



Negotiating Policy and Practice:

A Micro-Level Analysis of Three-Self Churches in a Coastal Chinese City

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Negotiating Policy and Practice:
A Micro-Level Analysis of Three-Self Churches in a Coastal Chinese City

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The results, discussions and conclusions presented herein are identical to those in the printed version. This electronic version of the thesis has been edited solely to ensure the anonymity of participants for the duration of the embargo placed on the print version of the thesis by the author. Sources in the Bibliography which help identify the field-site in which research for this thesis was carried out have been redacted in this electronic version. The final, awarded and examined version will be available for consultation via the University Library at the end of the embargo period.

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Dedicated to the memory of my father-in-law, Hao Jinsheng 郝锦生 (1955-2012),
follower of the Way.

Abstract

This doctoral project is an ethnographic account of the interactions between Protestant Three-Self (TSPM) churches and the local state in a coastal Chinese city. Adopting a framework of embeddedness and developing the concept of symbiosis, the study presents an original and nuanced analysis of church-state relations. I demonstrate that the embedded nature of the churches in the local state and the symbiotic relationship between the Three-Self churches and the Religious Affairs Bureau allows for the creation of informal structures and procedures. The project analyses these informal channels, arguing that they provide space for religious activities, some of which occupy an ambiguous “grey” area while others are officially prohibited. These activities help facilitate proselytising and the expansion of the churches. While religious specialists and lay believers seek to utilise their relationship with the state, they do not consciously resist the state but rather seek to spread the Protestant message which they believe is not in conflict with state projects but has more to offer than the political messages of the state. The relationship between the churches and local state institutions results in the state providing resources which aid in the transformation of the state-religion nexus.

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Abbreviations

BMS	<i>Baptist Missionary Society</i>
CC	<i>Christian Council</i>
CCC	<i>China Christian Council</i>
CIM	<i>China Inland Mission</i>
CPC	<i>Communist Party of China</i>
LMS	<i>London Missionary Society</i>
LPC	<i>Local People's Congress</i>
PPCC	<i>People's Political Consultative Conference</i>
PSB	<i>Public Security Bureau</i>
RAB	<i>Religious Affairs Bureau</i>
RAD	<i>Religious Affairs Department</i>
RAS	<i>Religious Affairs Section</i>
SPG	<i>Society for the Propagation of the Gospel</i>
TSPM	<i>Three-Self Patriotic Movement</i>
UFWD	<i>United Front Work Department</i>
YMCA	<i>Young Men's Christian Association</i>
YWCA	<i>Young Women's Christian Association</i>

Chapter One

Introduction

China's religious revival

This dissertation analyses a group of Three-Self Protestant churches and their interactions with the local state and argues that the embedded nature of the churches in local state institutions and the symbiosis between the churches and the Religious Affairs Bureau, in particular, facilitates the provision of resources which facilitate the expansion of these Protestant congregations through a range of activities, some of which fall beyond the remit of the state regulatory framework.

This dissertation is a contribution to three main areas of scholarship. Firstly, it contributes to the expanding literature on the ongoing religious revival in China which has been taking place since the 1970s (see Ashiwa and Wank, 2009; Madsen, 2011b; Wickeri, 2011) as part of the global resurgence in religion. This literature analyses the myriad ways in which religion is influencing social and political milieus (see Goossaert and Palmer, 2011). This interest in religion and its resurgence has much to tell us about the nature of modernity and theories of secularisation, and more specifically, how the modernisation project has impacted China (see Madsen, 2011a; Marsh, 2011). Moreover, this dissertation is a contribution to the renewed interest in the anthropological study of Christianity, which, until recently has received insufficient attention due to the fact that, in the words of Cannell (2006, 3), was assumed to be “an ‘obvious’ or ‘known’ phenomenon that does not require fresh and constantly renewed examination.” In addition, this project contributes to the work of defining the state which anthropologists have recently highlighted.

Social anthropology is concerned with “people’s customs, social institutions and values, and the ways in which these are interrelated” (Beattie, 1993, 16), yet few studies have sought to look specifically at the relationship between religious institutions and the local state in China. In recent scholarship, anthropologists have noted that political scientists tend to see the state as a “clearly bounded institution” which is “distinct from society”

(Sharma and Gupta, 2006, 8). In reality, however, power is “disaggregated” and there is a need to “de-emphasise the state as the ultimate seat of power” (Sharma and Gupta, 2006, 9). This study is concerned with the state at the local level and asks: Who are the local state agents or actors involved in the management of religion and how do they behave? Whilst it is easy to conceptualise state-society relations where the “state” and “society” appear to have clearly delineated boundaries, how does this work in practice? This anthropological study seeks to answer such questions in terms of the relationship between Three-Self Protestantism and the local state.

In recognising these weaknesses in conceptualising the state, an anthropological study of the state sees the state as a “cultural artefact” which is framed within “transitional dynamics” (Sharma and Gupta, 2006, 5-6) as institutions undergo change. There is a need to ask how boundaries between state and society are culturally and socially constructed (Sharma and Gupta, 2006, 9). This can only be done by ethnographic studies at the local level. By focussing this study on the social relations between Three-Self churches and local state actors, we can avoid the need to conceptualise these relations in terms of state versus society, or of state control, or of societal resistance to the state but can enter in to the intricacies of how different actors involved with the practice of religion operate within their specific cultural and social milieu.

Project origins, research puzzle, research question and hypothesis

No research projects are formed in a vacuum and this one is no different. The empirical basis for this research is derived from an extended period of participant observation in several Three-Self churches 三自教会 in Huanghaicheng¹ 黄海城, a coastal Chinese city, between 2003 and 2007 whilst working in a higher education institute.² During that period I generally attended at least one church service, meeting or other activity every week. I was struck by the number of activities or events which, as I understood them, went against state policy on acceptable religious practice. Deciding that this was a question worth exploring, I made the decision to pursue a PhD and, as part of this, conducted twelve months of intensive research in Huanghaicheng. In the early planning stages of the project, I considered several possible options for research. One plan was to do a comparative study by conducting fieldwork in two or more locations in China.

¹ This, and all place-names, church names and participant names are pseudonyms.

² For the sake of clarity, I was not working for any mission organisation and nor was I there as a career missionary.

Another plan was to look at how several different religious groups within Huanghaicheng interacted with the state. A third option was to look at the whole Protestant community in Huanghacheng including all unregistered “house churches.” While I think any of these options would make for interesting projects, several factors led me to the decision to focus only on Three-Self churches.

Firstly, as we will see in Chapter Two, there is a shortage of academic literature on contemporary Protestantism in China. The decision to focus my project on Protestantism only was based primarily on the lack of literature. Further, my decision to focus the project primarily on Three-Self churches³ in particular was based on the fact that there is a clear gap in the limited literature on contemporary Protestantism in China on Three-Self churches in particular and that my observations conflict with the core assumptions of much of that available literature; that is, Three-Self churches are less properly “religious” due to the fact that they are state-approved.

Secondly, the maximum amount of time which I was able to conduct research in the field was twelve months. Taking this time constraint into consideration, I chose to focus on depth rather than breadth in my study. To try to cover more than one religious group or to attempt to conduct viable research on all Protestant groups would have been broad-based but undoubtedly have lacked the kind of depth which I was able to achieve by focussing my study on Three-Self churches alone. During my time in the field I was able to make further contacts within the wider Protestant community itself and I hope to return to Huanghaicheng to conduct further research (see Chapter Ten for more details).

Taking both my initial observations made during participant observation in Three-Self churches and this gap in the scholarship into account, I feel that it is pertinent to make enquiries into the relationship between Three-Self churches and the local state in China. My main research question in this project is framed in the following way:

How do Three-Self Protestant churches interact with the state at the local level in relation to the implementation of religious policy and the boundaries that are placed on religious activity?

Flowing from this main question there are a number of questions from which my research project is comprised: What is the relationship between Three-Self churches and the local

³ While the local Protestant religious specialists refer to the “Huanghaicheng Church” 黄海城教会, we are looking here at separate Three-Self church institutions. However, as we shall see in later chapters, there is a great deal of interactions and sharing of resources between these individual churches.

state in historical perspective? What is the nature of Three-Self churches at the local level and what activities do they engage in? What do we mean by local state in terms of religious management? What constitutes locally-implemented policy, regulations and other measures on religion? What is the nature of the interactions between church and state actors? Do the churches gain anything from their interactions with the local state? Do religious groups play any part in the process of policy implementation? Is there space for negotiating policy in terms of what activities churches can be involved in? Do the answers to these questions suggest that there has been a shift in the way the state seeks to deal with religion since opening-up and reforms began at the end of the Maoist era? Scholarship on contemporary religion in the PRC suggests that these questions remain largely unanswered but we will provide answers to these questions in later chapters.

My initial working hypothesis for this research project in light of scholarship on other religious traditions in China was that the process of interaction between individual churches and the local state in relation to what is and what is not acceptable religious activity is carried out on the basis of some form of negotiation. I posited that these negotiations are probably not carried out along the lines of bureaucratic procedures but more through informal procedures facilitated by personal relationships and networks. These interactions are a key catalyst in the creation of “space” for religious practice.

Theoretical contribution⁴

Theoretically, this dissertation provides an original conceptual framework for church-state relations in Huanghaicheng by applying the notion of embeddedness to the relationship between Three-Self churches and state organs as well as by utilising and developing the idea of symbiotic relationships. While other scholars have adopted the concept of symbiosis to conceive interactions between individuals and social groups, I argue that this concept has not been rigorously explored. This dissertation applies a comprehensive framework of symbiosis and explores the structures which are created as a result of the symbiotic relations between Three-Self churches and the Religious Affairs Bureau. Thus, this framework provides a nuanced narrative of the interactions between these institutions, breaking down the idea of a monolithic state and allowing us to see the Three-Self churches as active agents. This framework also helps to reveal that this

⁴ All data referred to in the dissertation is derived from participant observation, conversations and interviews unless otherwise stated. I have purposely not provided details of interviews (dates, times) in order to help protect the identities of participants.

symbiosis facilitates the flow of resources from the local state to the churches which the churches then put to use for their expansion. Of most significance is that the churches can benefit from this relationship in unexpected ways, leaching state power and thus altering the state-society nexus.

Categorising and legislating religion

After 1949, the Communist Party of China (CPC) adopted a similar approach to the management of religion as the New Policy Reforms and the Nationalist policies before them. This approach posited that a “religion” should have scriptures, professional clergy, a fixed site, and a logical theosophy (Ashiwa and Wank, 2009, 9). The working out of this involved defining officially-recognised religions and ensuring the establishment of “patriotic” 爱国 associations to help manage them. The role of these associations was to help implement CPC policy on religion and they were much more politicised than the religious associations in the Republican era (Goossaert, 2011, 186).

The CPC had a pragmatic approach to religion before 1949, when alliances were made with religious groups such as the Red Spears 红枪会 (Perry, 1980, 208-247).⁵ Mao believed that people could not be forced to give up religious belief, and this idea also informed the CPC approach to religion before 1949 (Laliberté, 2011a, 193). However, after 1949, popular religion 民间信仰 was not officially recognised and was subjected to anti-superstition campaigns both in the 1950s and in the early reform period. Despite the fact that the 2005 Regulations on Religious Affairs 宗教事务条例 (RRA), the most recent national regulations on “religion”, do not specify these five religions, there is still an explicit understanding in Huanghaicheng that Daoism, Buddhism, Islam, Protestantism and Catholicism remain the only officially-recognised “religions.” This was evident from talking to Religious Affairs officials and from Religious Affairs publications. These five religions have been referred to in party-state policy documents as “religious superstition” 宗教迷信, the idea being that all religion is superstition but that not all superstition is religion (Fielder, 2006).

⁵ The Republican government had also made alliances with various Redemptive Societies to aid in resisting the Japanese (Goossaert and Palmer, 2011, 106).

Thus, “religion” became a distinct category separate from the state and was effectively institutionalised in the early part of the twentieth century⁶ (Duara, 2008; Ashiwa and Wank, 2009, 3). Not only was “religion” forced to institutionalise, but the management of “religion” was also increasingly institutionalised with the formation of state organs to monitor and supervise religious groups through policies and official state-defined procedures. It is this institutionalised form of religion and its management which has allowed for the symbiosis of the Three-Self churches and the Religious Affairs Bureau which we will examine in greater detail in later chapters.

As we mentioned above, this institutionalisation project began with the end of the Qing. After the formation of the Republic of China in 1911, Daoism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Islam were forced to reform along lines largely modelled on the institutionalised Protestantism brought by Western missionaries (Goossaert, 2008). The authenticity of Protestantism and Catholicism as “religions” was not questioned by either the early reformers or the later Republican state (Nedostup, 2009), mainly because they were already highly institutionalised in the form in which they were introduced to China. The purpose of these officially-sanctioned associations was to delineate the role of religion (Goossaert, 2011, 183). Following on from the ideas of the early reformers, the Nationalists did much to further emphasise the differences between the categories of “religion” 宗教 and “superstition” 迷信 through national anti-superstition campaigns (Duara, 1995). This separation of “religion” and “superstition” as distinct categories, formalised with the New Policy Reforms 新政 towards the end of the Qing, was first encoded in official regulations in 1915 (Ashiwa and Wank, 2009, 9).

As part of the institutionalisation of religion, the distinction between these categories and the activities associated with them continue to be reinforced in official policies and legislation in the contemporary era and have a direct bearing on the activities of Three-Self churches in terms of what the state defines as acceptable practice for believers. There is no single law on religion in China and understanding the legal framework within which religious groups can legitimately operate means that we need to look at the policy documents, regulations and other measures, as well as guidelines produced by the local state for those involved in the management of religion.

⁶ Some scholars have argued convincingly that this state discourse on religion and superstition did not penetrate the population (Goossaert and Palmer, 2011, 124).

The CPC directive which has come to be known as Document 19⁷ (1982), together with Document 6⁸ (1991) are generally taken by scholars working on religion in China to outline the state's basic approach to the management of religion (Chan and Hunter, 1995). These documents reveal that the state pays a lot of attention to religious groups, seeing them as a potentially destabilising force in society. The documents, therefore, outline the importance of encouraging “normal” 正常 religious activities and outlawing any religious activities which do not come into this category. In Huanghaicheng, however, one young Religious Affairs Section 宗教科 (RAS) official I interviewed had heard of Document 19 but had never actually read it perhaps suggesting that its significance is waning. Certain themes within these policy documents continue to influence the management of religion at the local level. For example, in Huanghaicheng, the participation of minors in certain religious activities remains a sensitive issue, as we shall see in later chapters.

There are also a myriad of regulations on the management of religious affairs produced by the central state and the provinces. The Regulations on Religious Affairs⁹ are the most comprehensive national regulations to date and together with other regulations and measures promulgated by the central state make up the core of defining acceptable religious practice. These include the “Measures on the Examination, Approval, and Registration of Religious Activity Venues”¹⁰ (2005); “Measures on the Reporting and Putting on Record Religious Clergy”¹¹ (2006); “Measures on the Reporting and Putting on Record of Principal Clergy in Religious Activity Venues”¹² (2006).

The province in which Huanghaicheng is located also has its own “Provincial Regulations on the Management of Religious Affairs”¹³ (2004) which I will analyse in later chapters. Huanghaicheng has no city-level regulations but a training handbook, “A Compilation of Laws and Regulations on Ethnic Minority and Religious [Affairs]”¹⁴ (Huanghaicheng RAB, 2004) contains guidelines which add further detail to some of the regulations. This volume is produced for personnel from the Religious Affairs Bureau 宗教事务局 (RAB)

⁷ “The Basic Viewpoint and Policy on the Religious Question during Our Country's Socialist Period” 关于我国社会主义时期宗教问题的基本观点和基本政策. For a full English translation see MacInnis (1989, 10-26).

⁸ “Circular Issued by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and the State Council On Some Problems Concerning Further Improving Work on Religion” 中共中央国务院关于进一步做好宗教工作若干问题的通知. For a full English translation see Asia Watch Committee (1992, Appendix 1, 30-35).

⁹ For a full English translation see Regulations on Religious Affairs (2005).

¹⁰ 宗教活动场所设立审批和登记办法 (Huanghaicheng RAB, 2007, 23-26).

¹¹ 宗教教职人员备案办法 (Huanghaicheng RAB, 2007, 27-29).

¹² 宗教活动场所主要教职人员备案办法 (Huanghaicheng RAB, 2007, 30-33).

¹³ 省宗教事务管理条例 (PRMRA) (Huanghaicheng RAB, 2007, 14-22).

¹⁴ 民族宗教法规规章汇编.

and printed by the Huanghaicheng City RAB 市宗教局. The chapter entitled “Questions and Answers on the Policy and Legislation for Work on Ethnic Minorities and Religion”¹⁵ is particularly instructive because it reveals details of local directives not contained in other documents, adding another layer of state attempts at supervision of religion.

In this project we are essentially examining these official categories of religion and religious activity. We will see that the implementation of these official categories is affected by a range of factors at the local level and due to the nature of the relationship between Three-Self churches and the local state, there is a great deal of space for negotiating what religious activities are acceptable.

A closer examination of “religion” and its official categorisation reveals that it was inextricably linked to the building of a modern nation and the development of state institutions (Duara, 1988, 1991). The modern and contemporary usage of the Chinese term religion – 宗教 – is not an indigenous label but was borrowed from Japanese in the early twentieth century, as many terms were (Liu, 1995, especially 284-301; Fan, 2011, 89). The term *zongjiao* did exist in Chinese previous to this period but was used in the texts of a particular Buddhist sect in the fifth and sixth centuries and did not carry the meaning of the term in its contemporary usage (Poon, 2011, 18). The Japanese term, *shūkyō* (*zongjiao*), originally borrowed from Western scholarship, was made popular through the work of Liang Qichao 梁启超 (1873-1929) (Goossaert and Palmer, 2011, 50).

Similarly, the term “superstition” 迷信 was also borrowed from Japanese, *meishin* and, like *zongjiao*, also went through a transition in meaning. *Meishin* was a Buddhist term meaning that not everything in the world had a tangible form and did not allude to belief in an “illusory supernatural world” and nor was it “anti-science” as the modern Chinese denotes (Yang, 2008b, 12). “Superstition” and its differentiation from “religion” was heavily influenced by Western Protestant missionaries, many of whom regarded popular religion as “superstition.” This was direct a result of the analogous processes of the Enlightenment and the Protestant Reformation which led to a particular type of “rational” thinking and the elimination of “superstition” from Catholicism which Mayfair Yang refers to as the “purging of the magical” (Yang, 2008b, 14). Such thinking was also informed by social evolutionary theories which posited that societies moved from primitive to complex and that science and “[modern] rationality” were at the heart of modernity (Yang, 2008b, 2). “Superstition”, then, seen as something backward and

¹⁵ 民族宗教工作政策法规问答.

detrimental to the building of a modern state was pitted against the category of “religion” (Feuchtwang, 2010, 23-24).

There are several categories of superstition besides that of “religious superstition” which we saw above. Firstly, there is “common superstition” 一般迷信 which includes some aspects of “popular religion” 民间信仰 such as ancestor worship or grave sweeping. In Huanghaicheng, I did not meet anyone who classified these activities as “religious” 宗教性的. The local state does little to manage such activities in Huanghaicheng. In fact, during the Grave-sweeping Festival 清明节¹⁶ in 2010, the local government sent out mass text-messages warning locals to be careful not to cause hill fires when burning paper money 烧纸 for their ancestors. The district governments also placed personnel from Street Councils 街道办事处 on “fire watch” on the forested hills around the city where people would go to sweep graves, kowtow to their ancestors and burn paper money. We see here that although such activities are not within the remits of what is acceptable religious practice, these activities tend to be individual in nature and not highly-organised and therefore are not perceived as a threat by the state.

“Feudal superstition” 封建迷信 also includes many aspects of “popular religion” conducted by ritual specialists such as exorcism, (faith) healing, and divination (see MacInnis, 1989, 385-409; Anagnost, 1994, 234). The label itself echoes negative aspects of the “old China” which the CPC claims to have transformed and the state has been more active in suppressing particular named activities both within registered and unregistered religious groups (Anagnost, 1987). However, popular religion has enjoyed something of a revival nationally and Huanghaicheng is no exception. “Feudal superstition” is a separate category from localised “customs” 习俗 which the religious activities of China’s ethnic minorities 少数民族 are often assigned, offering them state legitimacy. Chapter Nine reveals how the relationship between the Three-Self churches and the RAB in Huanghaicheng provides space for the Protestant religious specialists and lay believers to conduct activities such as exorcism, faith healing and prophecy which the state officially labels as feudal superstition.

Other important official terms for categorising religious activities and religious groups are “heretical group” 异端 and “evil cult” 邪教组织. The categories “heretical group” and “evil cult,” used in official documents are “political categories” (Barker, 2011) and groups defined as such are almost always put on a black list and members face the possibility of

¹⁶ The Grave-sweeping Festival and Mid-Autumn Festival 中秋节 became official national holidays in 2008.

arrest and punishment if caught.¹⁷ We will argue in later chapters that the Three-Self churches make use of these official categories in order to provide legitimacy for their own “grey area” activities.

As a central concept to this thesis, it is worth expanding here on what we mean by “grey area” activities. Yang (2006, 97) defined “grey” religious activities as those which have an “ambiguous legal status.” While this basic idea is useful, it is worth analysing in some detail what results in religious activities having an ambiguous legal status. We saw above the range of policies, regulations and other measures related to state management of religion as well as the range of state-defined categories defining religion and religious activity. It is in the implementation of legislation on religion as well as the use of state categories that we see areas of ambiguity. Firstly, the legal status of many regulations and other measures on religion is not clear. Many have not been ratified by the appropriate state organs but are still relayed to RAB and other local state personnel as “law.” In addition to this, local-level regulations sometimes conflict with national regulations; for example, the RRA does not define specific religious groups whereas the PRMRA does, as we saw above. This leaves the status of religious groups not defined within the remits of local-level regulations unclear. We have already noted in passing the ambiguity of language used in policy and regulations; for example, “normal” religious activities are supposed to receive the protection of the state, yet what exactly constitutes “normal” is not clearly defined. These are some of the facets of policies, regulations and other measures which result in some religious activities which can only be classed as “grey.”

There are other factors which also result in activities which we can label as “grey.” The interpretation of policies and regulations related to religion is often down to individual personnel working in local state organs. This individual interpretation depends on a wide range of factors including amount of training or depth of understanding of a particular religious tradition. Further, there are also sometimes conflicts between different state policies which lead to ambiguities in the legal status of certain activities since local state personnel must decide which policies to emphasise at the cost of others. For example, in the interests of developing a “harmonious society” Religious Affairs officials may refrain from reigning in the activities of particular religious groups so as to avoid conflict which may draw negative attention from higher-ups. The role of religion within the state has also arguably changed over time. More recently, religion itself has been viewed by the state as a possible positive force in society – within state-defined limits, of course. So,

¹⁷ For a detailed list of “evil cults” see Yang (2011, 103-105) and Chan and Carlson (2005, 15 footnote 15).

these myriad contradictions and conflicts within the state result in a range of activities lacking a clear legal status and can, therefore, be classed as “grey.” In later chapters we will analyse in detail the range of “grey” activities which the Huanghaicheng Three-Self churches are engaged in.

Issues affecting fieldwork in Huanghaicheng

Although I will provide a detailed overview of my methodology and methods in Chapter Two, I feel it pertinent to mention some of the broad issues which I faced when conducting fieldwork in Huanghaicheng. The data analysed and written up as a coherent narrative of church-state relations in this dissertation does not tell the whole story. There were some aspects of the data which participants were willing to share with me but requested would not be included in this dissertation. Secondly, after the murder of two key members¹⁸ of a Three-Self church in a town near Huanghaicheng, several interviews with key officials were cancelled; in part I am sure, because of the sensitivity of this unusual event.¹⁹ Since this occurred in my final weeks in Huanghaicheng, it was impossible to hope to re-arrange these interviews but I hope that in the future I will have the opportunity to return to Huanghaicheng to followup the ongoing story of the Three-Self churches there.

Thesis Chapters overview

Chapter Two is a detailed review of the literature on the relationship between religion and the state in China. This review reveals that the major paradigm applied to state-religion interactions is inadequate for dealing with more recent empirical studies. Chapter Two also reveals that there is a real lack of contemporary research on Three-Self churches at the local level. In Chapter Two I will outline my conceptual framework of embeddedness and symbiosis, together with an overview of my methods and methodology. I will then introduce my field-site, Huanghaicheng, in some detail in Chapter Three, demonstrating how the institutionalising state project embedded Protestantism into the local state, paving the way for embeddedness and symbiosis. We will also see the significance of

¹⁸ For the sake of clarity, these murders were not the result of religious hatred or due to any action of the two believers.

¹⁹ I had no intention of pursuing questions on the murders but I can fully understand the reticence of these officials to speak to a “foreigner” at such a (politically) sensitive time.

Protestantism within the local religious ecosystem. Chapter Four analyses in detail the eight Three-Self churches in Huanghaicheng, revealing how official state institutional procedures and policies have helped to form the official structure and activities of these congregations. We will also see the important distinction between the official and the unofficial in relation to church leadership, proselytising and other religious activities. Chapter Five explores how the Three-Self churches are institutionally embedded in the local state and the manner in which these churches and the religious specialists who manage them are in symbiosis with the Religious Affairs Bureau. Building on Chapter Five, Chapter Six shows how the Three-Self church symbiosis with the Religious Affairs Bureau facilitates the institutional expansion of the churches. Likewise, Chapter Seven demonstrates how this symbiosis provides the channels necessary for the expansion of the churches as built institutions. Chapter Eight explores how space for “grey area” congregational activities is facilitated by church-state symbiosis. Similarly, Chapter Nine examines some of the “grey area” activities whereby the Three-Self churches engage with wider society in an attempt to spread the Protestant message. In the Conclusion, I summarise my main points, reveal how the embeddedness of Three-Self churches in the local state and the symbiosis between the churches and the RAB actually result in the transformation of the state-society nexus. Lastly, I will suggest the limitations of this research project and outline avenues for future study.

A note on Pinyin and Romanisation

All Chinese names, places and other vocabulary which the author deems to be specialist (that is, not ‘everyday’ terms) are written using Chinese characters after the English term on the first usage. Thereafter, Chinese *pinyin* is used. All Chinese names are represented in their original order; that is, they will begin with the surname followed by the given name unless an individual has adopted a Western given name which is placed before the Chinese surname.

Chapter Two

A Review of the Literature,

Theoretical Framework, Methodology and Methods

INTRODUCTION

A proper understanding of the relationship between Three-Self churches and the local state requires that we examine both the literature on religious organisations in China for insights into approaches on religion-state relations and also scholarship on Protestantism more specifically. This growing literature reveals, most significantly, the notion of state control over religious groups and/or the resistance of religious groups to the state as a dominant paradigm in the literature. However, within the existing literature the strands which are particularly instructive are the most recent studies²⁰ which question this paradigm and seek to re-frame our understanding of the religion-state nexus. Our survey of the literature will reveal a paucity in the literature on Protestantism in contemporary China, and more specifically, Three-Self churches. This project fills some of that gap by analysing Three-Self churches in their relationship to the local state. By arguing that the Three-Self churches in Huanghaicheng are embedded in the local state, I will outline the conceptual framework of symbiosis in the second section of this chapter. This framework will allow us to conceptualise the ties between the churches and the state while highlighting the agency of the churches in utilising the informal and unofficial structures created as a result of these relationships in order to facilitate their expansion. In the last section, I will detail the methodology and methods employed in this project, detailing the approach to data generation and analysis. We will look first at the state-religion literature.

State-Religion Interactions in China

In this section we will locate contemporary state-religion relations within both a historical and a contemporary socio-political context, though it would be very naïve to assume, for

²⁰ Most of these studies have been published since this PhD project was first proposed.

example that all religious traditions in the PRC have the same type of relationship to the state, or that different streams of Buddhism, for example, are regarded by the state as one homogeneous whole (see Birnbaum, 2003). In addition, we can assume that there have been changes over time and that the relationship between the state and any particular religious tradition will vary across locales, as other scholars have noted (Lang and Yang, 2011, 6). However, we will see that state management of religion has a long history in China but we will also see that the state in its local context needs to be broken down into its constituent parts to allow a more nuanced understanding of state-religion relations at the grassroots.

Historical overview of state-religion relations

With the growing interest on the nature of state-religion relations both before and after 1949, it is becoming clear that the involvement of officialdom in managing religion for its own purposes has a long history in China and that the current approach to religion management does not differ dramatically from previous forms. Several broad themes emerge from these historical studies. Firstly, is the idea that historically, religion has been very much tied up with state policies and power. This idea is most prevalent in Yu's (2005) study where he argues that Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism were inextricably linked to the state and its symbolic order (see also Lagerwey, 2010 for a similar argument). Secondly, we see in this scholarship the idea that China has a long tradition of managing religious affairs. Bays (2004), has highlighted the means by which the state sought to manage religious groups and personnel. Almost all governments since the Tang dynasty have required the registering or licensing of religious groups, whilst those groups not registered or licensed were viewed with suspicion by the state authorities and were often victims of extortion and harassment (Bays, 2004, 26-27; see also Chan, 1992). Overall, these analyses emphasise the similarity between the management of religion in imperial times and that of contemporary China (Chan, 1992, 42; Bays, 2004, 25; Yu, 2005, 145; Brook, 2009).

It is certainly accurate to say that the Chinese state has desired to manage all manner of religions in China since imperial times. The Nationalists, for example, organised some religious groups while attempting to suppress others (Goossaert, 2008; Goossaert, 2011). However, it is important to emphasise that some recent scholarship has suggested that religious specialists and lay believers were active agents in engaging with the Chinese

state, particularly at the local level. For example, Nedostup's (2009) study of religion management in Jiangsu during the Republican era suggests that the state had considerable difficulty in implementing policies on the reform of temples. Similarly, Poon (2011) argues that the reform of temples in Guangzhou in the Republican era was often a process of negotiation between the actors involved, rather than simply a monolithic state carrying out its projects with impunity. Lee's (2009) analysis of Protestants in Chaozhou after 1949 demonstrates the manner in which space for religious activity was provided through mediation between the Protestant community and the local state. These insightful studies certainly raise questions regarding the possibility of similar processes in the contemporary era since there is a great deal of continuity in the CPC's approach to managing religion with that of the GMD.

Contemporary state-religion relations

A close reading of studies on contemporary religion in China suggests that, until recently, most have been dominated by the paradigm of state control of religion and/or resistance to the state by religious groups. Having already seen that state control of religion is a dominant theme in historical analyses of the relationship between religion and the state, it is perhaps no surprise that we find an emphasis on this idea in contemporary discourse. However, recent research on religion-state relations has begun to question these paradigms, primarily because many of these studies are based on empirical data generated at the grassroots and do not conceive of the state as monolithic and in binary opposition to religious groups.

The state control and/or religious resistance paradigm in state-religion relations

The notion of state control over religious groups and/or the resistance of religious groups to the state is emphasised in many studies on religion in the People's Republic of China (PRC) to the extent that together these two ideas combine to form the dominant paradigm (see Dunch, 2008; Ashiwa and Wank, 2009; Cao, 2011).

Studies which emphasise state control/religious resistance emphasise these two aspects to varying degrees. However, both are based on questionable premises. Firstly, the state is perceived to be the dominant actor carrying out its projects at will. For example,

Overmyer (2003) sees the theme of state control of religion as having continued over the last several hundred years while arguing there has been an increase in control of religion by the state under the CPC.

Furthermore, the resistance aspect of the paradigm emphasises the view that religious groups resist the state or are in direct conflict with it. Certainly the role that religious belief has played in Chinese history would give credence to the notion that religious groups have either been the basis of collective action against the advances of the state or have fuelled anti-state sentiment (Perry, 2001. For specific examples see Naquin, 1976; Perry, 1980; Esherick, 1987; Cohen, 1997; Spence, 1997). More recent examples have been cited from rural China during the 1960s when villages turned to popular religion – seen as “superstition” by the state – after official policies led to widespread disruption of the traditional way of life and severe famine in some locales (Feuchtwang, 2000, 162). I would also argue that resistance is often regarded as a marker of the authenticity of religious groups by observers and believers alike; conflict with the state demonstrates the religious piety of believers. Religious groups may be regarded as inauthentic because they are registered with the state and, therefore, do not often come into direct conflict with state organs (see Faries, 2005²¹; Bays, 2009).

Within this paradigm, it is worth mentioning a number of studies which have focussed on the Chinese state’s ability to co-opt religious groups in order to control them. These studies tend to deal with registered religious organisations and present them as having little leeway in the face of state power. Potter (2003) was the first to expand on this idea but it has influenced other studies (see Kindopp’s (2004c) analysis of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM); White’s (2010) study of a city development building project which affected a Three-Self church; Yang (2011) for a more general description of the main religious organisations in China). While these studies have informed us of a specific approach taken by the state they do not consider in any depth the religious organisations as agents in these interactions. This dissertation locates Three-Self churches within the state-society nexus as active agents in shaping their relationship to local state institutions and deriving benefits from these interactions for the expansion of the church.

²¹ Faries does not discuss this issue at length but the idea is evident in his analysis of literature on Christianity in China.

Legal/policy analysis on religious regulations and laws

Analyses have been conducted on state-religion relations by looking specifically at legislation either directly or indirectly affecting religious policy in the PRC. Without exception, these analyses begin with the premise that state control of religion is the underlying basis of all religious policy legislation and that this has been consistent in its stance throughout the reform period (see Britsch, 1995; Leung, 1995, 2005; Chan and Hunter, 1995; Liu, 1996; Lambert, 2001; for more updated analyses covering the 2005 regulations see Carlson, 2005; Fielder, 2006; Ying, 2006). The atheistic stance of the CPC is emphasised as the basis for religious policy (Chan and Hunter, 1995, 22; Carlson, 2005, 749). Accounts of the repression of religion during the Cultural Revolution (see Chan and Hunter, 1995) and the “repression” and “harassment” of religious groups up to the modern day (Leung, 1995; Fielder, 2006) are used as examples for demonstrating this atheistic stance. However, they only provide a very incomplete view of how policies are implemented, particularly at the local level. These analyses also argue that there was an increasing emphasis on the control of religion throughout the 1990s (Britsch, 1995; Leung, 1995; Lambert, 2001). Some commentators even claim that the trend has changed from the administration of religion to “dictating the actual practices and doctrines of religious groups” (Chan and Hunter, 1995, 35).

These analyses of religious policy documents highlight the somewhat ambiguous language in which regulations and laws are framed and inconsistencies both within documents and between documents (Chan and Hunter, 1995). Much has been said about the meaning of “normal” 正常 religious activities or what might constitute “superstition” 迷信 as opposed to “religion” (see Carlson, 2005; Fielder, 2006).

A significant point made in some of these policy analyses is that policies are responses to specific situations (Chan and Hunter, 1995, 34-35). These situations can be either domestic or international in nature; yet only Leung (2005, 905-906) makes a serious attempt to bring together national and international events and their effect on policy, arguing that the protests centred around Tiananmen Square in 1989, the collapse of the former Soviet Union, a meeting of unofficial Catholic bishops, the rise of *Falun Gong* and a fear of foreign involvement in religion all led to the tightening of religious control in the 1990s. Chan (2004a; 2004b) attempts to assess China’s economics to state policy on religion at the national level.

However, it needs to be asked whether we can realistically assess Chinese religious policy on legal perspectives based on Western notions of how the law operates and what role the state plays in the implementation of law. Britsch (1995, 347) claims that “[p]olicies, directives, hints and suggestions have been preferred over the rigidity of laws and ordinances” but does not account for this claim in his analysis of religious policy. Potter’s (2003) analysis is instructive in that it attempts to understand how the legal system in China operates and what role the law plays in society, and he argues that the current system of policies and regulation on religion are concerned with protecting state legitimacy rather than protecting the rights of religious believers. However, his analysis is dominated by the notion of state control and is concerned with making broad generalisations regarding religious policy. None of these accounts contain detailed descriptions of how policy is implemented in specific areas. Some commentators note that there is not much difference on the ground since the new regulations were implemented (Fielder, 2006). Yet it is not clear on what basis this claim is made.

There are several main weaknesses with the approaches outlined above. Firstly, because of the predominant paradigm of state control/religious resistance, these studies either ignore altogether empirical evidence which suggests otherwise or cannot account for such data. Secondly, the state is taken to be a monolithic whole, or if different state actors are taken into account, analyses are not comprehensive and so do not extend our knowledge of how religious groups interact with different state actors. Thirdly, religious policy is viewed as legislation to which all state bureaus and departments adhere to. Lastly, there is a severe lack of grass-roots studies: most are concerned with perceived general trends in the growth and development of particular religions. A major contribution of this study on Three-Self churches is to analyse what religious activity is officially permitted within regulation on religion while comparing this with the activities of Three-Self Protestant congregations. This undoubtedly provides a more detailed and informed analysis.

Scholarship on religious traditions in contemporary China

The idea of state control and/or religious resistance is evident in studies across a range of religious traditions found in China. There are currently five official religions in China: Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, Catholicism and Protestantism and there is also a large (possibly larger) number of religious groups and amount of religious activity which is either banned, not officially recognised or whose official recognition is unclear. Much of

the reform-era scholarship on religion in China has tended to place a great emphasis on the distinction – which is essentially a political one – between religious groups which are in contact with registered religious organisations and religious groups which are not. While there is clearly some distinction between, for example, a Protestant congregation which has registered with the relevant state department through the officially-recognised TSPM and a Protestant congregation which operates without having registered, the difference is often not as great as many scholars assume.

Scholarship on the official religious groups has emphasised the control that the state exerts on these groups through the official religious associations. Buddhism is reportedly the largest religion in China although few studies have focussed on its relationship to the state in the reform era (Laliberté, 2011a). Birnbaum (2003) emphasises state control over Buddhism in all its forms, arguing that it suffers from a “pervasive official unsympathy [*sic*]” (Birnbaum, 2003, 132). Further, he argues that the officially-sanctioned Buddhist Association of China 中国佛教协会 (BAC) seeks to “organise”, “control” and “regularise” all the different schools (Birnbaum, 2003, 132). This is partly done by the selection process for monks and abbots being increasingly narrowed by the state (Birnbaum, 2003, 134). Although some building projects involving Buddhist temples are sponsored by the government these are seen predominantly by analysts as tourist attractions and not for the benefit of Buddhism (Birnbaum, 2003, 137-138). Some accounts of Buddhism in Tibet tell of a Han re-construction of the region and its religious traditions (Birnbaum, 2003, 142). Other accounts emphasise the all-pervasive control of the state in controlling Tibetan Buddhism (Cabezón, 2008).

Commentators present a similar account of Daoism in the PRC. We are told that Daoism is “stymied” and “repressed” under “anti-religious” state religious policy and control (Lai, 2003, 106, 120). Aspects of religious activity long-associated with Daoism, such as shamanism, are criticised for being “superstitious” and remain illegal while some activities and liturgical services performed in homes without official permission are criticised by the Daoist Association of China 中国道教协会 (DAC) (Lai, 2003, 115-117).

While Islam has not been influential in contemporary China to the extent that popular religion, Christianity, Daoism, Buddhism and Confucianism have been, it is an important religious group in China’s socio-political milieu (Tamney, 2005, 1). Part of the importance of Islam in China is to encourage better relations between Muslims in China and Muslims in Central Asia by the Chinese government because of oil resources but some argue that Islam remains restricted most severely in border regions (Gladney, 2003,

157). Some scholars have suggested that Chinese Islam is predominantly a political force, especially in Xinjiang (Dillon, 1997) while there is some reporting of arrests of Uyghur and other Muslims by the Public Security Bureau (PSB) and claims of huge numbers of executions (*Time Magazine*, March 5, 2002; Gladney, 2003, 152). Many studies on Muslims in China still primarily focus on issues of identity and nationalism (see Baronovitch, 2003; Becquelin, 2004) rather than on the relationship between Islam and the Chinese state.

Christianity in the PRC is officially divided into Catholicism and Protestantism as two distinct religions. Although the relationship between the Catholic Church in Rome and the official Catholic Church in China has markedly improved since reforms began, some scholars have argued that there is an issue of state control on the Catholic Church (see Myers, 1991; Charbonnier, 1993). This focus on control includes the issue of the selection of bishops by the Catholic Patriotic Association 天主教爱国会 (CPA) which differs from appointments made by the Vatican (see Madsen, 2003, 172-180).

The idea of what we can call ‘active’ resistance to the state is demonstrated by some scholars working on unregistered or illegal religious groups. Anagnost (1994) sees the resurgence of popular religion temple activity as resistance to the state. Jing (1996) in his analysis of a Confucian ancestral hall sees similar processes occurring. Mueggler (2001) argues that local religious practices serve as a means of resisting the state and state projects. Thornton (2004) argues that syncretic religious groups or new religious movements (*Falun Gong* and other *qigong* groups²²) use modern technology and have utilised members working in the state in resisting the state. These groups have also used technology to gain support including funding from overseas Chinese. Thornton argues that the Internet allows these groups to evade the state more effectively and in effect has created “crypto-anarchy” (Thornton, 2004, 264). Similarly, Dunn (2007, 2008) has argued that the Internet has also been used by religious groups as a resource from which the state can be resisted and attacked. ‘Eastern Lightning’ 东方闪电 (‘Church of Almighty God’) has launched extensive Internet campaigns critical of the Chinese state and the CPC in particular, making claims that heaven will destroy the CPC whilst seeking to subvert state-sanctioned religious groups – Protestants in particular. Kindopp (2002, 259a) has also argued that banned groups have used symbolic acts, such as silent protest, as a means to resist the state.

²² For detailed analyses of *Falun Gong* and other *qigong* groups and the response of the state in dealing with them see Chang (2004), Palmer (2007, 2008), Ownby (2008), Penny (2008) and Tong (2009).

While the resistance paradigm may be useful for analysing religious groups such as new religious movements (NRMs) like *Falun Gong* or Eastern Lightning which have a specific anti-state agenda, we should be careful in interpreting any religious activity which falls outside state-defined remits as resistance to the state. The resistance that religion makes against the state posited by some commentators is more ‘passive’ in the sense that religious belief is cosmological in nature and “distinguished from other cultural practices” (Feuchtwang, 2000, 162-163). These religious beliefs provide other conceptions of reality than those produced by the state: “Resistance of this kind may take such forms as the diffusion of knowledge, of stories and a sense of history and the direction of social forces, which may not directly challenge the state or regime, but which are autonomous from and alternative to its legitimating ideologies” (Feuchtwang, 2000, 163). A sense of close community in Christian villages and neighbourhoods would be one suggested example of how religious groups can offer something not given by the state (Feuchtwang, 2000, 166). However, this is a very elastic definition of resistance and we should be careful in considering such an under-nuanced argument. It is essential to ask, How do religious groups themselves interpret their behaviour? Do they see actions they take as being resistant to the state? These are questions which we will return to below.

Thus, these studies have sought to expand our understanding of how different religious groups have revived in the reform era and how they seek to operate. However, the underlying assumption of state control and/or religious resistance as the only viable narrative must be interrogated in light of studies whose analysis takes into account religious groups as actors with their own projects in religion-state interactions.

Scholarship on Protestantism in contemporary China

Apart from the call from anthropologist Janella Cannell for more research on Christianity which we mentioned in the Introduction, scholars working on Christianity in China have long been making appeals for more research to be done to provide empirical data on Christianity in China in the reform era (see Tang, 1993). Until recently, there has been a predominant pre-occupation in academia with Chinese Protestantism in relation to the missionary era. In addition, many of these studies have been preoccupied with foreign mission centred narratives, with few exceptions (see, for example, Dunch, 2001; White, 2011). It has not been until fairly recently that scholarship has begun to focus on Protestantism in contemporary China.

Some commentators have claimed that “there is no lack of material to consult in assessing Protestantism today” (Bays, 2003, 184). However, I would argue that there *is* a real lack of studies on churches at the grassroots level and analyses of how they interact with individual state actors in the contemporary era. Part of the issue, I would suggest, is that there is a profusion of commentary about Protestantism in China but that there is a shortage of rigorous scholarship on its dynamics in the mainland China context.

A significant amount of the literature on contemporary Protestantism in China is influenced by the missionary era, some writers themselves having been missionaries in China before 1949 while some are currently involved in mission work in the country. Many of these works (with a limited number of exceptions) are heavily reliant on second-hand accounts, hearsay or brief trips to China while many claims are not referenced or sources declared (see, for example, Wallis, 1985; Brown, 1986; Kauffman, 1987; Adeney, 1988; Paterson and Farrell, 1993; Aikman, 2007) This is perhaps one of the biggest weaknesses in this body of literature and yet these accounts are widely-cited in academic studies. Despite these weaknesses, Lambert (1994, 2003, 2006) has extensive contacts within China and his 2006 study is more objective than his earlier (1994) work. His attempts to collate figures for numbers of Protestants in China has been the most systematic to date and he has called for caution when making claims such as un-verifiably large numbers (Lambert, 2003). While I do not think it is necessary to labour a great deal on the issues which I view as problematic with this genre of writing, some of these materials are referenced and quoted in the academic literature, often without any critical analysis.

A brief sketch of these accounts reveals that they tend to be generally anti-CPC, and/or tend also to be characterised by an outright rejection or extreme suspicion of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, China Christian Council and Three-Self congregations as tools of the CPC, while at the same time projecting a fetishised view of unregistered churches (“house churches”) which are often seen as “true” churches. This false distinction between Three-Self churches and unregistered congregations is based, at least partly, on a theological argument about whether “Christ” or the “state” is the head of the church (see, for example, Adeney, 1988; Lambert, 1994). However, this dismissal of Three-Self churches as political allies of a perceived totalitarian state, and a communist one at that, reduces these congregations to something other than religious groups and makes them redundant as valuable for analysis by scholars of religion in China generally or Protestantism specifically. The theology of the TSPM is criticised as compromised and the leaders of it as politically inclined (see Wallis, 1985, 76-79). The unregistered

congregations are seen as operating in a restricted space for religion while accounts of persecution are emphasised (Bürklin, 2006).

While more sympathetic to the TSPM, Suman's (2006) overview of unregistered churches and Three-Self churches is entirely based on secondary sources and lacks analysis. The same can be said of both Towery's (2000) and Falkenstein's (2008) attempts to provide a survey of developments within Protestantism in China.

As with the accounts of other religious traditions we have already looked at, commentators have commonly seen state control and religious resistance as the prime paradigm with which to study the Protestant Church in China. Cheng (2003), Wielander (2009a, 2009b) and Marsh and Zhong (2010) focus on unregistered churches and their perceived role in resisting the state while Zhou (2006) has attempted to argue that the Protestant Church in China has a role in bringing democracy to the country. Accounts which include some analysis of both unregistered congregations and the TSPM by Bays (2003, 2004), Kindopp (2004a, 2004b, 2004c), Vala (2008, 2009) and Wenger (2004) all emphasise the design of the state to control and intervene in many, if not all, spheres of church life. In addition, Kindopp has dealt primarily with the TSPM at the national level and all these studies lack systematic analyses of Three-Self churches and their relationship to the state at the grassroots. Much scholarship displays Three-Self churches, and in particular their leaders, as tools of the state, questioning the sincerity of believers or claiming that the Three-Self churches lack vibrancy (see Ying, 2003; Homer, 2010; Schak, 2011). Scholarship on a range of predominantly unregistered Protestant groups by Wesley (2004), Kao (2009), Deng (2011), Oblau, (2011), and Tang, (2011) seek to deal with the Pentecostal-style nature²³ of these groups and do not deal with the issue of church-state relations.

An overview of Protestantism written by Whyte (1988) is informative but only covers the early years of the reform era and deals in general terms with policy on religion without any real analysis of how this is implemented at the local level. Hunter and Chan's (1993) in-depth overview of Protestantism in China is very informative, and although many changes regarding what religious activities are acceptable to the state in the reform era are acknowledged, there are few case studies of either registered or unregistered Protestant

²³ There is an ongoing debate within the literature on how to locate certain practices such as glossolalia, faith healing, visions reported in churches across China. Wesley (2004) argues that such phenomena allow a significant part of the Protestant church to be labelled as "Pentecostal" while other scholars such as Tang (2011) argue that such labels are problematic while demonstrating that there is a degree of congruence between these practices and those found within popular religion.

churches. Hunter and Chan did conduct fieldwork in two different churches but the limited case studies that exist in this literature are nearly twenty years out of date. These studies are also limited because they were written before the 2005 regulations. Work done by Dunch (2001) and Lee (2007) provide good general overviews of issues in Protestantism in China but do not deal with grassroots congregations. Recent dissertations based on ethnographic research in rural areas of China (Huang, 2003; Liu, H. T. 2006; Chen, 2007) focus on either unregistered or Three-Self churches and deal with a range of issues but do not deal with the relationship between these churches and the local state in any real depth.

Of particular interest are the growing number of studies by young scholars on Three-Self and unregistered churches in urban areas (Fisher, 2005; Liu, S. B. 2006; Ma, 2008; Zhao, 2010; Xie, 2010, 2011), but again, while they provide details on a range of religious activities and how these are understood by church leaders and lay believers, there is little analysis of church-state interaction as this is not the primary focus of these studies. Studies conducted in four urban Three-Self churches in the last five years are published in Wu, Li, Huang, He et al²⁴ (2009) which attempt to locate Chinese Protestantism within the concept of glocalisation and provide some insight into the religious activities of the congregations. An informative study based on fieldwork in Fujian conducted by Colijn (2011) looks specifically at Protestant funerals and the negotiations which take place between church leaders and families regarding the nature of the funeral.

Clearly there is a paucity of academic scholarship on Protestantism in China. The existing literature overwhelmingly focuses on the state as the main actor and we have a lack in our understanding as to what role Protestant religious specialists and lay believers might play in these interactions as agents. More specifically, little research has been conducted on Three-Self churches at the local level and we have yet to gain an-depth understanding of the dynamics of relations between these churches and the local state.

Alternative studies of state-religion relations

Recent scholarship, mostly in the field of ethnography and anthropology, on religion in China and its interaction with the state has much to offer in analysing the problems and issues of relating state religious policy to the religious activities of various state-

²⁴ The names of the other contributors are not identified in the book.

sanctioned and unofficial religious groups. The most notable studies to date have been those of Dean (1993, 1998, 2003, 2009, 20011), Lozada (2001) and Chau (2005, 2006, 2009, 2011b) which provide rich accounts of how religious groups function at the local level and borrow from indigenous ideas of religion.²⁵ I will also refer here to other recent scholarship which highlights important factors of the local-level interaction between religious groups and local state actors.

Dean's (1993, 1998, 2003) research seeks to explain the resurgence of Daoist ritual and popular religion in Fujian. Based on extensive fieldwork, he has conducted in-depth studies of the histories of several folk religions or local "cults" and relates these historical accounts to contemporary practice while analysing how religious practice engages with the local state. Similarly, Chau (2005, 2006, 2009, 2011b) has centred his research on popular religion in Shaanbei and his aims are threefold: to study the "intertwinement" of popular religion and folk culture revival, agrarian political culture and the agrarian public sphere, and the local state and changing state-society relations (Chau, 2006, 3). He argues that the local state's treatment of popular religious activities is one of "regulatory paternalism" (2006, 215) while the structure of the relationship between the local state and the Heilongdawang Temple is one of "local state corporatism" (2006, 217). This relationship is also described as a "symbiotic patron-client relationship" (2009, 233). These are issues which we will return to below. Lozada's (2001) study analysed factors in determining what makes a church "local." He conducted his period of extensive fieldwork in a Catholic Hakka village in Southeast China. These studies reveal several important factors which can inform the relationship and interactions between Protestant churches and the local state.

