believers left behind by the Japanese mission made contact with the newly formed Orthodox migrant community.

In the first years after the war, no liturgy was apparently celebrated in Taiwan. An anecdote is told about the first priestly visit to the island during the Korean War (1950–1953): It is said that an old Russian migrant lived in southern Taiwan, married to a Japanese woman, who very much wanted an Orthodox burial. When Georgij Elsner was told of his death, he discussed the matter with some believers in the Cafe Astoria. But no solution could be found. Suddenly the door of the café opened and in came a priest who agreed to celebrate a liturgy. It was Bishop Ioann (Dmitrij Aleksevič Šahovskij, 1902–1989) – later Archbishop of San Francisco and West America – who had visited the American army in Korea as an Orthodox army chaplain and was on his way home.<sup>49</sup> After that episode, there is no more information about the Orthodox community in Taiwan for several years.

A new life began for the believers in 1957, when it was decided to broadcast an anti-communist Russian-language radio program for Siberia from Taiwan and to invite some journalists. The first of these were Roman Nikolaevič Redlih and his wife Lûdmila Glebovna Redlih, who, in addition to their radio work, began to organise the life of the Orthodox community and around 1957 invited Archbishop Irinej (Ivan Dmitrievič Bekiš, 1892–1981) from Tokyo to Taipei for the first time. The archbishop celebrated a liturgy at their house on Jianguo Beilu in Taipei and came a few times over the next few years.<sup>50</sup> In addition to the liturgies in the house church, that was dedicated to St. John the Baptist, the archbishop also went to Taizhong, where he administered baptism to nine catechumens in a hotel room. Gleb Aleksandrovič Rar and his wife Sofiâ Vasil'evna Rar, who took over the work of broadcasting and the care of the Orthodox community in 1958, set up an iconostasis with the help of Tomara Lü (a Russian tailor from Xinjiang), which was set up for liturgies in their house church.<sup>51</sup> Their son Aleksandr was baptised there in 1959 during one of Bishop Irinej's visits. In the reports on the bishops' trips to Taiwan published in the journal of the Japanese Orthodox Church, *Seikyō jihō*, in 1958–1959, one can also find information about the Orthodox community: there were about 100 faithful from Russia,

47 Among others, the President of the Republic of China, Chiang Kai-shek, and his son and successor, Chiang Ching-kuo, who was married to an Orthodox White Russian, Faina Ipat'evna Vahreva (Jiang Fangliang 蔣方良, 1916–2004).

48 Rar 2011.

49 According to an account of Georgij Elsner, cf. Rar 2011.

50 Cf. *Seikyō jihō*, Oct. 5, 1958, No. 827, p. 11; *Seikyō jihō*, May 5, 1959, No. 834, p. 12.

51 Rar 2011.

the USA, China and Greece. Fifteen people were baptised, including twelve Chinese.<sup>52</sup> In another 1959 article in the journal *Vestnik*, Gleb Rar expressed a well-founded hope that “church life will soon gradually normalize.”<sup>53</sup> He also wrote about the many Chinese “cultural Christians,” mostly married to Orthodox Russian women, and saw educational work with them and their children as the main task of the Orthodox mission.<sup>54</sup>

When Archbishop Irinej was appointed Bishop of Boston and New England in 1960 and went back to the USA, a military chaplain from Japan, Nikolaj Kirilûk, came to Taiwan at Christmas and returned again in the following years to celebrate the liturgy for the faithful there. In 1960, the Rar family also left Taiwan. Their services to the Orthodox community were then taken over by the Peruanski family.<sup>55</sup> In the last “Taiwanese” report of the journal *Seikyō jihō*, which tells of the visit of Bishop Vladimir (Vasilij Pavlovič Nagoskij, 1922–1997) from Japan to Taiwan in 1965, some hopes for the future of the Orthodox community were still tangible. The Bishop went to Taipei, Taizhong and Jiayi, he celebrated a liturgy, administered baptisms and visited the faithful. He reported about 200 believers mainly in the Taipei area asking for a priest and affirmed plans to build a new church there. He also visited an Anglican priest, Fr. Morris, who in emergencies helped the Orthodox community with prayers for the sick and the dead. He was particularly impressed by the testimony of the Russian women who had come from the Mainland with their Chinese husbands, awakened their husbands’ interest in the Orthodox faith in Taiwan and worked together enthusiastically for the Church.<sup>56</sup> The plan was to have a permanent priest for Taiwan by sending one from the USA or training one from the local Taiwanese community.<sup>57</sup>

