

# Globethics Repository

The logo for Globethics, featuring the word "Globethics" in white, sans-serif font centered within a solid blue rectangular background.

## Statistics on religions and churches in the People's Republic of China-update for the year 2020

This page was generated automatically upon download from the Globethics Repository. More information on Globethics see <https://www.globethics.net>. Data and content policy of Globethics Repository see <https://repository.globethics.net/pages/policy>.

Item Type	Article
Authors	Wenzel-Teuber, Katharina
Publisher	China-Zentrum e.V.
Rights	China-Zentrum e.V.
Download date	2026-06-30 09:55:35
Link to Item	<a href="http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/4035852">http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/4035852</a>

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

Katharina Wenzel-Teuber

Translated by Jacqueline Mulberge

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

### 1. From Chinese Research

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

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

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

---

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

18 Liu Ying 2020, pp. 82-83.

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

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

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

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

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

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

19 Liu Ying 2020, p. 82.

20 Liu Ying 2020, pp. 82, 84.

21 Liu Ying 2020, p. 84.

22 Liu Ying 2020, pp. 84-85.

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

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

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

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

### 1.3 Are religious persons more generous donors?

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

24 Liu Ying 2020, p. 86.

25 Liu Ying 2020, pp. 86-87.

26 Liu Ying 2020, p. 89.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

29 Liu – Ruan 2019, p. 9.

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

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

32 Liu – Ruan 2019, p. 9.

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

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

35 Liu – Ruan 2019, p. 11.

36 Liu – Ruan 2019, p. 14.

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

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

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

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

## 2. Buddhism, Daoism and Folk Beliefs

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

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

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

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

<sup>37</sup> Liu – Ruan 2019, p. 15.

<sup>38</sup> Liu – Ruan 2019, p. 16.

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

<sup>40</sup> The percentage 2.54% was calculated by the author of this Statistical Update (kwt) by analogy with the data given by CSLS for Buddhists (85 million correspond to 18% of the population over 16 years of age).

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

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

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

These percentages are close to the CSLS results.

## 2.1 Buddhism

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

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

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

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

41 Buddhist academies (State Council 2018)

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

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

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

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

43 Gildow 2020.



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

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

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

Gildow then compares the following official Chinese figures in particular:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

47 Gildow 2020, p. 23.

48 Gildow 2020, pp. 23-24.

49 Gildow 2020, p. 28.

50 Gildow 2020, pp. 15-16.

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

## 2.2 Daoism

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

4,011 Quanzhen tradition

4,338 Zhengyi tradition

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

10 Daoist academies (State Council 2018)

## 3. Islam

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

Table 5: Muslim Population according to Ethnicity

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

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

51 Gildow 2020, pp. 18-19.

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

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

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

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

#### 4. Protestantism

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### 4.1 Reasons why Chinese become Christians

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

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

---

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

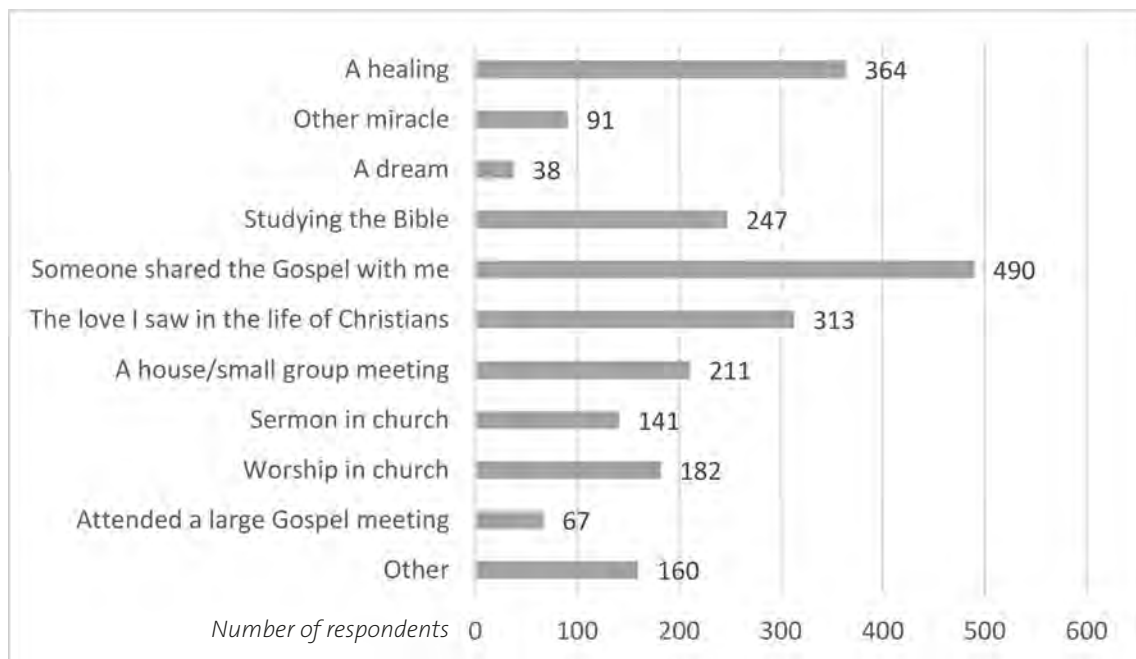
66 Steve Z. 2019/2020, p. 20. – Z. does not address the question whether the limited influence of the Internet could also be related to the age structure of the participating churches.