The work of all three scholars demonstrates the fragmented nature of the local state and the degree to which religious institutions play a role in local governance. Dean argues that the local state is not "monolithic" and that "there has been a certain amount of confusion generated by the competing claims of different divisions of the government" (1998, 264). He also speaks of the "melting" of state institutions as rituals take increasing significance in villages and usurp the role of the state (1998, 57). Lastly, he highlights the importance of local religious groups whose "social and cultural resources far surpass those of

²⁵ Chan and Hunter (1994) propose that analysts of religion in China have tended to use definitions of religion based on those formulated by Durkheim, Marx and Morgan which have their bases in Christian thought and emphasise "personal belief, doctrinal statements, and institutions" and which "consider religion as a measurable package, with a monolithic identity" (Chan and Hunter, 1994, 53). While this is undoubtedly the case, another qualification is needed; that is, these theories of religion are derived not from Christian thought but from *Western* Christian thought. Christian thought itself does not have a monolithic identity.

regional cults to gods, ancestral lineages, and possibly even the local government” (Dean, 1998, 19) while claiming that the “Three in One in Xinghua [southern Fujian] is most likely capable of mobilising more human and capital resources than even the local government” (Dean, 1998, 224; Dean 2011, 134).

Similarly, Lozada (2001, 42) argues that “the local church is the principal structure around which Little Rome [the village where Lozada conducted fieldwork] is built” while being the centre of social life in the village. Indeed, like Dean’s research, this would suggest that the local state is not the dominant actor and is not in a position of complete control over local religious activity. In fact, Lozada points out this very idea himself when he says that the local state is not unified: “the [village] community is held together not through state political penetration but through the symbolic and institutional reaches of the Little Rome Catholic Church” (Lozada, 2001, 63). Chau (2006, 10) suggests that popular religion is regaining its institutional significance at the centre of village life. The diffuse nature of the local state is also captured by Chau: “The state does not act directly upon popular religion; rather it is the local agents of the state who do” and this local state “is an amalgam of administrative structures, political processes, policies, and crosscutting intentions and desires” (Chau, 2006, 14).

The ambiguous legal standing of religious activities which are conducted with the tacit approval or overt compliance with local state actors is another important theme in these studies. It is hard to imagine a more overt display of religious activity than that described by Dean on the birthday of a local deity (1998, 208-209). Hundreds of delegations attend and the lively events are made up of musical troupes, performances and rituals even although the local cult does not have official recognition. In addition, the same cult has been the subject of academic conferences with local and provincial officials in attendance (Dean, 1998, 230). Chau’s (2006, 215-216) analysis also reveals the attendance of local officials as the guests of honour at temple festivals while various awards were conveyed on the temple by different bureaus in the local and county-level government (2006, 222). Finally, Lozada (2001, 89-90) reveals Catholic baptisms of a range of ages including pre-schoolers in a registered Catholic church and a Catechism class for children. Outsiders who marry into the village “are expected to become Catholic” (Lozada, 2001, 111) while Christmas was more important than Spring Festival in this Catholic village (Lozada, 2001, 95).

It is of central importance to ask what factors or processes allow the overt practice of religious activities which do not fall within the remit of religious policy. These studies

suggest various stimuli which facilitate the practice of legally ambiguous religious activity. Firstly, the attitudes of local officials have the ability to hinder or encourage the growth of religious activities: officials can gain power or “community stature” by their involvement in religious affairs (Dean, 1993, 174; Chau, 2006, 12). For example, some local officials have realised that religion can be a source of funding for the building of roads and other infrastructure (Lozada, 2001); secondly, some officials appear to appreciate the moral or ethical values held by religious adherents (Dean, 1993, 5). By managing religious affairs, these officials can offer an “alternative morality” to the community (Dean, 1993, 174).

The ability of local officials to placate and negotiate with their superiors (and presumably other government departments) is also a factor influencing the nature of religious activity (Dean, 1993, 178). In addition, Dean’s study reveals that the “permissibility of a ritual depends a great deal on the determination of the local people, the relationship of the village Party secretary with the villagers and with the local government, the extent of overseas connections, the wealth and influence of the community, and the constantly changing ‘political atmosphere’” (Dean, 1993, 9). Further, the ability of religious leaders in their networking capabilities and their handling of local officials is another factor which can help determine the extent to which religious activity is accepted by the state (Dean, 1993, 178; Dean, 1998, 254; Chau, 2006, 12, 99-100). For the purposes of our analysis of Three-Self churches, can we assume the same to be true for Three-Self religious specialists? Some local officials were supportive of religious activity; others were using religious activity in a battle for power (Dean, 1993, 104-106). For example, reforms have brought with them a loss of power and prestige for some cadres. Embittered by this demotion in the social domain, some local officials attempt to interfere in local religious activity in order to demonstrate their authority (Dean, 1993, 5). In fact, one of the Taoist temples at the centre of Dean’s research had become the “object of a power struggle between local and provincial government forces” (Dean, 1993, 126). Are Three-Self churches affected by similar processes?

Dean postulates that government involvement in rituals changes their nature, effectively making them less ecstatic. Yet, government involvement means that the state is offering recognition of religious activity. With this recognition, “there is at least some possibility for a dialogue between traditional sectors, intellectuals, and government officials responsible for religious policy” (Dean, 1993, 92-93). There are also implications for police interference with overseas Chinese funding or sponsorship of rituals (Dean, 1993, 113-114). Chau (2006, 215) argues that local officials no longer benefit from crackdowns

on religious activity due to the resulting “popular disapproval” and the notion that it “will not win people’s hearts.” Are Three-Self churches able to attract and utilise outside funding either from domestic donors or from overseas? We will discuss this issue in later chapters.

Other recent studies reveal similar processes. A study of the Bailin Buddhist Temple in Hebei reveals several key factors which explain the degree to which the temple thrives: funding from overseas, charismatic leadership and support from members of the national CPPCC (Yang and Wei, 2005, 65-67). In fact,

Without the open encouragement of the highest authorities, the Bailin Temple would have been unable to hold the large-scale, high-profile, cross-provincial activity of the Life Chan Summer Camp. Without tacit backing by the highest authorities, Bailin Temple would have been unable to sustain criticisms from inside the Buddhist community and from Communist ideologues. (Yang and Wei, 2005, 77)

All of these studies reveal that the religious organisations and religious specialists take an active role in negotiating space for their projects with the local state. This growing literature comprises studies which include similar processes in popular religion temples and associations (see, for example, Eng and Lin, 2002; Fan, 2003a, 2003b; DuBois, 2005; Chan and Lang, 2011; Fan and Whitehead, 2011; Jones, 2011; Tam, 2011). These processes are also found in studies of “popular Confucianism” by both Dutournier and Ji (2009) and Billioud and Thoraval (2009).

Similarly, some recent studies demonstrate that relations with local officials can facilitate negotiations for resources. Since these resources are supplied by the local state, they receive state legitimation which is particularly important if the legal status of the religious group is ambiguous. Hillman (2004) notes the importance of local connections between Hui Muslims and officials in order to facilitate the building of a new mosque. Gladney (1996, 62, 128) argues that Muslims utilise the China Islamic Association in order to carry out their own projects while Party members and cadres are involved in Islamic religious activity in many locales (see also Gladney, 2008). Good networking ability is seen to be essential to all the activities of local Buddhist monks and for the promotion of a local Shanghai Daoist temple (Borchert, 2005, 104; Yang D-R, 2005, 117-120). Tsai (2002, 2007a, 2007b) has analysed in great detail how village temples serve as a means of getting local village projects completed. Studies also reveal collaboration between official and unofficial Daoist priests with unofficial priests performing in registered temples and official priests learning from unofficial priests (Yang D, 2005, 128, 139). Tacit approval

of illegal religious activities in village temples appears to be widespread (Yang, 2004; Lang, Chan and Ragvald, 2005, 175) while Goossaert and Fang (2009) argue that the DAC does little to regulate activities in temples. Ji (2008, 2011), argues that the BAC has negotiated with state institutions regarding policy on religion. Wank (2009), has demonstrated the extent to which different actors play a role in the changes and developments of the (Buddhist) Nanputuo Temple in Xiamen, Fujian, arguing that these actors “strive to legitimate their actions in accordance with state discourse of ‘religion’” (2009, 145). Nichols (2011) argues that a similar process takes place at a Buddhist temple in Quanzhou. Herrou (2011) reveals that officials “turn a blind eye” to unregistered “householder priests” (2011, 120). Yang (2008a, 339) shows how the local state trumps national regulations as it supports the revival of *Mazu* in the Meizhou Temple.

Rather than the unhelpful notion of resistance to the state, Feuchtwang suggests the notion of “negotiated public space” (Feuchtwang, 2000, 173). Although Feuchtwang does not offer a detailed definition of what he means by this, we can get some sense of it from the following:

Religious resistance in these instances of temples, festivals and ancestral halls is more than a greater richness beyond the state’s interpretive communities. It is the assertion of a determination by local residents to make their own history, in their own interpretation of the stories and heroes who are their deities and whom they treat as present through their own spirit media... This is not simply resistance to the regime’s policy on religion and superstition. It is the establishment of a more general local authority, often capable of mounting local welfare projects and networks in their own defence and advancement. (Feuchtwang, 2000, 174)

These religious believers are not actively resisting state designs on local society (hence my term passive resistance). By adhering to religious belief and seeking to construct or re-construct beliefs with the tacit approval of local state actors, they are creating social space.

Recent studies of the CPA show similar processes. The CPA has not been able to exercise tight control over religious practice in particular locales; for example, in the Tianjin Cathedral (Madsen, 1998; Madsen, 2004, 98). Some Catholic priests have given “lip service” to the CPA but did not have to join it and Madsen cites the example of one priest who refused to join the CPA but was consequently allowed to serve in an official Catholic church (Madsen, 2004b, 98). Leung and Liu (2004) also reveal that there is often space for negotiation between local governments and unregistered Catholic congregations. As we outline in the Introduction, for the purposes of our project, we need to ask whether or not Three-Self churches are able to negotiate space.

Madsen has also highlighted the phenomenon of the merging of the lines of distinction between the official and unofficial Catholic churches. In fact, “[m]ost people have to live and work under the supervision of state-controlled organisations, but within those organisations (sometimes in complicity with the organisation’s leaders) they carry out a great deal of unofficial activity that sometimes contradicts and subverts the stated purpose of the organisation” (Madsen, 2004b, 101). Madsen does not detail all the activities that members of official organisations are involved in. However, we do know that unregistered Catholic communities have built their own church buildings with the “tacit approval” of local authorities (Madsen, 2004b, 101). In terms of our study, are prohibited activities given tacit approval in Three-Self churches in Huanghaicheng?

In another study, this time of a rural Three-Self church in Gansu, the local township government did not back an antagonistic village leader against the church which had rebuilt the main gate in such a way as to go against accepted norms of *fengshui* (Huang and Yang, 2005, 60). The same study revealed that the church leaders adopted anti-imperialist rhetoric in their discussions with local officials in order to encourage good relations with them (Huang and Yang, 2005, 47-48). In addition, church leaders used the time for required weekly political study classes for Bible study sessions (Huang and Yang, 2005, 52-53). Conflicts between the church and the local cadres were not helped by the fact that members of this particular congregation do not smoke or drink and so find it hard to build rapport with the officials and vice-versa (Huang and Yang, 2005, 56). This raises questions regarding to what extent religious specialists are willing to make concessions in order to establish friendly relations with state personnel.

Cao’s (2007, 2009, 2011) publications based on extensive fieldwork in both registered and unregistered Protestant churches are a significant contribution to the field of Protestantism in China. While Cao’s analyses focussed on the formation of Protestant identity and the power of “boss Christians” backed by significant amounts of economic capital, he does deal with issues of state power and how this capital controlled by local Protestants helps to facilitate a range of unregistered activity, including the construction of elaborate churches.

Cao’s (2011) study of Protestants in Wenzhou reveals that the local state is “plural” and “composed of actors with conflicting and contradictory ideas, ideals and interests” (Cao, 2011, 8). He details how good relations between businessmen and local officials allow unregistered congregations to obtain “informal recognition” (Cao, 2011, 27). His study also includes examples of how officials become partners with Protestants in the

expansion of Protestantism through providing land for the construction of churches (Cao, 2011, 30). In relation to this study, do good relations between Protestants and officials in other parts of China facilitate the flow of goods and services which churches can utilise? Is it only churches backed by large amounts of economic capital which can engage in such activity? I would argue that we need to explore these themes in the Protestant community in a different geographical context, employing an ethnographic approach which would help us elucidate such processes.

Lastly, it is pertinent that we mention the religious economy model which has been applied and developed in the Chinese context by Yang Fenggang (2006, 2010, 2012), amongst others (Wen, 2007; Li, 2008; Zhao, 2008; Zhai, 2010). I am in agreement with Feuchtwang (2010, 187-189) in his critique of this approach to religion in China (and in other contexts) since the approach does not take into consideration the content of religious ritual and other religious activity. Yang's definition of the three streams of the religious market, and in particular his definition of the grey religious market is a useful concept as we have already seen. However, I would argue that in practice the separation between his three markets is not always easy to distinguish. Yang's "grey market" comprises "all religious and spiritual organisations, practitioners and activities with ambiguous legal status" (Yang, 2012, 87). It is this concept which is useful in naming activities which Three-Self churches and other religious groups engage in.

Thus this literature based on empirical studies of religious groups in the reform era reveals weaknesses and disagreement in approaches to the relationship between state and religion. The body of literature which adopts the dominant paradigm of control and/or resistance does not adequately account for the interaction between religious groups and state actors at the local level. The state has predominantly been viewed as a monolithic whole and this has led to an over-simplification of the situation at the grassroots. Policy analyses do not take into account policy implementation whilst a major body of literature has emphasised the idea of state control and/or religious resistance. However, the body of literature comprising more recent anthropological studies of the interaction between religious groups and state agents has revealed complex processes deeply embedded in Chinese social and state institutions. Building on this recent literature, there is a need for local-level studies which can capture the possibilities, intricacies and idiosyncrasies of church-state relations which lie beyond the formal and the institutional (Madsen, 2011b). These studies together can then provide a more nuanced picture of the dynamics of religious life in China. The importance of the relationships between religious leaders and local officials has been highlighted. These studies have also brought to light some of the

processes by which legally ambiguous religious activities are conducted with approval of the local state. The fact that many of the significant studies have been carried out in rural areas leaves a gap in the literature with regards to religious groups in China's urban social milieu.

Conceptual framework

Having surveyed in detail the available academic literature on the relationship between religion and the state in the People's Republic of China, the purpose of this section is to outline in detail the framework that this project employs to conceptualise the interactions between Three-Self churches and local state actors.

Framework: point of departure

Our point of departure in establishing a theoretical framework with which to analyse the interactions between church and state in China is the work of Ho and Edmonds (2008) who write on the relationship between the Chinese environmental movement and the state. While we are neither analysing a social movement, nor political activism as it is understood by Ho and Edmonds, their framework provides a useful analytical tool for our purposes of exploring the interactions of Three-Self churches and local state actors. Ho argues that in the Chinese semi-authoritarian political context there is currently "a gradual shift towards a polity adapted to an increasingly complex and pluralist society" (Ho, 2008a, 2). This context, in which there is an increase in social space, has provided for the possibility of the environmental movement to be "embedded" in the state. This notion of embeddedness is derived from Polanyi (1957) via the work of Granovetter (1973, 1984) (Ho and Edmonds, 2008, 217).

Polanyi (1957) argued that the establishment of the modern market economy and the creation of the modern nation-state were part of the same project rather than separate phenomena and together make up the "Market Society." Basing his argument on Polanyi's idea of the inseparability of society, political institutions and economic markets Granovetter developed the idea of the embeddedness of economic relations in social networks and interpersonal ties rather than in an abstract idea of a market. In relation to

the environmental movement in China, the movement is not an abstract concept but is embedded in social ties and interpersonal networks.

For Ho and Edmonds (2008), the embeddedness of the environmental movement in China comprises several key strategies which facilitate the movement engaging in their activities while not being shut down by the state. These strategies include personal network ties, “self-imposed censorship” and the “de-politicisation of politics,” the movement’s low-profile existence together with an approach to activism which is not confrontational to the state (Ho, 2008a, 2-3). Personal network relations 关系 between leaders and members of NGOs and members of the state at all levels bridge the gap between the two and tie them together into a relationship of ‘mutual dependence’ (Ho, 2008a, 11; Ho and Edmonds, 2008, 217). Self-imposed censorship and the de-politicisation of politics involve NGOs and activists focussing on “politically innocent” activities and avoiding direct confrontation with CPC dictates (Ho, 2008b, 29). NGOs also maintain a low profile by “downplaying” their ability to expand membership (Ho, 2008b, 29) or lead a clandestine existence by either not registering or by somehow negotiating the registration regulations (Ho, 2008a, 9; Ho, 2008b, 23). The movement is also legitimised by the state; that is, the movement receives recognition by CPC and government actors, thereby allowing it to operate (albeit within boundaries). Ho and Edmonds argue that the relationship between the environmental movement and the state is a “negotiated symbiosis” in that it relies on the continual interaction of environmental groups and the state (2008, 218). Ho and Edmonds argue that this political environment is restrictive of and yet paradoxically enabling to environmental activism (Ho, 2008a, 2).

While Ho and Edmonds have defined clearly the concept of embeddedness and have demonstrated the various facets of it in their edited volume (2008), the notion of symbiosis which they refer to is rather less well-defined. While we can see that it is a relationship based on interaction at a personalised level, and that this interaction is beneficial to the environmental movement, the lack of clarity with regards to the concept restricts its application in other contexts. Our aim here, then, is to explore the theory of symbiosis because a further explanation and refinement of this concept will afford us the ability to produce a framework which can be applied in other social contexts.

The historical context of symbiosis

The botanist and microbiologist Heinrich Anton de Bary (1831-1888) first coined the term ‘symbiosis’ in 1879 as “the living together of differently named organisms” (Smith and Douglas, 1987, 1). Although the theory of symbiosis developed in the years following de Bary’s definition, it would appear that the first major conference on symbiosis which brought together a range of disciplines from within the natural sciences was not held until 1963, marking the increase in research into the theory and its application in a wider range of scientific fields (Smith and Douglas, 1987, v). It is a concept that has been extensively applied and substantiated across a range of disciplines, not least, in the social sciences.

The concept of symbiosis as applied in the social sciences

We have already described above the manner in which Ho and others (2008) have attempted to apply the concept of symbiosis in describing the relationship between the Chinese environmental movement and the state. The terms ‘symbiosis’ and ‘symbiotic relationships’ are used frequently in the social science literature from economics and education studies through to sociology and social anthropology. The terms are used most often to describe relationships between individuals; for example, Yeates’ (2007) analysis of the relationship between carers and the disabled people under their care; between social groups as in Breusers et al’s (1998) account of farmers and herdsman relations in Burkina Faso (see also Shadian, 2007); between individuals and social groups or between social processes and social groups, such as McCargo’s (2004) study on the relationship between Buddhism, democracy and identity in Thailand (see also Miller, 1993). The terms are also used to describe relationships between individuals and institutions which we see revealed in Carlson’s (2006) research into the relationship between vendors and libraries (see also Allswang, 1977), between institutions as we see in Baek’s (2000) work on private enterprises and bureaucratic capitalism in China (see also Kim, 1987), between theories as we see in Strang (2006) on the parallels between anthropological theories and indigenous knowledges (see also Berez et al; Wiseman, 2006) or between nations and/or administrative regions which Hook and Santos Neves (2002) look at in their analysis of the roles Hong Kong and Macau play in China’s interactions with the European Union.

In all of these instances, symbiosis or symbiotic relationships are used to describe relationships of interdependency where it is argued that there is mutual benefit for both

(or all) partners involved. In none of the works cited above do the authors attempt to define what they mean by symbiosis or symbiotic relationships: the meanings are inferred and assumed. While this notion of interdependency is certainly enlightening, it remains as just that, a notion with little analytical value and also one which is difficult to transfer from one context to another. We can see this shortcoming in the following examples.

Moritz (2010), has analysed the relationship between herders and farmers in Northwest Cameroon and Southwest Burkina Faso, and argues that these two social groups have “long coexisted in symbiotic relationships” (Moritz, 2010, 138a). These relationships which Moritz describes as “interdependent,” are based on reciprocity and various kinds of support (2010, 138a -139b). Moritz argues that the symbiotic relationship “breaks down” at times when herders allow cattle to wander onto farmland. It is clear from Moritz’s application of the concept of symbiosis that only relationships which are seemingly mutually beneficial are symbiotic in nature although it must also be emphasised that the main purpose of Moritz’s article is to demonstrate the process of conflict resolution between the two social groups.

We can see a similar issue in Formoso (1996) who writes about the “ritual refining of restless ghosts” 修枯骨 (“*Hsiu-kou-ku*”) in Thailand. Formoso argues that the ritual involves a symbiosis between the Thai majority and the Chinese minority in dealing with the bodies of the Thai dead. The Thai majority seek to emphasise the social distance between themselves and the Chinese minority by allowing the Chinese to ritually process their dead while the Chinese believe that their ritual management of the Thai dead will bring them prosperity which will in turn allow them to ascend over the Thai population (Formoso, 1996, 218). Again, we see the use of the term symbiosis in an undefined manner, but more importantly, are unable to apply Formoso’s use of the concept in another context with much ease.

Saich (2000) argues that the relationship between the state and social organisations in China is symbiotic and employs the concept that both (or all) parties in the relationship benefit in some way and that such relationships are not “unidirectional” (Saich, 2000, 125). Saich states that the relationships between the social organisations and the state are symbiotic due to the idea that it is a “relationship that maximises their members’ interests or... circumvents or deflects state intrusion” (Saich, 2000, 125). Although Saich does suggest that structures and regulations concerned with social organisations encourage “state patronage” it is not entirely clear what the state gains in this symbiotic relationship. If it is control over the social organisations, then it is not clear what benefits this control

brings. Similarly, Thøgersen (2009) employs the use of the term “symbiosis” in analysing the relationships between the various actors involved in rural construction projects. It is clear from his employment of the concept that various actors at the local level – academics, entrepreneurs, Party secretaries – can all receive benefits from their interactions. Again, in the same way, Chau (2006) describes the relationship between the local state and Heilongdawang Temple as “regulatory paternalism” (2006, 215) and “local state corporatism” (2006, 217), incorporating the concept of symbiosis by arguing that the relationship between new elites (entrepreneurs and leaders in local folk social institutions) and traditional elites (local officials) is symbiotic and that both the local state and the temple gain from the relationship (2006, 224). However, as with the above examples, no clear framework is presented with regards to what constitutes symbiosis.

While these ethnographic studies are enlightening in a variety of ways, the concept of symbiosis is underdeveloped. Mortiz’s argument that the farmers and herders exist in symbiosis reveals little with regards to what constitutes this symbiotic relationship, except that these two social groups derive some form of benefit from these interactions. Similarly, Formoso’s analysis of the relationship between the Thai majority and the Chinese minority in the ritual refinement of the unfortunate Thai dead suggests that these two groups are in symbiosis but does not leave us with a great deal to go on with regards to what symbiosis is or the nature of such a relationship, except that both are perceived to obtain benefit. While the work of Saich, Thøgersen and Chau is particularly instructive for our understanding of how social organisations relate to state institutions, the idea of symbiosis as a conceptual framework could be greatly enhanced by analysing the original definitions and characteristics of the concept.

The use of biological and ecological terms in social anthropology

While there is a dearth of analyses on the use of concepts from biology and other natural sciences in the social sciences, Love (1977), notes that terminology such as ‘predation,’ ‘symbiosis,’ ‘carrying capacity,’ ‘organism’ and ‘niche’ have all been borrowed from biological ecology by social scientists while terms such as ‘community,’ ‘sociology’ and ‘exploitation’ were all borrowed by biological ecologists from the social sciences (Love, 1977, 27). This is significant because this successful borrowing of concepts from the natural sciences to the social sciences allows for further possibilities in the development of existing theoretical concepts and the production of new ones.

We are arguing here that the biological concept of symbiosis provides a valuable framework for analysing social relationships but that the term borrowed from the natural sciences has both been ambiguously defined and applied in an unsystematic manner. Love (1977), seeking to apply the theory of ‘ecological niche,’ finds that the concept has been used in the social sciences with a “much less precise meaning” than in biological ecology while it has been used frequently in socio-cultural anthropology but has not been applied systematically (Love, 1977, 27-29). Despite the fact that some anthropologists have applied the term “more correctly” than the majority, Love argues that the concept has still not been used “rigorously” enough (Love, 1977, 29). He means by this that the theory has not been adopted in its entirety or that it has not been adopted in such a way as to be faithful to its original definition.

He further argues that frameworks of niche need to be “operational”; that is, they need to be applicable to specific contexts and useful in such a way as to reveal something about the social relationships to which they are applied. In other words, frameworks need to be of use as analytical concepts and that when used rigorously “the concept is ultimately a heuristic, descriptive tool providing insights into community structure, and directing our attention to underlying processes of competition, mutualism, predation, or specialisation” (Love, 1977, 32).

Based on his own ethnographic data from a mountain valley in California, Love then proceeds to apply the framework in a rigorous manner, applying ecological niche theory to the issue of land as a source of competition between two different social groups: full-time and “retirement” farmers. He concludes that increasing competition over farmland, which is a decreasing resource, is causing “niche displacement” as full-time farmers are forced to sell out because they can not compete with “retirement” farmers who have access to different resources. As with Love’s application of ecological niche theory which furthers our understanding of the relationships between social groups in relation to resources, the conceptual framework of symbiosis should be applicable in different social milieu and bring to light the dynamics of interactions between particular individuals, social groups or institutions and inform us of the benefits (or harm) that these interactions have on those involved.

Symbiosis: a definition and conceptual framework for analysis of church-state interactions

We have seen in the previous sections that while the concept of symbiosis has been widely applied in a variety of disciplines across the social sciences, it lacks a clear definition and offers little clarity on what may or may not constitute a symbiotic relationship. What we need then is to have a theory which we can apply to our ethnographic material. Our purpose in this section, therefore, is to borrow an analytical framework directly from biology and explore its characteristics and their potential application in analysing social relations. In later chapters, the framework's rigorousness will then be assessed when applied to the interactions between Three-Self churches and the state. It should also be noted that the main aim of this exercise is not to provide a detailed overview of the ongoing debates within biology and ecology regarding symbiosis but to provide a useable framework for our purposes.

It is important at the outset to note that Smith and Douglas (1987) argue that de Bary's original definition of symbiosis included the concepts of mutualism, parasitism and commensalism and that this idea was previously upheld by others (see Henry, 1966; Read, 1970; MacInnis, 1976). Confusion as to the definition and application of the concept of symbiosis set in soon after de Bary's coining of the term (Boucher, 1985). Some biologists continue to use a narrow definition for the concept and exclude parasitism from their definition (see Clayton et al, 1980). We saw in our overview of the use of the concept in the social sciences that symbiosis is generally only associated with a relationship in which both or all actors involved derive benefit from their interactions and this can be attributed, in part, to the lack of clarity of the concept in the natural sciences.

The major confusion surrounding the concept of symbiosis in the social sciences is the pronounced or inferred notion that symbiotic relationships are mutually beneficial. However, as we have noted above, the original definition was more comprehensive and described relationships that were not mutually beneficial. To clarify our terms, *mutualism* describes the situation in which "all the organisms involved [in a symbiotic relationship] are believed to derive benefit" (Smith and Douglas, 1987, v). *Commensalism* is the case in which "only one of the partners profits" but the other partner remains "unharmful" (Henry, 1966, x). *Parasitism* is a symbiotic relationship "in which one organism benefits to the detriment of other members of the association" (Smith and Douglas, 1987, v). It should be noted that this differs from commensalism in that it may lead to "severe injury" or "death" (Henry, 1966, x). We will adopt this original, more comprehensive and

widely-applied definition within biology²⁶ in this study. It is also of significance to note that associations can be parasitic or mutualistic at different points of the symbiosis (Smith and Douglas, 1987, 1), a point we will return to later.

In order to provide a more nuanced and detailed definition of the terms they employ, Smith and Douglas (1987), have outlined “characteristics” which provide a framework when conceptualising symbiotic interactions. Similar schema have been developed and applied by others (see, for example, Lewis, 1985, 34). For the sake of clarity, I have further divided their framework into two separate sections because Smith and Douglas do not separate the characteristics which constitute a symbiotic interaction from those characteristics which are an outcome of a symbiosis. This framework provides a basis for determining symbiosis between two or more organisms, and what the nature of this symbiotic relationship is. Within biology, it is sometimes difficult to establish the boundaries of an organism. It is essential to highlight here that this lack of definition is also the case with social organisms (institutions) and this point does not detract from this conceptual framework. Symbiosis is also a framework which can be applied to different ethnographic contexts. I will outline the model below while at the same time adapting it to make it a more meaningfully analytical framework for our intended purpose in the following chapters. We will deal first with the characteristics which establish whether or not a symbiotic relationship exists between organisms and then outline the characteristics which are formed as a result of the symbiosis.

Requirements for symbiosis

Recognition: Recognition refers to the processes “involved in the selection of partners and discrimination against inappropriate organisms” (Smith and Douglas, 1987, 5). Recognition can be divided into different stages, beginning with initial contact. Put in other terms, how do social actors decide which other social actors they will partner with and who they will not partner with? How do we identify this process? The Chinese state, for example, has choices with which religious organisations it will interact. What choices do Three-self churches have in whom they will interact with?

Duration: Symbiosis should only be used to describe relationships “where contact between the partners persists for ‘an appreciable length of time’ relative to the life span of the organisms involved” (Smith and Douglas, 1987, 4). Furthermore, “in nearly all

²⁶ For a list of biologists who have employed de Bary’s definition, see Smith and Douglas (1987, 1).

associations, one or more of the interactions is of continuing rather than temporary significance to at least one of the partners” (Smith and Douglas, 1987, 252). In our case, we need to consider the relationship between Three-Self churches and local state institutions to determine the length of time their relationship has been ongoing. We must also consider the significance of the relationship for the partners involved.

Position of the partners: Where one symbiont is external to the other, the symbiosis is ectosymbiotic. Where one symbiont is within another symbiont, the symbiosis is endosymbiotic (Smith and Douglas, 1987, 3-4). These interactions can take place at the level of the organism (institution) or at the cellular (individual) level. For example, a case of ectosymbiotic relations would be the interactions between a Three-Self church and the local Religious Affairs Section, since both institutions operate external to one another. However, an endosymbiotic relationship would describe the situation where a member of a local state institution, who is also a Three-Self Protestant, uses this position to supply resources furthering the interests of the Three-Self churches.

Direct interaction: A significant aspect of symbiotic relationships is that there is “direct physical contact” between the partners (symbionts). In terms of the relationship between a social organism and the local state we will conceive of direct physical contact as the interactions between social actors. These interactions may be in the form of face-to-face meetings or via media such as telephone or written communication.

If the interactions between social actors fulfil the above criteria then we can talk of them being in symbiosis. We turn now to analyse the possible outcomes of a symbiotic interaction.

Outcomes of symbiosis

Modes of interaction: There are several different “categories of interactions” between the various partners in a symbiotic relationship (Smith and Douglas, 1987, 5). These categories are concerned with the strategy employed by the host or symbiont in deriving benefit for their own growth or reproduction. Biotrophy is the interaction “in which an organism obtains nutrients from the living cells of its partner” (Smith and Douglas, 1987, 6). In terms of symbiosis between social actors this may be, for example, the interactions between a church and a Religious Affairs Section where the church is granted a specific status by Religious Affairs personnel despite the fact that the church does not qualify for that status. Necrotrophy refers to the situation in which “an organism first engenders the death of cells of its partner and then derives nutrients from the dead cells” (Smith and

Douglas, 1987, 6). We are essentially talking here of the leaching of authority similar to what Ding (1994, 30-31) defines as taking advantage of institutions and seeking private goals rather than official ones. Again, in terms of symbiosis between a church and the state this could take the form of interactions which involve officials in a church project which is ambiguous with regards to religious policy but which requires tacit approval from these officials. The church project may then develop beyond what the officials originally perceived but because they are involved in this interaction their authority has been usurped. This may be conceived as something along the lines of social, political or authority “asset stripping.”

The flow of nutrients in a symbiotic relationship is said to be either unidirectional or bidirectional. In other words, either one social actor receives particular benefits or both sides receive benefits in any given symbiosis. However, how do we define “nutrients”? Broadly speaking, nutrients are something beneficial to the life of an organism. In social terms, nutrients could be material benefits (wealth, status symbols) or social capital, power, prestige, and the like. The term donor is used to describe the “partner from which nutrients originate” and the term recipient refers to the partner to which nutrients flow (Smith and Douglas, 1987, 6). In order to identify the donors and recipients the origin of nutrients themselves must obviously be recognisable but as Smith and Douglas note, “there have been very few direct and accurate estimates of the absolute amounts of nutrients a recipient obtains from a donor. This is mainly because it is difficult to study events at the interface between the partners” (Smith and Douglas, 1987, 261). While we may never be totally sure as to the amounts of nutrients a social actor may derive in a symbiotic relationship, we can be sure of some, at least. For example, church leaders may be given tacit (informal, unspoken or not officially recorded) approval for certain church activities which fall beyond the limits of religious policy because of their relationship to officials. This approval is a tangible nutrient derived from the symbiosis.

Integration: Integration describes the structures, functions, and so on “which are more than, and different from, those of which the participants are capable as individuals” (Lewis, 1985 quoted in Smith and Douglas, 1987, 6). In other words, what is the result of a symbiotic relationship beyond the individual social actors? In the relationship between Three-Self churches and the state, is the expansion of social space a result of this interaction? Are new avenues for influence and new structures for state-society dialogue created? For example, pastors and church leaders from the Three-Self churches are sometimes approached by personnel from the Public Security Bureau or the Religious Affairs Bureau for advice on unregistered churches or religious groups. This provides an

informal channel for consultation and advice and can allow church leaders to give protection to groups with which they are familiar and have personal ties.

Significance for well-being: It is usually the “net outcome” of interaction which determines whether the symbiosis is beneficial or harmful. As we saw above, relationships are mutualistic if the “fitness” of the partners is greater when they are together than when they are apart; commensalistic when one partner benefits but the other is left unaffected; and parasitic when one partner benefits but the other is harmed. It is difficult to define fitness and there is no agreed definition in biology (Smith and Douglas, 1987, 262). Similarly, when applied to the relationships between social actors, the term “fitness” can, at times, be difficult to measure or assess. The two most common “indices of fitness” are the “acquisition of nutrients” and “enhanced growth” (Smith and Douglas, 1987, 262). This is further complicated by the fact that symbionts can pass on to other symbionts nutrients which could contribute to their own growth (Smith and Douglas, 1987, 263). In social interactions, this may occur when a social actor sacrifices independence in one area to gain benefits in another. For example, churches which register put themselves under direct state scrutiny at the registration stage but may then gain a degree of independence because of their official status.

Again, for our purposes, the idea of acquisition of nutrients means increased power or social capital. It may also be seen in material capital terms. For example, the state may provide land for the building of a church. Furthermore, it is not always apparent when, for example, a partner is harmed. Detrimental effects of any given social relationship may take some time to become evident. In church-state interactions, for example, Religious Affairs officials may decide on using soft tactics such as dialogue and negotiation when dealing with Protestants who revert to proselytising tactics which fall beyond the boundary of acceptable practice. The use of soft tactics, however, may result in encouraging Protestants to continue such activities or develop and expand proselytising practices, resulting in the expansion of the church thus demonstrating the benefits of the symbiosis to the Three-Self churches.

In terms of the “nutrients” which flow between partners in a symbiosis, we will draw on Bourdieu’s (1986) model of social, cultural and symbolic capital (1986: 47a). These different forms of capital help to shape power dynamics in social relations. *Social capital* – “social relations” and “connections” 关系 – facilitates the exchange of *cultural capital* in its *objectified* and *institutionalised* forms. Objectified cultural capital includes such things as qualifications or certificates. Institutionalised cultural capital incorporates built

institutions such as churches or seminaries. Bourdieu's theory also comprises *symbolic capital* which deals with how these capitals are perceived within the social structures in which social actors operate.

We have outlined above a working framework with which to analyse relationships which may be described as symbiotic in the vernacular sense of the term. The framework not only clarifies the nature of symbiotic relationships but provides us with the means to identify what the outcomes of a symbiosis might be. It is important to highlight that this framework can only be useful at a specific point in space and time when analysing particular social relationships. Further studies would need to be done to track changes over time but I will argue in this dissertation that it is the symbiotic interactions of Three-Self churches and the local state which contribute to the growth of the Protestant community in Huanghaicheng.²⁷

Methods and methodology

Methodological approach and research strategy

In broad methodological terms I am assuming the epistemological position that social reality is socially constructed, based on the work of Berger and Luckman (1966). Social reality is produced and mediated through communication in “everyday life.” This begins with “externalisation”: the physical and mental activities of people are poured into the world. The outcome of this activity is objectivation; that is, the physical and mental outcomes of the pouring into the world are taken to be social facts which exist as external to the producers. These social facts are then internalised and re-appropriated into the subjective consciousness. Central to this position is that idea that data is not *collected* but *generated* as other scholars have argued (Mason, 2002, 52).

Based on this epistemological position, I adopted an ethnographic approach for the design, planning and carrying out of data generation and data analysis. This required grounding the phenomena which were the focus of the research in their own context in an attempt to build up a narrative of how the participants construct and interpret the world (Maykut and

²⁷ I am fully aware that unregistered churches also grow despite the fact that they do not have an official relationship with the local state. However, it is the case that some, maybe many, unregistered groups are in symbiosis – often at the individual level – with state personnel or the TSPM structure which contributes to their survival and growth based on similar modes of interaction which we will see in proceeding chapters.

Morehouse, 1994, 17). This broad qualitative approach allowed for a degree of reflexivity in the stage of data analysis and suggested avenues for future research (Baszanger and Dodier, 1997; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, 28).

An ethnographic approach allowed for the generation of the specific types of data that this study required. As we have already seen in the review of the literature, one of the central themes in this project is seeking to account for the salience of religious activities which are “grey” in nature; that is, either illegal or legally ambiguous. The social relationships between individuals in state institutions or between state institutions and Three-Self church religious specialists or lay believers are directly related to this phenomenon. As I have suggested above, there is a process of negotiation at the local level involving these various actors. Such negotiation is affected and influenced by individual perceptions of what is important and significant with regards to the management of religion or the running of a church. Of course, eliciting perceptions and gaining accounts from these participants at the local level as to their perceptions is a subjective exercise. Yet the fact that these are subjective accounts does not mean that they are not valid but only that this validity will not be taken at face value (see Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, 98).

In addition, this study employed both inductive and deductive methods for the generation and analysis of data, recognising that any claim to producing purely inductive theory can not be substantiated (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, 165). I have “shopped around” for theories and concepts and added depth and analytical value to them through this research (see O’Brien, 2006). My working conceptual framework prior to fieldwork was embeddedness and symbiosis where the embeddedness of Three-Self churches in the state and the symbiosis between Three-Self churches and state institutions creates informal channels for negotiation with the state for increased religious space. At the same time, these ideas were starting points for my research in the field. These ideas then needed to be tested in the field-site and as data was generated, new themes and categories emerged which helped me to develop a more robust framework to analyse and explain the social processes on the ground.

Field-site access and related issues

I conducted fieldwork in the coastal city of Huanghaicheng. There are two main factors which influenced my decision to conduct fieldwork in this particular city. Firstly, this is

the location where my previous period of participant observation was conducted and which provided the basis for this research project. Secondly, I chose Huanghaicheng as a fieldwork site because having spent time there, I knew the city and had contacts which were helpful in gaining access to potential participants, something which can not be over-emphasised (Solinger, 2006, 156-157).

In order to gain field-site access, I enrolled as a language student in a different higher education institution to the one I had worked in previously. I had minimal contact hours and was able to negotiate my own “syllabus” since I was the only language student with advanced Chinese skills. As I got to know the teaching staff better I persuaded them to allow me to use the class time to read Chinese-language sources related to my project. I was also able to negotiate to live off campus which gave me more freedom to come and go as I needed.

Methods for data generation

Taking an ethnographic approach to fieldwork research, I adopted three main methods for data generation: participant observation, interviews, and documentary analysis. I will outline these briefly, in turn. Participant observation constituted a key part in the overall ethnographic approach for this research. The main objective of participant observation is to “investigate, experience and represent the social life and social processes” which occur in any given social setting (Emerson et al, 2001, 352a). Interaction, action, behaviour, how people interpret and respond, as well as the settings for all these activities are all important (Mason, 2002, 85). Participant observation at best can only provide a reconstruction of any given setting but it provides depth. Participant observation was primarily based in the eight Three-Self churches in Huanghaicheng. However, further data was generated through participant observation in meeting points and small groups as well as during church activities conducted outside church buildings. With each individual church having a range of activities (both religious and social) in any given week as well as extra meetings during particular festivals, I generated rich data over the fieldwork period by attending two, three or sometimes more church activities every day of the week.

My main method of recording data generated in the field was field-notes which by their very nature are selective (Clifford, 1986; Emerson et al, 2001, 353b). However, this was my only option since filming was not possible. Religious specialists were nervous about me filming as part of my research and even taking photographs felt intrusive during

religious rituals. I did all that I could to produce field-notes of a high standard using a three-stage approach: mental notes, jotted notes, full field-notes²⁸ (Emerson et al, 2001, 356a-357b). My method for the organisation of note-taking was based on that set out by Spradley (1980). Note-taking while undertaking participant observation in Three-Self churches and related locations was not a problem since many people take notes during church services/meetings.

Interviewing also played a major role in the generation of data, playing “a crucial role in theory building by illuminating (better than any other method) the institutional environment in which informants live” (O’Brien, 2006, 33). I made use of two kinds of interview which Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) term “pre-structured” (structured) and “reflexive” (un-structured) interviews or a combination of both approaches within any given interview context (Holstein and Gubrium, 1997). I used both directive and non-directive questions to encourage the generation of data (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, 118-120). By using the constant comparative method (see below) lists of categories formed the basis for developing my conceptual framework and providing new insights into social relations and social processes in the fieldwork setting. While being systematic, this method for data generation was reflexive enough to be open to new categories and leads (see Schensul et al, 1999, 146-162).

Before heading into the field, I was aware that some scholars working in China have found most people happy to talk and be recorded (Kjellgren, 2006, 232). However, due to the sensitive nature of my research project, I assumed that this would not be the case for my interviews. I was pleasantly surprised: I was given permission from most participants to record interviews. Some interviews were conducted “off the record.” These interviews were not recorded; nor was I given permission to quote material from them. However, I felt that these interviews were extremely useful in providing background information and generating new categories which I was able to utilise in conducting follow-up research. Although transcribing interviews is an extremely time-consuming task, I found it invaluable for helping to highlight new categories which I was then able to pursue.

Documentary analysis – the analysis of documents and other written media – made up the third method within my ethnographic framework (see Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, 105-106). Documents were an important part of this research project as “social facts” which are “produced, shared and used in socially organised ways” (Atkinson and Coffey, 1997,

²⁸ The same process is described in different ways by different ethnographers. For example, Le Compte and Schensul (1999, 12-19) call this process “inscription, description, transcription.”

47). Documents and other officially-produced materials are also useful because they encouraged analytic ideas (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, 122). I analysed local religious policy documents, reports on religion by the United Front Work Department (UFWD) and the Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB) in “yearbooks” 年鉴, “materials on culture and history” 文史资料, “local gazetteers” 地方志 and local history publications.

While acknowledging that the data generating process is in itself a subjective exercise, researcher bias was minimised through several facets of the research design. The three-fold approach outlined above provided a solid foundation for generating data whilst at the same time providing a means to triangulate the data I generated. Employment of the constant comparative method ensured that data generated through participant observation, interviews and documentary analysis covered both researcher-identified and participant-identified categories. Observations made in church setting were followed up through conversations and interviews. Where possible, accounts provided by one participant were compared with accounts on the same theme provided by other participants. Interview design involved minimising bias by avoiding leading questions and by focussing on general and unaided questions. Additionally, during the early stages of fieldwork I consistently negated sharing in-depth with participants my own understanding of particular events and situations in order to minimise the degree to which participants sought to cater answers to what they thought I wanted to hear. In the later stages of the fieldwork process, I discussed key findings with participants in order to provide opportunities for critique from the participants themselves.

Data analysis

In broad terms, I used what can be termed a ‘reflexive’ version of the “constant comparative method” first formalised by Glaser and Strauss (1967) to generate categories and sub-categories for the analysis of data (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994; Mason, 2002; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). I borrowed heavily from grounded theory methods while leaving flexibility to allow the theoretical concept of symbiosis to form a basis for the overall ethnographic approach. The importance of employing grounded theory methods in a flexible manner is recognised by some grounded theorists (see Charmaz, 2006). Hammersley and Atkinson prescribe a similar reflexive approach (2007, 159):

As data was generated, I stored field-notes and interview transcripts in OneNote which enhanced my ability to identify, label and collate possible categories by cross-referencing.

After returning to the UK, I then utilised the software package NVivo to further enhance my ability to identify categories and establish relationships across different types of data (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, 161-163). Previous to entering the field, I had already identified a number of possible categories and served as the basis for further fieldwork; through participant observation, interviews and documentary/textual analysis. As suggested by Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, 38), I considered both “member-identified categories” and “observer-identified categories.” I had initially planned to continue this process until I had reached the stage of “saturation.” However, the idea of saturation became more of an ideal than something which I feel that I achieved due to the constraints of time spent in the field or difficulties with access to particular participants (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, 133).

Through this process, I was able to analyse and assess the validity²⁹ of concepts and categories from participant observation, interviewing, and documents. Gaining perspectives from different actors revealed different facets of issues and helped to provide depth and opportunities for cross-referencing and verification (He, 2006, 173). This type of “triangulation” adopted by Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, 184) also highlighted differences as well as similarities which were instructive for analysis.

Ethical, legal and data protection issues

My project received full ethical approval from the University of Sheffield in terms of ethical, legal and data protection issues and complied with the Economic & Social Research Council’s “Research Ethics Framework” (ESRC, 2006).

CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter we have reviewed the relevant literature on religion-state dynamics, focussing specifically on Three-Self churches within the scholarship on Protestantism. We have seen the scarcity of scholarly studies and the lack of a conceptual framework in analysing the interactions between Three-Self churches and the local state. In order to address this issue, we then established our conceptual framework for analysing these

²⁹ As Ryan and Bernard (2003, 103) have commented, “How do investigators know if the themes they have identified are valid? There is no ultimate demonstration of validity, but we can maximize clarity and agreement and make validity more, rather than less, likely.”

interactions. This conceptual framework comprising of notions of embeddedness and symbiosis allows us to see the churches as agents in their interactions with the local state. We have also established that symbiotic interactions are characterised by a range of possible outcomes thus offering more than the dominant binary approach of control and/or resistance within religion-state relations. Our framework allows us to see the churches with differing relationships with a range of local state actors thus enhancing our understanding of the state and its role in the management of religion at the local level. We will outline more fully the embeddedness of the churches in local state institutions and the symbiosis between churches and the RAB in Chapter Five. We turn in the next chapter to locate these Three-Self churches (as social organisms) within Huanghaicheng's religious ecosystem.

Chapter Three

Protestantism and Huanghaicheng's Religious Ecosystem

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is a detailed analysis of the religious 'ecosystem' in which the Three-Self churches in Huanghaicheng are located. This analysis will detail the beginnings of the relationship between the local state and Protestantism as the state encouraged the institutionalisation of religion and state management of religious groups. This relationship became characterised by Protestantism in the form of the TSPM being embedded in the local state under the CPC state. This embeddedness serves as the basis for the symbiosis between Three-Self churches and local state institutions. This analysis will reveal the nature of the Protestant missionary endeavours in Huanghaicheng which provided a model for more indigenous expressions of Protestantism. We will also see how Protestantism in Huanghaicheng began a dialogue with the Republican state which, to some extent, established a precedent for the TSPM in the 1950s under the CPC. It will also make evident the fact that the TSPM has developed rapidly in the reform era and that Protestantism is a significant religious community in Huanghaicheng. Further, this chapter will demonstrate the vibrant nature of religion in Huanghaicheng in the contemporary period. This foundation will provide the context we need in order to look in detail at the actors involved in and the nature of church-state interactions which we will do in later chapters. We will begin by surveying the city's economy and city landscape before providing a history of Huanghaicheng, highlighting, in particular, events which helped to shape the contemporary social milieu. We will then look in detail at Protestantism within the religious ecosystem.

Huanghaicheng

Contemporary Huanghaicheng

The Central Committee of the CPC designated Huanghaicheng an open city in 1984, allowing inward investment and revitalising the port as a point for import and export for

the province (Liu et al, 2003, 44). Huanghaicheng has a vibrant economy and this is contributed to by the city's harbour which is the province's largest sea fishing port and an important facet of Huanghaicheng's import and export economy. A large ship-building yard, light manufacturing and textiles are also key aspects of the city's economy.

The urbanised area of Huanghaicheng is made up of four city districts 市区: Jinping, Moushan, Xicheng and Jinghai (pseudonyms). It is in these four districts that we find the Three-Self churches which are the focus of this study. The oldest part of the city is largely based in the area which is now Jinping which became a city district in 1983 (Zheng, 1993, 5). This district is still the hub of the city, generally referred to as 'downtown' 市里 and is the main centre for banks, retail and transport links. The harbour lies to the north as do several beaches which are popular with locals and tourists in the summer months. Moushan is a relatively new district having been carved out of an adjacent county 县 but most of the city government 市政府 offices have moved here in the last three years and so it is fast becoming the most important district in the city. It is home to several large universities and new, high-end apartment complexes. Small hills and parks dot both Jinping and Moushan. A large river divides Jinghai and Xicheng from Jinping and Moushan. Jinghai was established in 1984 as a development zone and was carved out of Xicheng which was originally a separate county but was made a district of Huanghaicheng city in 1983. Xicheng has developed more slowly than the other city districts but is now catching up fast. Large areas that were predominantly farmland several years ago are now occupied by new and very modern apartment complexes, restaurants and department stores.

A history of Huanghaicheng

There is a long history in Huanghaicheng of interplay between "state" and "religion." One of the earliest recorded historical events in Huanghaicheng is the emperor Qinshihuang's visits to the city in search of a Daoist immortality elixir. He is said to have made three visits in all, the first in 219 B.C. The emperor never did find the elixir and died shortly after his third visit. However, the memory of his visits continues today in the form of inscriptions and a Daoist temple (see below) (Liu et al, 2003, 34-35).

Yet it was not just Huanghaicheng's alleged Daoist alchemy which made this small city significant. As a coastal city with a deep-water harbour, Huanghaicheng was subject to attacks and raids by pirates in the nineteenth century which periodically interrupted trade

to and from the port (Zhu, 1994a, 12). However, there were much more significant changes to Huanghaicheng and its religious ecosystem with the arrival of Western powers in the second half of the nineteenth century and the formation of China into a modern nation state in the twentieth century. The first “unequal treaty” 不平等条约 between Western powers and China was the Treaty of Nanjing 南京条约 signed in 1842 following the first Opium War. After the second Opium War and the resulting second round of treaties in 1858 (Treaty of Tianjin 天津条约) and 1860 (Beijing Convention 北京条约), a town near Huanghaicheng was marked to be opened as a treaty port but after visiting the proposed town in 1861, the British Consul deemed the port unsuitable. Huanghaicheng was chosen instead since it had a natural deep harbour (Zhu, 1994a, 13). British and other consulates were opened in Huanghaicheng during the following years under the protection of gunboats as activity in the port increased. The port was also used as a departure point for Chinese labourers going to gold mines in South Africa which were under the control of the British government (Cliff, 1994, 217).

The war with Japan came to Huanghaicheng in August, 1894 and, like the arrival of Western powers, catalysed the drive to transform the country into a modern state. Although the first Japanese attack on Huanghaicheng led to Japanese forces retreating after fierce resistance, in January, 1895 the Japanese navy attacked again. Towns outside Huanghaicheng were taken by Japanese forces but the fighting did not reach the city proper before the Chinese conceded defeat (Zhu, 1994a, 18). This brief war was followed several years later with disturbances caused by the Boxer Uprising (1898-1901). In 1900, several towns outside of Huanghaicheng were attacked but the city itself was not (Zhu, 1994a, 18-19).

In 1937, after several turbulent decades in which Huanghaicheng experienced the fall of the Qing dynasty, the establishment of the Republic of China and the influx of refugees from famine and flooding, the city was once more at war. The 1911 Revolution resulted in the formation of a new government in Huanghaicheng. In 1923, the CPC formed a branch in the city and began underground recruiting and propaganda (Zhu, 1994a, 22). The CPC would later use the premises of a Protestant congregation in which to conduct their meetings (see below).