These hopes and plans were soon dashed, as in the following years most of the active faithful left Taiwan and the congregation met only rarely for prayer.<sup>58</sup> The connection with the Church in Japan, which was in fact limited to occasional visits by the bishops or priests of the Orthodox Church in America, was also broken.<sup>59</sup> For the 1970s–1980s, there is virtually no information about the life of the Orthodox faithful in Taiwan. The Russian period of the Orthodox mission apparently came to a halt in the 1980s at the latest.

## New Mission

New life came to the Orthodox Church in Taiwan in the late 1990s when the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Moscow Patriarchate, in addition to their renewed interest in mission in China, simultaneously turned their attention to Taiwan. The first to arrive in Taizhong was apparently an American lay Orthodox missionary, Timothy Beach,

52 *Seikyō jihō*, Oct. 5, 1958, No. 827, p. 11; *Seikyō jihō*, May 5, 1959, No. 834, p. 12.

53 Rar 1959, pp. 22–23.

54 *Ibid.*

55 Rar 2011.

56 *Seikyō jihō*, Jan. 20, 1965, No. 901, p. 7.

57 Kharin 2011, p. 257, fn. 941.

58 [www.orthodoxchurch.tw/](http://www.orthodoxchurch.tw/)台灣教會/台灣基督正教會簡史.

59 Kharin 2011, p. 257.

with his wife Anna, where he ran a language school and founded a missionary association (Chinese Orthodox Christian Mission Fellowship). He was visited and encouraged in Taiwan in 1998 by the Bishop of the one year earlier newly established Orthodox Metropolitanate of Hong Kong and Southeast Asia, Nikitas Lulias.<sup>60</sup> Then in 1999 Fr. Dionisij Pozdnaev – later the parish priest in Hong Kong and de facto coordinator of the Moscow Patriarchate's China Mission – came to Taiwan. He met a group of Russian Orthodox believers who had requested a liturgy and accompaniment. However, a corresponding petition of the faithful to the Moscow Patriarchate could not be fulfilled at first because of economic difficulties. As a result, Fr. Pozdnaev still travelled to Taiwan from time to time for pastoral care.<sup>61</sup>

In September 2000, Fr. Jonah Mourtos (Li Liang 李亮), a Greek priest from the Holy Mountain of Athos (Grigoriou Monastery), came to Taiwan for the first time in decades as a permanent Orthodox priest. The former missionary to Congo and India founded a Trinity parish with the help of the Kosmas Aitolos Missionary Society,<sup>62</sup> which was also officially registered by the Taiwanese authorities in 2003. Fr. Mourtos gathered Orthodox migrants, Russians, Ukrainians, Greeks, Macedonians, and others,<sup>63</sup> and began to conduct regular liturgies, first in a Catholic church, then in a building in the Tianmu district of Taipei, and finally for over 15 years in the Xindian district of New Taipei City in an apartment on the fourth floor of a high-rise building.<sup>64</sup>

In the last twenty years Fr. Mourtos tried very actively and in many ways to make the Orthodox faith known in Taiwan. His core task became pastoral care for the Orthodox faithful of various nationalities who gathered mainly in the Taipei and Taizhong parishes. The liturgy (in Taipei every Sunday at 10:30 a.m.) is conducted in English and Chinese, with readings in Russian and Greek, and it is usually attended by 20-30 faithful or people interested in the Orthodox Church. However, at larger celebrations, such as the Easter liturgy, the congregation can be three times larger. After the liturgy, a simple meal is prepared and everyone is invited to a conversation about the Orthodox faith, life issues and personal problems. Study of the Greek Bible is also offered. Upon request, pastoral trips are made to other cities in Taiwan, such as Tainan or Gaoxiong. Baptisms, weddings and funeral services are held.<sup>65</sup>

The Orthodox faith in Taiwan is also spread by the Trinity community through lectures and publications of the parishioners. For example, Fr. Mourtos was invited several times to Academia Sinica, Taiwan National University, Fu Jen Catholic University, or Fo Guang University, where he emphasized, among other things, the need for dialogue between Christianity and Chinese culture. Publications of the congregation include books,<sup>66</sup>

60 Beach 2001.

61 [www.orthodoxchurch.tw/](http://www.orthodoxchurch.tw/)台灣教會/台灣基督正教會簡史.