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



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

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



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

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

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

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

## 5. Catholic Church

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

### 5.1 General Data

#### Faithful

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

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

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

#### Dioceses

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Bishops

99 of whom

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

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

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

### Priests

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

### Seminaries and Seminarians

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

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

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

### Sisters

4,600 in total, of whom

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

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

### Churches

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

## 5.2 Baptisms

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

## 5.3 Bishops

### Bishops Who Died in Mainland China in 2020

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

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

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

### Bishops Consecrated in Mainland China in 2020

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

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

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

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

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

Bishop Lin Jiashan 林嘉善 of Fuzhou (FJ),

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

Bishop Li Huiyuan 李会元 of Fengxiang (SN),

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

Bishop Ma Cunguo 马存国 of Shuozhou (SX),

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

Bishop Jin Yangke 金仰科 of Ningbo (ZJ),

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

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

### **5.4 Priestly Ordinations**

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 6. Sources and Abbreviations

CFPS [China Family Panel Studies, *Zhongguo jiating zhuzhong diaocha* 中国家庭追踪调查]: see Lu Yunfeng – Wu Yue – Zhang Chunni 2019 and Wu Yue – Zhang Chunni – Lu Yunfeng 2020.

CSLS [Chinese Spiritual Life Survey]: Yang Fenggang with Hu Anning – Jiang Fan – R.J. Leamaster – Lu Jun – Tang Zhenyu (Center on Religion and Chinese Society, Pur-