As part of a large offensive, Japanese troops advanced towards the province and broke through Nationalist lines in September, 1937. In Huanghaicheng, the Nationalist government attempted to deter the Japanese advance by blowing up the harbour. This did not stop the Japanese forces and they began their advance on Huanghaicheng in January,

1938 in a two-pronged attack combining the Japanese navy and ground troops, who arrived in early February beginning a seven-year occupation of the city (Zhu, 1994a, 26; Tan, 2002, 276). This occupation caused the Nationalists to lose their grip on the city and paved the way for the future CPC takeover. Having occupied the city, the Japanese forces quickly took over all communications, the port (including customs), as well as banks and other financial services (Tan, 2002, 278). After the bombing of Pearl Harbour in December, 1941, the Japanese sent Westerners residing in Huanghaicheng to an internment camp further inland while foreign businesses were taken over (Zhu, 1994a, 29). Local print media, schools and hospitals also came under Japanese control (Tan, 2002, 283-285).

While elderly people I spoke to in Huanghaicheng told me that daily life for the majority of Chinese was not disrupted much under the Japanese military, it is estimated that about 1,000 residents in the city were killed by Japanese soldiers during the seven-year occupation (Tan, 2002, 288).³⁰ On August 17, 1945, troops from the Eighth Route Army arrived in Huanghaicheng, after Japan's formal surrender, marking the beginning of the end of the Japanese occupation of the city. The recovery of Huanghaicheng was slow and even after the CPC flag was raised on the highest hill in the city centre, sporadic fighting continued (Tan, 2002, 294-298). The city was taken over again by the Nationalists in 1947 for a short period before they fled to Taiwan, allowing the CPC to form a city government for the second time.

Protestantism and Huanghaicheng's religious 'ecosystem'

We look here at the religious groups and institutions that make up the religious ecosystem³¹ in Huanghaicheng today, focussing particular attention on the arrival and spread of Protestantism from a missionary religion to one that developed highly-indigenised forms. The analysis reveals that Protestantism became embedded in local society due to its highly institutionalised form and its engagement with society in the way of hospitals and schools. For this reason, churches had a degree of agency and became significant actors in the religious ecosystem. Having discussed in the Introduction how

³⁰ While these deaths were clearly tragic, the number of Huanghaicheng residents killed by the Japanese was certainly lower than in some areas.

³¹ This is similar to the "religious ecological environment" 宗教生态大环境 concept (see Wu et al, 2009, 197) to describe the religious landscape.

religion became institutionalised as a part of the modern Chinese nation, we see in this chapter the manner in which the state strove to institutionalise what it categorised as religion and how the religious groups were regulated within an increasingly institutionalised relationship encoded within policies and regulation as well as official procedures. We will also see that in practice the boundaries between these official categories are less clearly defined – a theme we will see with greater clarity in subsequent chapters as we focus specifically on Three-Self Protestantism.

The historical religious ecosystem

After the mid-nineteenth century, attempts to build a modern Chinese nation changed forever the religious ecosystem in Huanghaicheng as religion became the subject of an institutionalising project. Before the end of the Qing, the relationship between the “state” and religious groups was characterised by the loose institutions of “priest officials” 道官 and “monk officials” 僧官 which managed local Daoist and Buddhist religious specialists respectively. According to local sources, Huanghaicheng had hundreds (if not thousands) of Daoist 道教, Buddhist 佛教, and ‘popular religion’ 民间宗教 temples before the end of the imperial era. Many, if not all, of these temples were embedded in the centre of city and village life in the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties and remained as such into the early twentieth century. The services of Daoist and Buddhist religious specialists were employed in popular religion temples in and around Huanghaicheng (Zhu, 1994b, 1630b). Local sources describe how Daoist priests would be asked to read scriptures 念经 and fast 斋醮 for the dead. In addition, Daoist believers would give gifts of grain to temples in exchange for the services of Daoist priests to recite scriptures 诵经 and seek blessings 祈福 in order to overcome difficulties (He, 1990, 248).

The table below summarises the Daoist temples listed in local sources.³² We can clearly see that Daoist temples were found across what is now Huanghaicheng and that Daoism had a clear presence in the city. A range of deities were worshipped in these temples, including Jade Emperor 玉皇大帝, Jade Lady 玉女, God of Wealth 财神, Fire God 火神 and Medicine King 药王. There are also many legends surrounding some of these temples, some of which are recorded in local publications (see Zhang, 1997, 512-523). The Three Teachings Temple has also been included here because it was served by Daoist religious

³² There will undoubtedly have been more temples than those which are listed.

specialists. An unusual temple, it housed three deities: Buddha 菩萨, Laozi 老子 and Confucius 孔子.

Table 3.1 Daoist temples in Huanghaicheng (Zhang, 1989, 245-250; Zhao and Yu, 1990, 592a; Zheng, 1993, 27-36, 49-53; Yu, 1994, 755b - 756a; Zhu, 1994b, 1631b; Sun, 2002, 44-45).

Temple	District	Date of origin	Religious specialists	Renovations / Expansion
Yangzhu Temple	Jinping	Yuan		Ming, Qing
Yuhuang Temple	Jinping	Yuan	8	Ming, Qing
Dragon King Temple	Jinping	Qing (1661-1672)		Qing (1859)
Erlang Temple	Jinping	Ming		
God of Wealth Temple	Jinping	Ming		
Fire God Temple	Jinping	Ming		
Sanguan Temple	Jinping	Ming		
Medicine King Temple	Jinping	Ming		
City God Temple	Jinping	Ming		
Guandi	Jinping	Ming		
Zisun Temple	Jinping	Ming		
Laoye Temple	Jinping			
Yujia Temple	Moushan		1/2 ³³	
Sangong Temple	Moushan		1/2	
Guandi Temple	Moushan		1/2	
Jade Emperor Temple	Moushan		1/2	
Four Dragons Temple	Moushan		1/2	
Tongxian Temple	Xicheng / Jinghai	Yuan	5/6	Yuan, Ming, Qing
Sanyuan Temple	Xicheng / Jinghai	Ming	3	Ming
Xiuzhen Temple	Xicheng / Jinghai	Yuan		
Sanqing Temple	Xicheng / Jinghai			
Guandi Temple	Xicheng / Jinghai			
Jade Emperor Temple	Xicheng / Jinghai			
Dragon King Temple	Xicheng / Jinghai			
Three Teachings Temple	Jinping			

Buddhism in Huanghaicheng developed rapidly in the Song (960-1279) and Yuan (1271-1368) dynasties. Buddhist religious specialists served in two temples in the centre of Huanghaicheng. The City God Temple also had resident Daoist religious specialists as Table 3.1 shows, demonstrating the manner in which these religious specialists worked alongside one another and the highly diffuse nature of religious practice at the local level. The majority of Buddhist activity was centred in Xicheng and Jinghai. Towards the end of the Qing dynasty, Daoist 道会司 and Buddhist 僧会司 Associations were established by the government in every county across Huanghaicheng in order to regulate these religious

³³ Local sources are unclear on the exact number of religious specialists.

groups and to create more institutionalised forms which were in keeping with the nation-building project (Zheng, 1993, 1).

Table 3.2 Buddhist temples in Huanghaicheng (Zhao and Yu, 1990; Zheng, 1993, 90-106; Yu, 1994, 755a; Zhu, 1994b, 1630a-1631a).

Temple	District	Date of origin	Religious specialists	Renovations / Expansion
City God Temple	Jinping	Ming	19	
Ersheng Temple	Jinping			
Zhulin Temple	Moushan	Jin (1161)		Ming, Qing
Gaogu Temple	Xicheng / Jinghai	Tang (883)	10	
Jindui Temple	Xicheng / Jinghai	Song (1048)	10 (1940s 3)	
Hegu Temple	Xicheng / Jinghai	Yuan (1301)	10	
Xiyu Temple	Xicheng / Jinghai			
Duofu Temple	Xicheng / Jinghai			
Zifo Temple	Xicheng / Jinghai			
Shanyang Temple	Xicheng / Jinghai			
Zhu'an Temple	Xicheng / Jinghai			
Hongfo Temple	Xicheng / Jinghai			
Pu'an Temple	Xicheng / Jinghai			

Also located right at the heart of the city is a temple dedicated to the goddess *Mazu* 妈祖 also known as 天后. This temple was built in 1906, covering an area of about 2,000 square metres and funded by Fujianese merchants working in Huanghaicheng (Yu, 1994, 755b-756a; Liu et al, 2003, 119-120). However, it is unclear how active the temple was in the first half of the twentieth century.

Islam was introduced to the province in the Yuan dynasty by Hui 回族 Muslims. A large number of 'teachers of the Koran' 经师 were trained in the seventeenth century (Zhang, 1998, 495-496). There were several 'waves' of Hui Muslims settling in Huanghaicheng. The first was towards the end of the Qing dynasty. They bought a piece of land and constructed a mosque which was extended in 1880 (Zhu, 1994b, 1632b). Muslims were managed under the imperial organ "Board for Minority Affairs" 礼范院 as minorities rather than as a religious group.

The advent of Protestantism

The development of Protestantism in Huanghaicheng reveals the extent to which it developed a prominent position in the religious ecosystem. In the missionary era the spread of Protestantism was backed by military force and the “missionary cases” 教案 – assaults on persons and properties – demonstrate the sometimes antagonistic relationship between Protestantism and local state institutions. However, we also see the beginnings of Chinese denominations and independent churches which signalled the move to the indigenisation of Protestantism as well as a distancing from the missionary-run churches and the roots of the Three-Self principles which the CPC later adopted as its model for Protestantism in the New China. This idea of indigenisation 本色化 paved the way for dialogue between the Protestant community and the CPC in the late 1940s.

By the end of the Qing dynasty, Protestantism was becoming increasingly embedded in local society as missionaries and believers opened schools and hospitals. It had a significant presence in the religious ecosystem in Huanghaicheng in its highly institutionalised model of church buildings and congregations, although in terms of conversions, it is unclear how successful the foreign missionaries actually were. In the early 1900s were the beginnings of Chinese-initiated and managed Protestant mission work in Huanghaicheng. The Republican era saw a massive growth in this trend.³⁴

It was into a religious ecosystem dominated by Daoism, Buddhism and local popular religion that Protestantism first came to Huanghaicheng in 1830 with the arrival of a missionary from the London Missionary Society 基督教伦敦会 (LMS). The missionary distributed³⁵ religious leaflets but did not remain long in Huanghaicheng. There were no recorded converts (Zheng, 1993, 163-164). The first reliable records of Roman Catholicism 罗马天主教 in Huanghaicheng are in 1839 when a Chinese priest began mission work in the city (Cliff, 1994, 16-19).³⁶ This was followed by the arrival of foreign Franciscan nuns who established a convent, a hospital, an orphanage and schools

³⁴ It is important to note that there is no clear division between the stages of Protestantism in Huanghaicheng as some scholars have claimed. In the case of Taiyuan, Gansu, for example, one study suggests that there was a clear progression from missionary churches, through independent churches to indigenous churches (see Wu et al, 2009, 211-215).

³⁵ It was common practice for missionaries to sell literature and portions of the Bible rather than simply to distribute them without charge.

³⁶ Missionaries from the Church of the East (Nestorians) may have come to Huanghaicheng during the seventh century but it is not clear if they visited Huanghaicheng (Cliff, 1994, 11). Franciscan missionaries came to the province in the 1320s thirty years after the mission to China arrived in 1294 (Cliff, 1994, 14). There was further unsuccessful Jesuit evangelisation of the province in the early seventeenth century.

as well as the building of a Catholic church, completed in 1886 (Li, 1987, 173). Foreign priests served in Huanghaicheng during these years. The work expanded to include a small printing house in the city in 1908 (Li, 1987, 177). The Catholic Church in Huanghaicheng initiated education projects to help young girls and orphans (Zhu, 1994b, 1637b-1638a). The first attempt of the local state to manage Protestantism in an institutionalised form began during this period when both Roman Catholicism and Protestantism were dealt with by the Department of Foreign Affairs (Zhu, 1994b, 1629b).

Protestant missionary work in Huanghaicheng began in earnest towards the conclusion of the second Opium War (1856-1860) when two LMS missionaries arrived.³⁷ This work was transitory as they soon contracted cholera and died soon after (Zheng, 1993, 164). Also in 1859, (British) Baptist Missionary Society 英国浸礼会 (BMS) missionaries arrived in Huanghaicheng to begin mission work but this ended in 1875 with few converts and the missionaries moved further inland. The American Episcopal Church 美国圣公会 sent two missionaries to Huanghaicheng in 1861. One of the missionaries was soon killed by bandits while the other left in 1866, thus ending the work. The Scottish Presbyterian Church 苏格兰长老会 together with the Scottish Bible Society 苏格兰圣经公会 began work in Huanghaicheng in 1864, setting up a preaching station, school and medical clinic. The Scottish Presbyterians took over the work of the BMS in Huanghaicheng in 1875 but their work in Huanghaicheng ended in 1880 (Zheng, 1993, 176-177). These attempts at missionary work in Huanghaicheng were transitory in contrast to the work of other foreign mission agencies in Huanghaicheng.

The first of the durable mission works which did a great deal to embed Protestantism in Huanghaicheng was conducted by the American Presbyterians 美国长老会 who arrived in the city in 1861. They built a church compound in Jinping in 1867 which covered an area of more than 4,000 square metres including buildings from a temple and an area of the temple complex³⁸ (Hou, 1982, 182; Hou, 1989, 201). The church building was renovated in 1903 and a clock tower, gospel hall³⁹ 福音堂 and accommodation blocks were added. With the signing of the “unequal treaties,” the Protestant churches also had an increasing degree of control over their methods of proselytising and expansion.

³⁷ Missionaries were largely independent from control by the Chinese state because they were backed by Western military power (Palmer, 2009, 18).

³⁸ It is not clear how the missionaries acquired these temple buildings.

³⁹ Gospel halls were used specifically for proselytising. “Inquirers” were first invited to attend meetings in these halls before joining the church.

The Presbyterian mission did not simply focus on preaching as a means to proselytise but invested heavily in education and medical institutions. This model of mission work had become standard for missions in China by the late nineteenth century and was an attempt at creating a more substantial and permanent Protestant presence. In 1867, the Presbyterians opened a primary school which became a middle school in 1896. A vocational school was set up in 1890 which was taken over by the Huanghaicheng Industrial Mission (see below) in 1894 when the missionaries who ran the school left Huanghaicheng. The Presbyterians then opened an English-language school in 1894 and a nursery 幼稚园 in 1900 (Zheng, 1993, 204).

The Huanghaicheng School for the Deaf 启音学校 was set up in 1895 and by 1898, the school had ten students (Cliff, 1994, 183). A new school was built in 1900 and some of the school staff travelled around China to promote education for the deaf and mute. The school also developed new teaching methods for deaf-mute education. Interestingly, Koreans came to the school to study these teaching methods demonstrating how such institutions were embedded in transnational networks. In Chapter Eight we shall see how South Koreans are again involved in this work in Huanghaicheng today. Medical work continued when the Presbyterian mission opened a small pharmacy in 1901 which later developed into a clinic. The mission opened a museum in Huanghaicheng in 1898, comprising a range of exhibitions on science and natural history, a reading room and a “gospel hall” (Hou, 1989, 213-214). It was free to enter and was, apparently, very popular.

The development of the Presbyterian Church in Huanghaicheng was not always without resistance, however. In 1873, one prominent missionary attended a festival at the Jade Emperor Temple with the intention of preaching. After he began to preach, he was beaten and called a “devil” 鬼子. The missionary took the matter up with the American consulate which resulted in twenty-eight Huanghaicheng residents being charged by the local government and the judge publishing five agreed rules and regulations 议定条规 for Huanghaicheng including the banning of the term “devil” in reference to foreigners (Zheng, 1993, 235-237). There were four other significant cases in areas outside the city, demonstrating the antipathy between the foreign missionaries and the local state and sectors of society. This conflict did not prevent the churches from developing, but rather bolstered their efforts as the local state was forced to punish those who opposed the presence and work of the foreign missionaries due to the threat of foreign reprisal.

The (North American) Southern Baptist Church 南方浸信会 also started work in Huanghaicheng in 1861. The work in the city ended the following year but was re-started

in 1904 when they sent a Chinese pastor to establish a church. A church compound was built in 1906 covering an area of more than 6,000 square metres making it by far the largest Protestant church site in Huanghaicheng. The main church building itself seated over 800 people and included a baptistery (Liu, 1989, 229). This church complex initially incorporated a nursery for girls (which eventually grew to 400 pupils) and a primary school (Liu, 1989, 231).

In 1874, the mission wing of the British Anglican Church 英国圣公会, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel 联合信仰传播协会 (SPG), sent missionaries to Huanghaicheng. Their main work was amongst the foreign enclave and as a result, not many local Chinese were converted through their mission efforts. They built two churches: one in 1883, the other in 1895 (Zhu, 1994b, 1639a). One of these churches became known as 'Union Church'⁴⁰ 联合堂 (Sun, 2002, 92).

The China Inland Mission 内地会 (CIM) set up a sanatorium 疗养院 and a school for missionary children in 1880 (Zheng, 1993, 183). The campus included a school for boys, a school for girls and a primary school and followed the British curriculum.

The Huanghaicheng Industrial Mission 工艺会 was set up in 1893 by an independent missionary couple (Cliff, 1994, 183). In 1895, the mission took over a school originally set up by Presbyterian missionaries. Through the sale of lace 花边 made for export, the school was able to expand, becoming a boarding school. Working together with a local pastor 牧师 and a local elder 长老, the missionaries planted the Mashan Church 马山教会 in 1902. The church complex comprised fifty-five rooms and a clock tower. The Chinese elder was put in charge of church affairs 教会事务 and for this reason, it is categorised as a "Chinese Church" in contemporary local sources (Zheng, 1993, 186-187). The mission also opened a nursery, primary school, and orphanage and undertook education projects in rural areas. It also published a magazine as a means of proselytising. The church was managed solely by Chinese Protestants from its founding. This was a significant step towards Protestantism in Huanghaicheng being managed solely by Chinese nationals.

Foreign missions provided a model for Protestantism to expand through engaging with wider society and as more people in Huanghaicheng were converted, we see a move toward indigenous Protestant congregations. These Chinese-led projects tended to adopt mission strategies introduced by the foreign operations, and besides establishing new congregations, also focussed on education and medical work. The first of these Chinese-

⁴⁰ The name of the second church is unclear.

initiated undertakings was the Huanghaicheng Young Men's Christian Association 基督教青年会 (YMCA), set up in 1903 by leaders from the (American) Presbyterian Church.⁴¹ The YMCA had a particular focus on modern education 现代教育 and social work 社会服务.

A congregation set up by a group of local Protestants and a British missionary in 1909 served as the basis of Fu'an Church (see below). The small congregation rented a building in Jinping in which to conduct meetings. The daily affairs of the church were carried out by Chinese believers and church members provided funds through carpentry and making violins (Wang, 1989, 240). The church also opened a school in 1910 (Wang, 1989, 241-242).

Religion in the Republican era

The 1911 Revolution leading to the collapse of the Qing government and the establishment of the Republic of China brought change to Huanghaicheng's religious ecosystem. Within this rapidly-changing religious ecosystem we see that Protestantism takes a significant place due to its increasingly institutionalised form which served as a model of "church" for other religions. Furthermore, much of the Protestantism introduced by western missionaries fitted in with the ideals of the modernising nation. This also meant that it was not subject to repression during the anti-superstition campaigns. This expansion of Protestantism, which was also occurring in many places across China, was also aided by state sympathy towards Protestantism. Senior Nationalists were trained in missionary schools or were professing Protestants. This era saw further expansion of Protestantism in different forms. We see both the development and expansion of established foreign missions and the arrival of new ones in Huanghaicheng. We also see the setting up of independent Chinese churches and the beginnings of indigenous Chinese denominations across the city.⁴²

During this period the Nationalist government moved to create religious associations as part of the modernising of religion. Religious specialists from Nanjing were sent to Huanghaicheng to advise on the management of these associations though it was local religious specialists who were involved in their day-to-day running (Zheng, 1993, 1-7).

⁴¹ These leaders from the Presbyterian Church were all Chinese, as were all subsequent leaders of the YMCA in Huanghaicheng.

⁴² This also occurred in other places, some much earlier than this. See, for example, Wu et al, (2009, 122-123) for a description of how North Church in Shanghai became independent in 1906.

The management of religious groups became increasingly institutionalised and was to later serve as a model for the CPC. Under the Nationalists, between 1914 and 1928, religious affairs were handled by civil affairs organs 民政机构. Between 1929 and 1935, Civil Affairs Offices managed religious activity.

Under this institutionalised management, there were changes and developments across all religious groups in Huanghaicheng. Already recognised as a “modern” religion, the Catholic Church expanded into Xicheng where a church was built in 1915. Huanghaicheng became one of eleven Catholic vicariates in the 1920s, demonstrating the importance of the work in the city (Li, 1987, 174). Another Catholic church was built in 1934 comprising twenty rooms and a primary school.

In 1912, another group of Hui Muslims came to Huanghaicheng this time from Baoding in Hebei. Records state that they were salt merchants (Yu, 1994, 756b). A third ‘wave’ of Muslims came to Huanghaicheng in the late 1920s and early 1930s. This group were from cities in the west of the province and the Muslim community, which by this time comprised about forty families and were served by several Imams 阿訇 (Zheng, 1993, 251-253).

This drive to build a modern nation and to institutionalise religion did not fair well for all religious groups in Huanghaicheng. We know that in Huanghaicheng, many Daoist, Buddhist and popular religion temples came under threat towards the end of the Qing dynasty with a drive to reform religion and “exterminate superstition” 破除迷信 as reformers sought to build a modern Chinese state (He, 1990, 246). The “Destroy temples to build schools” 毁庙办学 movement began during this time and continued under the Nationalist regimes (Goossaert, 2006; Nedostup, 2009; Poon, 2011). As a result of these reforms, many temple buildings were forcibly converted into schools. These changes undoubtedly had an impact on the numbers of temples in Huanghaicheng but we do not have figures to ascertain what the extent of temple closures was. However, there were also other factors which resulted in the destruction of temples or their conversion to other uses. Urban expansion during the 1920s and 1930s may have resulted in some temples being demolished or taken over for other uses.

Many Daoist and Buddhist temples were closed in the Republican era (Zhu, 1994b, 1630a-1630b) but the Huanghaicheng Red Swastika Society 红卍字会, a charitable association established by the new religious movement, Daoyuan 道院, was active in the city during the 1920s and early 1930s. The Society attempted to bring together Daoists,

Buddhists, Muslims, Protestants and Catholics to carry out welfare projects for 'the benefit of all people' 济世行化 (An, 1988, 132). However, it is unclear how many followers the Society had in Huanghaicheng. Japanese occupation was to bring further changes to the religious ecosystem in the city.

However, in the meantime, the durable Protestant foreign missions continued to expand in the 1910s and 1920s, becoming increasingly institutionalised and meeting some of the ideals of a modern nation by providing "Western" medicine and education models. The Presbyterians opened a new nursery in 1912 and in 1919, a nursery teacher-training school was opened which merged with the girl's middle school in 1925. A business school 尚专 was formed in 1920 and ten years later, the school had 260 pupils (Hou, 1982, 184). Also in 1920 a middle school for girls 女子中学 was opened. A senior middle school was added in 1925. In 1922 the School for the Deaf was extended as was the primary school which became co-educational. By 1930 this school had around 300 pupils in six grades. The Presbyterians then opened a Bible school for women 妇女圣经学校 in 1927 which also taught vocational skills. By 1937 the school had eighty students and included dormitories, a sports ground and a garden. A hospital was opened in 1914, covering an area of 8,000 square metres. It was the first modern hospital in the city (Qu, 1987, 43). Patients were asked to watch a short film outlining the basics of the Protestant faith. In 1917, specialist eye, ear, nose and throat departments were added while an X-ray department was built in 1922 (Qu, 1987, 11). Attached to the hospital was a nursing college 护士学校, established in 1913. Between 1926 and 1944, 150 nurses graduated.

The Southern Baptists added a middle school to their church compound in the 1920s. They also expanded their preaching work to Jinghai and a congregation was planted in 1920 numbering fifty believers. Small congregations were also established in Moushan (Zhao and Yu, 1990, 593a-593b).⁴³ In 1917, the CIM opened a hospital in Huanghaicheng which remained open until the late 1930s when it was closed down.⁴⁴ They then opened a church in Huanghaicheng in 1924. Numbers quickly grew to between 200 and 300. The CIM also established a preaching station in Moushan. Mashan Church planted another congregation in Chengxi in 1920. By 1930 the congregation had thirty people (Zhao and Yu, 1990, 593b).

⁴³ It was possibly the Southern Baptists who established a church in what is now Baisong (see Chapter Four) (Wang, 1991, 617a). In 1927, a preacher sent to the area and in 1940 the church was built. The congregation at this time numbered about 200. The church buildings were taken over by the village when the preacher returned to Jinping. It was at this time that the church ceased formal activity (Wang, 1991, 618a).

⁴⁴ The reasons for this closure are unclear.

The YMCA set up a vocational school in 1914 and had both day and night-class programmes. The school had about seventy students at its peak but closed in 1920. A permanent building for the YMCA was constructed in 1915 in Jinping. A second school was set up in 1922 with a focus on training and was involved in the “Education for the Masses Movement” 平民教育运动. Twenty-nine “education points” 教育点 were set up across the city involving an estimated 3,000 young people. The church building was used by the local CPC branch from 1928 while still serving as a base for the YMCA congregation. In addition, the Huanghaicheng Young Women's Christian Association 基督教女青年会 (YWCA) was established in 1924 and, like the YMCA was heavily involved in social outreach. The Association's main priority was women's work but it also opened a nursery in 1925.

New foreign mission organisations and churches arrived in Huanghaicheng during the Republican era, making use of the increased freedoms for proselytising. The North American Seventh Day Adventists 福临安息日会 began work in Huanghaicheng in 1913 and had a permanent preaching station by 1920 (Zheng, 1993, 168). Similarly, the Salvation Army 救世军 began work in Huanghaicheng in 1917 focussing on porridge stalls 粥棚 rather than on preaching. The mission had its greatest number of converts in the late 1920s. The (North American) ‘Pentecostal’ Assemblies of God 神召会 church came to Huanghaicheng in 1935 and small groups of believers developed across the city (Cliff, 1994, 317). The lone missionary only stayed several years but the work influenced the establishment of other congregations (see below).

Of most significance for Protestantism in Huanghaicheng was the development of independent congregations 自立会 and indigenous denominations. By 1913, Fu'an Church had around fifty members and in 1915, members funded the building of a permanent meeting site which was finished two years later. By this time, the church had grown to about 100. A group of believers from the Presbyterian Church in Huanghaicheng planted the independent Sanlin Church in 1918. The church started with around twenty members and they borrowed a room for meetings. As the church grew a church building was constructed in the same area. Within a few years, the church had over 100 members. The church sent one of its members to preach in Shanghai, Nanjing and other cities (Zheng, 1993, 189).

The independent Desheng Church was first established in 1919 by a group of thirty believers who had also left the Presbyterian Church. A building for the church was completed in 1922. It had a clock tower and the basement rooms were used as a ‘gospel

hall' until one was built in 1929. That same year, the church established a nursery and a primary school which was run by one of the pastors and was divided into four grades. As we shall see below, Desheng Church became a significant Protestant institution in the city.

The Church of Christ in China was formed in 1927, and although this national body did not achieve the representation that it had hoped to, it did serve to encourage Chinese Protestants to debate the issue of independence (Charbonnier, 2007, 420; Bays, 2012, 110-111). This, and the growing independent church movement in Huanghaicheng, inspired other local Protestants to leave foreign mission-supported churches to set up new independent congregations. That same year, Dongzhi Church was formed in Moushan.

In 1929, Zhudan Church was established (also called Zhudan Bible Point 朱丹查经处) by two former Chinese seminary⁴⁵ staff. They had resigned from their posts after a disagreement with foreign staff. Members of the Huanghaicheng Presbyterian Church also joined them. A building for the church was provided by one of the members (Qu, 1989, 243). The main focus of the church was Bible training and the training of 'preachers' 传道人. These training classes attracted Protestants not only from Huanghaicheng but also other cities and provinces. The church also published a magazine.

As well as independent churches, Huanghaicheng was important for indigenous denomination congregations. Huanghaicheng was one of the centres for the indigenous denomination, the 'Local Assembly' 聚会处 (also known as the 'Little Flock' 小群) (Cliff, 1994, 337). The Huanghaicheng Local Assembly was formed in 1930 by two prominent local Protestants, one of whom had direct contact with Ni Tuosheng 倪柝声 ("Watchman Nee" 1903-1972), the main founder of the denomination (see Lian, 2010). In 1932, Ni came to Huanghaicheng to preach and with his support the congregation formally became a Local Assembly.

Protestantism and the religious ecosystem under the Japanese

While Protestantism in Huanghaicheng fared rather well under the Nationalist government, the Japanese occupation of Huanghaicheng probably affected Protestantism more than any of the other religions since most Western missionaries were forced to leave Huanghaicheng and the running of churches was handed over to Chinese believers. This served as a further opportunity for churches to be developed and new churches to be

⁴⁵ The seminary was located in another city in the province.

established with an entirely Chinese leadership, preparing the way for the late 1940s when the CPC took power.

The Catholic Church in Huanghaicheng continued to expand until the Japanese occupation of the city. Local sources claim that many Catholic believers took part in anti-Japanese activities (Li, 1987, 179-180). One of the most famous accounts is that of a Chinese worker (surname Chen) in the Catholic-run printing house who secretly used the facilities to produce anti-Japanese leaflets. In 1938, Chen was arrested and executed and the press closed down (Zheng, 1993, 113). The congregation in Xicheng district continued to grow until the Japanese stopped meetings in 1939.

A fourth wave of Hui Muslims arrived in the city due to the Japanese invasion in the north of China in 1937. These Hui came from Hebei, Beijing and Tianjin and most of them left Huanghaicheng after the end of World War II, returning to where they had originally come from leaving only about ten families (Zheng, 1993, 251-253).

Some temples in the city were heavily damaged or destroyed altogether during the Japanese occupation. However, it should be noted that Buddhism was 'promoted' under Japanese military control when the Society to Promote Buddhism 佛教推行社 was established in Huanghaicheng (Yu, 1994, 754b-755a). No new temples were built and little temple repair was undertaken. The fate of Daoism during this time is unknown but Longwang Temple became inactive as a religious site from this period.

Certainly, foreign mission work was restricted severely under the Japanese (Hou, 1989, 204). The Chinese denominations (with the exception of the Local Assembly) and the independent churches did better under the Japanese than the foreign mission-initiated churches, especially after the attack on Pearl Harbour in December, 1941. Some foreign missionaries left Huanghaicheng before this period and church leadership in some congregations was handed to Chinese believers. Chinese believers were given more control after foreign missionaries who had remained in Huanghaicheng until 1941 were moved to an internment camp in Shandong. This was a common trend across China as others have noted (Bays, 2012, 141-146). Some Protestant institutions were closed by the Japanese but new congregations were also formed during the inter-war years, giving the local Protestants a greater degree of assertiveness than ever before.

Japanese forces organised the local churches into the Huanghaicheng United Protestant Church 基督教联合会 which was part of the Japanese-initiated Northern China Protestant Group 华北基督教团. This organisation was an attempt to bring Protestants together for

ease of control (Marsh, 2011, 187). A local pastor served as the president 会长. While many congregations in the city agreed to join this umbrella organisation, this was largely to avoid trouble according to local believers. Only the Local Assembly refused to join this Japanese-initiated union and this resulted in the arrest and incarceration of several of the denomination's leaders.

Mission-run institutions were affected more than the congregations. The Presbyterian and Southern Baptist schools were either closed or taken over by the Japanese. The works of the Salvation Army and the Seventh Day Adventists were forcibly stopped. In 1940, a building belonging to the CIM was handed over to a group of local Protestants which they used to establish a church – the Provincial Church 全省教会. The original CIM congregation continued meeting after the missionaries left during the Japanese occupation (Han, 1989, 238-239). The Huanghaicheng Industrial Mission schools were combined to form a state school in 1941 and the mission's congregation in Jinghai was shut down (Zhao and Yu, 1990, 593b). After 1941, Desheng Church lost numbers until the end of the war in 1945. Publication of the Zhudan Church magazine was stopped by the Japanese. The Fu'an Church school was forced to merge with another institute and then closed in 1941.

A believer from the Presbyterian Church started meetings in his home in 1940. This group soon combined with the Assemblies of God groups in Huanghaicheng, forming the beginnings of the Spiritual Gifts Church 灵恩会 in 1942. Many of the members had been inspired by the 'revivals' 灵恩运动 which had taken place across the province in 1909-1914 and 1927-1937 (Cliff, 1994, 321-332). There were reports of faith healings (including two paraplegics) (see Crawford, 1933; Monsen, 1959; Culpepper, 1971; Lian, 2010, 84-108). The meetings also emphasised vibrant forms of worship and glossolalia⁴⁶ 说方言 as happened in Spiritual Gifts congregations in other locales (Wu et al, 2009, 221). The preacher Song Shangjie (John Sung 1901-1944) had visited Huanghaicheng during this religious movement, an event within living memory of some Huanghaicheng Protestants. One elderly believer told me that Song had prayed for her aunt who had been a paraplegic for eighteen years and that she was healed instantly and walked home (see Liu, 1989, 228, 231-232 for a similar account). In 1943, the newly-formed Spiritual Gifts Church rented a building in Huanghaicheng (Luo, 1989a, 235-236). During the next year, the leaders left Huanghaicheng and a lay believer took over the leadership of the church which became known as Shanmei Church. Following this in 1944, Zhudan Church set up

⁴⁶ This is also known as "speaking in tongues."

a school for the blind 姑母学道院 to teach blind people how to read the Bible. The indigenous denomination the Jesus Family⁴⁷ 耶稣家庭 started work in Jinping in 1944 with ten believers but according to several believers still alive today, Protestants from other churches visited their meetings. The following year, one of the believers donated a house which became the new church building (Luo, 1989b, 237). There was a close relationship between the Spiritual Gifts congregations and the Jesus Family in Huanghaicheng.

The Japanese occupation of Huanghaicheng, then, was an important period in the life of Protestantism because the foreign mission enterprise was checked while leadership was handed over to Chinese religious specialists. Chinese-led congregations generally had much more freedom to expand and new Chinese-managed congregations were also formed during this period. This resulted in a greater move on the side of local Protestants to lead their own congregations in the post-war years.

Religion in the post-war years

Much of the Protestant church work was revived after the end of the Japanese occupation but apart from churches, many of the foreign mission schools and hospitals faced either closure due to funding issues or were nationalised by the first Huanghaicheng CPC government, formed in 1945. Between 1945 and 1949, Huanghaicheng was mostly under the control of the CPC and changes which are associated with 1949 in other areas of China began earlier in Huanghaicheng. Religion was managed by the Huanghaicheng People's Government Foreign Affairs Committee 人民政府外事委员会 but there were no personnel specifically assigned to religious affairs work (Zheng, 1993, 2), demonstrating to some extent the rather loose nature of religion management. In addition, before the 1950s, no "patriotic organisations" represented Protestants under the CPC government in Huanghaicheng. These two factors meant that there was no real institutionalised relationship between the local state and the Protestant churches at this time. In 1947 when the Nationalists re-took Huanghaicheng, religious groups were managed by religious specialists under the direction of the local Nationalist government (Zhu, 1994b, 1629b). We have no information on the fate of Buddhism, Daoism and popular religion temples in Huanghaicheng during this period but all remaining temples faced closure or demolition under the new CPC government.

⁴⁷ For a background on the Jesus Family see Tao (2001), Lian (2010), Deng (2011).

The Presbyterian-established business school taken over by the government in 1945 was handed back to the control of the Presbyterians two years later when the Nationalists retook the city (Zheng, 1993, 225). The Huanghaicheng School for the Deaf and Mute, the Presbyterian-run hospital and the Southern Baptist primary school were nationalised in 1945 as was the Desheng Church primary school in 1946. However, it was not all negative for the mission-dominated churches and the Southern Baptist congregation in Jinghai grew to more than forty believers by 1947. The Salvation Army in Huanghaicheng was revived in the post-war years, led by a local Protestant and the work expanded. The work of the YMCA came to an end in the 1940s and the Association-initiated nursery merged with a local primary school in 1945.

The independent churches and indigenous denominations continued to grow. In 1946, Zhudan Church set up an orphanage for girls, which was then merged with the School for the Blind in 1948 on new premises. A group of members from Mashan Church left in 1946 to set up Nanerlu Church. Their Bible studies and prayer meetings attracted a large number of believers. At this time, a member donated a house from which the church derived its name. Another Jesus Family was established not far from the one above in 1949 by a (Chinese) former member of the Southern Baptist Church. It started with three members. The church also set up a lace-making⁴⁸ factory and the members increased to ten (Luo, 1989b, 237). This congregation also started up other meetings across Jinping and Jinghai. By 1948, Sanlin Church had grown to around 120 members.

From the initial CPC takeover of Huanghaicheng, many of those Protestants with wealth and a stake in the Nationalist regime began to make plans to leave the city and many fled to Taiwan before the formal nationwide CPC victory in 1949. The remaining years of the 1940s marked the beginning of the end for the foreign-led missions as schools and hospitals were nationalised across China (Hunter and Chan, 1993, 24). However, there was little immediate change for Protestant believers under the new government and we see some congregations continuing to expand.

In December, 1949 the Seventh Day Adventist Church sent a Chinese missionary to the city to revive the work (Xia, 1989, 244). The work was expanded from its original location and by 1951 there were Bible study points 查经点 in Jinping. The Presbyterian-built museum was taken over by the government soon after 1949 and became a model for the city museum. In 1950, after investigations had been made into social organisations 社会团体 registration of such groups was supervised by the Civil Affairs Bureau 民政局,

⁴⁸ Lace was sold for export.

including religious organisations. It was not until 1957 that the work of religious management was handed over to the Religious Affairs Department 宗教事务处 in Huanghaicheng. This marked the beginning of an institutionalised relationship between the Protestant community and the local state.

In 1951 Dongzhi Church had about forty members (Zheng, 1993, 191). The same year, the government took over the church School for the Blind and merged it with the School for the Deaf and Mute which had been nationalised (Qu, 1989, 243). By 1951 there were about thirty members in the Nanerlu congregation. The area in which Fu'an Church was built became a militarised zone in 1953 and the church moved to another location (Wang, 1989, 241-242).

In 1950, the Local Assembly had the most members of any denomination in the city with about 500 (Yu, 1994, 759b). Shanmei Church moved to a new building donated by a believer in 1950 after his wife, who had previously been unable to conceive, was prayed for by a believer from Shanmei Church and subsequently became pregnant. Other Spiritual Gifts churches in towns outside Huanghaicheng also sprang up during this period. They also developed close ties with Jesus Families across the province (Yu, 1994, 759b). By 1950 there were twenty-five members in the largest Jesus Family in Jinping but all Jesus Family activity was forcibly stopped by the CPC government in 1950 (Luo, 1989b, 237).

One elderly church leader claimed that the late 1940s and early 1950s were the best years for the Protestant community in Huanghaicheng. However, he suggested that the CPC also demonstrated caution in its dealings with Protestants. Several elderly believers who had been active in congregations in Huanghaicheng at that time told me that local state security personnel were sent to gather information on the churches. An elderly believer related:

1948 to 1953 or 1954 was the time when the Huanghaicheng Church flourished 兴旺 most. There were a lot of people in the church and a lot of church activities. Under the Japanese, people didn't have their own church but now that time was over and the church was revived 恢复. Possibly for this reason, there were some in the local CPC who didn't feel comfortable with the situation. At that time, people have told me, public security personnel were sent to monitor things in the church.

Protestant churches were organised into a "patriotic organisation" in the 1950s, signalling a new development in relationship between church and state.⁴⁹ Of most significance for

⁴⁹ For an historical overview of the TSPM Movement at the national level see Ying and Leung (1996).

Protestantism in this change was what has become known as the “Christian Manifesto”⁵⁰ 基督教宣言 (full title, “Direction of Endeavour for Chinese Christianity in the Construction of New China” 中国基督教在新中国建设中努力的途径) which was announced in 1950 by Wu Yaozong 吴耀宗 (Y. T. Wu 1893-1979). This manifesto detailed an official move for Protestant churches in China to follow the “Three-Self” principles of “self-governance, self-support, and self-propagation”⁵¹ 自治, 自养, 自传 and to support the state in its drive towards socialism. Protestants who believed in the ideals of the CPC headed this movement (Hunter and Chan, 1993, 23).⁵²

In Huanghaicheng, official sources state that the majority of Protestants took part in the Three-Self Reform Movement 三自改革运动 as it was then called (Zhu, 1994a, 34). There is a discrepancy in the numbers of Protestants who allegedly signed the Christian Manifesto with estimates varying between 1,284 and 2,000 signatures (Zheng, 1993, 243-244). One church leader who was active in the TSPM related this:

As you know, the Three-Self Patriotic Movement was national. Here in Huanghaicheng, there was definitely support for the Three-Self principles 三自原则. All the churches in the city met together to analyse and discuss this matter and all agreed that this was a good thing. There wasn't one church that did not agree to apply the Three-Self principles. After that, it was the [Protestant Manifesto] “signature movement” 签名运动. I've seen the original documents for Huanghaicheng and about 2,000 Protestants signed the Manifesto. Whether or not there were any fake signatures, I couldn't say for sure. It's difficult to say. At the time there were between 4,000 and 5,000 Protestants in the whole of Huanghaicheng [including rural areas].

The meeting referred to in the narrative above was the 1956 meeting of churches in Huanghaicheng where it was agreed to move towards a unification of Protestant churches 宗派联合 in the city. The same process was happening in cities across China. They also agreed on the establishment of a City TSPM Committee which helped to represent the city's Protestants in relation to the local state. While we do not have complete figures for all four districts in the city, in 1957, on the eve of the Anti-Rightist Campaign, there were fifty-four deacons, elders and pastors in Jinping district (Yu, 1994, 760a). This, together with the estimates of believers in the entire administrative area of Huanghaicheng, gives us an idea of the size of the Protestant community.

Compared to the Protestant community, some religions remained largely unaffected while others were put under more intense scrutiny by the local state. Due to the Vatican's

⁵⁰ For a full translation of the Manifesto, see Jones (1963, 19-20).

⁵¹ These ideas were not established by the CPC but had been debated for some time by Chinese believers and foreign missionaries (see Xu, 2004; Lee, 2007).

⁵² For further details on the TSPM at the national level see Wickeri (1990) and Jones (1962).

resistance to the CPC, the activities of the Catholic churches in Huanghaicheng received strict supervision from the state. One Catholic Church complex was demolished after 1949 to make way for other buildings. Until then about 200 Catholic believers had worshipped there. Worship continued again in Xicheng in 1945 and lasted until 1950 when there were about 60 worshippers but was then forced to close (Zheng, 1993, 121). The same year, the Legion of Mary 圣母军 was formed in Huanghaicheng. This group was set up to resist the impending “Patriotic Movement” 爱国运动 and encourage lay Catholics to remain loyal to Rome (Zhu, 1994b, 1633b). There were ten small groups formed in the city which were forcibly disbanded by the CPC (Li, 1987, 180-181). In 1951, leadership positions in the remaining Catholic congregation were given to Chinese believers. All foreign Catholic Church clergy left or were forced to leave Huanghaicheng by 1952 after the “Patriotic Movement” began.

The last Catholic church building was taken over 接管 by the city government in 1955 for military purposes but then returned to the Catholic Church in 1957 (Li, 1987, 181). It was demolished in 1959. In 1955, the first Catholics in Huanghaicheng took positions on the City People's Political Consultative Conference 中国人民政治协商会议[黄海城]市委员会 (shortened to 政协). In 1957 the CPA was established in Huanghaicheng and in 1960 Huanghaicheng's first Chinese Bishop was chosen 备选 (Li, 1987, 181).

There is little available evidence to confirm how many of these temples still existed after 1949 and when they were actually demolished or converted for other uses. Local sources state that all Daoist activity in Huanghaicheng had stopped by 1950 (Zhu, 1994b, 1630b). No Daoist Association was established in Huanghaicheng as a result. In Xicheng, Tongxian, Sanyuan and Xiuzhen temples were converted to schools under the Nationalists and temple land taken over during the land reform in 1946 (Zhao and Yu, 1990, 592a). All the buildings were demolished in 1947 to make way for building projects. The area where Yangzhu Temple was located became a “military restricted area” 军事禁区 in 1965 and after this period most of the temple was demolished (Wang, 2009, 224-225). Temples that were not demolished were converted to other uses. The *Mazu* Temple in Jinping was also demolished leaving only the opera stage 戏楼. The Three Teachings Temple ceased to function after this time.

The fate of the sole Mosque in Huanghaicheng was different to that of the Daoist, Buddhist and popular religion temples, in part because the Hui Muslims were managed as an ethnic group under the Bureau for Ethnic Minorities 少数民族局 rather than as Muslims (Goossaert and Palmer, 2011, 156-157). Despite this state categorisation of, a Muslim

(halal 清真) abattoir 屠宰厂 was built in Huanghaicheng in 1951, sponsored by the Religious Affairs Bureau.⁵³ All the Muslim-run restaurants were combined into one eatery in 1956. In 1964 the provincial Islamic Association 伊斯兰教协会 was established and the resident Imam in Huanghaicheng became a member of the Standing Committee (Zhang, 1998, 545).

Huanghaicheng had a myriad of “redemptive societies” which were part of the makeup of the religious ecosystem until the CPC takeover (see Goossaert and Palmer, 2011, 91-122). However, local sources only describe the Li Sect⁵⁴ 理教 which was formed in Shandong at the end of the Ming dynasty (see DuBois, 2005, 107ff) and was considered a “secret society” 秘密团体 combining beliefs from Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism. The sect had five meeting places in Jinping but these were disbanded by the CPC in the late 1940s (Yu, 1994, 760a-760b). This sect did not fit into the CPC categories of legitimate religious groups and was outlawed for this reason.

The Anti-Rightist Campaign and the Cultural Revolution

The Anti-Rightist Campaign and the Cultural Revolution were tumultuous times for all religious believers in Huanghaicheng but more so for religious specialists such as Catholic priests and Protestant pastors who were singled out. However, we will see that the attempts of the local state to silence the leadership of the Protestant community were hampered to a degree by personal connections between the Protestants and local officials. Surprisingly, we see that conversions and baptisms continued during these difficult years. The Anti-Rightist Campaign in 1957, at first, affected church leadership most severely as an elderly believer related:

The churches chose Pastor Ying as the chairman of the Huanghaicheng Protestant Unification Committee 基督教联合会. He had studied in seminary and was quite extreme 积极 in some of his theological ideas. During the Anti-Rightist Campaign he was labelled a Rightist 右派.⁵⁵ He went to a meeting in the provincial capital and when he came back, that was him, he was a Rightist. It didn't matter who you were. If you were a pastor it didn't matter. You were finished. And then this affected the church because it was seen as not being dependable. Someone else was chosen after him. After he was gone they chose someone who was lower down in the church, an elder. But after this the churches started to lose numbers even more.

⁵³ Previous to this it is unclear what the arrangements were for the slaughtering of animals.

⁵⁴ For a fuller description of this sect see Nedostup (2009) and Goossaert and Palmer (2011).

⁵⁵ Across China at this time, there were attacks on religious specialists as supporters of the *Guomindang*, foreigners or rightists (Hunter and Chan, 1993, 25).

However, the Anti-Rightist Campaign did not only affect Protestant leaders. One elderly Protestant believer related to me how her uncle and brother were both executed simply because they had Biblical names.⁵⁶ She described how her relatives were loaded onto trucks and driven outside the city where all the occupants – labelled Rightists – were shot.⁵⁷

As part of the state drive to further institutionalise Protestantism and its relationship to the state, the provincial TSPM Committee met to discuss the issue of united worship in 1956. Following this, the Huanghaicheng TSPM Committee made the decision for Protestant congregations to come together for united worship, as happened in many places across China (see Ma, 2008, 8). This would allow the state to monitor religious activity more easily, thus regulating what it deemed as acceptable activity against unacceptable activity. Almost all of the foreign-initiated⁵⁸, independent and Chinese denominations (except for the Jesus Family) merged into two meeting points: Shanmei and Desheng churches (Hou, 1989, 206-207). However, united worship in Huanghaicheng was not successful for the Protestant community as a former TSPM leader related:

In 1958 the united worship began. The two congregations, Desheng and the Shanmei were both in dire straits. There were hardly any people because the policies were bad. There may have been only fifty or sixty people in Desheng Church at the time. They made pillows to sell in order to try to make money for the church. I helped them at the time because I knew someone in the business.

Although there were two official meeting points for Protestants, the Shanmei Church point quickly closed as restrictions on preaching content were introduced and believers failed to gather for worship. Another TSPM church leader described the situation:

By the time united worship was actually initiated, there weren't many people. Many believers went to do other things. Some were involved in export; others became teachers, and so on. And then the Catholics were really persecuted. This had a big impact on the Protestant church. After that started to happen, many people stopped coming to meetings. Also at that time, those who were preaching couldn't preach what they wanted. If people alluded 影射 to anything to do with the government then it could easily be seen as a criticism and people could get into serious trouble. At times people would just go along to read the newspaper together. When things were really bad and believers came to church, not even the pastors wanted to preach, so they read the newspaper. Then no one went to Shanmei Church. It was the only other place apart from Desheng Church [for worship].

⁵⁶ It was common in Protestant families to name children with Biblical names prior to 1949. Popular names in Huanghaicheng were Paul 包罗 and David 大卫. The practice of naming children so as to identify them as coming from a Protestant family has re-emerged in the reform era, although most of the names are based on Biblical ideas rather than directly taken from the Biblical narrative. Examples of these names include 恩淋 and 明恩.

⁵⁷ The interviewee did not state who carried out the executions.

⁵⁸ It is unclear whether or not this included the Seventh Day Adventists.

The Mashan church building was closed in the 1950s and used as a storage facility and cinema for Maoist propaganda films. An elderly believer told me that the largest church movables were stored in Desheng Church, while everything else was divided amongst the brothers and sisters. Both SPG church buildings were demolished in the 1950s. All other church buildings and meeting places were closed.

We see at this stage the importance of relationships between the Protestant community and officials which we will see much more clearly in later chapters. One UFWD official, in particular, is remembered favourably by some of the elderly Protestants in Huanghaicheng:

The United Front officials treated the church leaders quite well. The United Front director 部长 used to do undercover work 地下工作 [for the CPC] when the city was under Nationalist rule. During this time he developed a problem with his eyes and it became quite serious. At the time, in one of the churches there was a believer who worked in a hospital and he was able to cure the director's eyes. Because he knew the man had a hard life because of his underground work, the believer didn't ask him for medical fees. The treatment apparently would have been quite expensive, so this official always thought well of the church after that. There were quite a few Protestants who should have been labelled as Rightists but he would be very lenient with those who were his responsibility and he let them off. It was really because of that relationship. He was very lenient on the church but of course it wasn't always down to him as to what happened.

Despite the state drive to institutionalise Protestantism, there was still a degree of un-institutionalised Protestant activity and some Protestants were still engaging in proselytising. I met believers who were converted to Protestantism and baptised in the early 1960s. This was not the norm and by this time it was becoming increasingly difficult for believers to express their faith at all. Proselytising and baptism were carried out in increasingly secretive ways. Pastor Zheng, the current head of the City Two Committees told me:

The church began to flourish less and less due to the political climate 政治气候 and the different political movements 政治运动. But, in 1959 and 1960, there were still baptisms. I've met people who were baptised in 1960. At the time, the government didn't allow baptisms but we secretly still did. It wouldn't be worth living if you were found out doing baptisms but the preachers continued nonetheless. Those seeking baptism were asked to write down that they wanted to be baptised but wouldn't tell anyone about it. There probably weren't too many baptisms but I know that they continued up until 1966. By that time the church was just a façade 门面. That's what it was like.