62 [www.orthodoxwiki.org/Orthodoxy\\_in\\_Taiwan](http://www.orthodoxwiki.org/Orthodoxy_in_Taiwan).

63 Beach 2001.

64 Address: New Taipei City, Xindian District, Xiyuan Road, 4th Fl., No. 389-12, B8 (新北市新店區溪園路389-12號B8棟4樓).

65 Cf. [www.theological.asia/activities](http://www.theological.asia/activities).

66 Among others: Li Liang 李亮, *Shengmingde hualei* 生命的花蕾, Taipei 2005; Li Liang 李亮, *Liyi* 禮儀, Taipei 2007; Yu Juan 于涓, *Hunyin zhi mei zai dongzhengjiao* 婚姻之美在東正教, Taipei 2012.

translations of Orthodox works from Greek and English into Chinese,<sup>67</sup> and the monthly journal *Zhengjiao xinyu* 正教心語.

The parish of Fr. Mourtos is also present on the Internet. On their website ([www.theological.asia](http://www.theological.asia)) there are many contributions that present the faith, Bible passages, sacraments and parish life in Chinese. The YouTube account of the “Taiwan Orthodox Christian Church” (Taiwan Jidu dongzheng jiaohui 台灣基督東正教會)<sup>68</sup> offers extensive video material with sermons and spiritual thoughts by Fr. Mourtos, contributions by the Taiwanese icon painter Pelagia (Yu Juan 于涓), catechesis, prayers, and discussions. For years, online teaching courses and theological seminars were also offered, with a final certificate from one of the American theological colleges.<sup>69</sup> Numerous photos of the life of the community can also be found in the online service Flickr<sup>70</sup> and on the private website of one of the very active believers, Johanna E. Katchen (Ke Anna 柯安娜).<sup>71</sup>

Since 2004, several Orthodox students and seminarians have also been sent to Taiwan by the Moscow Patriarchate to study Chinese at the Language Center of Fu Jen Catholic University. Some of them also graduated in Chinese from the (Catholic) Faculty of Theology of Fu Jen University. The students actively participated in the life of the Orthodox community during their studies and helped out with catechesis.<sup>72</sup> After Moscow Patriarch Kirill approved the new establishment of a parish of the Russian Orthodox Church in Taiwan on September 16, 2012 “in response to the request of Russians living in Taiwan,” one of the students (a Canadian citizen) – Fr. Kirill Shkarbul (Ai Xili'er 艾西里爾), who had been sent from Canada to study for a doctorate – was appointed parish priest on January 9, 2013. A founding meeting of the new parish, which understood itself as a revitalized Christ the Redeemer parish, dating back to 1901, was held on February 26.<sup>73</sup> A few weeks later in March 2013, two churches were established in rented spaces in Taipei<sup>74</sup> and Taichung.<sup>75</sup> For the church in Taipei, the name Exaltation of the Holy Cross was chosen.<sup>76</sup>