- due University), “Quantifying Religions in China,” 5 page manuscript of a presentation at the Seventh Annual Conference for the Social Scientific Study of Religion in China, Beijing, July, 26–27, 2010.
- Gao Feng 2018: “Shuzi jianzheng endian manman” 数字见证恩典满满 (Numbers Witness Grace in Abundance) [Summary of data from the work report of the Protestant governing bodies presented by Pastor Gao Feng, Chairman of the China Christian Council, at the 10th National Assembly of Chinese Protestantism in November 2018], online at [www.ccctspm.org/specialinfo/340](http://www.ccctspm.org/specialinfo/340) (last accessed March 15, 2021).
- Gildow, Douglas M., “Questioning the Revival. Buddhist Monasticism in China since Mao,” in: *Review of Religion and Chinese Society* 2020, No. 7, pp. 6-33.
- HSSC: Holy Spirit Study Centre (Shengshen yanjiu zhongxin 聖神研究中心, Hong Kong).
- Liu Li 刘力 – Ruan Rongping 阮荣平 2019, “Xinyang yu juanzeng: zongjiao rang ren gengjia kangkai le ma?” 信仰与捐赠: 宗教让人更加慷慨了吗? (Does Religion Make People More Generous?), in: *Zongjiao 宗教 (Religion)* 2019, No. 1, pp. 5-18.
- Liu Xiaochun 刘晓春 2014, “Jiyu renkou diaocha de Zhongguo musulim renkou tezheng fenxi” 基于人口调查的中国穆斯林人口特征分析 (Traits of the Muslims of China Based on Census Data Analysis), in: *Huizu yanjiu 回族研究 (Journal of Hui Muslim Minority Studies)* 2014, No. 1, pp. 70-76.
- Liu Ying 刘影 2020, “Zongjiao xintu dui Zhonghua wenhua rentong de yingxiang yinsu tanjiu – jiyu jidutu qunti de shizheng fenxi” 宗教信徒对中华文化认同的影响因素探究 – 基于基督徒群体的实证分析 (On the Influencing Factors of Religious Believers on Chinese Cultural Identity: An Empirical Analysis Based on Christian Groups), in: *Shijie zongjiao wenhua 世界宗教文化 (The World Religious Cultures)* 2020, No. 2, pp. 82-97.
- Lu Yunfeng 卢云峰 – Wu Yue 吴越 – Zhang Chunni 张春泥 2019, “Zhongguo daodi you duoshao jidutu? Jiyu Zhongguo jiating zhuzong diaocha de guji” 中国到底有多少基督徒? – 基于中国家庭追踪调查的估计 (How Many Protestants Are There in China: An Estimate Based on China Family Panel Studies), in: *Kaifang shidai 开放时代 (Open Times)* 2019, No. 1, pp. 165-178, online at [www.shehui.pku.edu.cn/upload/editor/file/20190402/20190402083311\\_1875.pdf](http://www.shehui.pku.edu.cn/upload/editor/file/20190402/20190402083311_1875.pdf) (accessed March 15, 2020).
- Ma-PA-BiCo 2016 [Ma Yinglin, Vice President of the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (PA) and President of the Chinese Catholic Bishops’ Conference (BiCo)]: “Zhongguo tianzujiao dijiuci quanguo daibiao huiyi – gongzuo baogao” 中国天主教第九次全国代表会议 – 工作报告 (9th National Assembly of Representatives of the Chinese Catholic Church – Work Report), Dec. 27, 2016, [www.chinacatholic.cn/html/report/17020718-1.htm](http://www.chinacatholic.cn/html/report/17020718-1.htm) (last accessed March 15, 2021).
- Malek, Roman 2011, “People’s Republic of China: Churches and Religions. Annual Statistical Overview 2010/2011) in: *RCTC* 2011, No. 1, pp. 32-59.
- NRAA: National Religious Affairs Administration (Guojia zongjiao shiwuju 国家宗教事务局).
- NRAA 2017: Three reports on “religious work” since the 18th Party Congress published in: *Zhongguo zongjiao 中国宗教 (China Religion)* 2017, No. 10, here in particular:

- Guojia zongjiao shiwuju yi si 国家宗教事物局一司 (NRAA, 1st Department), “Yifa guifan guanli, qianghua yindao fuwu. Dang de bashi da yilai fojiao daojiao gongzuo huigu” 依法规范管理, 强化引导服务. 党的八十大以来佛教道教工作回顾 (Standardize the Administration according to the Law, Strengthen Instruction and Services. Review of Work on Buddhism and Daoism since the 18th Party Congress), pp. 11-13.
- NRAA database 2021: 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](http://www.sara.gov.cn/zjhdcjsjbx/index.jhtml), data retrieved on March 1, 2021.
- Pittman, Joan 2020, “How Many Christians in China? Preferred Estimates,” three-part series on the *ChinaSource* portal at [www.chinasource.org/resource-library/series-index/how-many-christians-in-china](http://www.chinasource.org/resource-library/series-index/how-many-christians-in-china) (last accessed March 15, 2021).
- State Council 2018: Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China, White Paper “China’s Policies and Practices on Protecting Freedom of Religious Belief,” English version at [www.china.org.cn/government/whitepaper/node\\_8004087.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/government/whitepaper/node_8004087.htm) (last accessed March 15, 2021).
- Wenzel-Teuber, Katharina 2012, “People’s Republic of China: Religions and Churches. Statistical Overview 2011,” translated by David Streit, in: *RCTC* 2012, No. 3, pp. 29-54.
- 2013, “2012 Statistical Update on Religions and Churches in the People’s Republic of China and in Taiwan,” translated by David Streit, in: *RCTC* 2013, No. 3, pp. 18-43.
  - 2014: “2013 Statistical Update on Religions and Churches in the People’s Republic of China,” translated by Jacqueline Mulberge, in: *RCTC* 2014, No. 2, pp. 17-39.
  - 2015, “2014 Statistical Update on Religions and Churches in the People’s Republic of China,” translated by Jacqueline Mulberge, in: *RCTC* 2015, No. 2, pp. 20-41.
  - 2016, “2015 Statistical Update on Religions and Churches in the People’s Republic of China,” translated by Jacqueline Mulberghe, in: *RCTC* 2016, No. 2, pp. 20-43.
  - 2017, “Statistics on Religions and Churches in the People’s Republic of China – Update for the Year 2016,” translated by Jacqueline Mulberghe, in: *RCTC* 2017, No. 2, pp. 26-53.
  - 2019a “Statistics on Religions and Churches in the People’s Republic of China – Update for the Year 2018. Part 1: Catholic Church,” translated by Jacqueline Mulberghe, in: *RCTC* 2019, No. 2, pp. 21-30.
  - 2019b “Statistics on Religions and Churches in the People’s Republic of China – Update for the Year 2018. Part 2: Religions and Religiosity in General,” translated by Jacqueline Mulberghe, in: *RCTC* 2019, No. 3, pp. 22-29.
  - 2020: “Statistics on Religions and Churches in the People’s Republic of China – Update for the Year 2019,” in: *RCTC* 2020, No. 2, pp. 21-41.
- Wu Yue 吴越 – Zhang Chunni 张春泥 – Lu Yunfeng 卢云峰 2020, “Fansi ‘nongcun xifang zongjiao re’: misi haishi shishi? – Jiyu Zhongguo jiating zhuizong diaocha de fenxi” 反思“农村西方宗教热”: 迷思还是事实? – 基于中国家庭追踪调查的分析 (Western Religion Fever in Rural China: Myth or Truth? An Analysis Based on China Family Panel Studies), in: *Zongjiao 宗教 (Religion)* 2020, No. 4, pp. 5-11.

First appeared in *Kaifang shidai* 开放时代 (*Open Times*) 2020, No. 3, pp. 157-167, online at [www.shehui.pku.edu.cn/upload/editor/file/20200525/20200525153912\\_7043.pdf](http://www.shehui.pku.edu.cn/upload/editor/file/20200525/20200525153912_7043.pdf) (last accessed March 15, 2021).

*Xinde* 信德 (*Faith*) (Shijiazhuang), print edition and online edition at [www.chinacatholic.org](http://www.chinacatholic.org) and [xinde.org](http://xinde.org).

Xiuyuan-Study [2014]: Dong Leiming 董磊明 – Yang Hua 杨华, “Xifang zongjiao zai Zhongguo nongcun de chuanbo xianzhuang – Xiuyuan jijinhui yanjiu baogao” 西方宗教在中国农村的传播现状 – 修远基金会研究报告 (*The Spread of Western Religion in Rural China – A Study Report by the Xiuyuan Foundation*), [www.xiuyuan.org/yjbgshow.asp?id=81](http://www.xiuyuan.org/yjbgshow.asp?id=81), posted Sept. 1, 2014, undated [presumably published in 2014 in the journal *Wenhua zongheng* 文化纵横 (*Beijing Cultural Review*)] (last accessed March 15, 2021).

Z., Steve 2019/2020, “A Survey of Han Christian Churches and Christian Groups in Mainland China,” dated from June 11, 2019, published on Dec. 20, 2020 at [www.chinasource.org/resource-library/research-share/a-survey-of-the-situation-of-han-christian-churches-and-christian-groups-in-mainland-china](http://www.chinasource.org/resource-library/research-share/a-survey-of-the-situation-of-han-christian-churches-and-christian-groups-in-mainland-china). Under the same link, there is also a Chinese version of the text entitled “Dangdai Zhongguo dalu Hanzu jidu jiaohui he jidutu qunti de xianzhuang diaocha” 当代中国大陆汉族基督教会和基督徒群体的现况调查. An edited English version with an introduction by Brent Fulton was published by ChinaSource in 2020 as a blog series entitled “God at Work. How the Church Grows in China” at [www.chinasource.org/resource-library/series-index/god-at-work-how-the-church-grows-in-china](http://www.chinasource.org/resource-library/series-index/god-at-work-how-the-church-grows-in-china). Both URLs last accessed March 15, 2021.