All public forms of Protestantism ceased with the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in 1966 and the Protestant community went underground. Many outside observers at the

time thought that the Protestant churches in China had been crushed and that the religion had come to an end. The only remaining Protestant church and base for the TSPM Committee in Huanghaicheng, Desheng Church, was vandalised and ransacked by the Red Guards, then closed down, as Pastor Zheng relates:

In 1966, the Cultural Revolution began and everything was occupied by the Red Guards. I know two pastors who saw these things with their own eyes. At the time, someone from the UFDW came to tell them that although the UFDW reiterated freedom of religious belief, the church couldn't be protected. There were Red Guards everywhere. Within a short while they had taken over the [Desheng] Church building and occupied it. All the books, including Bibles, and all the church records were carried out of the church, piled up on the road and set on fire. The fire was so fierce that the cobblestones cracked and came out of place. So much stuff was burned. By that time the other church was gone. That was 1966. The Red Guards took the church sign down.

Desheng Church was then occupied by a state-run factory until 1981. The clock towers of Mashan and the Southern Baptist Church were demolished by Red Guards. The Southern Baptist Church became a factory in the late 1960s.

But the persecution of the Protestant community did not end with the closing of the last church in the city: denunciation meetings began in Huanghaicheng which was one of three provincial centres for Protestant denunciation meetings (Cliff, 1994, 424). An elderly believer told me the following:

All the church preachers, elders and pastors were labelled cow monsters and snake demons 牛鬼蛇神. They couldn't protect themselves. Most of the lay believers had jobs in factories or other work units but what could the preachers do now that they were unemployed? The government didn't want them to starve so they were given jobs in factories and they were forced to attend study sessions 学习班 to reform their thinking 改造思想. All leaders from religious circles were forced to attend meetings in the building which is now where the Catholic Church is. In 1967 and 1968 they were brought together to study, confess 交待 and expose one another 互相揭发. It was really a tumultuous time. One of the Street Councils 街道办事处 attended one of these meetings to denounce a preacher. A believer was also there to help them denounce.

It was inevitable that every church leader would be found guilty of political crimes at these denunciation meetings. All faced punishment although it seems that those who demonstrated remorse did not face such a harsh sentence, according to one believer:

Preachers at that time all had to do reform through labour 劳动改造. Some were sent to street factories and those who displayed good behaviour were sent to do handcrafts. When things were bad the preachers had signs hung round their necks and were paraded through the streets. This situation carried on until 1970 or maybe 1972.

However, not every denunciation meeting went ahead unchallenged. An account which I heard several times in Huanghaicheng relates how an elderly Protestant believer ended one such meeting. The story is recalled by an elderly church leader:

The church had a blind man who had been helped by the school for the deaf, mute and blind that was set up by the church. His son was in the army and so he was quite brave. When the accusation meeting started, people were told how to make accusations and how to point out people's bad points. At this point, the elderly blind man stood up to speak and used words from the Bible. He said, "Everyone should mind his tongue and be watchful of what he says." That was a really powerful thing to say, especially at that time. Despite the political situation, the meeting couldn't go on. They couldn't do anything because he was an elderly man, he was blind and his son was in the army. The meeting ended.

The passage referred to by the elderly Protestant is James 3: 1-12 which warns believers of the dangers of what they say. The verses emphasise, in particular, the idea that people who are not careful with their words can cause trouble and conflict. While the kind of action taken by the elderly believer was not the norm at the time, it does demonstrate the confidence that some believers placed in their faith. Not all the networks that encouraged the expansion of the Protestant community in this era were public: there were many private and family networks. While most Protestants withdrew from expressing their faith publicly, some continued to quietly communicate their beliefs as was common in many places (Wu et al, 2009, 187-188). The wife of one church leader related to me the beginnings of her Protestant faith during the Cultural Revolution:

When I was young and my grandfather was around, he believed in Jesus but he didn't talk about it much because at that time it was still during the Cultural Revolution. However, at that time, we had a radio in our home and we listened to [overseas] gospel programmes. My brother and I used to really like listening to those broadcasts. Although I didn't really understand much of what was said, I felt that it helped me a lot. Before my grandfather passed away, he prayed for us and prayed that we could believe in Jesus.

Other religious groups were also severely persecuted during this time. In 1966 at the start of the Cultural Revolution, the building which the Catholic congregation used for meetings was attacked and occupied while religious paraphernalia were burned. All religious activities stopped. There are no records of any Catholic clergy being killed but it is widely claimed in Huanghaicheng that Catholic believers were severely mistreated by Red Guards leading to suicides. An elderly Protestant told me:

The Catholics used to have a place for training and Red Guards based at the Huanghaicheng Music College went to occupy it. Because these Red Guards weren't from Huanghaicheng, they were really nasty. They really mistreated the Catholics and beat them. One of the Catholics couldn't handle being treated in this way because it made him lose face. He was treated as though he wasn't human so he killed himself.

The same believer also related that Catholic religious specialists and lay believers were sent back to where they were from at this time. There are claims that another Catholic believer, a local government official, killed himself shortly after the attack on the training centre. All public Islamic worship ceased during the Cultural Revolution. During the most intense period of Red Guard activity, the Mosque was raided and copies of the Koran 古兰经 and other religious paraphernalia were burned (Zhu, 1994b, 1632b). We have no records of temples being vandalised or demolished during this period but it is likely that any temples that were left functioning after 1949 were attacked in the same manner as churches and the mosque. This section has demonstrated that during the Cultural Revolution the official relationship between the Three-Self Protestant community and the local state – namely the Religious Affairs Department – broke down. Without institutional state legitimation, the Protestant community relied on personal networks for protection from the chaos of the period. However, these personal networks were not enough to protect many of the religious specialists and lay believers. In the next section we will see the resurgence of religion in the Reform era and the re-normalisation of the relationship between the Three-Self Protestant community and the local state.

The religious ecosystem in the reform period

Attempts at forced secularisation and the vandalism of religious sites in Huanghaicheng ended after the mobilisation of Red Guards finished in 1969. The official relationship between the Three-Self Protestants and the Religious Affairs Department took considerably longer to be re-instituted. The initiation of reforms in 1978 led the United Front Work Department to re-open some religious sites that had remained open until the Cultural Revolution as well as the re-establishment of “patriotic” religious associations despite the fact that some outside commentators had predicted that religion had all but been eradicated by the late 1960s (see Bush, 1970). In recent years, popular religion has also been making a comeback, though not as dramatically as in other parts of China (see DuBois, 2005; Chau, 2006). Surveying Huanghaicheng's religious ecosystem in the contemporary period, we see that religious life has been revived, and, in particular, Protestantism now has a significant position in the religious ecosystem, in part because it provides community in ways that some other religious groups do not. While highly institutionalised according to state-defined categories for religion, Three-Self Protestantism in Huanghaicheng also engages in a range of activities which do not fit into these official categories.

All of the officially-recognised religions in Huanghaicheng have revived to some degree since reforms began but we will see that Three-Self Protestantism has emerged as the largest and most active of all the religious groups. Daoism is of growing importance in the city but there are currently no Daoist temples in Xicheng, Jinghai or Moushan. Located in Jinping, Yangzhu Temple is the only active Daoist temple in Huanghaicheng. Much of it has been rebuilt since 1992 when the temple was given provincial-level protection 文物保护单位. In 1995 Yangzhu Temple was registered as a “religious activities site” 宗教活动场所 but without resident Daoist priests. The original bell from the temple was recovered in 1975 and is currently in the city museum (Wang, 2009, 224-225). Both Jade Emperor and Dragon King Temples have been restored and serve as tourist attractions with no religious specialists. The Three Teachings Temple was restored in 1993 and in 1995 became a registered “religious activities site” (Huanghaicheng RAB, undated B). However, there are no resident religious specialists and the temple appears to predominantly be a tourist attraction. The Huanghaicheng Daoist Association was not formally established until after I left the city in 2010.

Zhulin Temple is the only registered 登记 Buddhist “religious activities venue” in Huanghaicheng having registered in 1997 under the direction of the Huanghaicheng Buddhist Association which was re-established in 1993. The offices of the Association are located downtown. The Buddhist Association runs annual training classes for lay believers. Due to urban expansion, Zhulin Temple is now not far from several large modern apartment complexes. The temple comprises two main halls, a bell tower 钟鼓楼 and a room for storing scriptures 藏经楼. There is also an impressive incense burner in the main temple yard. Zhulin Temple predominantly functions as a tourist attraction with visitors paying to enter. While the resident monks seemed reluctant to discuss the running of the temple, they seemed to lament the fact that most visitors to the temple were tourists rather than “real” Buddhists. There were often expensive-looking cars parked outside but most visitors visit during the lunar New Year and on the Buddha's birthday. During the Grave-sweeping Festival certain buses deviate from their normal route in order to pass the temple to allow worshippers to get there easily, demonstrating a degree of local state support for the site.

Huanghaicheng Mosque re-opened in 1978 having been vandalised during the Cultural Revolution. Essential ritual paraphernalia were supplied to the mosque by the City RAB the same year. The provincial-level Islamic Association was re-launched in 1980. Celebrations marking the end of Ramadan 开斋节 in 1981 at Huanghaicheng Mosque were

joined by officials from the Local People's Congress 人大, the City PPCC, the UFWD and the City RAB. The resident Imam was also elected to serve on the Local Congress. In 1982, land was also rendered by the local government to the Muslim community for Muslim burials. With funds from the National-level Religious Affairs Bureau 国家宗教局 and the Huanghaicheng City Government 市人民政府 a new mosque was built in 1986, part of a province-wide move to restore or rebuild mosques (Zhang, 1998, 497). A new two-storey mosque covering an area of 700 square metres was built comprising the main meeting hall 大殿 (which can hold 200 people), a bathhouse 淋浴室 and a funeral parlour 殡仪室 (Yu, 1994, 756b). The Huanghaicheng Islamic Association had its first official meeting in 2004. Provincial-level training classes started in 1988 but I am not aware of any city-level training for Muslims. On Fridays, the area around the mosque is crowded with Muslim men on their way to Friday Prayers 主麻.

There are currently two registered Catholic meeting points in Huanghaicheng. One meeting point is the building previously built by the Southern Baptists which was sold to the Catholic community in 1979 because they had no meeting place. The building was in bad repair but the Huanghaicheng Government helped with finances for church repairs (Li, 1987, 182-183). The Huanghaicheng CPA re-formed in 1980, and operates from this church. Worship meetings were officially re-started in October, 1982, although the church was not registered as a "religious activities site" until 1994. This operates at the city-level and there are no district-level patriotic organisations representing Catholics. Representatives of the Catholic community in Huanghaicheng were asked to sign the "Patriotic Pledge" 爱国公约 in 1983 (Li, 1987, 182-183). This is an agreement unique to the Catholic community. The church now appears to be quite active but not as active as the Protestant churches in the city. The church has an online presence clearly stating that Huanghaicheng is one of the provincial dioceses established by the Roman Catholic Church (Huanghaicheng Catholic Church, 2008). There is also another congregation, not called a church, but a "prayer station" 祈祷所 which serves the same functions as a church. It is also located in Jinping district. There are small groups associated with the main church spread throughout all four city districts and these come together at times for training and teaching. There are also other unregistered Catholic congregations across the city, most of which are small. Some have contacts with foreign Catholics.

Interestingly, without any official status, the Mazu Temple has made a quiet comeback in recent years as a religious site. It is not officially referred to as a religious site but is simply called a "cultural palace." Until recently, the temple buildings housed the city

museum but although there are no resident religious specialists, there is now an annual temple festival held on Mazu's birthday. Other temple buildings which survived until the reform era have either been demolished to make way for new buildings or converted into retail venues.

Protestantism has by far had the most significant revival in the reform era. According to local Protestant leaders and lay believers, there were already groups of Protestants meeting quietly in homes across Huanghaicheng during the early 1970s long before Protestants were officially allowed to do so. One believer told me, "In the 1970s, there were at least ten [Protestant] small groups who met on Sundays and often during the week." This has been observed by others (Hunter and Chan, 1993, 27; Wu et al, 2009, 216). This was a time when potential future church leaders also became evident.⁵⁹ There were also conversions and baptisms as early as 1972. The government was aware of Protestant believers meeting together but was reticent to intervene since most were elderly. This may demonstrate the limits of the local state or a decline in appetite for struggle at a time when the CPC was facing legitimacy questions due to the Cultural Revolution. One elderly church leader related:

Because there were still political factions in the government, the preachers started to be ignored by [the local state]. At this point, believers began to quietly speak together or visit each other. Small groups formed again. In 1972, one of the elders baptised her son in the sea. Although this was still the Cultural Revolution, she baptised him. She did it secretly, of course. By 1976 there were house churches meeting across the city. There was one preacher who had a group of friends and they would get together like a fellowship 团旗. They were quickly discovered but what could the government do? They were all elderly people. They couldn't be stopped.

The arrest of the "Gang of Four" signalled a change for the future of Protestantism. The first church in China was re-opened in 1979 in Ningbo and this was seen as further evidence that the situation was improving for believers. He continued:

In 1976, the Gang of Four was arrested and there was immediate change across the country. Then in 1979 the first church was re-opened. Although the newspapers didn't carry the news, the news travelled through the Protestant community. This gave people even more confidence to meet together at home. At the time the government here was uncomfortable with the situation but didn't know how to handle it. Most of the believers meeting together were elderly. They used to meet on Wenhua Street in the yard of one of the preachers.

⁵⁹ Some scholars have tried to claim that the emergence of informal preachers in Wenzhou was a phenomenon particular to the Protestant community there (for example, Wu et al, 2009, 280). However, evidence from Huanghaicheng suggests otherwise.

The Protestant believers at this time felt that the government did not know how to manage these groups of elderly believers and this was taken as a signal that the local state was not in full control of religion. Elderly believers told me that they had begun quietly meeting in one of the Desheng Church buildings in the late 1970s but only a few dared to. In 1981, the UFWD made negotiations⁶⁰ on behalf of the church with the factory which had taken over the building. After repairs, an official re-opening ceremony 开堂典礼 was held in November that year and Desheng Church was returned to the Protestants. This marked the formal revival of the institutionalised church-state relationship. A former TSPM Committee member related what the first official meeting was like. He led the meeting.

We started meeting again in 1978, two days after Christmas. We all had tears in our eyes. In 1980, the new policy started but we didn't formally 正式 begin meeting again until 1981. In 1981 there were about 500 believers. I know because I led the first meeting. People cried because they were so moved. The brothers and sisters donated money to repair [Desheng] Church. Some even gave 1,000 *yuan*. Can you imagine it? In those days 1,000 *yuan* was a lot of money.

With the beginning of reforms, we see the development of the Three-Self churches being embedded in the local state through the religious specialists. In 1980, a local Protestant was chosen as Huanghaicheng Deputy of the People's Congress 人民代表 and another was chosen to be on the City PPCC Standing Committee. At this point, the City TSPM Committee had not been revived but six Protestant representatives from Huanghaicheng took part in the provincial Protestant Church Representatives Meeting 基督教代表会议 in 1981 and one was chosen to serve on the Provincial TSPM Committee.

Because the City RAB had not yet been revived, the UFWD first contacted pastors and elders who had been on the City TSPM Committee before the Cultural Revolution. By 1981, many of these religious specialists were elderly and some were not fit enough to take on the responsibilities of leading the TSPM. Several former leaders died at the start of the reform period. This led the UFWD to look for new potential church leaders and TSPM Committee members on the advice of the elderly pastors, demonstrating the importance of the Protestant religious specialists to the local state in recommending "reliable" candidates. The former TSPM Committee Secretary told me:

The TSPM Committee was revived. At first Pastor Leng looked me up and then Pastor Kang asked me to come and help. He had been the vice-general secretary 副秘书长 [of the TSPM Committee] before the Cultural Revolution. The former head of the Committee was seriously

⁶⁰ It was often government or party organisations which made the active move to have churches re-opened. The same process occurred in Tianshui, Gansu (Wu et al, 2009, 216-217).

ill and so couldn't get involved. Before the Cultural Revolution I had been the Committee Secretary 书记.

New leaders were also sought. Although he could not recall dates very clearly, Pastor Shao told me that in 1980 or 1981, the UFWD began to approach people who had led churches before the Cultural Revolution in a bid to find the leaders they deemed suitable for the task. Pastor Shao, who had not been a church leader before the Cultural Revolution, related it in this way:

At first, the provincial Two Committees did an investigation 考察 into who would be chosen [to work in the church]. The government did an examination 审查 to see if anyone was a reactionary 反动派.⁶¹ The fact that they were able to find any lay workers 义工 was already quite amazing. I was scared at first and didn't want to serve in the church. I was officially ordained 按立 as a pastor in 1987, the year that the church in Huanghaicheng was officially opened 开放.⁶² At that time, a lot of people did extra hours at work 值班儿 and had no time to come to church.⁶³

In 1981, the Huanghaicheng TSPM Committee was reformed after the Provincial-level TSPM meeting and in 1982, the local Protestant on the Provincial TSPM Standing Committee was selected for the National TSPM Committee.

From the mid-1980s and into the 1990s, the work of the TSPM expanded. The first provincial-level Three-Self church worker training took place and several students were selected to attend seminary. Then the first city-level “church workers training programme” 义工培训 was run and the first ordinations 案立 since before 1949 were conducted. Preaching tours were organised and while the official purpose was to strengthen the work of the Three-Self as part of the UFWD drive to encourage Protestants into Three-Self churches, these tours were seen as important times for teaching “the word of God” 神的话语 by the religious specialists involved. They regarded this as religious activity, not political activity. In 1990, a new leadership was selected for the City TSPM Committee

⁶¹ It was the state, and more specifically the United Front, who decided what/who could be approved. It was this legitimation by the state that allowed for congregational involvement and the resulting expansion of the church after 1979.

⁶² Although there was a ceremony for the re-opening of Desheng Church in 1981, Protestantism was not officially rehabilitated in Huanghaicheng until 1987 when the Religious Affairs Department was re-established to manage officially-recognised religions. This is simply an official date, however, and there was a great deal of activity taking places across Huanghaicheng before this year.

⁶³ This suggests that the need for the re-opening of churches and meeting points in Huanghaicheng was masked by the work unit 单位 structure and its inherent working practices. However, working practices were not the only reason why many Protestants did not attend open churches. Some did not attend for reasons they would describe as theological/biblical; others did not go back to opened churches because of a fear of future punishment and a mis-trust in the local state.

and the newly-established Christian Council, together known as the “City Two Committees” 市两会. In 1991, 1,303 people were baptised across the entire administrative district.

There are also many unregistered Protestant congregations in contemporary Huanghaicheng which the state tends to view with suspicion if they attract large numbers of people. Some of these congregations are indigenous, some started by out-of-town preachers and some established by foreign missionaries. A number of these groups are second- or third-generation while others are offshoots from well-established congregations or newly-formed since 1979. Many are very active in proselytising. Numerous members of Three-Self congregations also attend such unregistered groups. We will detail some of these congregations as is necessary in later chapters. Congregations run by foreigners attract the most attention from the local state due to fears of “infiltration”⁶⁴ 渗透 (Luo, 1991; Ying, 2008). The City Two Committees and Three-Self church leaders have varying degrees of contact with many of these groups and view them on a case-by-case basis. While officially the role of the TSPM Committees at the various levels is to try to encourage these unregistered congregations to join the TSPM, many leaders I spoke to said that they are aware of why these groups are suspicious of the TSPM or nervous about seeking to register with the local state. The contacts between the Three-Self churches and these unregistered congregations are informal and there is sometimes an exchange of resources while the TSPM provides a degree of protection for these groups. This is another activity which is not part of the state's institutionalising project which we will look at in detail in later chapters.

There are several South Korean-run congregations in Huanghaicheng, as well as several South Korean-supported Korean minority congregations which are in direct contact with the TSPM. Two of the South Korean-run congregations and some of the South Korean-supported Korean minority congregations have been granted “temporary meeting-point” 临时聚会点 licenses. There are also some significant meeting-points across the city which have been granted full meeting-point status. There were rumours that an Overseas Chinese Church 华人教会 had been established in the city but I was unable to find any definitive evidence for this. There are also several deaf and mute congregations in Huanghaicheng which are attached to registered churches or meeting-points. We will discuss these groups in detail in Chapter Eight since they demonstrate with some clarity

⁶⁴ The idea of “infiltration” is mentioned frequently in UFWD and RAB reports. This was not talked about by church leaders and workers in these contexts. The fear of infiltration was an issue for the state, not the church in Huanghaicheng.

religious activities which occupy a grey area with regards to religious policy. There is also another meeting-point in Xicheng which had been registered but was not given permission to upgrade to a church after a disagreement between the meeting-point leadership and the District TSPM Committee. We will look at this meeting-point in some detail in Chapter Nine since it reveals the significance of personal ties and the social capital of church leaders in dealing with local officials. This demonstrates the complexity of the Protestant community in Huanghaicheng and certainly suggests that there is often no clear distinction between the Three-Self community and other Protestant groups as some commentators would advocate.

There are also groups which Three-Self leaders call “extreme spiritual gifts” 极端灵恩 groups because they conduct activities which these Three-Self religious specialists view as manipulative. While this attempt to portray such groups as charlatans is a de-legitimation strategy also employed by the state, there is a clear distinction in the approach of the Three-Self leaders and officialdom. The leaders deal with these groups on an individual basis rather than according to the activities in which they engage. For example, both “faith healing” and “prophecy” are embraced by Three-Self leaders in Huanghaicheng (and outlawed by the local state) but the issue here is that these “extreme spiritual gifts” groups have cheated people out of money in the past and church leaders see it as their role to protect lay believers from this type of activity. These clergy view such activity as faith healing as God's work to increase the faith of the congregations but the same activity in these extreme spiritual gifts groups as harmful because it is seen not to benefit the church but individual fraudsters.

There are also unregistered Protestant ‘splinter groups’ which Three-Self church workers come into contact with at times. This contact is usually in the form of followers of these groups seeking to “steal sheep” 拉羊 (drawing believers away from the Three-Self congregations) or from believers from these groups seeking advice from Three-Self church workers on the differences between their group and the TSPM. Almost all of them have been banned by the government as “evil cults” 邪教 and tend to have exclusivist ideas regarding salvation. These groups include Eastern Lightning,⁶⁵ Disciples Sect 门徒会, The Shouters 呼喊派, Head-Covering Sect 蒙头派, *Jiduxiaopai* 基督小派, Jiu'en Sect 救恩派 and Jehovah's Witnesses 耶和华见证人. Many of these are also listed as ‘evil cults’ in local state publications (see Shiwei xuanchuanbu, 1999a).

⁶⁵ See Dunn (2007, 2008) for a detailed description of the church.

Other groups were not as easily defined as 'evil cults' by the party-state. One such group which remains unregistered but tacitly "recognised" 承认, by the local state is the Seventh Day Adventist Church. While the Adventists enjoy "protection" 保护 under the City Two Committees, many of the Three-Self church leaders are undecided on the exact nature of this church.⁶⁶ They are commonly described as an "extremist group" 极端⁶⁷ but Three-Self leaders were reluctant to pronounce a final judgement. Apart from disagreeing with Adventist teachings on obeying Old Testament laws and worshipping on Saturdays rather than Sundays, there was little regarded as questionable with their beliefs. Most church leaders claimed that the Adventists were fairly similar in outlook to themselves, something which other scholars have noted (Smith, 2008, 4). The main issue which church leaders in Huanghaicheng had with them was their proselytising methods. Like the banned groups we have described above, the Adventists in Huanghaicheng often go to churches and meeting points to "pull people away" 拉人 to their own meetings. Pastor Zheng criticised this approach and as one deacon described:

They come to our church to propagate 传讲 the so-called Seventh Day Adventist message. They can't come on a Sunday to worship [because] they worship on Saturdays, things like that. They often come to our congregation to pull people to their meetings.

In the reform era, the Three-Self Protestant community has been successful in negotiating with local state organs for the return of some church real estate 教产 confiscated either after 1949 or during the Cultural Revolution. This real estate includes the Mashan Church building and the Baisong Church building. However, according to senior members of the City Two Committees, some church buildings can not be returned to the TSPM due to restrictions within state policies. For example, church buildings whose congregations did not join the TSPM in the 1950s can not be claimed. Likewise, church buildings which were converted for use by the military, or were church schools or hospitals can not be claimed. Today in Huanghaicheng, the original YMCA church building still stands today, having been completely refurbished by the government. However, the Protestant community in Huanghaicheng has no claim to the building since it was not part of the

⁶⁶ There are similar issues with Seventh Day Adventist congregations in Adventists in some locales have actually come to an agreement with the City Two Committees and the RAB where they function under their authority (see Ma, 2008, 12-13).

⁶⁷ The term "extremist" 极端 is used to describe groups, beliefs or activities and tends to be used less by the party-state and more by Three-Self church leaders and lay believers when referring to particular beliefs and practices which are perceived to be excessive such as the insistence by religious leaders on certain actions or beliefs but which do not directly contradict understandings of Biblical texts.

Three-Self Movement after 1949. The original Presbyterian church building and buildings from the CIM school are also still standing but both are located in military-restricted areas in the city and the City Two Committees has no legitimate claim on them.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has traced the engagement between religion and the state in Huanghaicheng in historical perspective, focussing in particular on Protestantism in the modern era. We have seen how successive governments since the fall of the Qing have sought to institutionalise religion as a category of the modern nation. This institutionalising project was the driving force behind the TSPM whose official role is to support state policies and not to engage in religious activity which falls outside of state-defined limits. However, we have seen how Protestants sympathetic to the TSPM continued to engage in proselytising activities in an era when public forms of religion were banned and how Protestantism was one of the earliest religions to revive after the most extreme turbulence of the Cultural Revolution ended, revealing something of its dynamism. While there were clearly periods marked by the state seeking to control Protestantism, we have also seen in Huanghaicheng the significance of personal ties between local officials and Protestant believers and the benefits these can have for the Protestant community. The presence of Protestant churches is immediately more tangible than other religious institutions because of their prevalence in comparison to other religious sites. This chapter has also demonstrated the importance that the local state places on managing religion as local state organs have sought to oversee the re-establishing of religious associations and sites in the reform era. The desire of the state to act as the sole referent of legitimacy is also seen in religious specialists being given political appointments in the Local People's Congresses and the City People's Political Consultative Congress, a topic which we will analyse in greater detail in Chapter Five. In the next chapter we will look in detail at the structure, leadership and activities of the individual churches in this study, revealing the emphasis these churches place on spreading their message.

Chapter Four

Vibrant Religious Activities Spaces:

Huanghaicheng's Three-Self Churches

INTRODUCTION

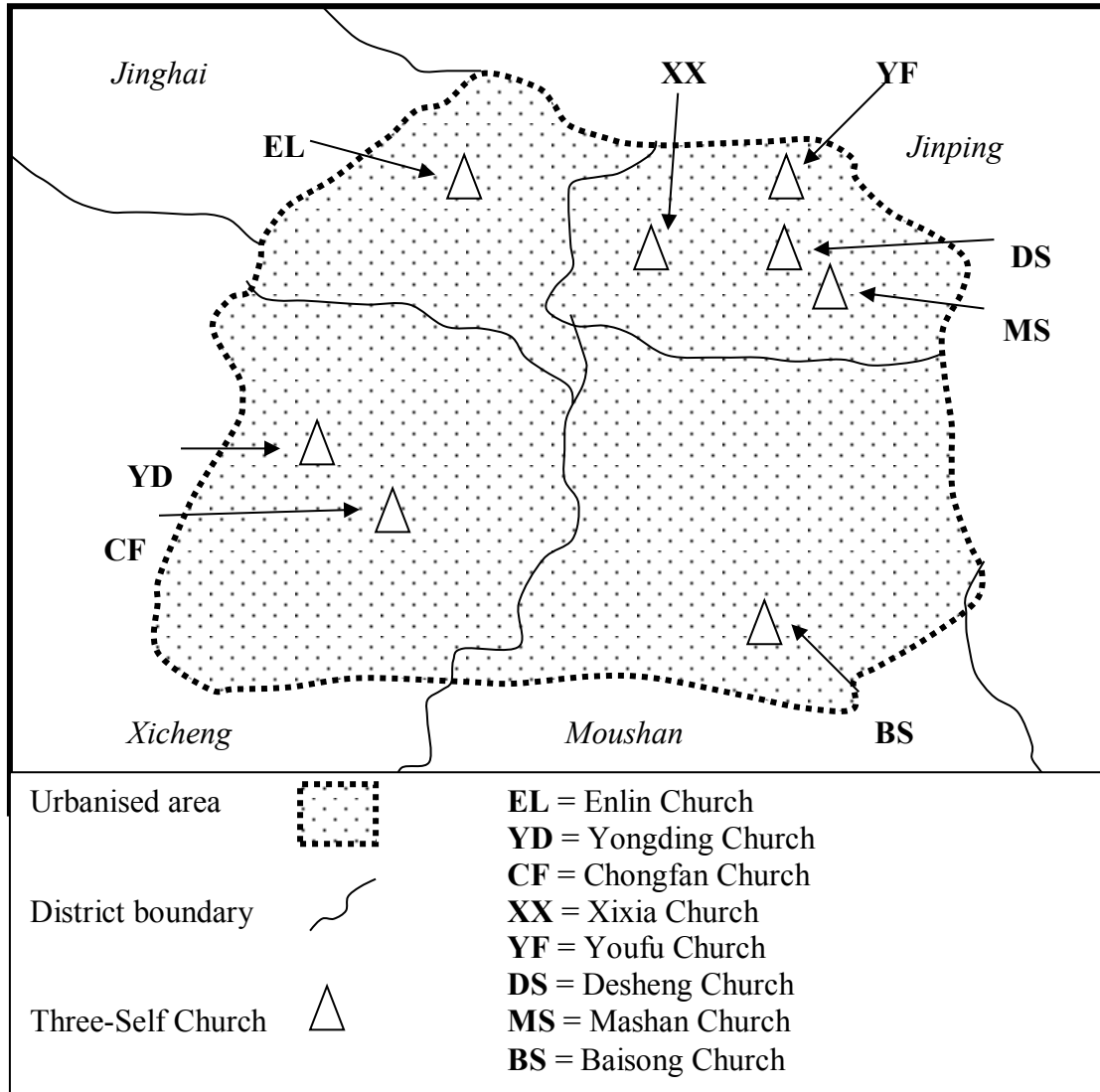
This chapter analyses the Three-Self churches in Huanghaicheng and reveals the official structure, leadership and activities of these congregations which fit in with state categories. This analysis will allow us to see what the state expects from the churches and provides an important context for the analysis of grey activities which we will undertake in later chapters. This chapter, therefore, also demonstrates that there are unofficial structures, leaders and activities in the Three-Self churches which are not congruent with state definitions of religious institutions. By analysing the origins of these Three-Self churches we will see the beginnings of their embeddedness in and symbiosis with the local state which is a key element in their expansion. We will see that of central importance to this is the nature of churches as sites for religious activity, incorporating activities for Protestant believers as well as activities to bring people into the Protestant community. We will begin by examining the geographical context and the history of the churches before going on to looking in detail at the structures and practices of the churches.

The location of the churches

We saw in Chapter Three that the urbanised area of Huanghaicheng is divided into four districts. As can be seen from the map (*figure 4.1*), four Three-Self churches are located in Jinping. Moushan has one church located in the suburbs of the city and there are plans to open a second church closer to two large universities and several smaller colleges, and to develop another congregation in a “development zone” 经济开发区 which has just been carved out of the district. Jinghai has one Three-Self church and, lastly, Xicheng has two

Three-Self churches. Apart from these eight churches, there are also many meeting-points 聚会点 and small-groups 小组 in Huanghaicheng affiliated with the Three-Self churches.⁶⁸

Figure 4.1 The location of Huanghaicheng's TSPM Churches



⁶⁸ It is important to clarify here that the term 'small-group' has two different but sometimes overlapping meanings. Some small-groups function separately from Three-Self churches but are known to meeting-point and church leaders. Some or all members may regularly attend a Three-Self church or Three-Self affiliated meeting-point. Another kind of small-group is that organised by a Three-Self church for a specific purpose (hospitality, evangelism, Bible study). The meetings for these small-groups either take place in churches or in people's homes.

Church histories

This section reveals how the eight Three-Self churches became incorporated into the TSPM/CCC structure. There are two main categories of Three-Self churches in Huanghaicheng: those which were established before 1949 and those which formed in the 1970s as unregistered “house churches” but later registered with the local state through the TSPM. Many of these congregations began with a handful of believers but rapidly grew into social organisms with a clearly-defined institutionalised character. This factor is significant because it demonstrates that these Three-Self Protestant congregations are significant actors in the religious ecosystem in Huanghaicheng, attracting large numbers of people at any given meeting as well as actively taking their message into the surrounding community. The churches are distributed across a range of categories, including those established before 1949, new congregations in the late 1970s and new congregations in the last several years. Desheng and Mashan Churches are the only two original church buildings left standing in Huanghaicheng in which congregations continue to meet. Xixia and Baisong meet in buildings which replace original buildings. Youfu, Enlin and Chongfan Churches rent their meeting space and Yongding Church meets in its own building which was bought in the 1990s. We turn now to look at these churches in detail, beginning with how they were first established and how they became affiliated with the TSPM.

Desheng Church was the first church to re-open after the beginning of reform and opening as we saw in Chapter Three. It had been an independent Chinese congregation from its founding in 1919 and had joined the TSPM in the 1950s. Protestants began meetings in 1980 and a re-dedication of the church was held in December 1981, supported by the UFWD. Desheng Church did not become an official religious activities venue until the 1990s when the registration of religious activities venues was re-instituted.

Mashan Church was originally built with funds from foreign missionaries but was Chinese-managed until its closure in the 1950s after the congregation agreed to join the TSPM. Official records state that the church was closed in 1958 after united worship was initiated (Zhu, 1994b, 1640b). However, this was disputed by several participants who claimed that the church was closed earlier – in 1952 – but that the building was taken over for other uses in 1958. The building was used as a cinema and then as a dance hall in the 1980s. It was officially re-opened in 1995. We will analyse the details of how the church was returned in Chapter Six. Both Desheng and Mashan churches serve as models for the other churches since they are directly managed by the City Two Committees. We

will see in Chapter Seven how Desheng Church served as the original model for children's work in Huanghaicheng's Three-Self churches.

Xixia Church is situated to the west of Jinping and serves as the base for the City Two Committees. It is located quite some distance from the original church building which was built in 1867 by the American Presbyterians, as we saw in Chapter Three, and joined the TSPM in the 1950s. This new church site was opened in 2007 after a lengthy process of negotiation between the military, RAB and the City Two Committees, led by Pastor Zheng, despite the fact that churches have no legitimate claim on church property on land taken over by the military.

Youfu Church is located in an economically-deprived part of the city called Youfu. There was missionary activity in this part of Huanghaicheng in the 1930s and a church was established before 1949 but the original location of the building or when it was demolished is unknown. Believers began meeting again in homes in this part of the city in the early 1980s and the congregation grew until it became a registered meeting-point in the late 1990s. The meeting-point was given permission to become a church in 2005 when it moved to a larger rented building.

Baisong Church also has a history dating back to the missionary era but has come into the TSPM in the reform period. As we have already said, the Church is located in the suburbs of Moushan but is now connected to the rest of the city with good transport links. The church building is a re-build of a church built by local Protestants in 1940. In 1947 the church building was taken over by the government (probably during land reform). The Protestants continued to meet in a believer's kitchen until the Cultural Revolution after which the building was taken over by the Village Committee 村委. The remains of the church were demolished to make way for housing in 1999.⁶⁹ The present form of the church is very much connected to the efforts of the church leader, Pastor Liu, 57, who became a Protestant in 1981 through the influence of a relative. From that time he would seek out older believers in the village to learn more Protestant teachings and to study the Bible. In 1983 more converts began to meet together regularly to sing, pray and study the Bible.

⁶⁹ It is important to note that official accounts of the history of Baisong Church are told somewhat differently in local publications. Pastor Zheng was interviewed by an editor for a gazetteer but his version of events was ignored in the published account. The official account states that the Southern Baptists sent a pastor in 1927 to build a church. The pastor then left in 1937, the church building was taken over by the village and the Protestants stopped meeting together (see Wang, 1991, 619a).

By 1990 there were 50-60 Protestants meeting together in people’s homes. Pastor Liu was warned by some other “home meeting” leaders whom he knew well that the government would restrict pastor Liu’s congregation if they affiliated with the TSPM. However, Pastor Liu decided that he could gain more freedom to operate if he came under TSPM supervision. That same year his congregation “became [affiliated with] the Three-Self” 成为三自的 after Pastor Liu attended meetings at a Three-Self church and met with local Three-Self representatives. Pastor Liu was elected as Secretary General 秘书长的 of the County Three-Self Committee⁷⁰ shortly after. In 1993 he was sent to the provincial capital for theological training for a year and then became an elder in 1995 which he says was for the sake of meeting the needs of the church, especially administering communion. Since Moushan had been newly formed in 1994, it was important for the district to have a Three-Self religious specialist to administer communion and conduct baptisms.

Meeting-points were not officially recognised in Huanghaicheng until the early 1990s and Pastor Liu’s congregation registered as a group and then obtained their meeting certificate in 1995.⁷¹ The meeting-point did not have to apply for registration as a church but simply applied to “revive a [previously] existing church” 复堂. A new church building was built in 2000, bringing together small-groups which had been meeting in homes. Some groups continue to meet in homes on a Sunday while others meet in homes during the week.⁷² We will look at the details of how this church was built in Chapter Six. In 2002, Pastor Liu was ordained as a pastor by the Provincial Two Committees. In 2003, he was elected onto the City Two Committees⁷³ (despite the fact that there is no District TSPM Committee in Moushan).

Enlin Church is a new congregation which meets in a rented factory unit and is led by Preacher Zhang. The church was established in 2006 with seven people after Preacher Zhang, inspired by a dream he claims was given by God, made the decision to set up a church in his home district. The small-group started meetings in the apartment of a relative and began to hand out gospel leaflets on the street. Zhang had previously studied at an officially-approved seminary but lost his status as a preacher for violating church principles. However, after contact with another small-group of believers who had a

⁷⁰ The County Three-Self Committee 县三自会 had been formed earlier the same year.

⁷¹ This meant that they had been meeting for fifteen years without formal recognition.

⁷² This is similar to Shanghai’s North Church where, in the 1980s, believers followed the “house meetings” model but then began to meet as one large congregation in North Church in the 1990s but still continue home meetings today (see Wu et al, 2009, 140-141).

⁷³ As Vice-Chairperson of the TSPM and Vice-President of the City CC.

meeting license 聚会证 and negotiations with the RAS, the small congregation was given official recognition and moved several times as numbers increased.

Yongding Church is located in the suburbs of Xicheng. There were several congregations established in the area before 1949 but little is known about them. Yongding Church grew out of a “home meeting” 家庭聚会 that began in 1990 after several ladies in the area became Protestants. They began meeting together and the group gradually grew and the number of meetings increased. One lady who converted, and whose husband was in prison at the time, offered her home as a permanent meeting place. The church gave her a small stipend every month to help cover water and electricity bills. Once they began meeting in this house regularly, they applied for and obtained permission to become a registered meeting-point. They were the first in the district to do so. Once the church grew to between forty and fifty people they bought a private house the finance for which came from the church members themselves. Yongding Church has good connections with unregistered Protestant congregations in Xicheng and other parts of Huanghaicheng.

The second Three-Self church in Xicheng is Chongfan Church. The church rents several large rooms on the first floor of an office block above a busy supermarket. The church has between forty and fifty people and was officially opened in July, 2009. Some members were originally from Yongding Church and left because of a disagreement over approaches to church governance. As far as I could ascertain this split was amicable.

As Edmond Tang (2008, 17) has noted, the affiliations of Chinese Protestants tend to be fluid and Huanghaicheng is no exception. I did not meet one church leader or lay believer in the Three-Self churches in Huanghaicheng who had an exclusivist view of the TSPM. Church leaders agreed that there were many “good” unregistered meeting-points or “house meetings” throughout the city. Many church leaders and lay believers had close ties with unregistered groups. Many lay believers also visited different groups during the week at times when there were no events in their own church. We shall analyse some of the relationships between Three-Self churches and unregistered congregations in Chapter Nine. While the affiliations of Three-Self Protestants tended to be fluid, some scholars have argued that Chinese religious practitioners take a “pluralistic approach to religious belief” and that “those who profess adherence to a particular form of religious belief are often open to, or participate in, other forms of belief” (Yuan, 2011, 179). I did not find this to be the case for Protestants in Huanghaicheng who generally held an exclusive belief in Protestantism.

Church structure and leadership

An analysis of church structure and leadership reveals a great deal about official state frameworks. But it also reveals the degree to which the Three-Self churches in Huanghaicheng diverge from these state frameworks. This section draws to our attention two main themes. Firstly, it reveals how the different types of Three-Self and Three-Self affiliated congregations are embedded in the TSPM structure. Secondly, it reveals how it is the leaders of these different congregations which serve as the main points of contact in the TSPM apparatus.

The standard model of Three-Self congregations in Huanghaicheng is that of “church leads meeting-point, large meeting-point leads small meeting-point” 堂帶點, 大點帶小點,⁷⁴ a model of Three-Self church management found in other places (see Wu et al, 2009, 182-183). It is estimated by church leaders that in the four city districts, about thirty per cent of meeting-points are registered. Some have not yet fulfilled the requirements for registration but are working towards such official recognition. The leaders of some other meeting-points are wary of the TSPM as a national organisation but have good relations with local Three-Self church leaders and enjoy their unofficial protection as we will see in Chapter Seven. Others have no contact with the TSPM whatsoever. According to leaders in the City Two Committees, small-groups can not register because they are not large enough but again, they enjoy protection if they are associated with the leadership of the District TSPM Committee (or equivalent), an issue that was not an intended result of state policy.

The “Measures on the Examination, Approval, and Registration of Religious Activity Venues,” Article 3, states that an application for the registration of a church or meeting point should “usually” be done by a religious organisation, which would be the District TSPM Committee or the City Two Committees in the case of Protestants in Huanghaicheng. The same Article also states that if a district does not have a religious organisation, then the city-level religious organisation can make the application. In Moushan, there is no District TSPM Committee and yet Pastor Liu has been able to negotiate and apply for temporary registration for one group of Koreans and Chinese Korean minorities. He is also in talks with the RAS regarding the opening of another church.

⁷⁴ For further details and discussion on this see Li (2007).

According to these Measures, the process of registering religious activities sites involves two stages: the application to set up a religious activities site 申请设立 and, once approved, the application to register 申请登记. The RAB and RAS oversee this process. There must also be a “designated legal person” 法人 for each of these Religious Activities Venues (see also Wu et al, 2009, 136-137).

According to the PRMRA, Chapter Two, Article 9, there are six basic requirements for a meeting-point: fixed meeting place and name, regular believers who attend, a management committee made up of believers, a leader who is either a religious specialist or someone who meets the requirements for a religious specialist, a management regulations and a legal income. Church leaders also added that despite not being outlined in regulations, there should be a minimum of thirty believers who regularly attend a congregation if it is applying to become a meeting point. In some cases in Huanghaicheng groups of about 15 people have registered as “temporary meeting-points” 临时聚会点. There is clearly a degree of flexibility exercised by the RAB in terms of implementing these measures since groups in Huanghaicheng, such as Enlin Church, have registered without meeting all the requirements.

The churches are also supposed to adhere to a set of regulations which were introduced some time after the National-level TSPM Committee published the “Church Order of Protestant Churches in China”⁷⁵ in 1997 and which was then updated in 2008 (see Wickeri, 1998, 63-79 and CCC/TSPM, 2008). These regulations cover such areas as basic beliefs, church practices, church leadership and church management. The Three-Self churches in Huanghaicheng have some form of “Church Order.”⁷⁶ Newer churches tend to draft theirs by borrowing heavily from the Church Orders of more well-established congregations. It appears that these Church Orders are there to legitimise the churches as part of the TSPM as well as to provide a sense of formality to assuage local state organs’ fears of religious groups engaging in activities beyond official remits.⁷⁷ These Orders, together with the “Religious Activities Venue Certificates”⁷⁸ are displayed publicly in the churches and serve as a form of cultural capital, legitimating these sites as state-approved places for legitimate religious activities. Some religious activities venues also have award plaques given by city-level or provincial-level Religious Affairs Bureaus. These add another layer of legitimacy to the churches and their activities. This is despite the fact that

⁷⁵ 中国基督教会规章.

⁷⁶ 教会规章.

⁷⁷ See Appendix for an example.

⁷⁸ 宗教活动场所聚会证.

activities conducted within these churches often do not fall within state-defined categories of “normal” religious activity.

The leadership of the individual churches is embedded in the local TSPM structure – either the District TSPM Committees (or equivalent) or the City Two Committees – which is responsible for managing all the Three-Self churches in Huanghaicheng. The meeting points and small groups are, in turn, embedded in the churches. This embeddedness effectively means that the churches and the TSPM structure in Huanghaicheng are inseparable and that the TSPM is simply an extension of the churches and has no real independent supervisory role. In fact, church leaders can utilise their positions on TSPM committees to protect “grey area” work in which they are involved. We shall analyse such grey area activity in Chapters 8 and 9.

While the City Two Committees has “the right to speak” 发言权 on many matters in individual meeting-points and churches in each district, leaders in the congregations claimed that Pastor Zheng, head of the City Two Committees, respects their autonomy but provides good advice on dealing with RAS personnel or running congregations. Palmer (2009, 20a) argues that officially-registered religious organisations (including the TSPM) function as “work units” (单位) since bureaucratic positions usurp those of religious specialists. This is not the case in Huanghaicheng where the two types of positions are not separate and where there are no non-believers in the leadership of the TSPM or the Three-Self churches.

Religious specialists, of whom there are several types, together with lay believers, help to manage the churches. Official UFWD, RAB and TSPM/CCC documents refer to religious specialists as “clergy” 神职人员, 圣职人员 or “teachers” 教职人员. However, in Huanghaicheng, the general term “preacher” 传道人 is used for all formal titles (pastor, assistant pastor, elder, preacher). When referring to those they work with, religious specialists do not use the term “colleague” 同事 but “fellow worker” 同工. This difference between the official face of Three-Self Protestantism and the everyday work of the Three-Self community in Huanghaicheng is of central importance to our understanding of how churches and church activities are managed since it demonstrates how the churches engage with state-defined categories in a different way to state institutions. Religious specialists and lay believers view the congregations and their management as different from other institutions “in society” 社会上 or “the world” 世人, 世人的. The titles of these

religious specialists generally have an equivalent term in the New Testament,⁷⁹ helping to legitimise the authority of the leaders. The titles are written in the Bible, connecting the church leaders to a wider context beyond Huanghaicheng – the world church – instituted by God. This adds a degree of authority beyond the physical presence of the leaders.

The types of church leaders can be categorised into *official* and *unofficial*. *Official* church leaders are those who have undergone the necessary training stipulated by the National/Provincial Two Committees and the local RAB. These are listed in the Church Order and local regulations. *Official* church leaders are also those on record with the RAB according to the “Measures on the Reporting and Recording of Religious Clergy.” This includes a formal application (Article 5) which requires the religious specialist to complete the “Form for Recording Religious Personnel” (Provincial RAB, undated A).⁸⁰ In addition, the main religious specialists in any given Religious Activities Venue (pastor or equivalent) should also apply to the RAB as such by filling in and submitting for approval the “Form for Recording Religious Activities Venues Principal Religious Personnel” (Provincial RAB, undated B)⁸¹ according to the “Measures on the Reporting and Recording of Principal Clergy in Religious Activity Venues.” *Official* religious specialists felt that they were watched especially closely by the PSB and the RAB, more than lay believers.

The official face of the Three-Self churches instructs us as to how they are supposed to be staffed. However, behind the official there is a range of unofficial personnel in the churches. Unofficial church leaders are either those who are tacitly recognised by the City TSPM or local state actors or those who are recognised by individual congregations but perhaps are unknown to the City TSPM or the party-state. The details of *unofficial* church workers are often unclear with some workers holding more than one position. Church leaders are reluctant to give details of personnel in their congregations, revealing their strategy to “camouflage” aspects of church activity which would be considered beyond the remit of religious policy. This attempt to camouflage is an attempt to deflect any unwanted attention from the authorities and is an important theme we will return to in the following chapters. We turn now to look at these different roles in the church.

The National Two Committees Church Order states that pastors, teachers/assistant pastors and elders are all ordained after examination and interview by the City Two Committees

⁷⁹ See Romans 12: 6-8; Ephesians 4: 11-13; I Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-30.

⁸⁰ 宗教教职人员备案表.

⁸¹ 宗教活动场所主要教职任职备案表.

followed by the same again at the Province Two Committees. These stipulations serve as the basis for state regulations and other legislation. This is what happens in Huanghaicheng although Pastor Zheng and other ordained clergy said that the interviews were quite informal since everyone knew each other. Pastors and teachers/assistant pastors should have a seminary degree, several years’ experience and should be recommended by the congregation which s/he oversees. Elders should have formal seminary training and several years of experience as a preacher. Preachers are not ordained but should have a degree from a recognised seminary and have completed the two years’ probation in a church in Huanghaicheng. Those who do not have a degree but have undergone training with the TSPM (at least two one-month training courses) can take an exam before being issued with a “preacher’s license” 传道证. People who fill these formal positions should be checked by the RAB before they can be ordained or made preachers in order to ensure that they are politically reliable. This does not always happen in practice, however, as we shall see. Deacons do not have to have formal training or recognition by the RAB but are chosen by the formal leadership of individual churches.

The main role of pastors 牧师 and teachers/assistant pastors 教师 or 讲师 is to oversee the work carried out in either multiple churches and meeting-points or a single church and its meeting-points. The work of a teacher/assistant pastor is similar to that of a pastor, the only difference being that an assistant pastor has less experience. Both are responsible for the spiritual life of those under their care, ensuring that they receive Biblical teaching. In addition, they liaise with the City Two Committees and keep up-to-date with its work. Lastly, pastors and assistant pastors/teachers are key representatives for the churches in liaising with state personnel. There are two pastors in Huanghaicheng: Pastor Zheng who is head of the City Two Committees and Pastor Liu who is the main leader of Baisong Church, head of the Moushan equivalent to the TSPM Committee, Vice-President 副主任 of the City CC and Vice Chairperson 副会长 of the City TSPM. In Jinping, Assistant Pastor He oversees Youfu Church but also has positions within the City Two Committees. He will likely be ordained a pastor within the next two years and may become the new head of the City Two Committees once Pastor Zheng retires.

Similarly, elders 长老 assist pastors with preaching duties, pastoral care and administering communion. There are five *official* elders and one *unofficial* elder in Huanghaicheng. Preachers 传道人, 传道师, or 教士 preach 传道 and lead prayer meetings, youth meetings and Bible studies. The preachers in Huanghaicheng preach, on average, eight sermons a week. All of the churches in Huanghaicheng have at least one official preacher, apart from Enlin Church (Preacher Zhang is *unofficial*) and I know of at least three other

unofficial preachers working in the churches. Deacons 执事 assist the other religious specialists in their work. It is common for deacons to lead church meetings other than the formal Sunday morning meeting, pray, lead in singing and introduce whoever will preach or teach. Deacons can have a great deal of authority and Deacon Xun in Mashan Church was generally referred to as Elder Xun even although he was not ordained. He helped the City Two Committees in meetings with state personnel because of his abilities to “entertain” 交待. Deacons are not ordained and are appointed by individual churches.

There is a definite hierarchy in the leadership positions, with pastors at the top and assistant pastors, elders, preachers and lay church workers below them in descending order. Pastors, assistant pastors and elders gain access to political appointments due to their leadership status, and this further embeds them into the party-state structure. Furthermore, there is a great deal of behind-the-scenes communication between the leadership of different churches. This communication tends to be informal and the leaders who I talked to played down such communication yet at the same time they knew details of what was happening in other churches in the city districts and in other parts of Huanghaicheng. This is part of an overall strategy employed by such leaders to avoid appearing as if they were part of something highly-organised since this would draw negative attention from authorities. Despite the importance attached to these leadership positions, the leaders are in no way distant from the other leaders or lay believers. Church leaders generally know many of the lay believers quite well and are quick to recognise potential future leaders, further revealing something about the manner in which the Protestant community is constructed.