67 Among others: Anjianni · Aleiweisuoboluosi 安東尼 · 阿勒維所波洛斯, *Zhengjiao de jingshen yu lingxing* 正教的精神與靈性, Taipei 2002; Heruodi'ao · Fulaqiao 赫若迪奧 · 弗拉喬 (Hierotheos Vlachos), *Shengshan shamo zhi ye: Yinxu daoshi tan Yesu qidaowen* 聖山沙漠之夜: 隱修導師談耶穌祈禱文, Taipei 2004; Sheng Yuehan xiudaoyuan nüxiu nümen 聖約翰修道院女修女們, *Nin dui shengxianghua you he liaojie* 您對聖像畫有何了解, Taipei 2006; Yuehan · Luomanidesi 約翰 · 羅瑪尼德斯 (John Romanides), *Sheng Baolu lilun zhong de yuanzui* 聖保羅理論中的原罪, Taipei 2007; John Zizioulas, *Jidujiao jiaoyi: jiaoyi de xingcheng ji dagonghuiyi zhong de zhengyi* 基督教教義: 教義的形成及大公會議中的爭議, Vols. 1-2, Taipei 2008; Bide · Ji'erkuisi 彼得 · 基爾魁斯 (Peter Gillquist), *Cheng wei dongzhengjiaotu: chonghui shanggu Jidu xinyang zhi lu* 成為東正教徒: 重回上古基督信仰之路, Taipei 2006; Yalisdilisi · Babalachangxi 亞里斯迪黎思 · 巴巴拉敞斯 (Aristeides Papadakis), *Jiaohui lishi* 教會歷史, Taipei 2006; Archimandrite George, *Tian-ren he yi: shengming zhongji mudi* 天人合一: 生命終極目的, Taipei 2007.

68 [www.youtube.com/user/asianORTHODOX](http://www.youtube.com/user/asianORTHODOX).

69 Cf. Liu Zhihao 2014, pp. 54-58.

70 [www.flickr.com/photos/orthodox\\_taiwan/albums](http://www.flickr.com/photos/orthodox_taiwan/albums).

71 [www.mx.nthu.edu.tw/~katchen/](http://www.mx.nthu.edu.tw/~katchen/).

72 [www.old.mpda.ru/site\\_pub/4479848.html](http://www.old.mpda.ru/site_pub/4479848.html).

73 Cf. the corresponding founding documents: [www.orthodoxchurch.com.tw/metochion](http://www.orthodoxchurch.com.tw/metochion).

74 Original address: Taipei City, Xinyi District, Hulin Street, Lane 88, No. 22 (台北市信義區虎林街88巷22號).

75 Address: Taichung City, West District Boguan 3rd Street, Lane 62, No. 10, Floor 2 (台中市西區博館三街62巷10號2樓).

76 Cf. [www.russiaclub.tw/the-news/274-russian-church-in-taiwan-2013-01.html](http://www.russiaclub.tw/the-news/274-russian-church-in-taiwan-2013-01.html).

Fr. Shkarbul started regular liturgies – in Eastern Slavonic, Russian, Chinese and English – in Taipei (Sundays at 10:30 a.m.) and Taizhong (Saturdays at 10:30 a.m.) and occasionally also in Yilan, Xinzhu, Tainan and Gaoxiong. He gathered around himself mainly the Russian-speaking faithful, but in recent years some Taiwanese also found their way to the community.

Today, about 20 believers attend the service in Taipei, with more joining in on major feasts. After liturgy, the people gather for a small meal, and sometimes for a cultural program. Even though it is relatively small, the “Russian” congregation is very alive: it runs a Sunday school with Russian, painting and faith classes, as well as piano and Bible courses. The church in Taipei, which moved to a beautiful new room on the first floor of a high-rise building in the center of the city in the summer of 2019,<sup>77</sup> is often visited by groups of Taiwanese students, to whom Fr. Shkarbul enthusiastically explains the Orthodox faith.

The Taipei and Taizhong parishes are also active on the Internet and in social media: they maintain their own Facebook pages<sup>78</sup> and websites in Russian and Chinese,<sup>79</sup> where one can find information about the Orthodox faith and the life of the Orthodox Church in Taiwan. There are also numerous YouTube videos with talks by Fr. Shkarbul on various questions of faith<sup>80</sup> and his interviews on the situation of the Orthodox Church in Taiwan.<sup>81</sup> He announced a new Orthodox Christian Missionary Channel in July 2020.<sup>82</sup>