All the Three-Self churches in Huanghaicheng have some form of Church Administration Committee 堂委会 consisting of between three and seven people. This is a requirement according to local state regulations as we detailed above and the members will be the first point of contact should the church engage in activity outside of official state remits. The Administration Committee oversees the many small-groups assigned with specific tasks such as service, evangelism or finance. The existence of these Church Administration Committees reveals a great deal about the solidity of the Three-Self churches as social institutions. Some scholars claim that the RAB also seeks to place personnel “in leadership positions of religious organisations to monitor activity” (Vala, 2008, 100). While this may be the case in some locales, this is not the case in Huanghaicheng as far as I was able to ascertain.

Positions in the churches are sometimes filled because of need and this is done in negotiation with the local state. For example, if a meeting-point becomes a church, a leader can be fast-tracked by the TSPM so that they can be a preacher. Pastor Liu has only completed one year of formal seminary training, yet was ordained as pastor in 2002. There is, therefore, a degree of flexibility in how these positions are filled. While only one preacher has moved away from Huanghaicheng to work elsewhere since the 1980s, one pastor was asked to leave in 2005 due to “misconduct.” I will discuss this at length in Chapter Six.

Lastly, lay church workers 服饰的 help with the running of churches and are involved in areas such as the “service team” 服务组, choir 唱诗班, leading small-groups 小组组长 or serve as accountants 会计 or cleaners 清洁工. Some lay church workers have undergone training in specific areas such as music or Bible study and are committed to work in the church unsalaried.

The spouses of religious specialists are often involved in church work. The wives of the two current pastors are referred to as “Pastor’s Wife” 师母 or “Teacher” 老师 in more formal contexts and simply as “Sister” 姊妹 by those close to or more familiar with them. The wife of Pastor Liu, Sister Qing, is involved with the pastoral care of women and managing the work for youth and children. Her role in the Baisong Church is more formal in that her name is written into the church order. The wives of Pastor Zheng and Assistant Pastor He are not formally integrated into the running of churches but they are heavily involved in pastoral care and children’s work.

Churches as activity space

This section will demonstrate that the church buildings essentially function as sites for religious activity. While the state-defined purpose of religious activities venues is for religious believers to engage in religious activities which are congruent with state policy, the Protestant community view them as places to train the Protestant community and facilitate its expansion. The churches are “religious sites” but they are not largely seen as “sacred space” by the believers (though the state defines them as such). Instead, the leaders and believers focus on the concept that they, themselves, are “temples of the Holy Spirit”⁸² rather than the church buildings themselves as being sacred. This distinction is

⁸² See 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

significant for several reasons. The church buildings are regarded as symbols of Protestantism in the city and as officially-sanctioned sites for proselytising. In addition, however, because each believer is a vessel of the Holy Spirit, they take the message out from the church buildings to engage with people in the community in homes, restaurants, and at work. This further facilitates the spreading of the Protestant message beyond the religious space defined by the local state.

The church buildings are significant because they serve as activity space for believers as well as for bringing non-believers into the church community. Desheng, Mashan, Xixia and Baisong churches are all located within their own compounds. The other four churches consist almost solely of the church building. All of these churches are conspicuous, helped by the red crosses (some of which light up at night) and large signs advertising their location, typically stating “Protestant Church” 基督教会. There are also colourful boards on which texts from the Bible are printed but because these boards are often placed in a public space, their legal status is questionable (see Chapter Nine). Aside from this issue, these boards help to draw attention to the churches. In addition, the churches are further made salient by the constant coming-and-going of people taking part in church activities.

The central location for church activities is the main hall 大堂 where the majority of congregational ritual life takes place. Seating takes the form of long wooden benches: Desheng Church hall can seat 1,100; Mashan Church, 900; Xixia, 250; Youfu, 300; Baisong, 500; Enlin, 300; Yongding, 200 and Chongfan, 80. These churches also have extra seating that can be placed in the aisles when needed. All the churches have overflow seating areas for church activities which attract many people.⁸³ These seating areas have television screens or speakers to relay what is happening in the main hall. These main church halls have a stage on one or two levels and lecterns used by those leading from the front and most churches now employ digital media projectors to provide access to song lyrics and presentations for talks and sermons. The halls also have texts from the Bible or statements connected with God on the walls including the “Lord’s Prayer” 主祷文 (see Hymnbook, 2008, 356). The dedication boxes 奉献箱, where people place gifts of money for church use, are also placed in the main hall in order to make them accessible.

While the main church halls are the centre of congregational ritual, there are other facilities in the churches where a range of other religious activities take place. Each

⁸³ For example, during Christmas, 2009, an estimated 1,000 people squeezed into Enlin Church while another 200 stood outside to watch through the glass doors.

church has at least one office for church administration and is often where the Church Administration Committee 堂委会 holds meetings. These offices are also where those involved with preaching can study and prepare talks. In Yongding and Chongfan churches, the church office is also used for children’s work during church worship meetings. All the other churches have separate facilities for children’s work, and Desheng, Mashan, Xixia, Youfu and Baisong all have two or more rooms for children’s work, enabling the children to be divided into different classes. The church offices and main halls are also used for training sessions (see below). Xixia Church, as the base for the City Two Committees, has a training centre 培训中心 consisting of dormitories and classrooms which can accommodate fifty students for training programmes.

All of the churches in Huanghaicheng have a literature store where people can purchase Bibles, hymnbooks and other Protestant publications. These literature stores sell vast numbers of Bibles and large amounts of Protestant literature and it is well known that members of Protestant groups not associated with the TSPM regularly buy items from the Three-Self churches. Unregistered groups which I visited in Huanghaicheng used Bibles and hymnbooks published by the TSPM/CCC. There are also several independently-run Protestant book-stores in Huanghaicheng. We will see in Chapter Eight how some of the Three-Self churches in Huanghaicheng have produced and printed their own literature, contravening regulations on the publishing of religious materials.

Most of the churches are also set up to accommodate church workers. Desheng, Mashan, Xixia, Baisong and Enlin Churches all have facilities for preparing meals. Church workers with busy schedules and early-morning responsibilities can overnight in any of the churches although the conditions are very basic. A married couple who are both preachers live in a room at Xixia Church. Pastor Liu and his wife and Preacher Zhang and his wife both live in accommodation at Baisong and Enlin Churches respectively. Church leaders also allow people who are seeking help to stay temporarily in the churches or put them up in their homes. Some church leaders also allowed unofficially-invited Protestant leaders from other parts of China or from abroad to stay in their homes so as to avoid detection from the authorities.

Activities

Church activities have several important functions: they aim to strengthen peoples' faith and create opportunities for "spreading the gospel"⁸⁴ as well as help to solidify congregational life and embed the church in the local community. This is significant because although the churches are minority social institutions, their influence is significant beyond their size. There are many other activities which are encouraged by the church leadership. Some of these activities are group-based such as handing out gospel leaflets and Bible studies. Other activities are more individual such as "spiritual devotions" 灵修 including Bible reading, praying and fasting 禁食. Praying before a meal 谢饭⁸⁵ whether at home or outside in a restaurant is part of everyday life for many Protestants. These activities are a direct result of the perception that believers are vessels of the Holy Spirit, as we saw above.

Training

Training 培训 demonstrates the importance placed on expanding the Protestant community and the emphasis placed by church leaders on identifying and cultivating new leaders. This training is primarily inward-looking in that it is concerned with nurturing people to manage and pastor congregations. As with leadership, there are also two types of training: the *official* and the *unofficial*. The training which is openly organised and run by the City Two Committees is official because it is approved by the City RAB. All other training run by individual churches or training that is organised by District TSPM Committees (or equivalent) is unofficial, despite the fact that some of these training sessions can last for several days and involve a hundred-or-so people. We will look at some of these unofficial training programmes in Chapter Six.

Charity work

The charity work 社会服务 or 慈善工作 in the Three-Self churches in Huanghaicheng, like many activities, consists of official and unofficial projects and is a major way in which

⁸⁴ Cao (2011, 20), reports that Wenzhou Christians are "critical of those who do not share their faith." I did not find this in Huanghaicheng. On the contrary, many church leaders and believers actively sought to help and care for people as well as share their faith with them.

⁸⁵ For example, when having lunch with a group of elderly "sisters", one of them stood up in the restaurant and prayed out loud before we began eating.

the churches seek to be outward-looking as they engage with wider society. Official activities are conducted with the permission of the RAS/RAB, including donations for disaster relief. Believers I talked to were keen to donate money but the churches have no control over how these funds are used. However, this type of giving can place churches in good standing with the RAS/RAB because such donations suggest that the congregations are “patriotic.” The City Two Committees has also initiated plans to open a care home for the elderly 养老院 in Jinping which would also find favour with the local government. Unofficial charity projects are those carried out without permission from the RAS/RAB and tend to be more overtly linked to proselytising. We will analyse such projects in Chapter Six.

Weekly Activities

All the churches in Huanghaicheng have a Sunday worship meeting 主日敬拜, 主日礼拜 which follows a pattern found in the majority of TSPM churches across China (see Wu et al, 2009, 185). In many ways these formal meetings serve to provide the state with a model of organised religious activity while behind the scenes, a great deal of activity takes place which does not fall within state-approved categories of religious practice. A typical meeting would be structured as follows:

07:45-08:30	People arrive and are “taught hymns” 教唱 by a choir member.
08:30-10:00	Meeting formally begins with the “leader” 主持人 greeting the worshippers. Congregation “prays in silence” 默祷 in preparation for worship. Reading from the Psalms or call to worship from the choir. ⁸⁶ First hymn 赞美诗. Second hymn. Recitation or reading 宣告 of the “Apostles Creed” 使徒信经. ⁸⁷ “Bible reading” 经文 which forms the basis of the day’s teaching is read out loud by the congregation. It is common for the preacher to encourage the congregation to read the passage out loud a second time. The speaker will often then pray for God 主, 神 to help his “servant” 仆人 to speak “his words” 他的话语. Teaching 讲道 (45-60 minutes). Third hymn. Final prayer.

⁸⁶ Each church has a choir 唱诗班 which helps to lead congregational singing and sings a “call to worship” at Sunday worship meetings. This is often “主在圣殿中” (The Lord is in His Holy Temple). For the full text see Hymnbook (2008, 358).

⁸⁷ The Apostles Creed was not part of the normal order of service until about 2007 when local churches were struggling with various other religious groups seeking to influence and “steal believers” 拉羊. For the full text see Hymnbook (2008, 357).

Collective recitation of the “Lord’s Prayer” 主祷文, 公祷.

“Blessing” 祝福 and the “Singing of Amen” 阿门松.

End of meeting 散会.

Some scholars (Wu et al, 2009, 189-190; 192-193) have found that teaching in Three-Self churches in some places has tended to emphasise the idea of “love country, love religion” 爱国爱教. However, the teaching in Huanghaicheng centred round the basic tenets of the Protestant faith with a specific emphasis on spreading the gospel. In addition, there is a great deal of activity which takes place before and after these formal meetings which helps with the nurture and expansion of the congregations. This pastoral care takes the form of quiet conversations and prayer for specific needs or of more dramatic exorcisms as we will see in Chapter Eight.

Desheng Church has added Sunday afternoon and evening worship meetings and Mashan Church has added a Sunday evening worship meeting in order to cope with demand and to give those who work different shifts the opportunity to attend. Other main weekly activities are youth meetings 青年聚会, prayer meetings⁸⁸ 祷告会 and Bible studies⁸⁹ 查经聚会. All the churches also have children’s work 主日学 but this is not limited to Sundays even though the name suggests it is. Enlin Church also has regular “spreading the gospel” outings in the warmer months. I will discuss these activities in more detail in Chapter Six.

Annual Activities

The main annual activities in the Huanghaicheng Three-Self churches are “spiritual training meetings” 培灵会 and festivals. For the “spiritual training meetings” a pastor from another city will come for three or four days of meetings to speak on a specific book from the Bible or a Biblical theme. Enlin Church also began a “marriage enrichment course” 夫妻恩爱营会 in 2010 which aims to look at marriage from a Protestant perspective through Bible study, lectures, discussions and games. An online couples’ group has already been set up and other churches are talking about a similar programme. Enlin Church also ran a

⁸⁸ Most of the churches have early-morning prayer meetings 早祷, 晨祷 as well as a weekly prayer meeting.

⁸⁹ Enlin Church does not have a single congregational Bible study because everyone in the congregation is assigned to a small-group 小组. These are found in some other Three-Self churches (see Ma, 2008, 51; Wu, et al, 2009, 148-149). These groups are highly organised and have a group leader and a group leader-in-training. The leader-in-training will take over the group when it becomes too large and the original leader will begin to lead a new group. There are ongoing attempts to establish such small-groups in some of the other churches in Huanghaicheng.

course for single young people on Valentine’s Day in 2010. It is also hoped that these programmes and events provide another opportunity to “spread the gospel.”

The major festivals celebrated in the churches are Christmas 圣诞节 and Easter 复活节, although Thanksgiving 感恩节 and some traditional Chinese festivals are also celebrated. Christmas and Easter are significant because they mark important events for Protestant believers and also because they attract large numbers of people to the churches.

Christmas is by far the most significant festival in the church calendar. Preparation begins months before Christmas as small-groups and individuals prepare performances and practice for the pre-rehearsals and rehearsals 彩排. Performances are given by a wide range of ages from the tiniest children to the elderly. People prepare poems, songs, dances, and sketches as well as traditionally-influenced performances of “cross-talk” 相声 and *kuaibaner* 块版儿 all with a Protestant-based content. There are always far too many performances to fit into the programme which extends to long meetings over four separate days. Cards are made with the times and places of the main Christmas meetings and used as invitations for friends and relatives.

The churches coordinate to arrange meetings and exchange performers since meetings are typically held for four consecutive days. Performance groups from churches and meeting-points visit other congregations. The churches are always packed and people who arrive anywhere near the start time either have to sit on overflow seating or stand in the doorways and aisles.⁹⁰ Bible readings and Christmas songs intersperse the performances and a short “gospel presentation” with a direct call for people to convert is given at every meeting. Enlin Church was slightly different from the others in that on the Sunday after Christmas Day (and the fourth day of Christmas worship meetings), Preacher Zhang arranged lunch for everyone who attended. He also arranged for enough gifts (towels, key-rings or pens with Bible verses on them) to be given to anyone who turned up to meetings over the four days. Other churches make small packages of fruit, nuts and chocolate to give to people as they leave. In addition, unregistered student groups in Huanghaicheng’s universities and colleges have started to use the Mashan Church hall to hold an annual Christmas celebration which is entirely student-run. We will discuss this in more detail in Chapter Nine.

⁹⁰ Due to the location of Desheng Church, traffic police were sent to the area to direct traffic but this was not something as highly-organised as the traffic control provided in Wenzhou by the police at church Christmas meetings (see Cao, 2011, 1).

Easter begins with the Holy Week⁹¹ 受难周 (lit. 'week of suffering') and culminates in a weekend of remembrance for the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Some church leaders and laypersons fast during this week but this is a personal decision and not a tradition followed widely throughout the churches in Huanghaicheng. Easter centres round "Good Friday" 受难日 (lit. 'day of suffering') and finishes on the following Sunday with "Easter Sunday" 复活节 (lit. 'resurrection festival'). Meetings were arranged at all the churches.

On Good Friday, I attended Desheng Church. The meeting had a sober atmosphere because the lights had been dimmed and candles were lit on the lectern. Those leading from the front were dressed in dark clothes. The hymns and prayers emphasised the importance of "remembering" 纪念 Jesus and his suffering. Pastor Zheng preached from Mark 15:6-32, looking at the text from the standpoint of the different characters. His overall theme was that "we were not created by God to live in sin" 神造我们不是让我们生活在罪恶之中. The preaching was followed by communion. It was an emotional service and many people sobbed out loud during communion. Those helping with the distribution of the wafer and the wine were dressed in white robes that I would associate with funerals in China. This added to the sobriety of the event.

On Easter Sunday the churches in Huanghaicheng celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Services do not differ much from normal Sunday worship meetings but there is perhaps an even greater enthusiasm in the reading, praying and singing. The content of Easter Sunday preaching usually emphasises the good that Christ's resurrection has brought such as peace 平安, light 光明 and new life 新生命. Some churches have performances interspersed with "personal testimony stories" 见证 of how God has influenced their lives. Many of these testimonies included accounts of healings from illness, disease or recovery from alcoholism while others recounted how God had saved marriages or provided for people with financial difficulty. People also exchanged painted eggs as a means of giving others "blessing" 福.

Thanksgiving is not celebrated specifically in all the churches and seems not to be considered a 'standard' festival and during my time spent in the city, only Enlin Church and the meeting for the hearing impaired celebrated Thanksgiving. At Enlin Church people were told the previous Sunday that those with "the financial ability" 有能力的 should bring some fruit to share with others. On Thanksgiving Sunday, the food provided

⁹¹ Also known as "Passion Week".

by church-goers was collected at the door and taken to the front. The church was packed and an elderly pastor from another part of Huanghaicheng spoke at the meeting. He mentioned the origins of Thanksgiving in the United States but made a distinction between that festival and thanking God for his provision for everyone. At the end of the meeting, Preacher Zhang prayed over the food and then it was served out to everyone as they sat in their seats. Fruit, sweets, peanuts and sunflower seeds were given to everyone who attended. Those greeting at the doors went out to the street to give handfuls of fruit to passersby. There was a range of performances all with an explicit 'gospel' content. Food was shared at the meeting for the hearing impaired in a similar way. I am sure that the influence of South Korean Protestants has led to Enlin Church and the meeting for the hearing impaired adopting Thanksgiving as a church festival since Thanksgiving is an important celebration in South Korean churches and both Enlin and the hearing impaired congregations have close ties to South Koreans.

Spring Festival 春节 does not feature highly in the church calendar although some meetings were re-arranged in order to allow Protestants to spend time with their family on New Year's Eve. The noise of fireworks and firecrackers from the streets outside the churches would make it difficult to hold any meeting anyway. The theme of New Year as associated with new beginnings ran throughout the preaching a few weeks either side of the festival. The festival is primarily regarded as another opportunity for 'spreading the gospel' with family and friends back home and believers were encouraged to do so. Similarly, the Grave-sweeping Festival and Mid-Autumn Festival are seen as opportunities to get together with family and friends for a meal and to share the Protestant faith. Some churches in China organise grave-sweeping 扫墓 outings (Wu et al, 2009, 163). However, I did not hear of any such grave-sweeping activities in Huanghaicheng.

Church rituals

The rituals 礼义 found in the churches in Huanghaicheng are common to Protestant churches in China and many other places: baptisms 洗礼, 受洗, communion 圣餐, 摆饼, wedding ceremonies 婚礼 and funerals 葬礼. All four rituals are important for the Protestant community but as with other church activities, are also significant proselytising opportunities. We will look at these in turn.

Official public baptisms are conducted in the churches once a year in August while unofficial baptisms are conducted at other times. I will discuss these in Chapter Six.

Baptisms are generally carried out collectively by district⁹² and usually take place on a Saturday. Registration 报名 for baptism begins in March every year. In order to qualify for baptism, people have to be Protestant and have attended church for not less than a set period of time (usually six months to one year) and, according to the City Two Committees, should be no younger than eighteen years old, a rule common in many places across China (Wu et al, 2009, 154, 155). This is a requirement from the UFWD and the RAB but it is not stringently enforced as we shall see later. Contrary to some reports, names are not handed on to party-state organs for approval. Candidates are also required to attend six to eight weekly baptism classes 受洗慕道班 where they are taught basic tenets of Protestantism, the contents of which varies across churches and meeting-points. Candidates are also “interviewed” 考察, 谈话 by a church leader in order to ensure that they understand the meaning and significance of baptism (Ma, 2008, 43; Wu et al, 2009, 154-155 give similar accounts). All those who get baptised must complete a card with their name, age, address and phone number. These cards are kept by the church as a record and a name-list of those who have been baptised should be sent to the district TSPM Committee (although this is often not done in practice). These lists serve as records for checking whether or not believers can fill positions that require the candidate to be baptised. An individual's personal identification number 身份证号 is not required as in some places (see Wu et al, 2009, 192).

In the summer of 2010, the total number of people publically baptised in the four districts was 426. Of this figure, 286 of these baptisms were conducted in Desheng Church, taking nearly six hours. I attended baptisms for all four districts and while all had their own individual style, they generally followed a similar format. All these churches had baptismal pools which were filled by hand the day before and heated overnight with electric elements. Baptisms are conducted by pastors, assistant pastors or elders although lay believers can help.

Most candidates are immersed in water but some (those who are ill or infirm or those who would prefer to be sprinkled for theological reasons) are sprinkled with water. Those doing the baptisms stand in the pool and each candidate is asked, “Do you agree to accept Christ?”⁹³ The candidate then says, “I agree.”⁹⁴ The church leader will then say, “I baptise

⁹² Not all churches have baptismal pools but in Huanghaicheng at least one church in every district does. The purpose in conducting baptisms by district is to reduce the travelling time and work for the pastors and elders who oversee the baptisms.

⁹³ 你愿意接受基督吗? Or, alternatively, “Do you agree to believe in Christ?” 你愿意相信基督吗?.

⁹⁴ 我愿意.

you into Christ in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.”⁹⁵ The candidate is then lowered into the water and pulled back up again. The choir sings a short song while the church leader lays hands on the candidate and says a short prayer.⁹⁶ The candidate is then hurried out of the water and the next candidate goes into the pool. After all the baptisms are conducted, a communion service is held because in Huanghaicheng’s Three-Self churches, believers who are not baptised are not allowed to take communion.

Under normal circumstances, the communion 圣餐 (lit. “holy meal”) can only be conducted by pastors, assistant pastors or elders. Communion is celebrated once a month in the Three-Self churches in Huanghaicheng. One exception to this is for the Protestants in the hearing impaired group who generally only have the opportunity once a year due to the lack of church workers qualified to conduct communion.

Communion is celebrated at the end of a Sunday worship meeting and lasts about thirty minutes. The ritual begins with a reading from 1 Corinthians 11 which contains a warning about the dangers of taking communion for non-believers or for Protestants who have unconfessed sin. Those present are reminded of this. A set hymn⁹⁷ is sung while the “wafer” 饼 is broken up and divided onto stainless-steel trays before being distributed to the congregants. Led by the leader, everyone eats at the same time. Another set hymn⁹⁸ is sung while the grape juice – referred to as the “cup” 杯 – is distributed. Again, everyone drinks at the same time. It is then common for whoever is leading to ask if anyone wants to pray. Usually two or three people stand and pray out loud giving thanks for the bread and wine.

Any of the Three-Self churches in Huanghaicheng can hold wedding ceremonies 婚礼 and all have done so at least once. Desheng Church and Mashan Church hold more weddings than the other churches by far possibly because many couples seem to prefer to hold the short ceremony in one of the more “traditional-looking” buildings. While it may be that church weddings in China are seen to be in keeping with fashion, the churches in Huanghaicheng will only agree to hold a wedding ceremony for couples who are both Protestants or, in some instances, if either the bride or the groom is a Protestant. Also, couples should already have their marriage certificate 结婚证 to prove they are legally married. Only pastors or assistant pastors can lead couples in the vows. Weddings are also regarded as an opportunity for ‘spreading the gospel’. Some of the weddings which

⁹⁵ 我在圣父、圣子、圣灵的名下给你施洗是你归到基督。

⁹⁶ This happens for every candidate.

⁹⁷ Hymn 165 “擘开生命饼歌” (Break the Bread [lit. “wafer”] of Life Song) (Hymnbook, 2008, 154).

⁹⁸ Hymn 166 “爱筵我尝歌” (I Taste the Love Feast Song) (Hymnbook, 2008, 154-155).

take place are of Protestant couples who attend unregistered Protestant congregations but who want to get married in a “proper church building.” These weddings provide an opportunity for both Three-Self church leaders to make connections with unregistered congregations and vice versa.

Having attended a number of wedding ceremonies, it seems that wedding ceremonies follow a fairly similar pattern and are similar in structure to Protestant weddings in other parts of China. Most ceremonies take place immediately after a regular church event such as a Saturday Bible study or the Sunday morning worship meeting. Usually the service team will spring into action once the meeting has finished in order to prepare the main church hall for the wedding. Seats are moved to create a central aisle down which the bride and groom will walk. Flower stands and artificial flowers are arranged down the edges of the aisle and red carpets put down. The choir will put on their robes and take seats near the front. All this happens as people leave from the meeting and wedding guests arrive. The official photographers begin setting up and talking over the details of the ceremony with the pastor.

As people come in and take their seats the pastor will go to the main lectern and ask people to make sure their mobile phones are switched off and to stand when the bride and groom come in. The bride and groom usually have to wait at the back of the church as final preparations are made. The pianist begins the Bridal Chorus 新娘合唱, signalling the bride and groom to start walking down the aisle as the congregation stands. The bride and groom are asked whether or not they agree to stay married regardless of circumstances. The pastor prays and says a blessing 祝福 for the couple. This is often followed by a reading from 1 Corinthians 13 and a short talk on the significance of weddings and marriage. The choir will then sing a hymn. Marriage vows and rings are then exchanged. The bride and groom are then given a gift of Bibles. This is followed by another prayer of blessing and then the congregation stands as the couple leave the church. As other researchers have noted, Three-Self churches tend not to marry divorcees although pastors will seek to understand the circumstances before making a final decision (see Ma, 2008, 44).

At one Protestant wedding I attended in 2010, the bride and groom showed a ten-minute film of themselves explaining how and why they became believers. During the wedding reception amidst the eating, toasting and usual wedding games, there were “performances” of dances to Protestant songs. Each guest received a small gift bag which also contained a

small booklet outlining why people should believe. During the meal, several “sisters” on the same table as me were trying to persuade a non-believer to become a Protestant.

Funerals⁹⁹ are generally not held in churches but at the funeral parlour 殡仪馆 or sometimes in the home of the person who has passed away (see Wu et al, 2009, 166-167). Worship ceremonies 追思礼拜 for Protestants who have passed away last about twenty minutes and are usually led by pastors or elders, although sometimes preachers also preside over funerals. Flower wreaths 花边, commonly found in funerals across China, are often placed at the head of the body. Those who have come to pay their respects line up along both sides of the coffin. At funerals associated with Baisong Church, church members wear white funeral clothes. Silent prayers are made and then a text from the Bible is read, often Psalm 23. A hymn may then be sung before a short talk 短讲 which is also an opportunity to “spread the gospel” with relatives and friends. Close relatives or friends sometimes convert to Protestantism after a funeral as is the case in other places (Colijn, 2011, 4). A final hymn and prayer end the ceremony before the coffin is taken away for cremation.

Meeting for the hearing-impaired

The meeting for the hearing impaired 聋哑人聚会 is not large but has international connections and reveals important dynamics of the Three-Self Protestant community in Huanghaicheng. The group began when an overseas Protestant Chinese came to Huanghaicheng to do business and converted a hearing impaired man who fixed bicycles outside his apartment. The hearing impaired convert introduced the overseas Chinese brother to other hearing impaired people in Huanghaicheng and more conversions followed. When the overseas Chinese brother moved away, the wife of a preacher, Sister Xi, met some of these new Protestants (four couples) and began to learn sign language. They also began to meet in her home for Bible study and prayer.

More hearing impaired people were converted and Sister Xi was forced to find somewhere larger to meet. Because of her connections within the TSPM, the group was given permission to use a meeting room in Mashan Church but after several years they had outgrown that room and moved to the basement of Desheng Church. It is important to

⁹⁹ I attended one Protestant funeral 葬礼 in my research. It was in a church in a small town outside of Huanghaicheng and was not a typical funeral since it was for a Three-Self pastor who had died in tragic circumstances and is, therefore, not representative of Protestant funerals.

note that the group of deaf and mute Christians who meet in Desheng Church on a weekly basis is referred to as a “meeting” 聚会 and not as a church 教会 although their existence is largely independent of other Protestants. It is also one of only several such meetings in the entire province.¹⁰⁰ We will look at important aspects of this group in Chapter Eight.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

We have analysed in this chapter the nature of Three-Self churches in Huanghaicheng, detailing their histories and revealing how they became embedded in the TSPM structure. We have seen the importance of state categories in defining the appointment of religious specialists and the official requirements for the establishment of Religious Activities Venues as part of the state project on the institutionalisation of Protestantism specifically and religion in general. Whilst being officially-recognised venues for religious activity, the churches serve as spaces for proselytising as a means to bringing people into the Protestant community as well as a basis for reaching the local community outside the church. Contrary to much of the literature, this chapter has also demonstrated the vibrant nature of the Three-Self Protestant ritual community and the range of activities which churches engage in within the reimits of religious policy. In the next chapter we explore how the Three-Self churches are embedded in and in symbiosis with the local state which will reveal in detail how these relationships are able to benefit the churches and aid in their expansion.

¹⁰⁰ According to one participant involved in this work, there are perhaps about 2,000 deaf and mute Christians in the whole of China.

Chapter Five

Embeddedness and Symbiosis in

Huanghaicheng's Church-State Interactions

INTRODUCTION

The primary purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the manner in which the Three-Self Protestant community is embedded in the local state as part of the official institutionalisation of Protestantism. This embeddedness facilitates symbiosis with state institutions and it is these symbiotic relationships which, in turn, allow for the formation of informal structures and channels which benefit the Three-Self community's expansion. It is these structures and channels which we will analyse in detail in the remaining chapters. This framework takes us beyond the previous scholarship outlined in Chapter Two by demonstrating the agency of the churches in their interactions with the local state as well as by revealing that the churches may gain from these interactions in ways in which the state would not expect. Further, we will establish that the symbiosis between Three-Self churches and the RAB/RAS is institutional but that personal relationships also play a major role in the actualisation of this institutionalising process, demonstrating the limitations of the institutionalisation of religion (Laliberté, 2011b, 7). To achieve our current goal, we will introduce the actors involved in Huanghaicheng's church-state interactions and demonstrate the embeddedness and symbiotic nature of these relationships. State actors include the United Front Work Department, Religious Affairs Bureau/Religious Affairs Section, the Security Bureaus and Urban Management as well as Local People's Congresses and People's Political Consultative Conferences. We will then analyse the relationship between the Three-Self churches and the TSPM/CCC structure. This analysis will reveal both the official and unofficial aspects of these relationships and interactions.

Local state actors

We will see in this section the local state actors with whom religious specialists who represent the Three-Self churches come into contact. We will also see how the official roles of these various actors help to promote the embeddedness of Three-Self Protestantism in the local state and symbiosis between Three-Self churches and local state institutions.

*United Front Work Department (UFWD)*¹⁰¹

The United Front Work Department 统一战线工作部 often referred to as 统战部 is a CPC organ which is involved in developing religious policy and overseeing its implementation as part of the CPC’s overall strategy to utilise as many social groups as possible. It operates at the national, provincial, municipal and district level. There are also UFWD cells within some organisations. This was referred to in Huanghaicheng as “principal work”; that is, the UFWD deals more with establishing general policies while other local state organs deal with the details of such policies.

There is little specific data available on the role of the UFWD on religious affairs in Huanghaicheng. The City UFWD’s own website has only one article on religion but it is very general and merely emphasises the “five characteristics of religion”¹⁰² 宗教五个特征 and the need for religious activity to be done within the law, for religious activity to be “normal” 正常 and for handling religion well so that “infiltration” will not be carried out in the name of religion. There is also an emphasis on the “love the country, love religion” 爱国爱教 slogan and a call to train young religious specialists with a “knowledge of popular science” 普及科学知识 (UFWD, 2004). The Huanghaicheng “Yearbooks” also have a short section on “Religious Work” every year but these updates tend to simply reiterate the importance of the work and mention the above themes.¹⁰³

We saw in Chapter Three that the UFWD made the decision to re-open churches after the Cultural Revolution but before the Religious Affairs Bureau had been revived. Since that time, the UFWD has returned to its original role of supervising the Religious Affairs

¹⁰¹ For a detailed overview of the UFWD at the national level see Wickeri (1990).

¹⁰² That religion is long-term, broad-based and complex and that it has both a national and international character.

¹⁰³ See Zhao and Gong (1990; 1991; 1992; 1993), Shang (1996; 1997; 1998-1999; 2000) and Liu et al (2001; 2002; 2003; 2004; 2005; 2006).

Bureau. Some scholars have argued that UFWD personnel “decide who will lead religious organisations” and “monitor organisational personnel” (Vala, 2008, 99). While this may be the case in some locales, it is not as clear cut as that in Huanghaicheng where religious specialists in the Three-Self churches have some authority in making decisions with regards to future leaders, as we shall see in Chapter Six. Some scholars have also claimed that UFWD cadres take part in religious affairs conferences and deliver keynote speeches (Kindopp, 2004c, 148). In Huanghaicheng, the UFWD organises meetings on a bi-annual basis, as Pastor Liu related:

The City UFWD organises meetings twice a year for the five big religions. The leaders of the five big religions come together to learn and talk about [issues]. The UFWD also arranges for us to study by visiting some scenic spots or places of historical interest.

These visits generally last five days and are referred to as “red travelling” 红色旅游 since they are arranged by a CPC organ. Pastor Liu told me that he was aware that these trips (once every two years) were an attempt to bolster support for the CPC but he regarded them as a good opportunity to see parts of China that he would never see otherwise. At the same time, this kind of activity helps to embed religious specialists into the state. UFWD cadres do not attend but RAB officials do and this serves as another opportunity for religious specialists and RAB personnel to develop their connections.

UFWD cadres may attend training sessions organised by the Religious Affairs Bureau but pastors and other church leaders in Huanghaicheng maintained that these cadres are aloof and that there is little professional contact between them and church leaders. In the course of my fieldwork, I heard no reports of UFWD personnel who were Protestants or followers of any other religion.

Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB)

The RAB is the government organ responsible for the “specific work” of managing religion and as such is under the supervision of the UFWD at each corresponding level (provincial, municipal, district). This is the main state organ with which the Three-Self churches are in symbiosis. The work of the RAB involves implementing religious policies and regulations, managing the personnel and activities of religious associations and helping with the registration of religious activities venues and negotiating their return. The Religious Affairs Bureau 宗教事务局 (RAB) changed its name to the State Administration on Religious Affairs of the People's Republic of China 国家宗教事务局

(SARA) in 1998 and is under the direct control of the State Council but below the level of a full ministry (Chan and Carlson, 2005, 6). Local-level offices are still generally referred to as RAB, so for the sake of consistency, we will maintain this usage.

The formal institutional relationship between the Three-Self Patriotic Movement and the RAB in its various forms began in the 1950s when the TSPM was formed and the RAB was set up under the new CPC government in Huanghaicheng. The RAB was set up in 1954 under the State Council but local offices were not immediately formed. From 1949-1957, the UFWD managed religions in Huanghaicheng.¹⁰⁴ In 1957, the Minorities, Religion and Overseas Chinese Affairs Department 民族宗教华侨事务处 was established which took over these roles in 1958 and then oversaw religion and minorities work until the start of the Cultural Revolution in 1966. This office is referred to as the (City) Religious Affairs Department 市宗教事务处 (RAD). There was no management of religion during the Cultural Revolution era until 1978 when the Religious Affairs Bureau was revived at the national level. The City UFWD was re-established in 1978 and took over the work of managing religion until 1984 when the (City) RAD again officially took over the work of religion and minority affairs. As part of the expanding institutionalisation of religion and its management by the state, in 1987, all levels of government were required to have such an RAD (Zheng, 1993, 5-6).

The CPC was careful in its selection of appropriate partners in the building of a socialist society. The patriotic organisations and the religious congregations embedded in them were the only ones the RAB would interact with since these were groups who had made an agreement to support the socialist state. It was from these groups that the UFWD through the RAB expected to gain support for CPC policies. While some of the leaders of the Protestant churches who led their congregations in support of the TSPM supported the ideals of the movement, others were simply seeking to survive and find a way to maintain their faith. In their interactions with the RAB, the Three-Self Protestant community gain some form of legitimacy from the state, allowing them to practice some aspects of their faith openly.

This relationship between the TSPM and the RAB continues today at the city, district and Street Council levels and is of continuing significance for both partners. The local state perceives itself as managing religion while allegedly receiving support for its policies from the TSPM. As part of the institutional relationship between the RAB and the TSPM,

¹⁰⁴ See Chan (1992) for further details on the various offices and departments which were responsible for managing religious affairs since the Tang dynasty.

the Three-Self Protestant community receives a degree of legal protection for “normal” religious activities and legitimacy from the RAB in the form of cultural capital: the official recognition and registering of official religious specialists and religious activities venues licenses. Through these, the RAB officially provides a degree of protection¹⁰⁵ (保护) in the contemporary era. This theme of the relationship providing protection was recognised by many of the church leaders, as an elder from Baisong Church expounds:

Here, it's the Religious Affairs personnel who supervise what they see as religion... I feel that they are a kind of protective umbrella. What do I mean by protective umbrella? Although we have the Religious Affairs personnel supervising [管理] us, we have an increasingly normal legal status allowing us to live out our religious faith life in a normal manner, and more bravely. Why? Because we have protection. No-one can come and interfere [干扰] with us, right? This is normal. So, we are at ease. We can live out our Protestant religious faith life in such a way that we continually develop. I think this is a good thing, right? Because no-one interferes with our faith. No-one stops us from reading the Bible, 'You can only look at the right, you can't look at the left,' or, 'you can only speak about these things, you can't speak about these things.' No-one places these requirements on us. There is only concern about supervising [管理] us properly and this will help us expand, right? I really think this is a good thing.

The relationship between the RAB and the Three-Self community continues as new congregations are established and developed. The RAB has expanded as the local state seeks to meet the perceived needs of managing religion. Although Hunter and Chan (1993, 54) found “few local branches” of the RAB in the early 1990s and Chan and Carlson (2005, 7) talk of the downsizing of RABs this has not been evident in Huanghaicheng. In fact, since the 1990s, the Religious Affairs work in Huanghaicheng has expanded and Religious Affairs Sections 宗教科 (RAS) have been opened in each city district. In 1991, the Huanghaicheng Government formed a Religious Work Guidance Committee 宗教工作领导小组 and as a result of meetings, Religious Affairs Sections or Offices were established in most districts and counties (Zheng, 1993, 9). According to one RAS official, RASs also rely on Street Councils 街道办事处 to help regulate religious activity. These are the lowest level of the state in cities and have increased in their importance in recent years as the state desires to improve urban governance (Wong and Poon, 2005, 434). In townships and villages, the PPCC offices 政协办公室 take the responsibility of managing religious affairs. This expansion of the Religious Affairs work demonstrates the ongoing institutionalisation of religion management by the state.

¹⁰⁵ This concept was also captured by Huang's (2003, 117) study of a rural Three-Self church where the believers say that they “use the power of the state to protect themselves” 利用国家力量来保护自己.

The development of the RASs is described by a member of the City Two Committees:

Since reform and opening, the churches in Huanghaicheng have always been managed by someone but sometimes [Religious Affairs] personnel were placed in some government office without any clear identity. Personnel may have had a lot of different responsibilities. Now, however, almost all counties, townships and city districts have started to establish a Religious Affairs Section with a clear identity and at least one person responsible for the work. Before, there were times when one person would take responsibility [for religion work] for a few months and then someone else would take over: there was a constant stream of new people who didn’t understand the work. I’ve been doing my job for more than ten years and now I’m starting to feel that the government is beginning to really take the work seriously.

In terms of the position of the two partners, the TSPM is external to the RAB, making the relationship ectosymbiotic. However, there is also another aspect to the relationship between the Three-Self Protestant leaders and the RAB which further embeds the Three-Self structures in the local state at the individual level. Pastor Zheng receives his salary directly from the RAB, unlike other church workers who receive theirs from the City Two Committees. The reason that this situation came about was that at the beginning of the reform era, there was no Three-Self church or TSPM Committee to organise the salaries for the new religious specialists. While this kind of situation seems relatively uncommon in China,¹⁰⁶ it is a result of policies in the early reform period, as Pastor Zheng describes:

I used to work in a factory. After the end of the Cultural Revolution, what would happen to the churches? At that time, the churches were supervised by the UFWD. They made an arrangement making the most of what they had 编制. They moved me from the factory to the UFWD. I’m now with the RAB. This is just a result of the structure of institutions. I was a factory worker who wanted to work in the church. What else could I do? There was a time when the UFWD managed religion but now it’s the RAB. There’s also an Imam who has the same arrangement. It’s been so long now, I don’t think it will change. I’m near retirement anyway. My salary at the RAB is 2,000 *yuan* a month and then I get another 700 or so to make up the difference from the City Two Committees.

This embeddedness of Pastor Zheng in the RAB does not signal that he automatically has access to benefits that other religious specialists do not have access to. He does not have an official position within the RAB and still has to negotiate with RAB personnel in the same way as other church leaders. However, Pastor Zheng has worked hard to build good relationships with the RAB as well as the RASs. In addition, the church could afford Pastor Zheng’s salary but is only too willing to allow the RAB to pay.

The Three-Self Protestant leadership places a great deal of emphasis on building relationships with those responsible for managing religion. These relationships are not

¹⁰⁶ According to Pastor Zheng, there is only one other Protestant leader in the same province who has the same arrangement with the RAB. There is also an Imam in Huanghaicheng who receives his salary directly from the RAB.

officially part of the institutional symbiosis and do not simply “spring up” but are consciously sought on specific terms. This is a significant theme which we will elaborate in more detail in later Chapters but it is important to highlight the strategies which Three-Self clergy employ to build relationships. Church leaders often take the opportunity during important festivals to give small gifts to the RAB/RAS officials. Most of these gifts are Bibles or other Protestant literature and many of the gifts are paid for out of the personal funds of the religious specialists. Festivals are also opportunities for religious specialists and RAB/RAS officials to share meals which also facilitate good relations. In terms of wider strategies, firstly, church leaders try to avoid direct confrontation with personnel by seeking to negotiate when there is a potential for conflict. Secondly, they seek to maintain a low-profile existence through the avoidance of engaging in activities which attract too much attention from wider society. Thirdly, the religious specialists downplay how well-connected they are both within the Three-Self community as well as within the wider Protestant scene to avoid drawing negative attention from the state. It is evident that RAB/RAS officials also seek to build good relations with religious specialists. They, too, send gifts and are often open to negotiation when there is a matter of potential conflict over their management style or religious activity. There are also RAB/RAS officials who have family members who are part of the Protestant community and this possibly positively influences their treatment of other Protestants.

The organisational structure of the RAB in Huanghaicheng aids the Protestant community in ways which we will explore in the following chapters. Although this matter is not a factor in the recognition process, it is significant. The City RAB is divided into several sections. Religion Section One 宗教一科 deals with Buddhism and Daoism; Religion Section Two 宗教二科 manages Catholicism and Protestantism; Propaganda and Education Section 宣传教育科 helps to form policy, conduct research on religious regulations and arrange internal training. The City Minorities Affairs Bureau and the RAB combined currently have 27 personnel but how these are divided into the different sections is not clear. It does, however, mean that there are only a handful of City RAB personnel (in Religion Section Two) who are responsible for the day-to-day management of Protestantism.

While the City RAB has personnel whose sole job description is to manage Religious Affairs work, personnel at the district-level RASs often have a range of duties with Religious Affairs work being only one of them. In Huanghaicheng, Religious Affairs

personnel in Jinping¹⁰⁷ and Xicheng¹⁰⁸ are in the Culture Section 文化科 and in Moushan¹⁰⁹ in the Documents Section 文书科 in the district government while the sole Religious Affairs personnel in Jinghai is in the Legal Department 法制处. This obviously means that personnel at the district level have many demands on their time and resources, a fact which I argue is advantageous to the Three-Self churches in the city.

Direct contact does take place between the RAB/RAS personnel and Three-Self leaders. Most of this takes place in meetings although these are not frequent. Religious specialists are required to make an end-of-year report to the RAB/RAS.¹¹⁰ Much of the contact which takes place now is in the form of phone calls and the advent of mobile phones has facilitated this greatly. This increases the physical distance between the local state and the Three-Self congregations. Although in practice RAB and RAS personnel are supposed to make official visits to religious activities venues to monitor activities, this does not happen often in Huanghaicheng. The busy schedules of the RAB/RAS also means that if documents need passed on to religious specialists or if there is some matter that needs to be discussed, then the clergy are usually asked to go to the RAB/RAS office. This also reduces the frequency with which RAB/RAS personnel visit religious activities venues while at the same time emphasises the idea that religious specialists are being respectful to the officials. This distances the congregations from the local state and means that religious specialists have more space to conduct religious activities which may not be considered legitimate.

While Protestant leaders do seek to establish good working relationships with RAB/RAS personnel, the wider structure of the Minorities and Religious Affairs offices often remains elusive which means that it is only possible to build relationships with those directly assigned to managing Protestantism. For example, it is not clear to Baisong Church leaders exactly how many people are involved with the management of religion but all their contact is with Section Chief Gao only. It is also the case that Religious Affairs work, and more specifically, Protestantism,¹¹¹ is only part of Section Chief Gao’s

¹⁰⁷ The Religious Affairs Section in Jinping was only established two years ago. Before that time, Religious Affairs work in Jinping was handled directly by the City RAB.

¹⁰⁸ Xicheng has two Religious Affairs personnel, both of whom are relatively young as well as a Section Chief 科长 who has more experience.

¹⁰⁹ The RAS in Moushan is headed by a Section Chief (sometimes referred to as Director 主任) and below him is a Deputy Director 副主任. A Deputy Division Chief 副处长 and Deputy Secretary 副书记 also help share the responsibility of religious management.

¹¹⁰ This is specifically stated in policy documents, highlighting its official importance.

¹¹¹ It is also unclear whether or not there are representatives in the Religious Affairs Section for all of the five official religions. Church leaders only know of a different Section Chief who supervises Daoism.

job description although the nature of his other responsibilities is not clear, as an elder from Baisong Church relates:

I don’t know [how many people work with Religious Affairs]. Why do I say I don’t know? When we go to see him to get something stamped or if there’s some other issue which needs addressed, we can see in his office a lot of other material. Some materials are nothing to do with the Religious Affairs Section. We can see there are different aspects to his work. Some stuff is to do with outside affairs, documents for some district official or for some other section chiefs or bureau chiefs. It seems that one person has a few different lines of work. I can see that it’s not just Religious Affairs work. But I only know that he’s the section chief that deals with Religious Affairs and is responsible for overseeing Protestantism.

Relations between the Three-Self churches and the RAB are not always harmonious. According to Pastor Shao (who retired some years ago), there were issues in the 1980s of City RAB personnel making demands for cigarettes and meals. Similar practices have been noted by others (Kindopp, 2004c, 150; Chen, 2007, 147ff). Indeed, some preachers in Huanghaicheng knew of former seminary classmates in other provinces who reported mistreatment from RAB personnel.

While church leaders who deal directly with the RAB agreed that the City RAB personnel understood Protestantism in some depth, the same can not be said for other RAS personnel at the district level. As some scholars have noted, many officials at lower levels “have little knowledge of religious specifics” (Chan and Carlson, 2005, 7). This seems to be the case in Huanghaicheng, where, despite a drive to recruit better educated and younger personnel, some staff display little knowledge of Protestantism or other religions.¹¹² A senior figure in the City Two Committees offered me his opinion:

I think that the higher up you go, Religious Affairs personnel understand Protestantism better. I really think that’s the case, especially with Protestantism. I come into contact with those at provincial-level and city-level and they are fairly professional. At the county-level, things are often somewhat lacking. At the village- and township-levels sometimes the personnel in the offices have many responsibilities and are not really very professional.

He continued:

Because there are problems with the Dongcun meeting-point, I have had to be in communication with the personnel from the Jinping Religious Affairs Office. She manages a lot of work and I think she is still overseeing work from some other departments and she’s a deputy in Religious Affairs work. She’s good at her job. There are some things that she doesn’t understand but she asks us what we think. At times she will also go to the City RAB to ask for advice. She’s diligent in her work.

¹¹² In fact, the Section Chief in Jinghai only manages Buddhism and Protestantism: no staff manage any other religion in the district.

While this lack of understanding of religion can cause problems, and “some RAB cadres poorly implement policies” (Vala, 2008, 100), I would argue that it is also potentially advantageous to church leaders because they take on an advisory role to RAS staff in their district. It is not unusual for RAB/RAS personnel to seek advice from Three-Self religious specialists in Huanghaicheng on the nature of particular Protestant groups. Kindopp (2004c, 151) cites that Religious Affairs personnel generally have a tenure of between three and five years whilst in Huanghaicheng church leaders informed me that they think it should not go beyond six years. In practice, however, some personnel have remained in their posts for considerably longer with leaders in the City RAB and the Moushan RAS still doing Religious Affairs work after ten years or more. This has also been advantageous to the symbiosis since better relationships have been formed over a longer period and a deeper understanding has been reached between the partners.

The RAB/RAS is also officially responsible for helping to select and put forward candidates for seminary training as well as the ordination of religious specialists. Palmer (2009, 25a-25b) suggests that RAB officials have to seek a balance between political suitability and legitimacy within the religious community when engaging in these selection processes and church leaders are given more space for selecting candidates themselves than official protocol suggests. The RAB/RAS is also responsible for selecting religious specialists for positions in the Local People’s Congresses 地方人民代表大会 and the People’s Political Consultative Conferences 人民政治协商会议 at the district and city levels. These candidates are then supposed to be approved by the UFWD at the same level.

In the past, many of the documents sent from the RAB were of a more “political” nature 政治性. This is less the case now although there are still some which are “red-letter-headed documents” 红字头文件 and are supposed to be for “internal circulation” 内部资料.

A church leader related the following:

It is true that documents are sent down [from the province]. For example, at the moment we are supposed to be establishing a harmonious society, right? Sometimes the RAB has some emergency issues, most of which have to do with safety and fire safety. You know, there was that mining accident recently... if there is that kind of accident then we’ll be called to a meeting about safety. They’ll remind us not to allow any kind of accident to occur in one of the churches. This is one side. Another side to the documents is as I just said: documents come down from the central government, the UFWD and RAB about such things as establishing a harmonious religious activities venue, the registration of religious specialists or the management of church finances.

The red-letter-headed documents which I was allowed to peruse were general in nature and were all related to safety issues and the development of a harmonious society, revealing a more government administrative relationship rather than one in which the RAB seeks to influence the internal management of the churches. Officially, the church leaders and the church administration committees are supposed to read these documents and relay the contents to the congregation. In practice, church leaders read them while most dispose of them, never mentioning the contents to the congregation since they deem the contents irrelevant to the work of the church.

There are no formal meetings between church leaders and RAS personnel. In fact, most of the preachers in Huanghaicheng have had little or no contact with RAS staff at all since it is usually only the person responsible for a church or meeting-point who will have to go to the RAS offices to get something stamped or pick up documents. Pastor Liu informed me:

If there is some new policy from the central government, the Religious Affairs Bureau will arrange for us to have a meeting to study and learn about the new policies but there are no set meetings. There are maybe one or two such meetings a year.

As we noted above, there is an annual “year-end summary” meeting 年终总结 between the senior leaders of district religious organisations (District TSPM Committee in the case of Protestants) and the RAB. According to the Protestant leaders, these meetings are fairly routine and they will avoid going into issues in a great amount of detail since they are only given a few minutes to speak. Thus, while official protocol seems to place importance on such a procedure, in practice, little emphasis is placed on it.

Security Bureaus and Urban Management

The security bureaus deal with violations of religious policy and regulations. There are several security organs which are active in Huanghaicheng although their secrecy means that there is still relatively little known about them. The Ministry of Public Security 公安部 – the Public Security Bureau 公安局 (PSB) at the local level – is under the State Council and is responsible for China’s internal security. It is the primary organ for the enforcement of religious policy as scholars have noted: “holding unauthorised religious services or training classes, unreported outsider visits, the use of illicit religious materials – all are criminal violations and subject to the PSB’s enforcement and punishment”

(Kindopp, 2004c, 151). Religious specialists in Three-Self churches can also be subject to punishment by the PSB for preaching outside defined areas or proselytising on the street. The National Security Bureau 国家安全局 (NSB often shortened to 国安部 or just 国安) deals with “counter-intelligence” and in particular, the activities of foreigners in China. Some sources have asserted that the NSB has a “task force” which deals expressly with religious groups (Chan and Carlson, 2005, 8).

A significant amount of literature would suggest that the security forces in China often mistreat religious believers. My research in Huanghaicheng suggests that this is a gross oversimplification. Participants in this study did claim that the PSB and NSB do not always consult the RAB when dealing with what they perceive to be illegal religious groups or activities (something which we will return to in Chapter Nine). While this may be the case, I did not hear of any serious abuse of Protestants by these security organs. Moreover, there seemed to be no fear amongst the Three-Self religious specialists that the PSB or any other security organ might try to use informers in congregations. A senior member of the City Two Committees commented on the subject:

I’ve been working here for more than six years and I haven’t come into contact with the PSB or NSB informants. Of course, if someone was in such a position, they wouldn’t just come and tell me. I haven’t seen such things and I have no sense that such things take place. Perhaps there are informers. It’s possible. I think that now there are few informers anywhere. After 1949, this kind of thing may have happened; after all, the ruling party is atheist. If there is still this kind of activity then I think they are more likely not to actually send informers to the church but to use listening devices 窃听器. Modern technology is more efficient than sending people. If you use that then you could listen in to everything. It would really be a waste of resources to send informers.

There are several ways in which religious specialists come into contact with the security forces. I did not meet any religious specialist who had contacted the security forces for any reason except for training, and this with a specific purpose (see below). Sometimes, personnel from the security organs may contact church leaders or members of the City Two Committees for information or advice on particular unregistered congregations, unofficial preachers or foreigners as one member of the City Two Committees told me:

I’ve been working in the City Two Committees for seven years now and haven’t yet actively sought to communicate with the PSB or NSB for any reason. Occasionally, they may have some issue or situation which they come to ask us about. These issues are almost always connected to heretical sects or evil cults. They sometimes come to ask our advice on such things as whether we know a certain heretical sect, how much we know, and so on.

On a similar vein, a preacher commented:

Sometimes the NSB also get in touch with us. They usually get in touch with us because of evil cult activity or because of issues to do with foreigners. In Huanghaicheng that’s really almost always South Koreans. They don’t really trust the South Koreans. The NSB are a bit more cautious 谨慎 than the PSB. They are also a bit more powerful than the PSB. Often, if there is some kind of issue then there will be different departments working together [to resolve it]. They sometimes come to consult us. For example, they might ask, What’s this Seventh Day Adventist Church? What should we do with them? What about this Wenzhou Church? Now, they know them. They’re fine with that and now recognise these churches. The NSB deals with foreigners. They came here a few times asking about what foreigners attend. I didn’t tell them anything. After a while, they stopped coming. The Bible says that we shouldn’t betray a brother.

This kind of interaction helps to embed the Three-Self churches into the state apparatus by effectively serving in a consultancy role. The significance of these interactions should not be downplayed since church leaders and members of the Two Committees can effectively influence the outcome of investigations into unregistered activity and provide a protective umbrella for groups with which they have personal connections.

The second in command at the City Two Committees had a great deal of respect for the PSB personnel who dealt with religion:

Every year when we organise the church workers training classes, we invite a staff member from the PSB to give a talk on how to prevent infiltration and how to resist evil cults. The man from the PSB is quite good. He works for a section in the PSB that deals specifically with religion. He’s been doing this work for almost twenty years. Personally, I think he’s a good person. I know a bit about how these things work and I know that sometimes within the PSB there are some bad working practices, habits and approaches. After all, it’s a state organ. We can’t see any of these things when we’re in communication with this man. He donates blood. He’s been doing this job longer than anyone in the city. He understands Protestants and the Protestant faith really well. He is respectful. He’s the leader of his unit.

Inviting such personnel to lecture at training sessions may also be part of a broader strategy to involve state organs and personnel in matters which are officially-sanctioned thus embedding aspects of the church in the formal religious structure and, in turn, providing space for activities which the City Two Committees or church leaders would not involve local state institutions. We will look at this theme in more depth in following chapters.

The main task of Urban Management 市容城管行政执法局 often shortened to 城管, or “urban order and appearance managers” as Solinger (2011, 17) refers to it, is to manage the enforcement of local by-laws related to a range of areas including the environment, public health and sanitation. In recent years there have been countless cases in the media

of Urban Management personnel mistreating groups or individuals and they often have the label of “local bullies” (Tong and Lei, 2010, 498). Although there appears to have been an effort in Huanghaicheng in the past few years to try to clean up the Urban Management Bureau (with new uniforms and minivans), the personnel are suspected of working on behalf of the PSB to try to limit expressions of Protestantism in some parts of the city, notably Jinghai. Preacher Zhang provides his opinion of the Urban Management personnel and the bullying tactics which have also been prevalent in news reports:

Urban Management are really quite low-level 底层的... Now that China is emerging in the world, it doesn’t look good if the PSB deal with some issues. So, sometimes, I think the PSB send Urban Management personnel to come and deal with certain issues. We used to have a sign for the church outside on the road. Urban Management came and took the sign down. They said it was because the sign was unlawful.

Teacher Zhou from Enlin Church also thinks that in the past Urban Management personnel have been sent by the PSB to confiscate their gospel leaflets when they go out to distribute them.

Local People’s Congress (LPC)

The Provincial, City and District People’s Congresses 人民代表大会 are officially responsible for “provid[ing] a forum for people to participate in politics, to exercise their rights as ‘the masters of a people’s republic,’ to supervise the government, to control corruption” (Xia, 2008, 26). This is a rather positive view of the People’s Congresses but Three-Self participants did say that the role of these congresses had improved in recent years by becoming more assertive (Cho, 2003, 1069 makes a similar point). Official religious specialists can be elected to the LPCs. In Huanghaicheng, no Three-Self church leaders have taken up positions on the District People’s Congresses¹¹³ but there have been several pastors elected to the City People’s Congress, including Pastor Zheng. He was also appointed to one (five-year) term on the Provincial People’s Congress, the session before the current one. These appointments are supported by the RAB and UFWD. As Pastor Zheng, himself, recounted:

I started off as a member of the Jinping PPCC. I was then a deputy of the City PPCC and then went to the provincial LPC. I then returned and became a member of the City PPCC Standing Committee. Through these [positions] I have been able to influence some things. Two

¹¹³ Candidates for the District People’s Congresses are directly elected.

important things which I was able to influence in talks at the LPC were issues connected to Religious Activities Venues, namely, if a believer is in hospital and we go to pray with him, well it's not a Religious Activities Venue...and if a believer passes away and we take a funeral in the funeral parlour, well that's not a Religious Activities Venue.

Pastor Zheng was seeking to get permission for TSPM religious specialists to perform religious activities in places that are not Religious Activities Venues. We will discuss this in greater depth in Chapter Seven.

The Huanghaicheng City People's Congress was revived in 1979 after thirteen years of not functioning. District People's Congresses were established with the re-organisation of counties into city districts. As a "development zone," Jinghai does not have a District People's Congress but the other three city districts do, providing opportunities for senior religious specialists in these districts to be elected to the LPCs. The significance of such appointments is not so much an opportunity to simply rally for the Three-Self Protestant community but embeds the religious specialists in the local state and provides the prestige and political capital which such positions bring to church leaders. It also provides opportunities for religious clergy to develop relationships with officials which may be useful

People's Political Consultative Conference (PPCC)

The City and District PPCCs 政治协商会议 officially provide non-CPC members, ethnic minorities, all trades and professions and religious specialists a form of political participation. They have often been regarded as a "rubber-stamp" organisation (Chen, 2011, 4). Each social group or organisation has a quota within the PPCC and members of these social groups or organisations are first nominated by their organisation and then approved by the UFWD. Religious specialists in Huanghaicheng are more commonly given appointments in the district- or city-level PPCC than in the provincial-level PPCC. These political appointments, like appointments to the LPCs provide a certain degree of "political security" and "social status" as other scholars have noted (Chen, 2011, 7). Again, like the LPCs, these political appointments help to embed the church leaders in the local state while at the same time providing social capital which can be utilised to aid the mission of the church. We shall see a clear example of this in the next chapter.

We can see clearly here how the embeddedness of religious specialists into the political system can facilitate the expansion of the Three-Self churches in Huanghaicheng. In the Three-Self Protestant community, there is certainly the idea that these appointments are a

means by which Protestants can engage with society and help create a favourable “testimony” 见证 which they perceive will help elevate their profile in society. An elder at Baisong Church related the following regarding Pastor Liu’s involvement with the PPCC:

Pastor [Liu] is a member of the PPCC. When he goes to take part in the PPCC meetings, people in the counties and the city districts respect our Protestant faith a bit more. This situation has really gone beyond what they could have imagined [before]. They don’t see Protestants in that [negative] light anymore. They see that Protestants care about society and are willing to make sacrifices for it. This is a good opening for spreading the gospel 传福音 很好的窗口。

Similarly, Elder Lan feels that she has made positive contributions through her role in the District PPCC by making requests connected with pollution and what she perceived as the dangerous burning of paper money on graves. She sees this as a “good testimony” 很好的见证 to people who do not believe.

According to participants and the website of the Huanghaicheng PPCC, a great deal of the emphasis of the annual conference and the policies and issues which are discussed are connected to economic development. Those appointed to the PPCC are supposed to attend the annual conference in order to put forward their viewpoints on policies and local issues and take part in political studies. This forum provides opportunities for Three-Self leaders to promote the cause of the church. Pastor Zheng, who has served on the City PPCC as both a Deputy and on the Standing Committee, explains how he has been influential in his position:

Generally, every county, township or city district’s TSPM Committee’s chairperson will be a PPCC member or a PPCC Standing Committee member. It’s obviously more important to be a member of the Standing Committee because then he/she can make demands on our behalf. These chairpersons just become members because they are representing Protestantism. Obviously, if someone wasn’t really doing well in their role, then we would have to make other arrangements. There is one main meeting a year and then smaller meetings every quarter. The PPCC has various working groups. For example, I’m a member of the politics and law group 社会政法. We meet to discuss issues of law and politics in society – including those related to religion. I don’t really want to go into details but we want to build a big church in Huanghaicheng. We covered this issue in our group and will take it to the PPCC. The reasons behind this idea will be talked about and an initial proposal will be made. There’s another Protestant who’s also a member of the PPCC. We put forward this idea together. In principle, this proposal is acceptable. Now, we’ll have to meet with the LPC and listen to what they have to say about the details: how to build the church, whether or not we are able to, what will happen if we can’t afford to buy a site.

There are also other “work groups” 工作组 set up within the PPCCs to discuss issues of a particular nature. For example, sometimes work groups on “religion” are established.

Issues of a “religious” nature are often raised but, as with all proposals, there is no surety that they will be dealt with. Indeed, it is not always easy for those appointed to such positions to fully utilise the advantages that such a position can bring. The second-in-command of the City Two Committees relates his experience and also comments on what he sees as the ineffectiveness of the body:

I’m a member of the District PPCC and it’s my first term. I’ve already taken part in three meetings... The annual meetings generally last three days. I’m not really that positive about the meetings. My work here with the church is busy and I really don’t understand my PPCC role that well. I go to the opening and closing ceremonies and I ask for leave for the main meetings. I’m allowed to put forward two proposals each year, so I do that. I put forward two proposals every year. Of course, some proposals are to do with the church. For example, last year I raised an issue about the parking spaces that have to be paid for which have been created right outside Mashan Church. That’s hardly acceptable. The church entrances are also for escapes and we can’t have that kind of situation. So, I’ve recommended that the signs be taken down and for the area outside the church not to be designated for parking. The other issue which I raised was about the new pavements that have been laid in recent months. Some of them are made from shiny tiles which are very slippery when it rains or snows. They really need to sort those out across the district. I haven’t heard back about either of those issues. There’s no point in me raising issues about building churches because that is a city affair, not a district affair. Apart from the main meetings there are also opportunities to meet up with other members to get to know each other over a meal.

It is interesting to note that this City Two Committees leader felt that while the PPCC was not very effective for bringing about change, he recognised that the sessions provided a forum for making contacts and networking over meals. This is not the intended official purpose of the PPCC; however, religious specialists can utilise these unofficial contacts for the advantage of the churches in Huanghaicheng. We will see in Chapter Six how one pastor’s connections within the PPCC were instrumental in securing the return of Mashan Church when the RAB was not fully cooperating on the matter.

Other local state institutions

There are several other state departments which the City Two Committees and church leaders come into contact with. These include the Civil Affairs Bureau 民政局, the Land Bureau 土地局, the Culture Bureau 文化局 and the Department of Fire Safety 消防部门. The Civil Affairs Bureau is responsible for dealing with the registration process of religious organisations¹¹⁴ (as “social groups” 社会团体) and is involved in the distribution of licenses for Religious Activities Venues. The Land Bureau is involved with the sales or

¹¹⁴ See the “Implementation Measures for Managing the Registration of Religious Social Organisations” 宗教社会团体登记管理实施办法 (State Council, 1991) and “Regulations on the Registration and Management of Social Organisations” 社会团体登记管理条例 (State Council, 1998).

allocation of land for building religious sites as we shall see in later chapters. Church leaders claimed that they never dealt with these Bureaus themselves, but that RAB/RAS personnel negotiated the necessary procedures with these bureaus on behalf of churches. The Culture Bureau (at the district and city levels) is involved with the registration and management of businesses which sell or produce literature. However, this topic is beyond the scope of this dissertation. The Department of Fire and Safety is responsible for making checks on Religious Activities Venues but according to participants, personnel rarely made visits to churches in Huanghaicheng.

Protestant organisations

The highest official Protestant umbrella organisation in Huanghaicheng is the City Two Committees 市两会. The Huanghaicheng City Two Committees is comprised of the City Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee 三自爱国运动委员会 (TSPM) and the City Christian Council 基督教协会 (CC). The City Two Committees helps to represent the Three-Self churches, meeting-points and small-groups in Huanghaicheng in relation to the local state. The official roles of the Two Committees are to bring Protestants into one organisation, to promote CPC policies, to seek to prevent foreign (religious) “infiltration” 渗透, to help train church leaders and to secure the return of church property (Huanghaicheng RAB, undated). Central CPC policy Documents 19 and 6 emphasise the role of religious organisations in supporting the leadership of the CPC and Socialism. Older versions of the National Two Committees Church Order also contained such clauses, but the latest version does not. Officially, the roles of the TSPM Committee and the Christian Council are different. In practice, however, in most areas, similar positions in both organisations are held by the same people, and Huanghaicheng is no exception.

In the 1980s, several church leaders were selected for the National TSPM Committee but there have been no candidates in Huanghaicheng since that time, meaning that the Three-Self Protestant community has no direct formal ties to the TSPM at the national level. Several senior religious specialists have connections with leaders in the National Two Committees. Pastor Zheng serves on the Provincial TSPM Committee, allowing him to network with provincial-level Two Committees members. We shall see the benefits of such relationships in Chapter Seven. Generally, senior church leaders in each district fill the positions in these two levels of the Two Committees, though there are exceptions which we will look at below. While there may be differences of opinion and a variety of

approaches to church management, these church leaders all share the identity of being Protestants committed to the expansion of the church.

An important feature of the structure of the Two Committees is that higher-level committees supervise lower-level District TSPM Committees 区三自爱国会. Officially, there should be District TSPM Committees in each district which has a registered church. However, in Huanghaicheng there are only District TSPM Committees in Jinghai and Xicheng. The Jinghai TSPM Committee was established in 2007 for two reasons: firstly, because the RAS Section Chief got tired of Protestants from unregistered groups going to him to ask him to solve their disputes; secondly, because the local Three-Self Protestants needed a bank account in order to save money for a new church building and the only name under which such an account could legally be opened was the TSPM. Jinping has no District TSPM Committee and the churches there are currently in direct contact with the City Two Committees. There is no formal Protestant organisation in Moushan although the Baisong Church Order refers to a “District Two Committees” 区两会.¹¹⁵ This situation has received tacit approval from the District RAS.

As we shall see, however, church leaders can simultaneously hold positions in a District TSPM Committee and the City Two Committees. For example, Pastor Liu simultaneously holds positions on the City Two Committees as well as a position within the Moushan district TSPM Committee equivalent. This feature of the Two Committees structure embeds the church leaders into the TSPM while allowing them to build relationships at different levels of the church-management structure and creates opportunities for the building of informal channels through which symbolic and material resources can flow, such as influence and legitimation. We will elaborate on this theme in the next four chapters.

Some scholars have argued that “TSPM/CC committees appear to be run independently by Protestants while secretly appointed Party members dominate actual organisational decisions” (Vala, 2008, 155). There is also the popular conception that leaders for the Two Committees are chosen by the CPC (Vala, 2008, 151). From what I could gather, in Huanghaicheng, the RAB did have to approve candidates for seminary and the Two Committees, but this was more of a rubber-stamping process as we shall see in Chapter Six. These proposals are also approved by the UFWD. Also, all senior church leaders in Huanghaicheng will end up on the District TSPM Committee or the City Two

¹¹⁵ Some Huanghaicheng church documents refer to “District Two Committees” 区两会 but no district currently has a Christian Council. See Appendix for an example.

Committees. A member of the City Two Committees described the “election” process in this way:

Elections in China are fairly similar across the board. The way we do things now are a result of how things were done after 1949, the way the government did things back then. There have been a few small changes since then but it’s really just the same. First, you hold a meeting of representatives. Then you choose some members 委员. These members then choose a standing committee 常委. Of course, in the City Two Committees we will try to choose who we think is most capable. We vote by raising hands 举手. We haven’t yet moved towards paper votes 投票. I suppose the RAB should confirm the candidates for the City Two Committees especially their political background.

As well as these officially-recognised committee members, there are also people who help out with Two Committees work because of their particular skills. They are chosen by existing members of the City Two Committees who recognise believers with skills useful to the work of the Two Committees. For example, pastors and other church leaders in Huanghaicheng rejected the idea that committee members were simply chosen by the CPC. In Huanghaicheng, all members of the City Two Committees and the district are Protestants and there were no suspicions from church leaders that any members of the City Two Committees are CPC members.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has analysed in detail what we mean by the local state actors involved in the management of Three-Self churches in church-state interactions at the grassroots. Our analysis of these different actors allows us to see the state not as a monolithic entity but as a range of institutions. We have analysed how the churches and religious specialists are embedded in the political system as well as the symbiotic nature of the relationship between the Three-Self churches and the RAB. Importantly, this analysis has revealed the nature of these church and local state institution interactions and we have seen how personal relationships play an important part in these interactions. We have also argued that these relationships provide opportunities for the Three-Self churches in a variety of important ways. In the next part of the dissertation (Chapters Six to Nine) we will look at a series of case studies which demonstrate how these relationships aid the expansion of the Three-Self churches in Huanghaicheng.

Chapter Six

Symbiosis and the Institutional Expansion of

Huanghaicheng's Three-Self Churches

INTRODUCTION

The symbiosis between the RAB/RAS and the embeddedness of the Three-Self churches in other state organs as detailed in Chapter Five benefit the Three-Self churches in specific and practical ways. In this chapter and the next we will examine in detail through a range of case studies the modes of interaction between the Three-Self churches and the RAB/RAS and the integration which takes the form of informal structures and channels resulting from these symbiotic interactions. We will also examine how the Three-Self churches' embeddedness in other state institutions provides resources and opportunities for the expansion of the churches, such as choice over seminary candidate selection and the legitimation of clergy who do not meet official criteria.

Seminary entrance negotiation

We elaborated in the last chapter how Three-Self religious specialists seek to play down their connections with the wider Protestant community and to keep a low profile in terms of religious activities in which they engage. As a result of this, the expectations of the Three-Self churches appear modest yet they do engage in activities which the state would not expect. In this case study we see the leadership of Baisong church negotiating geographical boundary restrictions laid down by the local state. The formation of a new Technology Zone 高新区 in Moushan meant that the TSPM needed a religious specialist in the new Zone. While it is the role of the RAS to vet seminary candidates, Pastor Liu's relationship with the RAS Section Chief Gao, meant that Pastor Liu, himself was able to take the initiative with the selection of candidates, thus effectively leaching authority from the state by carrying out state duties in such a way as to benefit the church and even harm the state. An important part of the challenge in having a new Zone was ensuring that

Pastor Liu's chosen candidate would enter seminary. We will see in this analysis that Pastor Liu utilises the symbiosis between Baisong Church and the state to negotiate these state-defined geographical boundary restrictions. He also utilises relationships required for seminary entrance which extend well beyond Moushan and the City Two Committees as we shall see in this case study, revealing the extensive networks that are involved in the Three-Self churches.

In his work, Pastor Liu emphasises the training and development 培养 of younger leaders and argues that a younger generation of leaders in the church will be able to adapt to changes in society at large and respond in more meaningful ways than the older generation. As the most senior church leader in Moushan, Pastor Liu is responsible for making applications for Protestant believers to receive further training in seminary courses or for younger believers to undertake a three-year undergraduate theology degree or postgraduate theological training. According to official protocol, it is the responsibility of the RAS to vet all applicants for their background, especially in relation to political issues and criminal activity. However, the symbiosis between Baisong Church and the district RAS has resulted in the creation of informal procedures which do not follow these official protocols. Pastor Liu relates what happens in practice:

And then there're those students who want to take the examination to get into seminary. We recommend the students, he [Section Chief Gao] stamps [the application]. But in order to do the political review, he's supposed to do an investigation 调查 – he's supposed to go into every relevant village¹¹⁶ to investigate, to look into their background, to see if there is any questionable history or whatever, to look into their character, their morals, so that he can understand them and write a report to send up to his superiors [in the City RAB]. This goes to the City Two Committees, the provincial Two Committees or the city government or the provincial government or they even send it on to the seminary 神学院. But he doesn't write it, he gets me to write it for him.

While this may simply be delegation of tasks, the benefits to Pastor Liu and the Three-Self church are obvious. This also has obvious repercussions for the degree of control which the state exercises over the selection and training of future church leadership and reveals that the Three-Self church is able to syphon off state authority for its own gain. All those who have received seminary training under Pastor Liu's watch seem to be sincere believers who come across as being committed to the spread of the gospel and the growth of the church. Because of some of the activities they are involved in, it would appear that their first loyalty is to Pastor Liu and Baisong Church rather than to the

¹¹⁶ The term "villages" 村 here is a catch-all term for the area where someone was born and grew up. The "villages" in the city are not villages in the technical administrative sense.

dictates of the local state. During my time in Huanghaicheng, I encountered a clear example of how Pastor Liu utilises these informal procedures to arrange the entrance into seminary of a believer in the Baisong Church whose background does not meet official state standards for seminary entrance.

On the week of the Dragon Boat Festival 端午节, I received a phone call from Sister Qing, Pastor Liu’s wife, inviting me to come for lunch with a few brothers and sisters to celebrate the festival. Her son and daughter-in-law were also coming and I saw it as another opportunity to chat and ask questions. When I arrived, there was the usual group of church workers 同工 from the church as well as Pastor Liu’s son and daughter-in-law. None of the younger men were there, which was unusual. I was surprised that Brother Zhen, a man in his early twenties who had just taken the entrance exam for seminary in 2010 was not present, and neither was an even younger man who was planning to take the exam for seminary the following year.

Brother Zhen was very much his own man. He had his hair dyed red with a permanent. He had his own van and spent a great deal of his time playing online computer games which he used as a vehicle for proselytising: he arranged for younger preachers to speak to his online team members about the Protestant message. When I first met him he was studying hard for the entrance exam but he found the English-language part of the exam particularly difficult and when I saw him I often answered his questions. In this way I got to know him quite well and in the summer months we spent time with some of the other young men from Baisong Church sea fishing. We sometimes had barbecues on the beach.

Brother Zhen had told me how he had “left God” 离开神 for some time and stopped attending church in his mid-teenage years. He became a “hooligan” 混混 and had run-ins with the police. He then had a re-conversion experience and made the decision to serve 服饰 in the church. Brother Zhen talked to Pastor Liu about his plans and how he felt “touched” 感动 by God. He spent increasing amounts of time with Pastor Liu, Pastor Liu’s wife and the elders asking questions and seeking direction from them. He sometimes practised preaching at the Friday morning meeting. He helped out with the children’s work and was always giving lifts to people in the church and running errands for Pastor Liu and sometimes Pastor Zheng. Always on the lookout for new leaders, Pastor Liu encouraged Brother Zhen to think about seminary training so that he could be effective in the church. Pastor Liu also utilised his relationship with the RAS to fast-track Brother Zhen’s vetting for seminary.

If the RAS had taken on the responsibility for thoroughly investigating Brother Zhen's past, it is highly likely that his application would have been rejected because of his trouble with the police. His application, drafted entirely by Pastor Liu, was successful and he had enrolled to take the seminary entrance examination.

In the spring of 2010, Pastor Liu got word that a section of the district would be designated the Technology Zone that we mentioned above. The announcement had not yet been made officially but it was a timely piece of information. Although Brother Zhen's mother was active in Baisong Church and had studied music for several months in seminary, there was no-one in the new Technology Zone who was eligible to take on the work of the church in that area. Because it would effectively be a new district, Pastor Liu and the other trained preachers would not have the right to be heavily involved in a church in a different district. Brother Zhen's application for seminary suddenly became even more important.

As we were sitting chatting in the courtyard of Baisong Church on that Dragon Boat Festival day, a car pulled up and the City Two Committee's number two in charge, Assistant Pastor He, got out along with two other men that I did not recognise. They were followed by Deacon Xun from Mashan Church. Welcomes and greetings followed and it became apparent that Pastor Liu and the others from Baisong Church did not know the two visitors either. They were pastors from the Provincial Two Committees and were spending a few days visiting Huanghaicheng's churches. When Pastor Liu was contacted by Assistant Pastor He about the fact that these pastors were in town, Pastor Liu sent an invitation and insisted that they come to Baisong Church for lunch. Perhaps because I had become fairly familiar to those from Baisong Church by that stage, I drew very little attention during this special visit. I was introduced to the pastors as a student researching the church in Huanghaicheng and very little else was said. It was eye-opening to sit and watch and listen to the pastors from the Provincial Two Committees and the church leaders from Huanghaicheng talk and interact.

I had no idea until we went for lunch what the purpose in Pastor Liu's invitation actually was. There was the usual back-and-forth refusals and invitations over the seating arrangements which had to be done according to local social "etiquette" 规矩 which determined who the most honourable guests were. Pastor Liu served as the main host with Assistant Pastor He as the second host. There was then a long discussion over what people would drink and how much. Pastor Liu, who has a natural reaction to even tiny amounts of alcohol made comments such as, "This rice wine 黄酒 is like a soft drink it's

so weak.” He poured full glasses for the Provincial Two Committees pastors. A good lunch was laid on of countryside-style cuisine 农家饭 and Pastor Liu made comments about the lack of food and its poor quality, again according to local etiquette rules for a good host.

Pastor Liu prayed before the beginning of the meal and then he and Assistant Pastor He took the lead with toasting. Although there was some encouragement to drink there was a distinct lack of the usual “forced drinking” 灌酒 that I had experienced on many occasions in Huanghaicheng when with locals not associated with the church. In contrast, this meal was fairly pressure-free. The pre-toast speeches started with very self-deprecating talk: “Our place is just a small place and we didn’t really have time to prepare a proper meal. Please don’t take this to heart.” This was the first time I had seen Assistant Pastor He in such a setting and his pre-toast speeches were even more self-deprecating than Pastor Liu’s. He talked about their “unimportant work” and the need for the Provincial Two Committees to “supervise them better” 多监督, “give support” 支持 and to come to Huanghaicheng to “check up on the work” 检查工作 more often. He also talked about the small size of Huanghaicheng and the lack of importance in the work there.

The dishes kept coming. The Provincial Two Committees pastors protested and said that we would not be able to finish all the food but Pastor Liu brushed these comments off by explaining that if there were no restrictions on fishing at that time of year then there would be a proper feast of seafood laid on. Everyone made toasts with the provincial Two Committees pastors and I was particularly impressed with the adeptness of Deacon Xun and his ability to toast.¹¹⁷ He was clearly experienced and comfortable in situations like these and he kept the toasts going to help relax the guests and make them feel welcome.

I was still waiting for the real purpose of the banquet to be revealed when towards the end of the toasting Pastor Liu asked the provincial Two Committees pastors to “help” 帮忙 them. He explained,

One of our seminary students 神学生 has just taken the seminary entrance exam but we need your help. If he doesn’t make the grade then we are in some trouble. You see, our district has just made a new High Tech Zone and he’s the only suitable brother in that Zone [to lead the church]. If he doesn’t get into seminary then there won’t be any of our people 没有我们的人了 there. There will be a vacancy.

¹¹⁷ Deacon Xun had previously worked in business and was very skilled in the art of hospitality and making relationships. He was chosen to help with the work of the City Two Committees because of these skills.

The Provincial Two Committees pastors did not seem in any way surprised by Pastor Liu's appeal and this short but pointed request for help was followed by some "Okay, okay, okay" 好, 好, 好 and more friendly toasts. After lunch we retired once again to the office for more tea for a short time where we chatted about various church issues. Assistant Pastor He then announced that they had to go back to the city centre. This was followed by the ritual insistence to stay longer but after a bit of back and forth, the Provincial Two Committees pastors left with their main hosts. Pastor Liu seemed completely happy with the whole event.

The grades for the seminary entrance exam were to come out officially in August and this was a topic which came up in conversation with Brother Zhen. He felt that he had done sufficiently well in some parts of the paper to pass but felt that the English section was likely to trip him up. In July, he got a phone call from a member of staff at the seminary to tell him that he had passed the test and would be starting at the end of August. This was several weeks before any formal announcements concerning grades were made. When the official letter of acceptance arrived in mid-August, a celebratory meal was arranged at Baisong Church. Before I left Huanghaicheng, Brother Zhen had already made his way to seminary to matriculate and start classes.

There are clearly a range of partners in these interactions. We see the importance of the relationship between the City Two Committees pastors and the Provincial Two Committees pastors (and their subsequent connections within the seminary), which highlights the significance of the embedded relationship of the TSPM structure. It is hardly surprising that the Two Committees from different levels would seek to help each other in many aspects of church management but what is surprising is that they could use their connections to facilitate a potential student entering seminary. As we have already seen there have been ongoing interactions between Huanghaicheng's and the provincial-level Two Committees since the 1980s. The Provincial Two Committees pastors can increase support for their own committees by showing support for the Huanghaicheng pastors. In return, Huanghaicheng secures a place for one of its seminary applicants. These interactions undoubtedly fall outside the established channels for seminary entrance. Relationships have been enhanced between the partners and new alliances have been formed which may be beneficial to the partners in the future.

This case study reveals the significance of the symbiosis between the Three-Self churches and the RAB by analysing the specific interactions of Baisong Church and the Moushan RAS. These interactions have resulted in the establishment of unofficial procedures

which facilitate Baisong Church leaching a degree of authority from the RAS in terms of seminary student selection and examination. The embedded nature of the TSPM structures at different levels also comes into play in this case study. The networks and interactions between Baisong Church and the City and Provincial Two Committees also create channels for resources useful to Baisong Church. It is also in the interest of the City and Provincial Two Committees to have trained church workers in every administrative area. Although we can not be sure as to whether or not Brother Zhen would have passed the test and entered seminary without the help of Pastor Liu or the Two Committees, it is significant that Pastor Liu was able to utilise his connections with the City Two Committees in order to ensure Brother Zhen's seminary place.

Baisong Church and the Religious Affairs Section

We see here an important aspect of the integration resulting from the symbiosis between Huanghaicheng's Three-Self churches and the RAB. We have seen the way in which Pastor Liu carries out his own investigation of potential seminary candidates, giving him and the rest of the leadership of Baisong Church a greater degree of control in whom they recommend and put forward for the seminary entrance exam. Here, we will examine this integration which takes the form of unofficial procedures for report writing and other aspects of Religious Affairs work which church leaders sometimes undertake. We will primarily describe and discuss Pastor Liu's relationship to the Religious Affairs personnel and will draw on accounts by Pastor Liu, himself, as well as others in leadership positions in Baisong Church.

As we saw in Chapter Four, the Moushan Religious Affairs work for Protestantism is overseen by Section Chief Gao who belongs to the Documents Section. We will look in this section at several aspects of the interaction between the Baisong congregation leaders and Section Chief Gao. Contact between the church leadership and Section Chief Gao is predominantly conducted by Pastor Liu although he seems to be making an active effort to train up the next people to replace him, and now, at times, either of Baisong's two elders may accompany him on visits to the Section Chief's office. Almost all interaction between the church leadership and the Section Chief takes place in his office. He seldom visits the church despite the fact that part of his job description is to visit the churches and meeting points in his district on a regular basis.

There are various reasons why Pastor Liu may need to pay a visit to the Section Chief; for example, Liu may go to collect documents 文件 that have been handed down through the levels of the RAB, the contents of which are supposed to be communicated to believers in churches and meeting points. Pastor Liu may also be called to the office to read over reports related to Protestantism in the district which are to be sent back up to the RAB or handed on to some other state department or section in the district or above. Because training new leaders is central to Pastor Liu's mission, making applications for seminary study for local Protestants is another reason why Pastor Liu will visit the RAS, as we saw above.

The manner in which much of this work is carried out, however, differs from official protocol. When requests for information and reports on Protestantism come down the state system from above it should be the responsibility of the RAS to draft a document, and then, if it is appropriate, to ask Pastor Liu to read over it and make any comments that he feels are necessary. In this way, the state gathers information and reports from within its own apparatus. In practice, this is very different from what happens. Pastor Liu describes the actual process in his own words:

When the government needs some kind of materials 材料 or the province [provincial government] needs some materials, or when the city [government] request [materials], or when the city Religious Affairs Bureau request [materials]... it's not supposed to be us who write the information 资料, it should be them who write it but he asks us to write it. Think about that relationship 关系. It should be him who writes a political review 政治审查 but he asks me to write it for him and then all he needs to do is stamp it 盖个章. I suppose, according to logic, that this is really a question of violating principles. Political review is his responsibility but he trusts me and asks me to write it for him. I go to the city Religious Affairs and copy the material, and see how everyone else in the city municipality 县市区 has written it, then I head back home and have a think about the wider local situation and then I write one for him, and then all he needs to do is stamp it.

This certainly reveals a degree of trust in the relationship. A similar account was given by one of Baisong Church's elders:

I think he [Section Chief Gao] really trusts us. For example, when the Religious Affairs Bureau request some materials that he needs to write, he should write it and then show it to us to see whether or not we have any comments to make about it. But he doesn't do it that way. He asks us to write it and then looks at it to see if it's okay or not. He really trusts our Pastor Liu. He asks Pastor Liu to write it.

Furthermore, Pastor Liu claims that this way of doing things is not unknown to the Religious Affairs Bureau at higher levels:

It's like last time when we had to fill in a form – it should have been him [Section Chief Gao] who filled it in. But he asked me to do it. After I had filled it in I took it down to the City Religious Affairs office. They said, “This isn't filled in properly, take it back to him.” I said, “This wasn't my job in the first place, I helped him fill it in.” So, they know [what's going on].

Because Pastor Liu believes that he has the space to research and draft the reports himself, he is able to frame and portray the situation relating to Protestantism in his local district in ways that may benefit him or the church more than an officially-drafted document. He is, for example, able to avoid mentioning activities or events that may raise objections from officials at higher levels. In addition, because he copies his report template from other districts, he is able to learn something of what the Religious Affairs Bureau regards as acceptable practice, and he is able to learn how to frame information in the rhetoric of the state. The Section Chief may also perceive that he benefits from this approach to fact-finding and report writing. He may believe that Pastor Liu might supply details of events or activities to which he, personally, does not have access to or knowledge of. Value is placed on insider knowledge.

Furthermore, Section Chief Gao might also regard this as a time-saving exercise on his part. There may be other aspects of his Religious Affairs work which require more attention, such as the management of unregistered groups. Or, there may be other aspects of his job description which he regards as more important or which provide more opportunities for rewards and promotion, or even graft. At the end of the day, however, it would seem evident that there is a degree of trust on the part of the Section Chief.

However, Pastor Liu does not perceive the relationship in quite this way:

This illustrates that we cooperate 配合 well in our work. He cooperates with our work, so we should cooperate with theirs. We cooperate with his work in order to cooperate with God's work. The exchanges we make in all of this pay off. It's all about doing God's work... He doesn't want to manage us but he has no option since he is responsible for this work. He does it for the sake of the administration of the state and the management of the government 政府管理... They all take responsibility for their duties. So, we have to cooperate with his [Section Chief Gao] work. It's okay as long as he doesn't interfere 干涉 with our faith or with the administration of our church. If he asks us to help out a little then we are willing 甘心乐意 to do it.

Pastor Liu argues that the Section Chief knows that he is violating procedure but is willing to do so since he recognises the good that the church does: “He recognises that in society our religion is good and has many uses. He recognises this. If he didn't recognise us in this way, then how could he dare do such a thing as violate these principles?”

Pastor Liu perceives state regulation as part of the political environment in China and one of the points which he often made to me and to those he was involved in training was the need for Protestants to understand the political context. It was only in understanding the political context, he claimed, that Protestants could be effective in spreading the gospel and manage the relationship with the state well. He sees his relationship with the RAS as working well because of the good character of the Section Chief and the Bureau Chief, the Section Chief's superior in the City RAB: "The two chiefs are really good. The section chief from the district government once adopted two orphans. The other one, from the City RAB, ... his aunt and his mother both believe. He knows a lot of what we believe..." Pastor Liu also sees a change in policy in recent years which has radically changed relations with the Religious Affairs personnel:

A few years back if you wanted somewhere to meet, he wouldn't give it to you; he wouldn't support you. If you told him the place you were meeting wasn't large enough for everyone he still wouldn't approve a new place. The policy 政策 has changed. It has relaxed 放宽. That [Religious Affairs] Bureau Chief 处长 has been there ten years. The one before him, he was all about the old policy and he wasn't a good person. This problem, it's partly to do with policy and partly to do with personality. What he thinks about you is also important. The person is important. Sometimes the policy is the same but some work it out to the left, some to the right. The way of working is not the same. If the person's character 人品 is good, he'll use just means in dealing with you but if his character isn't good he'll use all the most evil 邪恶 means possible.

While there are formal measures for limiting the time cadres spend in any one post in Religious Affairs, the current RAB chief in Huanghaicheng has been there ten years, as Pastor Liu tells us. This is advantageous to the Three-Self leaders since they have been able to establish an effective relationship with him. He said that without this relationship, it is hard for officials to understand and "is not good for the work [of the church]" 不利于我们的工作. Pastor Liu believes that he understands the RAB officials whom he comes into contact with very well: "I've been dealing with them for twenty years and although I don't think I completely understand them, I'm not far off." The leadership at Baisong Church is active in seeking to build the relationship with the RAS and sometimes, they exchange gifts as a means to show the importance of the relationship. Also, in the quote above, we see that Pastor Liu also recognises the significance of how officials interpret policy for the church and its activity.

The relationship between Baisong Church, and in particular, Pastor Liu and the RAS is important for the existence of Baisong Church. The RAS is the local institution with the power to issue the necessary licenses which allow Baisong Church to meet and function

openly and without fear of interference from the PSB. At the same time, the unofficial procedures which have been established as a result of this relationship are also of great significance for the church and its expansion. For example, Baisong has been able to expand the numbers of leaders in training. The RAS also benefits from being able to delegate procedures which are time-consuming for officials.

Consequently, Pastor Liu has learned to mimic the style and content of documents fit for state consumption. This was a common theme in talking with church leaders and members of the City Two Committees who distinguished clearly between language that they would use and language for the consumption of state personnel. One senior member of the City Two Committees stated quite clearly that he felt the slogan “love country, love religion” 爱国爱教 was the product of a particular era and was totally inappropriate for use today. However, he still used this slogan in reports written for the RAB. Pastor Liu in his writing of reports is sometimes able to frame the required information to his advantage; for example, by playing down numbers of converts or the frequency of church activities.

In this case study we have seen how the symbiotic relationship between Baisong Church and the RAS has facilitated the creation of new unofficial procedures which helps to benefit the work of both Pastor Liu and the Baisong congregation. Due to the busy schedule of the RAS Section Chief and the level of trust between Section Chief Gao and Pastor Liu, Liu is given opportunities to draft reports which he does to the advantage of the church.

Pastor Mou and Xicheng Church

This case study demonstrates the importance of the approach taken by church leaders to deal with local officials while revealing the effects of wider political processes on the interactions between Protestants and the local state. We will see that while the local state is wary of church leaders who are educated outside of the TSPM system, the City Two Committees has a great deal of power in legitimising those who do not fit into the TSPM mould. Further, the local Religious Affairs officials are prepared to negotiate official procedure to avoid conflict which may alienate sections of the Protestant community in Huanghaicheng. It also highlights the importance of social capital for Protestants whose legitimacy with regards to the local state is unclear. The lack of clarity in the status of this church and its uncertain future made it very difficult to study. However, from the data

that my fieldwork generated I am confident that we can build up a picture of the dynamics of Pastor Mou's relations with local state institutions.

I heard about this particular church, 'Xicheng District Church' several months into my fieldwork. I had not seen any details about it on flyers and it had not come up in any conversations until I was conducting an interview and Preacher Shen told me that there were three Three-Self churches in Xicheng, not two. She said that she had little contact but that it was run by a Korean minority pastor who had studied overseas. She was unable to pass on contact details but a brother from Xicheng Church put me in contact with Pastor Mou and we arranged for me to attend a Sunday worship meeting. Pastor Mou met me at the bus stop on his moped and led me to the building where his church met. Because the Sunday meeting was led by Pastor Mou and many people were seeking to talk to him after the meeting ended, we met up several days later and I interviewed him.

One of the first things he told me was "As I build up 建立 this church I believe that this is God's grace. It's not me who is establishing this church but God is here using me. From a human perspective it's me who is here establishing the church but this is God's work. I fully believe this." There are several factors which were instrumental in Pastor Mou deciding to set up this church. Pastor Mou had been a leader in several churches in his native Northeast, starting in the early 1990s. After taking part in several different TSPM training programmes and after several years of working, he had decided he needed better training and from 1998 through 1999 started to make clear plans to do so. As a speaker of Korean and with contacts amongst the South Korean community in the Northeast, he met visiting pastors and felt that their knowledge of theology was much higher than his.

In order to make a decision on his future, Mou fasted (from food) for twenty days. He said to God "If you want me to continue working [in the church] then you'll have to open a way for me to study. If you don't open a way for me to study then I'll go into business and make money so that I can give and help people. You have to open up the way." He felt that God accepted his request on the seventeenth day of the fast. After he ended his fast, Mou began to prepare to go to South Korea with his wife. They borrowed money from family and friends and went to South Korea. On arriving, they both worked for three years to pay back the money they had borrowed, which amounted to about 180,000 *yuan*. During this time, Mou visited different seminaries and took part in various training classes but it took him some time to find a seminary that taught what he wanted to learn, as he put it, "the Bible." Mou found the seminary he was looking for and was accepted on

a three-year Master’s degree with a full scholarship. His wife took on work in the student canteen (which had a low salary).

On graduation, he moved with his family to Huanghaicheng in early 2007 because he had contacts there. He made contact with the City Two Committees and Xicheng District TSPM Committee and visited all the other churches in the district, both the Three-Self churches and all the unregistered congregations. He was knowledgeable about all the congregations in the district and the leaders of these congregations so this clearly demonstrates that he had taken time to meet and talk with them.

After spending a short time in Yongding Church (where he also preached on at least one occasion), Mou came to the conclusion that all were all right as far as they went but lacked systematic teaching and clear planning. He also disliked the fact that trained clergy were often asked to preach in different churches which he saw as poor pastoral practice and led church workers to have no sense of responsibility for their work.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, Mou also said that all he wanted to teach was the Bible without anything else added to it, though he found it hard to explain exactly what he meant by this. This thinking was clearly influenced by his South Korean Presbyterian 长老会 training. He established the Xicheng District Church with the purpose of following the command of Jesus in Matthew 28 to “make disciples,” something which he felt was not happening to a great enough degree in the other congregations in the district.

He sought the permission of the District TSPM Committee by speaking to Elder Lan, the chairperson 会长. The plan was welcomed by Elder Lan who said that it was always “a good thing to start a church which is God’s home” 开辟神的家是好事. Before the first Sunday meeting, Mou did not make contact with the RAS in the district, something which he admits was an “oversight” 失误 on his part. Xicheng District Church had their first Sunday worship meeting in June of 2007 with just a few people.

The next week, the director of the district RAS called Mou and asked him to come to his office, which Mou proceeded to do. The director asked some questions about Pastor Mou and his meeting. The director said that if the TSPM Committee approved of him setting up a congregation, then he would be allowed to open a formal meeting point. He contacted Elder Lan again and the formal meeting point was established. Mou said that “If it wasn’t for God’s grace, if it wasn’t for support from various quarters and if it wasn’t

¹¹⁸ Because of the lack of trained religious specialists, preachers and other church leaders often had to preach in different churches and meeting points.

for the government's permission, then the congregation would not have continued until today." Several months later, Pastor Mou became the vice-chairperson 副会长 of the District TSPM Committee. Within a year the congregation had moved to a different location in the same area and had ninety regular members.

Xicheng District Church has similar activities to the Three-Self churches in Huanghaicheng: the main worship meetings on a Sunday morning and Sunday evening. There is teaching on Tuesdays and Wednesdays which is divided into levels so that people can keep learning. The church prayer meeting is on a Friday and there are also early prayers every morning. On Saturdays, there is church worker's training. Xicheng District Church also celebrates Christmas and Easter. Pastor Mou conducts baptisms and leads communion. The congregation also has various social welfare projects. They regularly visit orphanages and nursing homes in the district to distribute food and clothing. Pastor Mou and some of the lay believers went together with the RAS to the villages outside the city to deliver food and clothing to the disabled and those in poverty. As a congregation they have also made several donations 募捐 each year to projects in Yunnan and Guizhou. These activities help to emphasise the usefulness of the congregation to the local state, especially when the RAS is able to accompany such projects.

Pastor Mou made a point of establishing good relations with those involved with the management of religion in the district. He met with Religious Affairs officials over lunch to discuss his work with the congregation he had established. It would seem that a motivating factor in these meetings was to seek to understand how the Religious Affairs officials saw the Protestant community. He also made contacts in the City Two Committees because of his position on the Xicheng District TSPM Committee. His congregation had grown to about ninety when he approached the TSPM Committee about 'upgrading' his meeting license to that of a church 堂. This was necessary because meeting licenses have an expiry date and must either be renewed or upgraded before they expire. The application was made with the consent of the District TSPM Committee.

However, with just several days to go before the original meeting point license expired, Pastor Mou and Elder Lan ran into difficulties. Mou refused to accept that after the meeting point became a church, Three-Self pastors and elders would preach on a regular basis at Xicheng District Church. Mou maintains that he had refused this point from the beginning but Elder Lan insists that Mou had not made any objections until several days before the original meeting license expired and the new church license would be issued.

Neither Lan nor Mou would compromise on the issue and the expiry date came and went and no new license was issued.

While the issue of church management was the issue which seemed to have caused the rift, both Pastor Mou and Elder Lan have very different approaches to Protestantism which affected their approach to church governance. Pastor Mou had a clearly-defined “church order”¹¹⁹ 会则 adopted from the Presbyterian Church in South Korea. Each church leader was given a copy and expected to follow them to avoid confusion over the purpose of the church.

Mou was unable to secure a meeting license or get the original one renewed so his church remains in an ambiguous situation. He initially tried to persuade Pastor Zheng of the City Two Committees to intervene and help with the situation but he was unwilling to overstep Elder Lan's decision and was arguably in a difficult position since registered churches are expected to accept some degree of oversight from the TSPM although from what I could ascertain from the churches in Huanghaicheng, they had a fair amount of autonomy.

What is of most interest is the way in which Mou has negotiated for the tacit recognition of his congregation which continues to grow. Mou admits that his theology degree and ordination overseas are “sensitive” 敏感 in the eyes of the local state. After realising that Pastor Zheng would not intervene (or, perhaps, could not intervene) he met officials from the Religious Affairs and from the UFWD at both district and city levels (in their offices). Mou was also able to spend time with these officials over meals and he told me that they were very understanding about his situation. In his words:

Our relationship is mutually complementary 互补互助; it's not one of opposition 对立. This is really because the Religious Affairs Bureau is an institution which implements religious policy whereas I'm the target of that policy. Unregistered congregations 家庭教会 probably have a confrontational relationship with Religious Affairs. There are different reasons why the unregistered churches have this confrontational relationship but I won't go into that here because it's complex. The relationship I have with the Religious Affairs Bureau isn't confrontational. It has policies to implement and I accept these policies.

Even Elder Lan seemed to admire the way in which Pastor Mou had managed to persuade the Religious Affairs officials that they could come to an arrangement. She said that the officials were very “humble” 谦卑 in his presence.

By the time I had left Huanghaicheng, the Religious Affairs officials had made an agreement with Mou that if he bought a building to serve as a permanent meeting place,

¹¹⁹ I was allowed to read this Church Order but Pastor Mou did not give me permission to discuss it in this thesis.

they would not shut his congregation down. This requirement fits in with the regulations on establishing a religious activities venue. Mou was able to do this using his own apartment as collateral, taking out a loan from the bank as well as gifts from the congregation and purchased the floor (about 200 square metres) of an office block for 700,000 *yuan*. This would give them enough room to carry on with their meetings and with added space to expand in the future. When I went to visit Pastor Mou before leaving Huanghaicheng, he told me:

We just see ourselves as a congregation called Xicheng District Church. So now, because the government hasn't registered us, we aren't even a meeting point. We're currently just a temporary meeting site 临时聚会场所. The government, United Front and PSB all know that this is a meeting site. This is a tacitly-approved 默认 meeting. We are trying our best and praying that the government will be able to approve our congregation quickly...

It will be interesting to see how this church develops and whether or not the congregation can negotiate a permanent Religious Activities Venue license.

This case study has revealed several interesting points. Firstly, the TSPM places limits and boundaries on its interactions, not just with the local state, but also with religious specialists and congregations. There are issues of trust in the relationships between religious specialists and congregations in the TSPM. Senior figures such as Elder Lan and Pastor Zheng, while sometimes willing to take significant risks in terms of activities in which they engage, are often not willing to interact closely with groups which can bring a great deal of risk to their relationship with the local state. Pastor Mou certainly came across to me as someone with his own ideas and when he was unwilling to negotiate on the issue of Three-Self clergy preaching in his church, Elder Lan perceived that Mou's group could possibly upset the relationships that had already been established in Xicheng. In addition, Pastor Mou was an individual with significant social capital in other parts of China and in South Korea and it would be relatively easy for him to make an exit if he ran into severe difficulties with the authorities. This factor, as it is with foreign missionaries, affects the dynamics of such relationships. It is clear from the analysis that he was not as embedded in the local state as other Three-Self leaders. The next case study reveals the extent to which the City Two Committees will go to provide legitimacy to a congregation which does not fulfil the official requirements for registration.

The legitimisation of Preacher Zhang and Enlin Church

We see here the blurred boundaries of what constitute the state categories of “church” and “meeting point.” This case study also reveals that the status of church workers is also a complex and poorly-delineated concept despite the fact that religious policy documents assume a fixed definition. We will see the importance of Religious Affairs and the City Two Committees in providing legitimisation for Preacher Zhang over and above the state categories of ‘preacher’s license’ 传道证 and ‘preacher’ 传道人. Furthermore, the case study demonstrates the importance of the relationship between the Religious Affairs personnel and their willingness to recognise and legitimate both preacher Zhang and his work in the Protestant community.¹²⁰

Preacher Zhang’s connection with Pastor Zheng of the Huanghaicheng City Two Committees dates back to Zhang’s conversion to Protestantism in the mid 1980s when he was baptised by Zheng as a minor (a point we will return to in Chapter Six). Although Zhang initially attended an unregistered church (what he terms a “house church” 家庭教会), he soon came into contact with Elder Chu who was converted to Protestantism in the early 1980s¹²¹ and who was involved with the TSPM from that time. Through his friendship with Elder Chu, Zhang also came into contact with another pastor, Pastor Xi, who was in the City Two Committees but who led a church in another township under Huanghaicheng’s administration. Zhang and Pastor Xi became close friends and Zhang regarded Xi as a mentor in his faith. Zhang moved into Xi’s church for a year where he studied the Bible with Pastor Xi. Zhang told me that he sat in the church office with Pastor Xi and read, studied the Bible and asked questions for hours every day; he had no other job and was supported by other believers at the time. It was this intense period of informal study that inspired Zhang to try to attend seminary.