Even if the two congregations, the “Greek” Trinity congregation of the Constantinople Patriarchate and the “Russian” Christ the Savior congregation of the Moscow Patriarchate, are very active, they are, however, unfortunately burdened by a division that also affects the spread of the faith. The problem is the unresolved dispute between the Moscow and Constantinople Patriarchates over jurisdiction in the Chinese region, which has been ongoing since 1997.<sup>83</sup> With the opening of a second parish in 2013, which was not agreed upon between the patriarchates, and the transfer of some of the faithful to the new parish, the already small Orthodox community in Taiwan was divided and the relationship between the two parishes was severely affected, effectively broken. On June 1, 2013, the new “Greek” Metropolitan of Hong Kong and Southeast Asia, Nektarios, labeled the newly established parish of the Moscow Patriarchate “schismatic,” excommunicated Fr. Shkarbul, and banned all contact between the parishes.<sup>84</sup> Even today, after seven years, not much has changed in this regard. The ongoing schism continues to cast a shadow over the lives of the two Orthodox communities and their missionary work in Taiwan.

77 Taipei City, Zhongzheng District, Xiamen Street, No. 49 (台北市中正區廈門街49號).

78 [www.facebook.com/OrthodoxyInTaiwan](http://www.facebook.com/OrthodoxyInTaiwan); [www.facebook.com/orthoxchurchtaichung](http://www.facebook.com/orthoxchurchtaichung).

79 <http://orthodoxchurch.com.tw> (in Russian); <http://orthodoxchurch.tw> (in Chinese).

80 [www.youtube.com/channel/UCx9benLa7Uc4Xwy\\_dKHTeCQ](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCx9benLa7Uc4Xwy_dKHTeCQ).

81 [www.youtube.com/watch?v=KANK8xf6QcY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KANK8xf6QcY); [www.youtube.com/watch?v=geDjgGF-eRU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=geDjgGF-eRU).

82 [www.youtube.com/watch?v=-xUOTHp2z5Q](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-xUOTHp2z5Q).

83 See more on this: Piotr Adamek, “Wiederbelebt oder noch am Leben? Die Situation der orthodoxen Kirche in China heute” (Revived or Still Alive? The Situation of the Orthodox Church in China Today), in: *China heute* 2008, Nos. 4-5, pp. 135-136; Piotr Adamek, “Moskau und Konstantinopel. Differenzen und Gemeinsamkeiten der orthodoxen Missionen in China” (Moscow and Constantinople. Differences and Commonalities of the Orthodox Missions in China), in: *China heute* 2010, No. 3, pp. 144-147.

84 For more on this cf.: Piotr Adamek, “Die Probleme der orthodoxen Kirche in Taiwan” (The Problems of the Orthodox Church in Taiwan), in: *China heute* 2013, No. 2, p. 75.

In the past 125 years, the Orthodox mission in Taiwan has always been a “migrant church” in which the Japanese, Russian and other Orthodox foreigners could find a spiritual faith community. The mission for the Taiwanese, or the “evangelization of the pagans” called for by St. Nikolaj of Japan, could hardly be realized in the last century. The Orthodox Church, however, is not giving up and sees “great prospects” in Taiwan.<sup>85</sup> “Missionary activities” are organized on the streets of Taipei, Taizhong or Tainan by setting up a stand with a cross and an icon and inviting people to the liturgy and to talk about faith.<sup>86</sup> The regions of the indigenous peoples of Taiwan are also visited and the possibility of founding a mission is explored.<sup>87</sup> In the parishes around Fr. Mourtos and Fr. Shkarbul young Taiwanese gather – “friends of the mission” – who show interest in the Orthodox faith and even if they are still relatively few, they give the Orthodox Church hope of a breakthrough – despite all the problems and despite the division. As Deacon Georgij Maksimov (Георгий Максимов) noted after his visit to Taiwan, “it would be groundless to expect that all of Taiwan will soon become Orthodox, but that a fully-fledged living community of Orthodox Chinese (Taiwanese) will emerge there is quite real and is in fact already in the making.”<sup>88</sup>

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85 *Missiâ na Tajvane imeet bolšie perspektivy* [2014].

86 “Sorabotniki Božemu promyslu. Pravoslavie na Tajvane” [2015], p. 21.

87 *Missiâ na Tajvane imeet bolšie perspektivy* [2014].

88 *Ibid.*

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