However, because of restrictions on numbers, Zhang was unable to attend the provincial TSPM seminary that year. He decided to take matters into his own hands, and with the support of brothers from Xi’s church, he headed inland to another province which also had a TSPM seminary. Zhang began “auditing classes” 旁听 in the seminary because he had no way to matriculate formally. Zhang told me that even at the beginning and despite the fact that he was not a formal student, he read a theological book every day. After several months, his presence became an issue at the seminary, but one member of staff

¹²⁰ For a discussion on the legitimacy of Preacher Zhang in relation to ‘gospel’ leafleting, see McLeister (*forthcoming* 2012).

¹²¹ It was often recounted that Elder Chu had lived for quite some time under what the believers described as the influence of an “evil spirit” 邪灵 before his conversion.

was so impressed with his desire to learn managed to persuade the seminary to allow Zhang to matriculate formally. This is a key issue in that we see Zhang utilising his relationships. Zhang studied hard throughout his time at seminary and apart from reading a theological book every day, he also read the New Testament several times a term and the Old Testament once a term, demonstrating his desire to learn and his spiritual dedication.

On graduation, Zhang returned to Huanghaicheng to take up a position in Desheng Church as part of his probation 实习. Even although his entry into seminary had been somewhat unorthodox, Pastor Zheng welcomed Zhang as a promising future church leader. His initial year of probation seemed to be going well and he was liked by his colleagues and those who came to church meetings. However, after violating church principles in his personal life, Zhang was asked to resign. Pastor Zheng was extremely disappointed with the whole scenario but related to me that at the time there was nothing else they could do. The principles of the Protestant faith had to be upheld even though it was obvious Zheng and Zhang were close. As well as being asked to resign, Zhang lost his status as an officially-recognised preacher 传道人 and his preaching license 传道证 was revoked.

After leaving the Three-Self church in Huanghaicheng, Zhang went back to Jinghai (where he was originally from) and used his contacts to go into business and set up his own restaurant and ran barbecue stalls in the summer. However, he still had a desire to work in a church and reach his district with the Protestant message. He still had contact with Pastor Xi and his church congregation and, supported by the brothers and sisters in Xi's church, Zhang travelled around China for a year visiting Three-Self and unregistered churches. His contacts in Huanghaicheng and from his time in seminary allowed him to visit many different provinces and he made more extensive contacts as he travelled. He knows personally some of the biggest names in the unregistered or 'house church' scene. As well as learning how different churches were run and their different approaches to training and evangelism, Zhang also saw first-hand how both registered and unregistered congregations engaged with local state institutions. This experience has remained with him and continues to shape his own thinking and approach to how his church is managed today; for example, the small groups and training courses he has set up involve a large percentage of the congregation.

Preacher Zhang returned to Huanghaicheng with more determination to set up a church in his district. He had a dream which he took to be a vision from God and which he

interpreted as a call to start up a church 建立教会. In the dream he saw a Protestant on his knees facing the sea and crying to God. Zhang’s interpretation was that he was the man on the beach and that the sea represented blessing. Zhang, his wife and several close family members began to meet together to pray for the spiritual needs of the district. They soon discovered a small group of elderly ladies who were meeting together. They had already registered their small congregation and secured a meeting point license from the district Religious Affairs officer and were pleased at the thought of some young people joining them. Zhang immediately made the meeting place more noticeable by placing a sign outside the building which read “Protestant Congregation” 基督教会. This was soon brought to the attention of Department Chief Dong of the district Religious Affairs who told Zhang that he could not use someone else’s meeting point license for his growing congregation.¹²² He also requested that Zhang take down the sign for which permission had not been granted.¹²³ Zhang attempted a negotiation with Dong on two accounts. Firstly, he appealed to his close connections with Pastor Zheng (whom Dong had met) and, secondly, to his theology degree from a TSPM seminary. He said himself that because of these factors, the situation was “easy to resolve” 好办. The meeting license to this day remains in the hands of the original elderly lady to whom the license was granted with the understanding that Zhang is the main leader of the congregation. This marks the first stage in Zhang’s congregation receiving legitimisation from the City Two Committees and Religious Affairs.

As a brief aside, another self-legitimizing strategy employed by the churches was the manner in which leaders and lay believers alike sought to link congregations with churches in the past. For example, Pastor Zheng was the one who initially told me about Enlin as a “new church” but he said that the Enlin congregation could be connected to a church established in the missionary era because both churches are in the same district. There is still some physical evidence of the church established in the 1900s – a *pingfang* – but it is not recognisable as a church. The idea of a congregation with a long history helps to legitimise it more.

As the congregation grew rapidly, it had to look for larger premises. In 2008, the congregation had reached about 300 and was in need of somewhere substantially larger. Zhang located a factory which was made up of four separate units joined together. He

¹²² This is stipulated in the national (2005) Measures for the Examination, Approval and Registration of Religious Activities Venues 宗教活动场所设立审批和登记办法, Article 10 (Huanghaicheng RAB, 2007, 25).

¹²³ Again, the placing of “religious markers” 宗教标志物 outside is prohibited according to the PRMRA, Chapter Five, Article 33, Point 5 (Huanghaicheng RAB, 2007, 9).

managed to secure permission to rent it from the owner and knocked down all the dividing walls inside making one large hall for main meetings. Members of the congregation helped to do almost all of the renovation work, a project which Zhang says brought them closer together as a community. The initial shock of Zhang's departure from Desheng Church had worn off; Zhang and Pastor Zheng had more contact and Zheng was particularly impressed with Zhang's efforts in growing a church so rapidly, and by the fact that Zhang's congregation was overwhelmingly made up of young people. Zheng visited the new meeting point building after its renovation and decided to name the congregation demonstrating his support for Zhang and his work. It is very significant that Zheng named the congregation not just as a meeting point but as a church 堂 even although the congregation has a license as a meeting point.

While according to legislative definitions, the Enlin congregation is still a "meeting point," it has become recognised as a "church" simply because Pastor Zheng named it Enlin Church,¹²⁴ using characters from the local area which serve as a homophone for the biblical concept of "grace" or "blessing." Zheng arranged for a gift to be sent to Zhang and his congregation from the City Two Committees. The gift was the print of a biblical scene and on it are printed the words, "Congratulations to Enlin Church of Jinghai District in memory of the dedication of the church building, Huanghaicheng Protestant Two Committees."¹²⁵ This picture is placed in a prominent position on the back wall of the church, affirming both Pastor Zheng's and the City Two Committee's recognition of Zhang and the Enlin congregation as a church.

Other church leaders that I spoke to in Huanghaicheng had a great deal of respect for Preacher Zhang and many had visited Enlin Church to see how Zhang conducted meetings. His ability to preach and to lead young people was well-recognised. However, it was not just within the Huanghaicheng Protestant community that Zhang received recognition. A pastor from the Provincial Two Committees was there on several occasions when I was in attendance. Notably, this pastor preached on the day that Enlin Church conducted baptisms in the summer of 2010. Also of note is the fact that Enlin Church received a special plaque from the City Religious Affairs Bureau. The copper plaque engraved with red and black characters reads "Harmonious Religious Activities Site" 和谐宗教活动场所 and is issued by the Huanghaicheng Ethnic and Religious Affairs Bureau 黄海成民族宗教局. Despite the fact that Enlin Church did not meet half of the

¹²⁴ Enlin is a pseudonym for the church name. I have followed the same principle in using pseudonyms.

¹²⁵ 敬贺静海区恩临堂献堂纪念, 黄海成基督教两会敬贺.

criteria at the time, Dong insisted that Zhang accept it. It is surprising that Elder Chu's church (located in a village to the northwest of the district) did not receive the award since the church has a longer history and is run by an ordained church worker who is also head of the District TSPM Committee.

The significance of the symbiosis between the City Two Committees and the RAB is evident. The importance of personal ties in this symbiosis is particularly salient in the interactions between Preacher Zhang and Enlin Church and the RAS in Jinghai. The informal channels established through this symbiosis through which resources can flow are of heavy significance to the expansion of the TSPM in Huanghaicheng. Zhang clearly derives legitimisation for himself and Enlin Church from Dong despite his lack of official legitimacy. While Zhang's degree from a TSPM seminary as a form of cultural capital counts for something and demonstrates that he has received a "patriotic" education in order to prepare him for church work, his lack of an official preaching license counts against him since these are generally required for leaders of meeting points and churches. Zhang also derives further legitimisation from the plaque awarded by Religious Affairs. Dong clearly sees in Zhang someone that he is able to work with. While Zhang has been involved in activities which occupy a grey area with regards to local policy, he is clearly keen to work with Dong on many issues. It is clear that part of Dong's job description is to ensure that religious activity in his district remains within the registered domain as much as possible. Zhang's extensive ties throughout the registered and unregistered churches in Huanghaicheng make him a good ally. After all, there is the possibility that Zhang could retreat from the Three-Self and continue to work more clandestinely. Dong will be aware that Zhang is well respected amongst the young people in his church and there is no guarantee of what might happen were Zhang to move on from Enlin Church. It is clear that these informal channels have provided the means for the negotiation of categories laid down by the state and the TSPM at the national level. The categories of "church" and "preaching license" have been negotiated to benefit both Religious Affairs and the Three-Self church. A more formalised Enlin Church allows some form of containment of religious activity under Zhang which makes Dong's work easier. The TSPM also gathers resources and Zhang's abilities are clearly of benefit to the expansion of the Protestant church in Huanghaicheng.

We have seen in this case study the manner in which a local Religious Affairs official has been prepared to actively negotiate the terms on which a preacher without official status can set up a church. Preacher Zhang, by appealing to his theological degree from a TSPM seminary and relying on his connections within the City Two Committees to successfully

negotiate permission from the local Religious Affairs official to use a meeting license registered by someone else and to expand his work in the district, is facilitating the mission of the Three-Self church in Huanghaicheng. We can also see the different political processes which Dong himself has to negotiate in order to fulfil his job description. He has to attempt to promote a harmonious society as well as seek to keep religious activity “above ground” so that it can be monitored to some degree. We also see the City Two Committees – led by Zheng – seeking to expand its influence in Jinghai by conferring legitimation on Zhang and Enlin Church which reduces the appearance of ambiguity.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has revealed the agency of the Three-Self churches in their interactions with local state institutions. The case studies revealed some of the policies and regulations which affect specific religious activities. Further, through these case studies which looked specifically at the institutional expansion of the Three-Self Protestant churches in Huanghaicheng, we can see that there are a variety of unofficial structures and procedures which have been created as a result of the symbiosis between the Three-Self churches and the RAB. We have seen how religious specialists are able to extract state authority for the gains of the church such as through the selection of seminary candidates chosen and vetted by clergy. We have also seen how clergy write official reports and can “play down” the size of the congregations so as not to alarm the authorities. Further, these case studies have revealed the importance of ties within the TSPM structure which can help in the legitimation of clergy who do not fulfil official requirements. In the next chapter we will focus more on the construction and expansion of church buildings, facilitated by the symbiosis between church and state in Huanghaicheng.

Chapter Seven

The “Grey” Construction and Expansion of Huanghaicheng’s Three-Self Churches

INTRODUCTION

This chapter reveals how the embeddedness of the Three-Self churches in the local state and the symbiosis between these churches and the RAB provide benefits which help the construction and expansion of church buildings. We analyse the modes of interactions and the integration created as a result of using our framework of symbiosis established in Chapter Two as a lens through which we view church-state interactions. We will look in particular at the re-opening of churches, the establishment of new churches and the construction of church buildings, as well as outside donations for the building of new churches, all with reference to the roles of local state actors. This section will provide further evidence of the complex exchanges between church and state while emphasising the symbiotic dynamics of these interactions. These symbiotic relations further reveal that institutional boundaries are blurred at the edges and that pragmatism often overrules official procedures and channels. These symbioses also demonstrate the complexities of the different political processes occurring simultaneously. All of the church workers or clergy in the case studies are politically savvy and actively utilise the resources available to them or through their relationships with local officials, to secure further resources.

The re-opening of Mashan Church

The return of the Mashan Church building to the Huanghaicheng church¹²⁶ demonstrates the central importance of personal relationships in the interactions between the church in

¹²⁶ Many details of the issue remain unclear due to the fact that the two people involved in the issue were in ailing health at the time of the interview. I was told by a former member of the local Three-Self Committee that there was a written record of all the details regarding the return of the building but I was not successful in my attempts to get a look at it. Despite that, I am grateful for their willingness to participate and for the accounts that they provided.

Huanghaicheng and local state institutions. That the building was ever returned is surprising since the leader responsible for it refused to interact with the RAB officials on their terms. When official channels of interaction prove unprofitable for the Three-Self church leaders, they seek alternative channels, revealing that they make choices with whom they will interact. These alternative channels may have a detrimental effect on the authority of particular state institutions but may also provide opportunities for future interactions which are beneficial for the church.

Mashan Church was a significant Protestant institution in Huanghaicheng before 1949 but was closed as a church in the early 1950s. Pastor Shao’s appointment as church leader is central to the revival of this congregation in the 1980s and the re-opening of the building in the 1990s. We have already seen that prior to the official re-opening of churches in Huanghaicheng in the early 1980s, the UFWD and former members of the TSPM Committee from the 1950s worked together to find suitable candidates to take on the responsibility of running churches.

Although Pastor Shao was at first reluctant to take on any responsibility in the church in Huanghaicheng, he was ordained as a pastor after several key figures in the local church passed away unexpectedly or became too ill to take on any real responsibility. There were several reasons why he did not want to become a church leader. Firstly, he did not have any formal theological training and had never had a formal position in any church before this appointment although this may have been related more to denominational theology than a conscious decision not to since he was a member of the Spiritual Gifts Church¹²⁷ 灵恩会. However, it appears that at least one of the pastors suffering from ill-health at the time vouched for him. In addition, he related to me that he did not trust the CPC. He remained unsure as to their motives in re-opening churches and did not want to “go looking for trouble” 找麻烦. After eventually agreeing to take on a leadership role Pastor Shao worked in the church with a great deal of enthusiasm and, despite the fact that he has been retired for many years now due to serious health issues, he is still remembered fondly by many in the local churches and the Mashan congregation in particular. This is demonstrated in the number of brothers and sisters who try to visit him (although visitations are kept to a minimum by his wife for the sake of his health).

One significant achievement for the church in Huanghaicheng while Pastor Shao was a church leader was the return of the Mashan Church building to the Protestant community by the local state. He had served in the Desheng congregation in the years prior to his

¹²⁷ See Chapter Three. See also Lian (2010); Luo (1989a).

move to the Mashan congregation after the church building was returned. Pastor Shao seemed to hint that he saw this as an achievement over what he regarded as poor practice by the Religious Affairs staff. He related his account of events as following:

Later, [after I was ordained] Mashan Church was re-opened. It was I who got the church building back. I appealed [to the Religious Affairs Bureau] for the church building for six years but wasn’t successful until I managed to do so through a friend. He was my friend from the City PPCC. His father-in-law was a Protestant. We were in the same [political] study group 学习组. We were also both members of the City PPCC. My friend was the son-in-law of the Vice President 副主席 of the City PPCC. Actually, sorting out the issue of the church building should have been the responsibility of the RAB. We raised this issue with them for six years but with no result. The Mashan Church building was re-opened 恢复 at Christmas, 1994. It was officially re-opened 正式恢复 in 1995.

As Pastor Shao explains, the return of the church buildings was, and continues to be, a key responsibility of the RAB (see Huanghaicheng RAB, undated A). It is also interesting to note that in the Huanghaicheng Yearbook (1995-1996), the City RAB have taken credit for the return of the church building (Shang, 1996, 393b). This account ignores the details of what happened, however, since Pastor Shao and others related to me that his relationship with the RAB¹²⁸ was one of conflict. He told me that, “My relationship with the government hasn’t been good. Our relationship was quite confrontational 对立... I wasn’t liked by the CPC.” Pastor Shao did not elaborate on this and, understandably, he was fairly reticent to discuss much regarding his relationship with the local state. It is possible that because of his denominational affiliation prior to 1949, the Spiritual Gifts Movement, which the state were suspicious of because of its independence and “superstitious” practices, affected his relationship with the authorities from the outset. In addition, the theology of the Spiritual Gifts Movement led them to be against political involvement. Despite Pastor Shao’s reticence to discuss this, his wife, (still referred to as “Preacher’s Wife”) told me that:

They wanted the church to pay for banquets but Pastor [Shao] didn’t agree to it. They said that they were there to help and that Pastor [Shao] was obliged to dine them. But that’s their job. The church’s money is donated by the brothers and sisters. How could we just spend it in whatever way we liked? They asked about meals and even asked him to buy cigarettes. He just wasn’t liked by the government... They even wanted the Religious Affairs Bureau to approve going off to travel and make the church pay for it!... Pastor [Shao] is an upright 正直 person.

¹²⁸ At this time, the department was called the Religious Affairs Department 宗教处 and was city-level since the district did not have its own Religious Affairs Section as it does now.

In addition, while Pastor Shao appears to speak of the return of the Mashan Church building as his achievement, he did not speak of it like this as he related the emotional first meeting that took place there at Christmastime in 1994. He described the mixed emotions of joy at having the church back and the sadness for some of remembering the times of worship held there both before 1949 and also in the period up until the church was closed and taken over by the state. People shed tears as they prayed quietly and sang hymns in the church for the first time in many years. I spoke to more than a few people who had attended the church as young children as we saw in Chapter Three. One sister talked to me at length about her experiences as a child attending meetings both in Mashan Church and in Desheng Church. Her aunt had been the pianist 斯琴 in Mashan Church before 1949 and the fact that a piano was in the same position today made these memories more real. Some of her own family including an uncle and a brother were killed during the Anti-Rightist Campaign and the Cultural Revolution. It seemed that for some people being able to meet again in a place that had meant so much to them in earlier times brought feelings of joy and reassurance for the present.

We can see in this case study the significance of the embeddedness of the Three-Self church leadership in the City PPCC. We saw in Chapter Five how senior religious specialists are placed on this consultative body, providing them with opportunities for social capital. Pastor Shao wanted to avoid what he regarded as manipulation by the Religious Affairs personnel despite the fact that they were city-level officials rather than district-level. He clearly felt that he had the ability to resist their demands and, ironically, this became possible through connections made at the PPCC political study group. Pastor Shao came into contact with his study-group partner’s father-in-law, who happened to be the Vice President of the City PPCC. This informal channel facilitated the return of the Mashan Church building. The President made use of his position to force the matter onto the agenda for the PPCC.

We see here that the embedded nature of the TSPM in the City PPCC delivers resources in the form of social capital which Protestant leaders are able to take advantage of for the mission of the church. We know that groups of Protestants who had been members of Mashan Church before its closure in the 1950s had been meeting together in the Mashan Church area, but the return of the building is a highly significant form of institutionalised cultural capital which gives the church legitimation and a significant presence in the local community. The return of the church building would bring with it the added legitimacy of being a designated place for religious activity. This would enhance the chances of both the survival and growth of the Three-Self community.

For Pastor Shao, the interactions within the PPCC are highly significant since there are relatively few socio-political actors who had the resources to secure the return of church buildings. Pastor Shao will not violate his own principles when he engages in social interactions with the local state. He refused to use church funds in order to buy gifts to give to officials for the purposes of improving their relationship. He feared that this would become an established practice, draining the church of much-needed resources. Secondly, he sought only to enter into relationships which, in his perception, would not bring harm to the work of the church. It is arguable that this may have limited his possibilities as we saw with his refusal to comply with the requests from the Religious Affairs Bureau. However, Pastor Shao arguably had the long-term view in mind and was willing to resist the demands of these officials in order to establish a precedent for their interactions in the future. While there is no evidence that the relationship between Pastor Shao and these particular Religious Affairs officials improved, we might be looking at quite a different situation today in terms of relationship dynamics had this pastor established the norm of using church funds to ‘entertain’ Religious Affairs officials. This clearly demonstrates the boundaries that church workers try to maintain in the interactions with the state, a theme which occurs with frequency in our analyses (see, Chapter Eight and the case study of Zhang and the police officer).

Pastor Shao also received greater social prestige through this interaction. The return of the church building was seen by the Three-Self community as a great benefit to the church in Huanghaicheng and is still talked about today. It was not viewed simply in material terms but also in spiritual terms. The return and re-opening of the building signalled a development in the establishment of a “heavenly kingdom” 天国 in Huanghaicheng. We could also posit that this event also helped to secure Pastor Shao’s authority within the Protestant community. Having not been a formal church leader in the years before the ‘Cultural Revolution,’ nor having been seminary trained, Pastor Shao lacked the social and cultural capital possessed by some leaders and although there was no resistance within the church in terms of his appointment, it could not have been easy for him to enter into the position of senior church leader.

In addition, the importance of the Mashan Church building to the local Protestants cannot be over-emphasised. It was built by local Protestants after the death of the missionary who founded the congregation (Cliff, 1994, 183). The current church leadership claimed that Mashan Church was the only in one China that had not just schools attached to it but also factories. For this reason, there was a great deal of pride in the Protestant community regarding the origins of the church. Furthermore, at the time, only one church building

(Desheng) had been re-opened in Jinping which, as we saw in Chapter Three, had had a vibrant Protestant community before 1949. This dearth of meeting places for local Protestants made the re-opening of churches and meeting points a more significant event than it is today in 2011.

While these resources can be seen to have flowed from the PPCC state institution to the church, the flow of nutrients was not necessarily unidirectional. The work of the PPCC also received greater prestige within the Protestant church, and no doubt Vice President Jiang also further improved his standing among Protestants in Huanghaicheng. The informal ties between Jiang and Pastor Shao provided a channel for resources from the local state to the church and from the church to the state. This specific personal network was deemed necessary by those involved after official channels proved ineffective. We see to some extent the lack of cohesiveness in the state structure and the ability of the church to evade what it regards as the unreasonable demands of the Religious Affairs personnel. This event also perhaps persuaded the RAB personnel to rethink their approach in dealing with the Three-Self community as evidenced by how the RAB have not resorted to such tactics since then.

It is likely, then, that Pastor Shao’s relationship with the RAB played a significant role in the difficulties he had in getting the building returned to the church. However, other personal relationships were key in securing the return of the building to the Mashan congregation. In addition, it is significant that the vice-president of the local CPPCC was, himself, a Protestant and was clearly sympathetic to Pastor Shao’s cause because of his son-in-law’s relationship and also because of his own personal beliefs. This is another example of sympathies for the local Protestant community from within the local state, although perhaps this is the most blatant example of Protestants within the state system utilising their position and influence to further the work of the Protestant community.

This is also an example of the pressures on local Protestant leaders in their interactions with the state. Although examples of the kind seen above where the local state tries to extract extra benefits from a relationship with the Protestant church (in the way of banquets, cigarettes and holidays) are not common in Huanghaicheng (but may be prevalent in some locales), we can also see, when faced with such pressures, local Protestant leaders have tended to stick to their principles, demarcating a boundary in their interactions with particular individuals and departments within the state. This is not an uncommon theme in the religion-state narrative.

Furthermore, we can see this as an example of a disparity between the activities of the local Protestants in the churches and what are regarded as official or formal activities by the state. The believers who later made up the congregation in Mashan Church began meeting together and had a Christmas service in the Mashan Church building *before* it was officially re-opened. In fact, many people in the Mashan congregation see 1994 as the year in which the church reopened and not, 1995. Even Chairperson Zou, the Chairperson of the City TSPM Committee until 1997, remembered that the building was returned in 1994. There is a marked degree to which the local Protestants feel that they are in control of church projects. The official re-opening is not the focus of the brothers and sisters in their community; the focus for them is remembering the significance of the birth of Jesus Christ and being able to do so openly in a recognised place of worship and the building which some of them had worshipped in prior to the closing of churches throughout Huanghaicheng.

The construction of the Baisong Church building

The construction of the Baisong Church building reveals that while there may be official procedures in place in order to regulate and manage the Protestants in Huanghaicheng, these procedures are often difficult or impossible to follow and therefore ignored or negotiated and new sets of unofficial procedures take their place. However, for these unofficial procedures to be established there need to be personal relationships between state officials and church workers. These new procedures can benefit the Protestants to a greater degree than official procedures and may even be detrimental to the local state. This case study will further demonstrate the creation of unofficial channels within the symbiotic relationship of the Three-Self churches and the local state which Pastor Liu utilises to negotiate permission to build a new church building. Of central importance here is the issue of church ownership of the church building and the compensation which the state should provide for loss or damage. With the rebuilding of the church, there is also the important issue of funding and we see here the Protestant community flouting regulations on how donations for such projects are made.

We saw in Chapter Three that the original church building in the village area which has now become a part of Moushan was built sometime between 1940 and 1944. It was taken over by the village in 1947. The original church building no longer exists having been demolished in the spring of 1999 to make way for modern housing blocks. The return of

church property has been a major issue since the 1980s. Church property taken over by the state for schools, hospitals and for military purposes does not have to be returned to the church. Ideally, all other property should be. Where this is not possible, compensation should be awarded the church. This is not always easy to do, however. In this case, the area where Baisong Church is located has changed administrative hands several times since the church was built and the original deeds have been lost or misplaced.

In the case of Baisong Church, instead of following official procedure, an alternative solution was found. The local meeting points were given another piece of land by the village leaders. Pastor Liu, himself, thinks that this site is much better because it is at the top of a hill and serves as a more prominent symbol to the surrounding area and makes it cooler in summer. It is also further away from any main road which makes it a quieter place for worship.

Apart from the usual health and safety issues in the design of the new church building, there was further government input on the construction of the church. In fact, the RAS helped Pastor Liu in liaising with other state departments to ensure that he avoided encountering unnecessary difficulties.

You take care of your own responsibilities yourself. The government doesn’t concern itself with those things. It’s only concerned with certain affairs. These affairs are things like when you need land to construct a new church building. In such a case, they will help you in dealing with the relevant departments like the Land Board, those in charge of real estate, and so on. They don’t concern themselves with other issues. Church issues are our own business and we take care of them ourselves.

There have been cases of local officials unhappy about the *fengshui* of church buildings or asking churches’ clock towers not to exceed the heights of other buildings (for example, see Huang and Yang, 2005). In fact, one church built in Huanghaicheng several years earlier did not get planning permission the first time round because the roof was going to be higher than another monument in the area. This monument was a symbol of the victory of the Party and it is not difficult to see why local officials would be against a church spire reaching above it. Pastor Liu explained that there was no negative interference from the local state when Baisong Church was being built:

There wasn’t any government interference when we were planning and designing the church building. All they were involved in was providing the land for building on. There was the case of Wumei where the government said that the top of the church couldn’t be higher than the top of the Martyrs’ Monument. That’s really a unified planning 统一规划 issue.

The church was built from funds donated by the congregation, as Pastor Liu describes:

We gathered the money for the construction of the church building ourselves. Most of it was donated by the brothers and sisters while some was from savings we had. The City Two Committees helped us out and also some foreign friends; for example, Jean. And Pastor Zheng also helped us out. The building cost us 195,000 [*yuan*] including the main bedroom and guest rooms, together with the yard. Including white goods, office furniture, seating [for the church] and tables, the project altogether cost just over 250,000 [*yuan*]... The government didn’t donate anything because we follow the principles of self-government, self-support and self-propagation. The government may help financially in a particular situation 特殊情况; for example, a few years ago Nanjing Seminary, you know, Jinling, when they expanded the government did donate some funding.¹²⁹ So, [the government] only [donates money] in special circumstances. Usually, there isn’t any such financial help. There are times when the government may sell land without tax or give land for the building of churches free of charge.

There is no surprise in the fact that the local Protestants contributed to the construction of the church building, or that the City Two Committees contributed some funds. What is of interest is that foreigners contributed to the building project. According to policy, the amounts that may be donated by a foreigner are not clearly stipulated in local regulations. Various religion policy and regulation documents mention the issue of donations to religious organisations or religious activities venues. For example, Document 19 (Part XI) allows for donations from foreign believers to churches (MacInnis, 1989, 22-23). Document 6 (Part II) states that permission from the Provincial RAB must be sought before churches can accept “significant donations,” though no figure is given to define what the sum might be (Asian Watch Committee, 1992, 32-33). In a similar vein, the RRA (Chapter 5, Article 35) allows for donations but omits the term “significant” used in policy documents (Huanghaicheng RAB, 2007, 9-10).

Some church leaders said that in the past, local regulations had limited donations to 6,000 *yuan* while others claimed that it was 10,000 *yuan*. I found no local policy or regulations to support this. However, in the training handbook for Huanghaicheng RAB personnel, it clearly states (Question 14, Answer 3) that any donations for the rebuilding of churches need to be examined and approved by the RAB at the provincial level and that no group or individual should accept donations without this approval (Huanghaicheng RAB, 2004,

¹²⁹ This funding may have been available because of the prohibitive land and real estate prices in cities like Nanjing. It is in the interests of the state to encourage the educating of “patriotic” church workers and leaders. In addition, Jinling seminary is the only national seminary and it is certainly the case that the state wants to be seen to be sympathetic to the Protestant community as part of its state-building efforts. Jinling was also the centre of the “theological reconstruction” campaign, viewed by many pastors within the TSPM as a watering-down of biblical theology and an attempt to bring the gospel in line with state dictum.

104). To avoid any possible conflict, these donations were not declared to the RAS. I know from Pastor Liu that a North American missionary living locally donated 10,000 *yuan* and although I am not sure of the identities of the other foreigners, it would not surprise me if they were South Koreans as Pastor Liu is well connected with a number of South Korean pastors living both locally and overseas. We will analyse the issue of foreign missionary workers in Huanghaicheng in a later case study.

The matter of the original church building deeds is not completely settled, however. Pastor Liu relates it in his own words:

The [church] building was sold by the Wumei County government to the village here at some point before 1980 because the village had used it since the end of the Cultural Revolution. During the Cultural Revolution it naturally became the property of the government. So, they sold it to the village. There should be a land license 土地证 but it’s either with the Wumei District government or with the village here. When the new district boundaries were implemented – Moushan district – things weren’t really formally implemented but the district government created the position of director 主任 [of the district government] and so we went to negotiate 协商 the matter.

It is not clear from accounts as to when the original church building was taken over by the state and the church closed down. It also seems that the new district government is in no hurry to make a final verdict on the somewhat complex issue of the ownership of the building (which no longer exists). In the late 1990s, Pastor Liu had sought to resolve the issue because at the time the local meeting points had no place large enough to accommodate them all to come together for corporate worship. The importance placed on such corporate worship in Protestantism is well-documented and with so few leaders the significance of this is further heightened because this allows more people to receive teaching at any one time. His account is as follows:

It was agreed that the Protestant church estate 房产 be given back to us so that plans could be made for the construction of [this part of] the city. No compensation was to be given because originally the village bought the building and if the policy [of returning church property] was to be implemented it would take a great deal of effort 费很大的事了. It was troublesome 麻烦. So we reached an agreement. I said, “It’s our building but has become village property. It should be ours.” He said, “You’re right. It’s yours, without a doubt.” It should have been ours but there was nothing in writing 明文. A report was written, that’s all. It was written for the City Two Committees. When I went to try and locate it I couldn’t find it. It was the City Two Committee’s responsibility to help us with the finances. So, I wrote a report and the director 主任 signed and stamped it. That should be a formal document 正式的一个文. The building is ours but to this day we haven’t got the certificates¹³⁰ 证. Yet I know they admit that it’s ours.

¹³⁰ Pastor Liu is fully convinced that the deeds still exist either in the village or in the town that used to be the centre of the district of an area that Baisong Church is located in before the

The local state, then, was clear on the issue of the ownership of the building and yet the matter has not really been resolved in accordance with official policy.

Pastor Liu still plans to get the deeds for the original building which may entitle the church to compensation. He thinks the only chance he has of resolving the issue is if he does so in the name of the District TSPM Committee which he has yet to set up (despite the fact that he is a member of the City Two Committees). This also shows the pragmatic thinking in the use of the Three-Self ‘banner’ to further the Huanghaicheng Church projects. In his words:

We’ll wait until we’ve set up our Three-Self Committee and then use the Three-Self name to get it sorted out. If we don’t use the Three-Self name, we won’t be able to get it done. If you try to do this in your own name, it would be very difficult, and it wouldn’t work. We’ll wait until we become Three-Self before we sort out the real estate certificates. There are still things to sort out. Implementing policies is difficult to do. We’ve made an agreement so I suppose the policy [of returning church real estate] has been implemented.

The official relationship between Three-Self Protestantism and the RAB is taken as a given in this case study. However, although official protocol could not be followed in the situation surrounding the original church building, Pastor Liu utilised his own position as leader of the Moushan Protestant community and sought to negotiate with the director of the RAS. Similar to the above case study regarding Mashan Church, this relationship is essential for the development of Baisong Church. A church building enhances the status of the church in the local community and brings with it new opportunities in access to resources. As a visible symbol of a spiritual institution in the eyes of the Protestants, the church also serves as the basis for future growth and a meeting point that brings together the various groups which meet in homes in the area.

In addition, from the perspective of the state, the church building brings Protestants together and provides, at least in theory, a better opportunity to monitor religious activity. Although a church and church building did exist before 1949, the Baisong Church and the district government were both relatively new institutions. In the 1980s there were several elderly Protestants who thought that they could remember the pre-1949 church but there was little connection. Because Moushan had only been carved out in 1994, the district government was also relatively new. Only the district government has the political resources to resolve the issue of the original church building. Pastor Liu’s involvement

restructuring of city and district boundaries. If the deeds do exist then they would help to end any speculation on the matter.

with the City Two Committees and the fact that he had official training in the 1990s and was ordained as an elder at the time gives him capital which he can utilise in his interactions with the RAS.

As with the above case study on the return of Mashan Church, new channels through which benefits are derived have been created in this symbiosis. Pastor Liu’s handling of the affair has improved his relationship with the director of the district government, a tie that proves useful in furthering the mission of the local Protestants. While official protocol could not be followed due to the ambiguity of the situation, an alternative solution was found. The interactions between the partners in the symbiosis established an informal structure for the resolving of future issues. The net outcome of the interaction has clearly had significance for the wellbeing of Baisong Church. The interaction secured land for the building of a new church building and the first in the newly-formed administrative district. While the interaction secured this land, Pastor Liu also hopes to secure compensation for the original church building but he recognises that this can only be achieved if he establishes a Three-Self Committee in the district. The new church building has also enhanced the growth of the Protestant community in the district. The building helps to legitimise this community. In addition, the building of the church itself helped Pastor Liu to establish new ties or enhance old ones which he can use in the future. For example, a foreign missionary in the district donated a sizable sum to the building project. Pastor Liu hopes to utilise this relationship in the years ahead and it may lead to the establishment of new channels for the acquisition of resources.

This case study has demonstrated the manner in which Pastor Liu interacted with the local state in seeking to recover compensation and the title deeds for the original church building. Pastor Liu is prepared to go to significant lengths to gain what he can in the way of income in order for the further expansion of Baisong Church. While he is comfortable in negotiating with the district government, he shows confidence in his position and determination not to let the unresolved issue to rest. His handling of the negotiation has undoubtedly gained him kudos with the local authorities and he has benefited from their connections with personnel in other departments. He has been prepared not to appeal the current situation although the title deeds of the original church building have not been returned to the church. While demonstrating the symbiotic nature of church-state interactions, this case study also suggests that events like these encourage the maintenance of this symbiosis. Without contact with local government departments, Baisong Church would have no chance of extracting resources now or in the future. This case study also reveals that the institutional needs to be there for things to happen even if

they are not done according to procedure and suggests that local-level institutions are managed along fluid lines.

Enlin Church and the proposed new congregation in Yuehua Company

The symbiosis between Three-Self churches and the local state sometimes provides surprising opportunities. In this case study we will see that the threat of suicides in Yuehua Company, a large electronics manufacturer, presented an opportunity for Enlin Church to receive permission from the RAS to open a meeting point in the factory complex. A district government Party Secretary works with Enlin Church because of the congregation’s legitimate status. We will also see the contribution of a national-level Two Committees pastor in negotiations surrounding the establishment of a new registered congregation in a large electronics company in Huanghaicheng, Yuehua. Although the new church has not yet been established, we can see from initial negotiations some of the relationship dynamics between the different actors and these reveal the ways in which the church sees opportunities to be involved in specific state projects for their own benefit.

On one hot and humid afternoon towards the end of July, I attended the weekly prayer meeting at Enlin Church as I often did. It was always a good chance to chat with people because it was held in the early afternoon and people were not generally in as much of a rush to catch buses home as they were after the Thursday youth meeting. At the end of the meeting as everyone was leaving, Preacher Zhang appeared at the door. He had not spoken during the meeting and usually if he was not speaking, his presence was not obvious. This day, he was dressed in an unusually casual manner in a loose “Pray for China” 为中国祷告 T-shirt. At first, I assumed that he was there to greet people and to see them off as he so often did at the end of church meetings. Although on that day he was shaking hands with some of those leaving and asking after people, it became apparent that he wanted specifically to talk to me as he motioned with his hand for me to stay. I waited until most people had gone and then Preacher Zhang came over to speak to me. He pulled me to one side inside the church door and began to talk to me. It was obvious that what he wanted to say to me was not for everyone’s ears. He seemed excited and said to me in hushed tones:

We’re planning to open a congregation in Yuehua Company: a legal 合法 one. In that way, we can really openly 正大光明 spread the gospel. It seems that the company CEO 老总 is really behind the idea. I’ve had some contact with him. Haven’t there been a lot of suicides in companies recently? The psychological help 心理帮助 [for the workers] isn’t

really done all that well. We can really help them. The CEO is going to contact head office and speak on our behalf.

At the time I knew that there had been a small group 小组 in the company for quite a lengthy period, set up by staff and workers from the company who attended Enlin Church. The name of the small group was ‘Yuehua Company Small Group’ and was advertised on the church notice board along with all the other small groups. Unlike unregistered congregations, this small group did not have the numbers to warrant applying for registration. The idea of setting up a congregation within this particular factory complex originally came from Preacher Zhang who sees a great “spiritual need” in the company and as such a good location to proselytise:

It was me who first suggested the idea. I really want a church there. It’s really because there are a lot of young people in that company. It’s right here in the district. As a preacher, I really have a heavy spiritual responsibility 灵魂负担 for that place. If, in the future, we can train those people and then send them to do God’s work, it would be really good. If they repented 悔改... if that doesn’t happen, then, well there are a lot of venues for entertainment 娱乐场所 and people are easily turned bad 学坏. They like the entertainment venues. But there’s no congregation. I think they need a congregation to help them change. Young people get lost 迷途 easily.

Yuehua Company has a significant presence in Huanghaicheng, employing more than nine thousand people. It is, perhaps, no surprise that Preacher Zhang would want to expand the Enlin Church work within the company complex because it is not that easy for those working on the production lines to attend meetings at Enlin Church. They would have to take a bus journey and that would be after a long day. The first time he applied, however, his application was refused: “I applied [to set up a congregation]. At first I spoke to the Religious Affairs person [Department Chief Dong]. [I spoke to him] because if I set up an illegal church then he would find out. So, I wanted to make the suggestion. At first he refused.” At this point, Department Chief Dong not only refused the application, but went to check up on the small group (highlighting the risk Preacher Zhang took in making the application in the first place): “We applied to set up a legal congregation in Yuehua Company, but he went to check it out. He keeps going to check out that small group we have at Yuehua Company.” It is clear that while Zhang was happy to have a small group in the company, he thought that it would be difficult for a small number of believers to have much impact. Instead, he wanted to have something larger. Having learnt from his experience of setting up Enlin Church, he felt that it would be better for his relationship to the local state to try to do things above board and try to get permission for a meeting point.

Preacher Zhang did not give up at this juncture, however. He waited and prayed. The situation then changed after a series of suicides in the Foxxconn factory in Shenzhen which had significant coverage in the Chinese media and was talked about a great deal both inside and outside the churches in Huanghaicheng during the summer of 2010. It was also a topic which came up in prayer meetings and when people spoke in the churches. Preacher Zhang seemed to see the situation in a very straightforward manner: “After that [the failed application], it was as I already told you, God organised one such opportunity. He [God] started working from the top towards the bottom, and so he [Department Chief Dong] agreed [to move forward with the congregation]. We pray, God listens.” Zhang continued with his narrative:

You know, at first he [Department Chief Dong] didn’t agree to our application. In the end, God provided an opportunity when somebody from the National Two Committees came to visit the congregations here. I was involved in the visit. When he came, the [Party] Secretary 管委书记 and the Deputy [Party] Secretary 管委副书记 took part. It just so happened that the conversation touched on the suicides in the south of China. The [Party] Secretary said that he was afraid in case something like that should happen here [in Jinghai district]. He said that he’d done many years of ideological work 思想工作 but that it didn’t really have much power 力度. He then particularly emphasised that the church can help people to change.¹³¹ So, because of that, he wants us to start our work in the company... This time we made an application and discussed it with them [Religious Affairs]. I just told them we want to open a congregation in the company. He [Department Chief Dong] agreed. And, so, that’s good news... You know, there are lots of young people in the company and that place in Shenzhen, they are having a lot of suicides. So, we wanted to apply and they seem supportive because they are afraid of suicides here... we have really developed a relationship of trust and so now we can apply.

Preacher Zhang recognises the significance of the issue of suicides as being instrumental in swaying the officials into taking action, although it is not clear as to whether they were aware of Zhang’s initial application. In addition, we can also see a change in the initial decision made by Department Chief Dong not to accept Preacher Zhang’s first application. It is also interesting that the Party Secretary of the district government is taking the lead by being the one to talk with the CEO of Yuehua Company. He is the one who will do the negotiations, including the issue of a suitable place to hold congregational meetings because as with other projects, finance is a problem:

¹³¹ Todate, there have been no systematic studies of the social impact of Protestantism in contemporary China. Yamamori and Chan (1998; 2000) have analysed the economic impact of Protestantism on Lisu villages in Yunnan. Protestant families tend to be better off economically than non-Protestant families because they do not smoke opium or drink alcohol. Yamamori and Chan also report that local officials have also recognised this trend and have encouraged the Protestants to spread the message to other Lisu families.

The good thing at the moment is that the [Party] Secretary of the district government 管委 has appeared, and he’s specifically talking to the CEO about the idea of setting up a church in the company. He’ll see if Yuehua Company can help us out at all. Really, because we don’t have what’s necessary, we don’t have a lot of funds. If he can step in and maybe provide somewhere for us to meet... even if we just use it and give them some money as rent... As long as it’s not too expensive. If it’s too expensive, we’ll not be able to take it on... So, our next step is to sort out the funding we need.

Preacher Zhang is already thinking ahead in this project and sees it as something long term: “Through time we’d like to build another church building. And then from there we can really spread the gospel in the company.”

There are various connections in these interactions. The Party Secretary has already shown his support for the building of a new church in Jinghai (see below). Zhang’s relationship to him has proved useful in the negotiation to try to establish a new congregation in Yuehua. The pastor from the National Two Committees also proved to be an important ally in the negotiation. It would certainly seem clear that the perceived importance of the establishment of the new church has changed over time in the eyes of the local state. Although the local state brushed off the idea in the first instance, the need to reduce the risk of suicides became ever more important and the work done by the Enlin congregation was perceived as key to this. The district government and Party organs were probably under significant pressure to reduce the risk of suicides in Yuehua. The initial proposal by Preacher Zhang was an extension of his beliefs in the need for reaching more young people with the gospel and proselytising in Yuehua Company, not as a matter of choice for Enlin Church but rather as one of their central roles. It is clear that the channels created here bring resources which benefit the different partners involved.

Preacher Zhang’s relationship with Department Chief Dong, Party Secretary Luo and the Deputy Party Secretary is ongoing. Zhang has fairly regular contact with Dong because of the nature of Dong’s work and with Luo because of the new church building project. He has had less contact with the Deputy Party Secretary but this does not detract from the interactions. Party Secretary Luo believes that Protestantism has something to offer the factory workers in helping to reduce the chance of suicide. A dynamic young preacher like Zhang may really be who he thinks it will take to bring change. Of importance here is that both the local state and Enlin Church seek to utilise the opportunities which arise for forwarding their own projects.

As we saw in our outline of the case study, the interaction between the district state and Enlin Church has resulted in the state demonstrating its role in the production of a harmonious society while Enlin Church gains from the potential establishment of another church. Clearly, it is surprising that the Party Secretary perceives that his own ideological work was less effective than what the church is doing in seeking to bring changes to peoples’ lives. It is also surprising that Party Secretary Luo sees the church as an answer to reducing the chance of suicide. At the same time, Enlin Church would be unable to expand its work through the establishment of another church (as both a physical and a spiritual entity) without the recognition of the state. It is clear that the official relationship between the Three-Self community and the RAS in Jinghai has facilitated these interactions.

We have seen in this case study the nature of the informal channels involved in the proposed establishment of a new church in Yuehua Company and, in particular, the power relations involved. The involvement of the National Two Committees pastor brings a different dynamics to the negotiation even although this does not seem to have been planned. He brings with him his own social and cultural capital giving him authority in these interactions. We see Department Chief Dong’s position being over-stepped by the more powerful Party Secretary. We also see Zhang’s sensitive handling of the issue and his belief that this is the work of God. Furthermore, although it is not uncommon for factories in Huanghaicheng to have some sort of small group or unregistered congregation, the possibility of opening a registered church within a large company complex is slightly different. This practice is not widespread and I have not heard of anything similar. These interactions create channels for the expansion of the church in Huanghaicheng which are not always predictable.

Enlin Church and the planned construction of a new church building in Jinghai

This case study is concerned with the interactions between the district government and Preacher Zhang¹³² of Enlin Church surrounding plans to construct a large church building

¹³² Preacher Zhang is the number two in the district Three-Self Committee so I think it is pertinent to ask why was he asked and not the Three-Self Committee head, Elder Chu. I think there are several reasons for this. Firstly, Preacher Zhang is more accessible since Enlin Church (where he also lives) is just a ten minute drive from the district government offices. Elder Chu on the other hand, lives in a rural area far to the west of the district. Apart from this very practical reason, Preacher Zhang is younger and much more savvy than Elder Chu and has much more experience in such negotiations having done business himself for some time. There is also a good relationship

in the district. This particular case study reveals the symbiotic nature of the interactions, and more specifically, the unofficial channels which these relations both establish and utilise can clearly be seen as we analyse the actors involved and the dynamics of their relationships. We will see how the Protestant community in Jinghai and Enlin Church in particular benefit directly from this unofficial but district government-initiated project. This essentially means that the Protestant community will benefit from a new church building which they could never have afforded to build themselves. Enlin Church benefits more than the other congregations. In particular we will see how this project was meant to bring all the Protestants in Jinghai into one building but that despite the continuation of the project, only the Enlin congregation will move into the new building when it is completed. At the same time, however, there are still concerns of possible government interference if Enlin Church is unable to secure the deeds to the building. I will rely heavily on Preacher Zhang’s description of events but I also confirmed many of the details of his account with others in Enlin Church and beyond.

The PRMRA (Chapter Two, Article 20) clearly states that non-religious organisations should not accept donations for religious purposes, build churches or promote religious activity (Huanghaicheng RAB, 2007, 17). However, in Huanghaicheng, a senior official has been involved in promoting the building of a church and generating funds for the building project.

I had been in Huanghaicheng for quite a number of months before I heard about the plans to build a large new Three-Self church building in the downtown area of Jinghai. In the first interview I conducted with Preacher Zhang several months into my fieldwork, I asked him if he had any plans to build a church building because, as we saw in Chapter Four, the Enlin Church congregation meets in a renovated factory. At the time of the interview, he diverted the question and gave a vague answer, saying something about the difficulties of making any application. I fully understand his reticence in divulging the details of the project to someone he had only met several times before, and in fairness to him, he was not dishonest in his answer. It was some time later in another prayer meeting at Enlin Church in the spring of 2010 that I first heard about the plans to build a new church building. The sister leading the meeting asked those present to pray about the plans for the new church project and told those present to pray that “God’s will would be done.” I assumed that the plans were new and that they were in their early stages but this

between Elder Chu and Zhang and I would imagine from Elder Chu’s disposition that he would prefer Zhang to do the negotiating. It was also never realistic to expect Elder Chu’s congregation to move to the new church building from their part of the district.

turned out not to be the case. In the following weeks I asked people in Enlin Church about the project and gleaned some information. When I broached the subject with Preacher Zhang, the first thing he told me was:

This is really inside information 内部消息. The whole idea of building a new church building didn’t begin with us [in Enlin Church]. It was the number one man in the district government, the Party Secretary 书记, who first put forward the idea. His mother was a Protestant but she passed away. She had had a desire for a long time to see a church building built in the district. So, after she passed away, he had this wish 心愿 to build a church in this district.

According to Zhang, Party Secretary Luo, was not only the initiator of the idea to build a new church building but also made attempts to secure funding for the project from a range of sources, including businesses and the Korean Protestant community, in violation of the PRMRA cited above. Preacher Zhang told me:

At first, he wanted to secure funding for the church building from society, from large companies, you know, get the companies to donate money. Later on, a church was started up by South Koreans in our district. They also found out about this whole idea [of building a church]... Maybe the district government asked them for a donation. When they found out they said that building a church was really our [the Protestant community’s] business. They pledged to donate money for the building of a church. So, it was all agreed.

In addition to locating funding, Party Secretary Luo was also a key player in the decision to help in the development of the project by providing a suitable building site for the church. He was able to do that by utilising his position and connections within the district government, especially with the Land Board 土地局. The issue of land was certainly something that Preacher Zhang could not negotiate on his own and any planned site has to fit in with the development plans of the district government, as Zhang told me:

The land [for the church] is provided by the district government. The land will be provided in accordance with the plans for the development of the city. They decide where is suitable for the church to be built. This is really beneficial because we can’t afford to buy the land ourselves. The land would be at least 10 million *yuan* and we couldn’t afford that. Buying land would be more money than building the church! If they want to give us land then it means we will spend less money. We will give them some symbolic 象征性的 money and then do the best we can to get the rights to the land in the name of the church. In that way it will be the property of the church and will be part of the real estate of the wider district church...

Although Zhang seemed reticent to discuss the issue in great detail, I learned from three sisters that several different sites had been offered by the district government over the past eighteen months or so but that these sites had, one by one, been used for other purposes and each time a new site proposed. This was one reason for the delay in starting to build. However, people from the Enlin congregation do not seem to be in a rush and seem more concerned that the job will be done properly. As one sister told me, “The site was given by the government, so, how can I put it? We should be really thankful 感恩. We should build a good one with all the facilities that we need. All the equipment should be suitable for all our needs.” The latest site offered to Enlin Church is near Jinghai’s CBD and not far from where the congregation currently meet. This, people said, was better because it would be convenient to get to and would both be a symbol 象征 of Protestantism in the area as well as an established basis for proselytising.

It was some time after the project was initiated by Party Secretary Luo that the plans began to run into problems; however, it was funding for the building rather than the idea of the project or the issue of land that was the main difficulty. The building should have been finished in 2010 according to the original plans but building has not yet started. Preacher Zhang explained the reason behind the delay:

Perhaps because some South Koreans talk with a big voice, they said they wanted to build a really big church. In the end, the Party Secretary didn’t continue to raise funds because he was waiting on the man¹³³ from the Korean church. And then the financial crisis began. Shortly after that, the pastor from the Korean church got ill. So, there was no money donated by the Koreans. Because the existing funds didn’t amount to all that much, the building wasn’t started at the time.

The issue of finances for the project still remains but support has been gained from elsewhere. The news of the new church building went online in 2008 and news of the proposed church building has a national audience. Preacher Zhang was reluctant to discuss the financial situation when I asked him about it but I learned from Teacher Zhou that the account for the construction of the new building currently has about 5 million *yuan*. This figure was also mentioned by a sister who works closely with the Enlin Church administration committee. Both of these people said that this was not enough.

¹³³ It appears that one particular businessman had taken special interest in the project and had promised to donate a large sum. I know that Preacher Zhang knew this man personally, which is no surprise considering his links with various Korean churches and ministries in Huanghaicheng and further afield.

When I asked about where all the money came from, I was told “The brothers and sisters donated it” 是弟兄姊妹奉献的。While this may be accurate in broad terms, it was certainly not only the brothers and sisters in Enlin congregation who donated these amounts. Zhang has extensive connections in Huanghaicheng, not least the Protestant South Korean community. Besides these network ties, Zhang also has connections across China in both Three-Self and unregistered churches and I am sure that both these local and national relationship networks have helped as sources of funding for the building project, a situation that would be in violation of local guidelines for donations made for the purposes of building a new church.

As Preacher Zhang said above, he also hopes to secure the rights for the land. Although the land will be provided by the state, the district Protestant community will try to make a payment for it in order that the appropriate paperwork for the land will be placed under the name of the church.

The money we’ve saved is in a special account that we can’t touch until we’re ready to start building. It’s especially for the church building. We’ll need some in order to get the land permit 土地证, probably about 150,000 [yuan] and then about the same again to demolish the existing building. And then we’ll need to spend quite a bit on the architectural plans 图纸. So, we need to keep saving. We want to start, even if we don’t have all the money but this isn’t my decision. Elder Chu, the head of the district Three-Self Committee, it’s his decision along with us.

The initial plan which was agreed between the leaders of the meeting points in the district and Party Secretary Luo was that Enlin Church and all the local Protestant meeting points (not including the oldest church in the district located in a village some distance outside the urban area) would be combined into one church. But things did not turn out this way. Zhang explained that:

At first all of the district’s congregations were going to come together [to build up the new church] but it’s not that easy. People don’t necessarily want to be together. So, everyone agreed on the idea that, because the church is going to be built near our church, that we would be the main people responsible. That’s what people seem to be thinking. If people want to join us then they can, if not, they can carry on as they are. So, in reality, we’re just going to change this building for the new one. Everything else will remain the same. We’ve had to rent a building up until now, but with the new church building, we won’t have to...

The building project has also benefitted the Three-Self Protestant community by allowing the establishment of a District TSPM Committee. The building project is the main reason

that the district has a Three-Self Committee at all. Before there was any mention of the new church, there was no committee. The bank account for the project had to have a recognised “legal person” 合法人 and since the TSPM is the only legally-recognised Protestant organisation which can open a bank account, a committee was set up. As it is, Preacher Zhang told me that the District TSPM Committee is all handled quite “informally” 不正式.

They [the officially-recognised preachers] set up a Three-Self organisation, and this Three-Self organisation was set up for the purposes of constructing the new church building because Three-Self is the only legal [Protestant] entity that can open a bank account [for Protestant work].¹³⁴ [They] wouldn’t approve anything else, so this was set up. The money we’ve saved for building the church is all in that account. This was set up on the spur of the moment [and is made up of] just a few of those in charge of congregations and one person who’s the leader 灵修 of a church.

However, the establishment of this Committee and Zhang’s membership on it, adds further legitimacy to Zhang’s position and to the Enlin congregation. This official membership further provides social capital which Zhang can utilise for the benefit of the church.

Preacher Zhang sees the project as an answer to prayer and believes that the new church building will be a significant aid in the spreading of the gospel in the district.

How can I put it? I suppose the construction of a new church building will bring with it advantages and disadvantages. The advantages... before, when we were in that small place, we really prayed in earnest 迫切的祷告 that a big church would be set up in this district so that more young people would repent and return to God. God has heard our prayers. So, it has already begun and it’s going to be near here, too. It’s fairly obvious that God heard our prayers. So, now we can really spread the gospel in order that more people would come into the church. I believe that when the new church is built there will be more people, just like the Bible says about preparing the bottle, regardless of how large the utensil is, it will be filled with oil.¹³⁵ God will provide. These are the advantages.

However, Zhang also recognises that there may be problems if Party Secretary Luo or others in the district government regard this as their project. There are also potential issues surrounding the church workers and who will have what positions and the authority that goes along with them, revealing the possibility of tensions within the church. These tensions can disrupt the mission of the church. As Zhang relates:

On the other hand, I don’t know, but I’m a bit worried that the government will try to interfere. This is a disadvantage. Another issue is that in a big church it may be easier for

¹³⁴ The legal status of accounts is unclear. It was perhaps the amount of money involved which drew attention from the RAS.

¹³⁵ This is a reference to 1 Kings 17: 1-15.

issues of power-grabbing 争权夺利 to arise. So, we need to pray and ask God that we’d have a good church committee 堂委 and good preachers that God can use. That’s it.

Thus the relationship between Enlin Church and Party Secretary Luo is not without risk; Preacher Zhang does not completely trust the Party Secretary and their relationship is perceived to have limits. The resources at the hands of the Party Secretary should not be overlooked or underestimated. He has initiated and entered into this relationship for personal reasons and his own career is not dependent upon it. It would be easier, perhaps, to expect that if a local official had relatives who were Protestants, then he might be more understanding or sympathetic to the Protestant Church. To be the initiator and the main driving force behind the construction of a new church building is something quite different. In this case, it did not just stop with an idea or a vague plan. Similarly, the Enlin congregation has been established and grown without the use or immediate need for this relationship with the Party Secretary or a new church building and although this new building is not necessary for its survival it is certainly perceived to be valuable in its growth and reproduction.

Recognition in this symbiosis is a straightforward process for the Party Secretary since there is only one registered Protestant community in the district; that is, those affiliated with the TSPM. It is highly unlikely that that the Party Secretary would approach any of the unregistered Protestant congregations and seek to involve them in the project. Again, for the registered Protestant community, opportunities such as these which result in a new church building are rare. Any such building project would involve the district government, notably Religious Affairs and the Land Board. There is little choice in the matter. While one is a state official with the backing of the district government, the other is a religious organisation but because Protestantism is, according to law, managed by the state, there is little choice for all partners in this relationship.

Of most significance in these interactions is the production of unofficial channels between the Party Secretary and the Protestant community. As we have seen in several other case studies, however, official structures need to be present in order for the unofficial structures to develop and unofficial transactions to take place. These channels have carried economic capital and a site for the church. In addition, these unofficial channels are potentially beneficial for Preacher Zhang and the Protestant community as we will see below.

As with many of our other case studies, the net outcome of the interactions described above are difficult to calculate. There are some clear benefits to the partners in the symbiosis. Certainly, the provision of relatively cheap land and the permission to build a new church building meets the perceived needs of Preacher Zhang and the Enlin Church congregation (providing the state does not interfere in the internal affairs of the church). As we have already seen with our example from Baisong Church, it is not unusual for the local state to help with the building of churches by providing land, although it is certainly more common that this will happen when a pre-1949 church building has been destroyed or cannot be returned to the church due to its current use.¹³⁶ The location of suitable land is very much under the control of the state although local officials may provide some space for negotiation in the matter. We also see that the district Protestant community as a whole benefits from the interaction with the proposal of a new building. With the current numbers who attend and the nature of the building which they rent, the Enlin congregation is in no immediate need of a new church building. If the building project is eventually finished, then in very real terms, the local Protestants have benefitted a great deal from the initial wish of the district Party Secretary. Not only will there be a large church with room for expansion, but there will still be congregations located across the district, which strategically, is more advantageous for the local Protestants in their quest to proselytise.

In addition, the Party Secretary is also comforted by the fact that he is able to fulfil the desire of his deceased mother to see a large church building in this part of Huanghaicheng. He is able to fulfil what he perceives to be his filial duties. It is also quite possible that the local state would have gained from such a move (although quite how it would work out in practical terms could certainly be debated). If all the local Protestants who were connected with the TSPM all met in the same location, as was the initial plan, they would be more easily managed by local authorities. However, if this was at least part of the reasoning behind the project things did not turn out this way.

In this section we have seen how the district Party Secretary initiated the plans to construct a new church building which would seem to have its roots in his mother’s own Protestant faith and her desire to see a large church built in her local area. The construction of a new church building will undoubtedly bring a great deal of benefit to Enlin Church and the expansion of its work. Although Preacher Zhang perceives that there may be some risk involved, he clearly thinks that the advantages outweigh the

¹³⁶ See Chan and Lang (2007) on a proposition to build a temple by the local state.

disadvantages. Furthermore, he sees this as part of God’s plan and an answer to prayer for the work in Jinghai. The mutualistic nature of the partnership is revealed by the fact that the Party Secretary has mobilised a great deal of resources which benefit the local Protestant community through his own political connections within the district government.

Preferential treatment for Protestants from Village Chiefs

There are some interesting interactions between church and state in the suburb areas of the city. We have seen already that Baisong Church occupies such an area and have seen some of the interactions between Pastor Liu and officials in the district government. This case study demonstrates that not only do churches in Huanghaicheng find favour with local officials but that these local officials seek to get the local Protestant community on their side and provide advantageous conditions for Protestant believers. However, rather than being coopted by the state, the church serves as an active agent, making use of these interactions to benefit the church. This further reveals that the interactions between church and state can not simply be conceived of in terms of local Protestant communities seeking legitimisation from the state but that sometimes the state actively seeks legitimisation from Protestants.

As we saw in the above case study involving a seminary place for Brother Zhen, a part of Moushan was designated a High Tech Zone 高新区 by the district government. Like the part of the suburbs in which Baisong Church was located, the villages in the new High Tech Zone were an interesting mix of multi-storey seafood restaurants and traditional fisher-folk 渔民 bungalows 平房. The villages in the High Tech Zone are wealthy and many of the villagers drive cars. Most of the roads were newly surfaced with tar macadam and new high-rise housing was being built for the villagers by a construction company from Beijing. The village also had the only paint-balling site in the whole of Huanghaicheng. A four-lane coastal highway which was completed in 2004 makes the village extremely accessible from the centre of the city and some prime real estate in the form of luxury sea-side villas on the edge of the village attracted wealthy Chinese from other parts of the country. It is against this backdrop, then, that this case study takes place.

The village chief, who had the surname Luo and whom I unfortunately never had the opportunity to meet, was quite well-known for his generosity. I had heard a great deal about this village chief even before I uncovered events in the village which we will

discuss below. Villagers received cooking oil, rice, pork, potatoes and other vegetables on most months from the village council 村委会 which was under his direction. Although people told me that they knew Village Chief Luo made a lot of money for himself, at least he shared some of it with the villagers, something not guaranteed with subsequent village chiefs were he to lose his position. This was a fact everyone I spoke to seemed to be aware of. As I spent time in the village and got to know some of the Protestant believers there, I heard similar accounts time and again regarding Village Chief Luo.

Some of the villagers from the newly-designated High Tech Zone attended Baisong Church on Sundays and for other meetings. Many of the villagers also enjoyed meeting together at other times such as during the day or during the evenings for further Bible study and worship but there were often too many to make meeting in someone’s house practicable. One young man who took the seminary entrance exam in the summer of 2010 related it to me in this way:

We’re going to construct a church building in the Technology Zone. Village Chief Luo is really great. Some of his relatives believe but he doesn’t. Although he doesn’t believe he really looks after us. He has always provided a place for Protestants to meet in the village: he lets them use the village council offices 村委办公室. And what’s more, he has already donated two million *yuan* for the construction of the church. In addition, another couple who are a brother and sister had earlier donated three million *yuan* for the new church building. The village head felt that because this couple had donated so much, he should donate something. We want to make a really good job of the design. God really looks after us. We would like to build a really big church and the village has already given us the plot of land to build on. The matter is almost settled but not quite entirely. We’d like to build a car-parking area as well...

This appears not to be an isolated instance, however. Indeed, when I interviewed a businessman who attended Enlin Church he recounted similar events from other areas around Huanghaicheng. He, himself, was from a village which is now located on the edge of the Jinghai in the north of the city. He laughed as he told me the following:

Some of the village chiefs are really quite clever. In my home village, for example, in order to ensure that his position in the village elections is guaranteed, the village chief gives special treatment to the village Protestants. He provides a place for the Protestants to meet and he doesn’t interfere with their proselytising activities. He basically allows people to spread the gospel. He knows that Protestants won’t cause trouble and aren’t fickle in their decision-making. So, he knows he’ll have a reliable basis [for his political position] if he respects 尊重 and looks after 照顾 the Protestants.

The main partners in this relationship are Village Chief Luo and the local Protestant community. There does not appear to be one particular representative with whom Village Chief Luo interacts with although I did speak to one sister who has regular contact with him. Their interactions have taken place not as formal meetings but as informal conversations and negotiations because there is no official TSPM Committee in the Technology Zone to date. Despite the lack of formality, this is still interaction between the partners. This symbiosis has become increasingly significant for both host and symbiont as the village has undergone changes. Before the establishment of the Technology Zone, Pastor Liu could act as a representative of the Protestants in this village in dealing with the district RAS. In this situation, good relations between the Protestant community and Luo were not as crucial. In addition, the redefining of the village as a Technology Zone has also increased his political clout. For political support, Luo’s dependence on the Protestant community has increased as he has accumulated political capital because his position as village chief will be elevated to that of a top leader in the Technology Zone government. He will need an increased amount of support because competition for such political positions. It will take time for an RAS to be established so in the meantime Luo is of importance for the Protestants, giving them legitimation and support.

The relationship between Village Chief Luo and the local Protestants has been constant, involving several factors. Firstly, because members of Village Chief Luo’s immediate family are Protestants and he seems at least tolerant of the Protestant faith, he would be a more likely choice for the believers in the village than another official. In addition, because the Protestants in the village appear to be held in relatively high regard by other villagers and the village council, Luo sees them as reliable political allies who do not seek to cause trouble and generally do not allow feelings of jealousy over the wealth accumulated by political leaders to distract them from their mission in seeking to build up the local Protestant community. They are also an identifiable social group whose relationships tend to be fairly cohesive, so securing some often means securing them all. In addition, the Protestant community seem content with extracting intangible resources from Luo such as protection for them to conduct proselytising activities rather than material wealth. The flow of benefits is bidirectional, and, therefore, the relationship is mutually beneficial.

This unofficial structure of church-state relations provides further channels for dealing with other activities which fall into the grey area of religious practice and help the Protestant community to expand. Village Chief Luo is certainly in a position to limit the

activities of local Protestants, should he choose to do so, by calling on the help of Religious Affairs or even perhaps the PSB. However, because Luo is sympathetic to Protestant belief, he can help influence the village council with regards to their approach to dealing with the local Protestants. There is no Street Council 街道办事处 in the village since the Village Council serves as the village government. The Council, then, is responsible for monitoring all religious activity in the village until the Technology Zone establishes a political structure which resembles something more like a district government. It is quite possible that these unofficial political channels will continue well into the future even after the inevitable influx of new cadres to take up positions in the departments which will take over. These channels are inseparable from the “net outcome” of the symbiosis. As we have already posited, the interactions of the Village Chief Luo and the local Protestants are mutually beneficial. Luo’s own political standing has been bolstered by the security of the Protestants who lend him support in return for relatively little material benefit (a meeting place) and the loose regulation of their proselytising activities. A more recent development in the symbiosis has resulted in the Protestant community securing a substantial amount of economic capital from Luo, presumably since they have proved their support for him in village elections. There is presumably the possibility of further funding for the church building project should Luo remain in power.

While the sums of money involved in the proposed construction of the new church building in the village are substantial but not unusual in China, the donations made for this new church are large indeed. It may not be that surprising that a Protestant couple (who run their own business) would consider making a donation, albeit one of such a sizable amount. Cao (2011) has certainly noted similar trends in Wenzhou. However, it is somewhat surprising that Village Chief Luo would openly make a donation for the construction of a church and even more surprising that he would donate such a substantial sum. He is confident that Protestants in the village will not “cause problems” 闹事 and through his protection of them he is seeking to garner support for future elections. We have also mentioned that this is something which happens in other parts of Huanghaicheng. Furthermore, it is clear in this brief analysis that the local state, in the form of village chiefs in the suburbs, is keen to maintain and bolster support from local Protestants for their own perceived political gains. However, in the long run as proselytising activities are over-looked and meeting places provided for local Protestants, the church in Huanghaicheng may be gaining a great deal more than is immediately apparent to the state.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Through the case studies in this chapter which looked specifically at the construction and expansion of church buildings in Huanghaicheng in the context of policies and regulations, we can see that there are a variety of unofficial structures and procedures which have been created as a result of the symbiosis between the Three-Self churches and the RAB and the embeddedness of the churches in the local state. These unofficial procedures help to supply various forms of capital which the churches are able to utilise for their own expansion. Of most significance is the economic capital gained through these interactions; some through the fund-raising efforts of local officials and some in the form of sizable donations from local officials. In the next chapter we will focus more on the “grey” area religious activities which help the Three-Self congregations in Huanghaicheng expand.

Chapter Eight

The “Grey” Congregational Activities of

Huanghaicheng’s Three-Self Churches

INTRODUCTION

The symbiotic nature of the relationship between the Three-Self churches and the local state has already been elucidated in Chapter Five and expanded in the last two chapters. We will see in this chapter how the Three-Self churches make use of this symbiosis to create space which allows them to engage in “grey” religious activities as outlined in Chapter One. The ambiguity in religious policy inadvertently encourages a culture of negotiation by which informal norms of practice are established. Where officials are aware of grey religious activity, they often “turn a blind eye” 睁一只眼闭一只眼. Other grey activities remain unknown to officials and we will see what strategies the Three-Self Protestant community employs to ensure the situation remains that way. We will look at two broad themes of grey activity in this chapter and the next. In this chapter we will analyse activities which generally take place within churches as religious activities venues. We will see how the state institutions are constrained by the socio-political environment which plays into the hands of the Three-Self churches and which churches actively seek to derive benefit from. Of course, while these activities generally take place within the Three-Self church community, they also affect people outside of the churches and aid in their expansion.

The mobility of Three-Self religious specialists

Local religious policy seeks to limit religious specialists from operating outside their own county or city district, as we shall see in detail below. The reason for these limitations is to reduce the chances for a well-connected body of religious specialists and congregations to develop. It is no secret that the state fears a repeat in China of what happened in Poland and the role of the Catholic Church in helping civil society to develop did not go

unnoticed (Kindopp, 2004c, 9). There may also be a desire to constrain the mobility of religious specialists in order that they concentrate on the work that they are supposed to do. The attempt to limit the mobility of clergy, however, is predominantly an anti-networking issue. In this case study, we will see that the Three-Self church religious specialists are highly mobile in where they preach although the full extent of this mobility can not be determined since clergy were generally reluctant to discuss this issue. We will focus particularly on four cases which involve the establishment of informal procedures or of the direct flaunting of the regulations. This is somewhat surprising because all preachers, elders and pastors have an “official” monthly preaching schedule worked out by the City Two Committees in Jinping and the TSPM Committees in the other districts. This schedule is often posted up on church walls and notice-boards or printed in church magazines for all to see. I argue that this preaching schedule is only one aspect of religious specialist activity in Huanghaicheng and yet it serves the purpose of establishing a veil of legitimacy similar to Weller’s (1987) “politics of ritual disguise” to avoid detection by the state. We will first look at the relevant policy documents.

Documents 19 and 6 do not detail the boundaries within which registered religious specialists can operate in terms of geographic area. The RRA, Chapter Three, Article 22 requires that religious groups or churches who intend to undertake a religious activity which exceeds the capacity of a church or if the activity crosses provincial boundaries, then an application should be made to the provincial-level RAB (Huanghaicheng RAB, 2007, 6). This suggests that only religious activities which cross provincial boundaries and are “large-scale” need to receive permission from the Provincial RAB. If this were the case, then religious specialists in Huanghaicheng would be free to travel within the city and into the counties as well as to other provinces in order to preach and preside over other religious activities, provided that they were not large-scale. However, other regulations set further limits.

For example, the PRMRA, Chapter Three, Article 23 stipulates that religious specialists who cross provincial boundaries (for religious purposes) should receive permission from the Provincial RAB (Huanghaicheng RAB, 2007, 18). Similarly, the PRMRA, Chapter Three, Article 24 further requires that religious activities which cross city districts should be reported to the Provincial RAB (Huanghaicheng RAB, 2007, 18). Even Pastor Zheng is required to seek permission from county-level Religious Affairs when he goes to preach or visit churches in his capacity as head of the City Two Committees. An examination of activities that contravene these regulations reveals the strategies which religious specialists employ.

Pastor Zheng told me himself that he thinks this asking for permission is troublesome 麻烦. Furthermore, he has found in several of the counties that township-level Religious Affairs personnel attempt to show off their position by asking unnecessary questions or being slow in their responses, thus hindering his work. Now, however, Pastor Zheng has negotiated an arrangement with many of the Religious Affairs officials. Pastor Zheng pointed out the fact that the officials are not always in the office during normal working hours or that he may have to visit an individual or a church outside of working hours. In both cases, it is impossible for him to get permission. He now generally “lets them know” 给他们打个招呼 (lit. “give them a greeting”) by telephone and this is framed in terms of him going to do something and letting them know about it rather than asking for permission. Furthermore, if the official is not in the office or if Pastor Zheng needs to make a visit outside of normal working hours, he has agreed with most of the officials to let them know after the event instead of waiting to be able to tell them. Sometimes, instead of letting them know either beforehand or afterward, he simply declines to tell them, especially if he was meeting with religious specialists who had also not received the necessary permission. This is a common strategy of appearing to play by the rules but then engaging in activity which is prohibited.

Having spent a great deal of time in Enlin Church I began to notice how often Pastor Xi visited. He preached several times during my stay in Huanghaicheng and also presided over several wedding ceremonies in Enlin Church. His frequent visits were in no doubt a result of the close relationship between Preacher Zhang and Pastor Xi. These visits were not “official” in the sense that either party had notified their respective Religious Affairs offices. Again, this is significant because Pastor Xi should have applied for permission to preach and preside over weddings at Enlin Church since he lived in a county outside the city. Furthermore, Pastor Xi was well known in Huanghaicheng and he could be easily recognised. Zhang always drove the fifty minute journey to Pastor Xi’s church to collect him when he came to Enlin Church and would always take him back again, a reflection of their close friendship. Pastor Xi’s wife always came along, too. This type of mobility is relatively easy to conceal from the authorities since the preaching schedule at Enlin Church was never published. As a result there was no record of who had preached during each meeting. Preaching schedules are regarded as an internal church issue. It is generally only when there are speakers from outside the district that it becomes a matter for the RAB/RAS since such visits should be reported. It is arguable that the symbiosis between the Three-Self churches and the RAB creates levels of trust which then bring a level of inattention by the RAB. This provides space for these “grey” activities.

This lack of reporting was a strategy used in other areas of religious activity related to clergy mobility. Only pastors and assistant pastors/teachers are allowed to conduct weddings. Due to the good relations between Pastor Xi and Preacher Zhang, Xi often presided over weddings at Enlin Church. Enlin Church, for example, did not charge any fee to couples who wished to marry in the church, so there was no public record of weddings which took place there. All of the wedding ceremonies which took place in Enlin Church during my year in Huanghaicheng took place on a Sunday morning at the end of the meeting. As with many wedding ceremonies in China, couples wishing to hold a wedding service in Enlin Church had to produce their marriage certificate 结婚证 issued by the district Civil Affairs Bureau 民政局 before the ceremony. For this reason, there was no “official” procedure at the time of the wedding ceremony and, therefore, no official record.

While at Chongfan Church in Xicheng, I was talking with some of the sisters after an evening Bible study meeting. The topic of conversation quickly moved to the subject of which Protestants I knew in and around Huanghaicheng. They asked me if I knew Elder Zhu from Moushan. When I said I knew her, they commented on what a nice lady she was and how well she preached. They also commented that she came sometimes to Chongfan Church to preach. When I saw Elder Zhu the following week, I asked her about where she was allowed to go to preach without seeking permission from the Religious Affairs Section. With a large grin on her face, she told me, “I go where I am needed. I go where God wants me to go.”

I found that this fluid approach to preaching was not uncommon in Huanghaicheng. Preachers, elders and pastors had an intimate knowledge of what was happening in some churches and it was evident that this knowledge came from first-hand experience. There was, evidently, a great deal of networking and sharing of resources throughout the Three-Self churches and between Three-Self churches and unregistered groups but this networking was often concealed to people they were not close to.

The mobility of Three-Self church workers was not always on the individual level; sometimes groups from one church visited another church. One example of this involves Preacher Zhang from Enlin Church. We have already established that Zhang has extensive contacts throughout the Protestant community in Huanghaicheng and in other parts of the country. Part of this network was established while Zhang was studying in seminary and he clearly regards maintaining these contacts as very important. In late spring of 2010, Zhang organised a four-day trip for the church choir of about twenty

young people to sing and “encourage” 鼓励 other churches. Preacher Zhang also said that this was a good opportunity for the choir members to “eat some bitterness” 吃点苦 which they will undoubtedly do if they are sent out from Enlin Church to be “missionaries” 传教士. This trip was significant because they went to another province to visit Three-Self congregations there and this contravenes religious policy in Huanghaicheng as we saw above.

I was aware that the choir had been preparing for something in the run-up to the trip but it was not announced until the Sunday they left. Preacher Zhang had ordered lunch for all those who were going and because he had ordered a few extra, he asked me to stay to eat. They set off in both church minibuses.¹³⁷ I (perhaps naïvely) assumed that they would be visiting other places in Huanghaicheng. It was not until they returned that it became clear where they had visited and the significance of the journey.

After the group returned, Zhang spoke at the youth meeting, giving a presentation which included photographs of the trip. The choir had performed not only songs but sketches and plays with a Biblical theme. They had taken with them a lot of outfits and props in preparation for the performances. The churches which they had visited were all registered and he knew the leaders of each church from his seminary days. Some of those who had been on the trip also shared their experience. Zhang’s main message of the evening was the importance of networking and encouraging other churches because he felt this caused Protestants to realise that they are part of a larger community. When I inquired about whether or not the trip was an “official” religious activity or not, he said, “It’s not an official 正式 activity because we didn’t notify the Religious Affairs Bureau.” The trip was also covered in the Enlin Church magazine the following month (see below).

The contravention of regulations on procedures for religious specialists is clearly not uncommon in Huanghaicheng. This flouting of official procedures takes two main forms. Firstly, as in the case with Pastor Zheng, a new informal procedure has been formed through processes of negotiation with Religious Affairs officials. Resistance to this from Religious Affairs officials has been minimal. Clearly, Pastor Zheng, as head of the City Two Committees has built an extensive network of contacts in Huanghaicheng and beyond. He has established effective working relationships with officials which facilitate the creation of informal procedures. In addition, because Pastor Zheng’s appointments are

¹³⁷ A sister had recently donated a second vehicle and Zhang had it serviced and had the Enlin Church emblem and address attached to both sides of the bus making both vehicles easily identified.

predominantly with other Three-Self church leaders, this is, first and foremost, the internal affairs of the church. For the Religious Affairs officials to send reports to the provincial-level RAB would be time consuming and as we have already seen, Religious Affairs officials generally have a wider range of different responsibilities at the lower levels, with religion work being only one of them. This organisational structure further encourages the officials themselves to establish their own informal procedures in order to alleviate workload issues.

Due to the regulations which limit the mobility of Three-Self religious specialists, it is highly significant that there are many unofficial preaching engagements undertaken at the request of district TSPM Committees or on an individual basis. Although the state seeks to limit the networking capabilities of religious specialists within the TSPM, it also means that in the eyes of religious specialists and lay believers, some of the needs of the Protestant community are not met. However, it is clear that many clergy are willing to work outside of this framework and accept preaching engagements without informing the relevant state organs. While senior religious specialists like Pastor Zheng have had extensive contact with Religious Affairs officials at a range of levels of the state, lower-level and less experienced religious specialists generally tend to have less contact with Religious Affairs personnel. It is due to this lack of contact and opportunity to establish connections with officials that such religious specialists are unable to establish informal structures and channels. If they place the needs of the church above the stipulations of regulations then they have little choice but to sidestep official procedures altogether. In order to do this they engage in preaching engagements and preside over other religious activities without informing the relevant Religious Affairs department. At the same time, the formal preaching schedules provide a veil of legitimacy for their official duties and a cover for these grey activities.

The mobility of Three-Self religious specialists has limits, however. Pastor Chi who was based in Jinpinging was eventually forced out of the church due to a trip he took to Hong Kong for training at a Pentecostal church. He took a group of believers from Huanghaicheng with him and on their return, Pastor Chi tried to change the form of the main Sunday worship meetings in Mashan Church by encouraging people to speak in tongues, prophesy and dance. Some of the believers in the Mashan congregation felt uncomfortable with what they felt was a forced style of worship and raised the issue with some of the other church leaders. Pastor Zheng was severely ill at the time having been in hospital for over six months but he was also informed and tried to discuss the issue with

Pastor Chi, pointing out the dangers of his actions for the Mashan congregation, and asked him to change his approach.

Several believers who supported Pastor Chi complained to the government, claiming that Pastor Zheng was interfering with Pastor Chi’s work. As a result, the RAB got involved which only elevated the situation. They conducted an investigation and it emerged that Pastor Chi had gone “abroad” to Hong Kong; a severe violation of religious regulations. Pastor Zheng, as head of the City Two Committees, was criticised by the RAB. However, after Zheng met with senior officials from the City RAB, they agreed to give Pastor Chi the opportunity to admit his mistake and put things right. The RAB requested that Chi write an “examination” 检查 “admitting his mistake.” Pastor Chi refused to do so. An elder and two other pastors, including Pastor Liu tried to persuade him to write the examination but Chi continued to deny that he had done anything wrong.

At the end of eighteen months, and after much discussion, the City Two Committees made a decision to remove Pastor Chi from the City Two Committees and to strip him of his title as pastor. According to Pastor Liu and Preacher Zhang, Pastor Chi left the TSPM and shortly after set up his own unregistered congregation in Jinping. A handful of people from Mashan Church left to go with him.

It was not the issue of the activities which Pastor Chi initiated in the Sunday worship meeting which got him into trouble but the fact that he had gone abroad for training without permission and then got found out. Pastor Zheng said,

“It would have been okay if he had just gone on his own to travel and visit the church [in Hong Kong] for whatever reason. But he didn’t do that. He organised a trip as a Three-Self pastor and took a group from here to represent the Huanghaicheng churches. That made it all the more serious.”

This reveals that there are limits on the acceptable mobility of Three-Self clergy. In the eyes of the local state, the mobility of religious specialists is undesirable if it goes unregulated because it is the activities which religious specialists are engaged in when they travel which are seen as potentially subversive. This type of activity can destroy the level of trust between the Three-Self churches and the RAB in particular. The fact that the City Two Committees was willing to wait so long for Pastor Chi to rectify the situation demonstrates the importance of qualified clergy to the TSPM structure.

The mobility of religious specialists in their preaching engagements which we have analysed in this case study arguably demonstrate that many TSPM religious specialists in Huanghaicheng, despite being willing to work within registered congregations are not divorced from meeting what they perceive as the needs of the wider church in Huanghaicheng. Preacher mobility is important to the Three-Self churches because there is a shortage of religious specialists to meet the perceived needs. Most breaches of regulations involve religious specialists going into neighbouring districts or counties. This makes sense since the Protestant community may cover an area straddling two different administrative zones. Clergy will seek to meet the needs which they can even if that means violating religious regulations. In addition, it is time-consuming and problematic to apply for permission. Any official permission leaves a paper trail and religious specialists seek to avoid appearing too well-connected over a broad area. There is no doubt that a desire to see the Protestant church expand is the main catalyst for such actions.

Children’s work in Huanghaicheng

The establishment of children’s work 主日学 (lit. “Sunday School”) has been a significant project in Huanghaicheng and one that is now highly institutionalised; for example, children are divided into classes in some congregations and in recent years the churches have developed materials and even established children’s work teacher-training programmes. The purpose in this case study is to describe in detail the various children’s works that are currently being run in Huanghaicheng as well as to analyse how the Three-Self churches in Huanghaicheng interact with the local state with regards to the issue of this work. Of central importance to this study is the status of these Sunday Schools with regards to religion policy as well as the perceptions of church leaders of this work in light of local religious policy. Our analysis will show that there is indirect permission granted by authorities to set up and develop work specifically for children in churches in Huanghaicheng. We will also see a change in attitudes by local Religious Affairs officials over time as there have been increasing calls to manage religion according to the law. However, we will also see that the issue of children’s work is still one that is sensitive with Religious Affairs and the PSB. We will conclude by positing some suggestions for these changes, including moves within the National Two Committees to engage with the issue.

There is no clear and definitive statement in national religious policies or regulations on the involvement of minors in religious activities and yet it is opposed in some, if not many areas of China, including Huanghaicheng. Some scholars suggest that minors are prohibited while others take an opposing view. For example, Yang Fenggang claims that allowing minors to engage in religious activity is against the law: “In China, . . . providing religious education to children under age 18 is mostly prohibited. Christian churches cannot lawfully hold Sunday school for children. Similarly, churches are not allowed to baptize youth under age 18” (Yang, 2006, 102). On the contrary, Daniel Bays asserts with confidence that, “Other widely believed untruths are that registered congregations are forbidden by law from bringing children to church or teaching Sunday Schools for those under 18. . . None of these is true” (Bays, 2009, 7).

When talking about children’s work in Huanghaicheng, however, neither of these statements would be quite accurate according to members of the City Two Committees, church leaders and lay believers. Religious Affairs officials in Huanghaicheng have been critical of attempts by the Three-Self churches to establish classes for children and youths under eighteen since the early 1980s and there are still suspicions today.

These reservations may be hangovers from older ideas regarding documents on religion. The Constitution would seem to guarantee freedom of religious belief for all citizens. However, some research would suggest there are myriad understandings of what constitutes a citizen in China, including the notion that a citizen is an adult over the age of eighteen (Keane, 2001, 1-2). The Constitution definition of citizenship is: “All persons holding the nationality of the People’s Republic of China are citizens of the People’s Republic of China” suggesting that both minors and adults are citizens, so there are no grounds in the Constitution for barring minors from religious activity. For example, in Document 19 (Part IV), one sentence reads “It will be absolutely forbidden to force [强迫] anyone, particularly people under eighteen years of age, to become a member of a church, to become a Buddhist monk or nun, or to go to temples or monasteries to study Buddhist scripture” (MacInnis, 1989, 15). While it is clear from this that the word “force” is important, it would seem that this is at least part of the root of the issue of children’s work in Huanghaicheng. In addition, Document 19 (Section XII) emphasises the idea that young people in particular should be taught “historical materialism” and a “scientific worldview” in order that they would have a correct understanding of “natural phenomena, the evolution of society, and of human life, with its old age sickness, death, and ill and good fortune” (MacInnis, 1989, 24-26). This suggests to some extent that the CPC policy in the past has been wary of teaching minors any alternatives to this. This idea is

reiterated in Document 6 (Part VI) (Asia Watch Committee, 1992, 34). There are also comments in Document 6 (paragraph 2) that young people have been a target of religious “hostile forces” and that religion has been used to “interfere with...education in schools” (Asia Watch Committee, 1992, 30).

The issue of minors has received special attention in such policy documents, even although there is no clear prohibition of minors engaging in religious activity. These statements appear to have been taken to mean that no minor should engage in religious activity and this has been an issue for Three-Self churches across China since the 1980s. For example, this idea was even published by the provincial-level Yunnan Two Committees in 1982 which reads: “It is forbidden to make converts among young people who are underage.” (Yunnan TSPM/CCC, 1987, 214). This prohibition was published by other provincial-level Two Committees in China but it would seem that recent developments at the provincial level where Huanghaicheng is located that no such prohibition now exists (even if it once did). Lastly, the RRA (Chapter 1, Article 2), states that it is prohibited to “force” 强制 anyone to believe or not to believe any religion but does not mention the issue of minors (Huanghaicheng RAB, 2007, 1). Similarly, the PRMRA does not mention anything concerning minors. Despite this lack of clear prohibition, the idea that religious practice should be limited to those over eighteen is still prevalent amongst some officials in Huanghaicheng.

Children’s work was revived shortly after the re-opening of the first church in Huanghaicheng, revealing the perceived central importance of Sunday Schools for the church.¹³⁸ However, the children’s work at this time and for some years after was effectively camouflaged to avoid drawing the attention of the authorities. As we saw in Chapter Three, Sunday Schools or children’s work was prevalent in Huanghaicheng in the missionary era. We have little information on what happened with the various children’s works after 1949 but we can assume with some confidence that they were stopped because we do know that in Huanghaicheng, as with the whole of China, education was nationalised early on and the CPC did not welcome the idea of anyone else providing any type of education outside of the state system. Pastor Zheng, the current head of the City Two Committees, was a new convert when Desheng Church was re-opened in the early 1980s and he was at the centre of the drive to initiate the children’s work in the church. He tells us in his own words:

¹³⁸ This has also been the case for Catholic congregations (Harrison, 2011).

At first, Sunday School wasn’t called Sunday School. You know, some people [that is, the authorities] would’ve thought that name wasn’t good... At first, we couldn’t set up a Sunday School. But the real meaning of Sunday School is that it’s on a Sunday, right? We weren’t allowed to set up a Sunday School and we couldn’t call it Sunday School so we called it ‘children’s class’ 婴孩儿班. Why? It’s quite simple. We had people coming with children and they needed looking after. It was like that at first. Then after a while a book called Bible Stories [圣经故事] became available in the Xinhua bookstore. It was a literary work 文学作品. So, if the Xinhua bookstore could sell that book then surely we could read it to the children, am I right? You know, it was difficult for the Religious Affairs Bureau to accept. But anyway, this book, it was bought outside; it wasn’t a church publication, so what could happen? We read it to the kids who came to our children’s class. But still for a while we couldn’t call it Sunday School. Later, this kind of thing happened a lot and we now have a really well-organised Sunday School but it’s really different from before. At first we were there to stop the children running around. We allowed them to watch television. And then the teachers began teaching them Bible stories and then Bible songs.

The Sunday School work in Mashan Church, which was re-opened in 1995, was strikingly similar to that in Desheng Church, as one of the current deacons (执事) related to me:

The Sunday School began after the church re-opened 恢复以后. There were a few children coming already that year because they came with their grandmothers or grandfathers or with their parents. Some of them were a bit noisy and upset the meeting so a room was prepared and Teacher Chen began the work with them on her own. She started to teach them how to read the Bible, some songs and gradually, more and more children came. Then a few younger sisters began helping out. So it all began just as the church re-opened.

This process occurred in other parts of China. See Ma (2008, 49-50) for a similar account.

As with Desheng Church, there was no direct interference from the local state; that is, the children’s work was not shut down. At the same time, however, it is clear that in the 1980s and into the 1990s, the issue of setting up children’s work in churches was taboo. The leadership here also made attempts to camouflage the work:

There really hasn’t been any interference 干涉 in the Sunday School work by the government. At the beginning we thought we should use a different word for the Sunday School because we were afraid of negative effects on the work. But it’s never been taboo 忌讳. We told them at one point we’d start to call it Sunday School. We get children along to church and then we allow them to accept Christianity from a young age.

In Huang (2003, 117), the RAB did not allow the village Three-Self church to operate a Sunday School but the church leaders have ignored this directive and established a children’s work anyway. In Tai’an (Shandong), under-18s are not allowed to receive “religious instruction” 宗教教育, a directive given by the RAB. However, in 2007, the

city’s main Three-Self church started to teach children in a small room. This church did make a formal application to the RAB to establish children’s work but the application was rejected. The church continued regardless (Wu et al, 2009, 191).

The leadership of Baisong Church also chose not to notify the relevant Religious Affairs personnel when they moved into their new building in 2000 and started an organised children’s work. There had been some attention given to teaching children in the faith when the church met in various homes in the area but something more formalised was set up when different groups were able to come together to worship in the new church building. The local Religious Affairs Section was aware that there were children attending Sunday meetings and Pastor Liu was questioned as to what the children were doing there. It is interesting to note, however, that Pastor Liu was never asked or forced to stop children coming along.

A few years ago things were a bit tighter 紧一点. I suppose that was twenty years ago. In the last few years the religious policy has loosened 松了. It goes without saying...but the man who was here before [in charge of Religious Affairs work], even if he saw a child come in he’d ask what was going on.

A similar view was presented by Elder Lu, also from Baisong Church and, again, it is interesting to note that the Baisong Church leadership were never forced to stop the work by the authorities and seemed determined to continue despite having to conduct the work in an environment where local officials were not really in favour of it:

Now they don’t bother us. We can do what we like with regards to Sunday School. When things were controlled tightly a few years back it wasn’t that convenient but now policy seems to be better year on year.

The camouflaging of children’s work was common in Huanghaicheng. As was the case in other churches, if asked, Pastor Liu and the other leaders would say that the purpose of the children’s work was to prevent worshippers from being disturbed during meetings. I heard this time and again from church workers and it seems to have been the standard justification for children’s work in churches until recently.

The deliberate changing of the name “Sunday School” was done for several reasons. Firstly, the term may have been linked with the Protestantism associated with missionaries. In the early days of reform, the link between Christianity generally and imperialism – real or perceived – was a sensitive area and pervades much of the literature

on Protestantism throughout the 1980s and 1990s.¹³⁹ Secondly, the religious nature of Sunday Schools was obvious and the religious instruction of minors was a taboo subject. Lastly, the idea of setting up anything in the way of an education institution was an issue that should be handled by the relevant state departments after permission had been granted. All these reasons make the use of the term “Sunday School” one which would attract unwanted attention from the authorities. I would argue that in contemporary Huanghaicheng, it is this last issue which is the most important.

The role of children’s work within the church is considered important for a variety of reasons. It is considered a normal part of every church. The importance of children in the Protestant faith is emphasised in sermons in the churches in Huanghaicheng. References are made to bringing children up in the knowledge of the Protestant faith.¹⁴⁰ In addition, children’s work is often a subject for prayer during Sunday meetings and at prayer meetings when requests are made for people to pray for the children who attend. There is an emphasis on the idea that they will be more knowledgeable on the Protestant faith if they are taught properly. This is presumed to have a positive effect on the numbers of people who stay in the church in later life and is believed to reduce the chances of people joining other (less orthodox) groups. The state perceives Three-Self churches to be teaching a kind of “orthodoxy” even although I would argue that the Three-Self churches in Huanghaicheng deviate from this orthodoxy in terms of performing exorcisms, faith healing and speaking in tongues which we will discuss later. However, this perception of Three-Self churches as orthodoxy is arguably part of the reason why the children’s work is condoned. This reasoning comes through in comments made by Pastor Zheng:

When I was in Shanghai [studying in seminary], I had quite a bit of contact with people there and then sometimes people came here when they were travelling. And I had contact with someone from the Shanghai Religious Studies Centre. They also thought that a church needs a Sunday School. People need to learn from the beginning. We can’t have people in the church who don’t even have the basics right...

The setting up of the work seems to have been fairly spontaneous and continues to be so today in new churches since it is seen by church leaders and lay believers alike as an integral part of the congregation. In the early days, there was more opposition from

¹³⁹ See, for example, Luo Weihong’s (2004) work on Christianity in China. In Huang and Yang’s (2005), study of a rural Three-Self church, the local Protestants use anti-imperialist rhetoric in order to side with officials. The museum in Huanghaicheng is a prime example of Protestantism-as-imperialism. The displays contain photographs of missionaries with captions that suggest the main reason for the presence of missionaries was to divide and weaken China.

¹⁴⁰ See, for example, Proverbs 22:6.

within the church than from the local state on the issue of children’s work. Pastor Zheng explained to me that when he first pushed the idea of starting up a children’s work, people in the church were reticent:

We didn’t bother telling anyone [in Religious Affairs]. There was no bother from the government. At first, there were people in the church who didn’t really support the idea.¹⁴¹ I think I have a good relationship with the government. They [lay believers] were worried about us getting into trouble.

The children’s work that began in Youfu Church was initially not highly organised and really started as elderly people brought their grandchildren along. People took it in turns to look after and entertain the children during meetings. As the church increased in size, the children’s work was consciously developed and made more formalised. The model of a highly-organised children’s work provided by Desheng Church served as a basis of comparison, a standard by which other churches could measure themselves. A preacher at Youfu related it in this way:

We didn’t have Sunday School when we first set up the church. It has taken time to get it established. At first, a few elderly women 阿姨 [lit. “aunt”] brought their grandchildren but we didn’t have any real Bible teaching or anything. Then the number of people coming increased. We have the same activities and meetings as other churches but we are still weak in some aspects. I mean, take the Sunday School as an example. How can we compare ours with Desheng Church? They have three levels of classes. Our Youfu Church isn’t at that standard yet but I believe in the future that it will be.

The Sunday Schools in Huanghaicheng’s churches vary as to the degree to which they are organised but some are highly institutionalised which is surprising considering the ambiguous legal status that children’s work has. The larger of the churches have well-established programmes while the smaller churches, which have fewer children, have a more modest set-up. In Jinping, the Desheng Church children’s work is overseen by one of the preachers, revealing how important the work is. She is responsible for the ten or so teachers and for all the children who number at least thirty and are divided into three grades or levels. Each class is generally managed by one teacher and an assistant at any one time.¹⁴² We saw in Chapter Three that rooms added to the church site serve as space for children’s work and are clearly labelled as such. In fact, they are labelled according to

¹⁴¹ This was due to the sensitivity of the issue. Most believers in Desheng Church in the early 1980s were elderly believers who had either experienced or knew people personally who had experienced the excesses of the political campaigns in the 1950s and 1960s. Many were reticent to attract negative attention from the authorities.

¹⁴² Many of these teaching assistants are students from local universities.

classes, demonstrating to what extent the children’s work has become a permanent part of the church. The children’s work also covers Saturdays when there are English classes and piano lessons.

In addition, the deaf and mute congregation attached to Desheng Church used to have a few children but they have now grown up and because of school commitments, can no longer attend due to the long days spent in classes and the large amounts of homework they are required to complete. There are no longer any children who regularly attend the deaf and mute congregation and so Teacher Liang sees no need to develop the work.

There’s no formal Sunday School. When the leaders’ children were young, they would bring them along. When the parents were busy, I helped look after them at the back. Now the kids have grown up, so there aren’t any children here. Very occasionally someone might come with a child, maybe someone who’s just become a Christian and started coming along...their kids are usually deaf and mute...about ninety percent of the children from deaf and mute parents will be deaf and mute also.

Mashan Church has eight children’s work teachers and about thirty children of varied ages divided into two classes but a lack of space prevents them developing much more.

According to Deacon Xun:

There’s quite a wide age range [in the Sunday School] so we have different classes. Two classes simply aren’t enough. We really should have at least three or four classes. Some have already started middle school and they still come. There are children who haven’t even started school yet at all. We are running out of room so we just have to make do with what we have.

Mashan Church will cater for children during the Saturday morning Bible study and the Wednesday prayer meeting as well as during Sunday meetings. Again, the classrooms 教室 used for the work are clearly signed and decorated with artwork produced by the children. Although Youfu Church is a much younger church, their children’s work has developed rapidly. They currently have three leaders, two of whom are experienced kindergarten education professionals. There were about twenty-five children in the children’s classes ranging from seven to early teens when I left Huanghaicheng. The teachers teach the kids English and calligraphy (besides the Bible).

As with Mashan Church, Youfu Church really wants to develop the work but limited space restricts them from dividing the children into classes. They currently only have access to one room in the rented building where they meet but even with limited space,

one sister explained, they were still able to do a variety of activities: “For example, in our Sunday School curriculum we have Bible study, [Bible] verse memorisation, and lots of other things. We have singing and we pray. We have all these things. These are all ways of leading the children [in their faith].”

The congregation at Xixia is even newer and despite being in its relatively embryonic stages had three teachers and six helpers for the children’s work when I left Huanghaicheng. The classrooms are clearly signposted at the front of the courtyard and the children seem to enjoy the newly-refurbished facilities. They related to me that they study the Bible, pray, sing songs and dance and learn verses from the Bible. As the congregation grows, they plan to expand the work and divide the children into different classes for which they have ample facilities.

The children’s work in Huanghaicheng continues to develop and take on a more high-profile status in the churches. During my time in Huanghaicheng, Pastor Zheng encouraged the introduction and development of a new idea in the churches in Jinping.¹⁴³ Pastor Zheng is concerned with encouraging young people to participate in church meetings, especially on Sunday. He wants to make sure that young people are better integrated into the church congregation while demonstrating to parents and grandparents the work of the Sunday Schools which he hopes will expand further.

Now we have another part to the work. We’ve now asked every Sunday School to take part in a Sunday meeting once a month by getting up on the platform to sing a hymn or song. That will help them in their learning. They won’t be there just to listen to the teacher; they will also be there learning about the church and, it will help them learn more about God. These are the things I’m concerned with in the church.

In all the other city districts, children take part regularly in festival performances but not quite as systematically as the new initiative in Jinping. The idea may catch on in the other congregations.

In Moushan, Baisong Church has a thriving children’s work which was initially started up by Pastor Liu’s wife and a retired university foreign languages teacher, Teacher Yu. As the church grew and Pastor Liu’s wife took on more responsibilities in the running of the church, the work was passed on to others. Teacher Yu also became too infirm to teach, and she also retired from this position. The rota for the children’s work is placed in several different locations in the main church building. There are currently about ten permanent children’s teachers and many other volunteers, as Elder Lu tells us:

¹⁴³ Jinping is often used as a litmus test to try out new ideas. Other churches often follow.

If you go now to look at the [Sunday School] rota there are at least ten voluntary church workers involved in leading the Sunday School work. There are at least ten Sunday School teachers. All us voluntary church workers serve in the Sunday School. Now I look after the oldest class with Brother Bai. Then there are others who aren’t on the rota... we call them the “floating population” 流动人口. We can call on them anytime to come and help if we need extra hands. There are at least ten of them. All our seminary students have come through the Sunday School.

The Baisong Church children’s work is divided into two classes, each with their own meeting room. One class is for smaller children and the other is more for younger youth (junior middle school age). During school holidays it was not uncommon for children to accompany their parents to the Friday choir practice and spend most of the day at the church playing and chatting.

Enlin Church regards the place they have for the children’s work as too small. They plan to try to create more space for the work in the planned new building in order to enable them to expand the work. Preacher Zhang also recognises that there are a lot of migrant workers whose children have no place to study or have difficulty gaining access to local schools. He would like to help them and sees this as an opportunity to proselytise. Teacher Zhou, a full-time staff member in charge of the work, explains it in her own words:

We have the kids divided roughly into three classes and we also have a crèche 婴儿教室 where mothers can look after their own young babies. So, basically we have three classes; one for threes to fives, one for sixes to eights and then one for nines to twelves. At the moment we have the six to twelve’s all studying in the same room. We wanted to have them separate but we don’t have the facilities right now. For me at the moment I feel that I have little energy to do the children’s work. I studied before [in seminary but] I haven’t actually studied how to do this kind of work even though I had previously been in charge of two Sunday School classes. So I only have a little experience. After half a year I had taught everything that I knew. I mean, teaching stuff about the Bible was no problem but I lacked knowledge in the area of arts and crafts, for example... or teaching skills. We now have a piano teacher and we do handcrafts, games, painting and things like that. We have teachers for these things now; my fellow workers 同工. We have someone to teach song and dance and someone to play the piano. We have other teachers to help look after the children. I teach the Bible...I teach simple stories and such... We also have time for games and snacks. We watch a cartoon at the end and then wait for the parents to come and pick them up.

As with some of the other churches, the children can have class every Sunday during the main worship meeting at Enlin Church. There is also someone available to look after children on Thursday evenings during the youth meeting or on Wednesdays during the prayer meeting. Although there are not as many children during these meetings, a teacher will be available to play with them rather than have a formal “class.”

Attached to this children’s work is a parenting class 家长课. This class is aimed at teaching parents how to raise their children but only women had taken part when I was in Huanghaicheng. These women are predominantly single mothers¹⁴⁴ 单亲母亲. It was the running of this class which brought about difficulties for Preacher Zhang when it was reported to the city-level Public Security Bureau (see below for details).

Xicheng Church, while much smaller than the above churches, has one leader and three helpers for the children’s work. Chongfan Church, the newest of all these churches has no formal children’s work but there are several younger ladies in the congregation who help to look after any children during church meetings. They are overseen by Deacon Han.

Since Sunday Schools are themselves an established institution within the Three-Self churches in Huanghaicheng, it should not come as a surprise that there is nothing haphazard about the way in which Sunday School teachers are selected. The children’s work reveals something of the scale of networks within and between the churches. Church leaders clearly have standards in the types of people they look for to take on the responsibility of guiding and instructing children in a variety of activities. These standards have been set by Pastor Zheng, the man who encouraged the growth of the work back in the early 1980s. As he says in his own words:

In our churches we have an administration committee 堂委会, like a diaconate 执事会. In the diaconate, we have someone who’s responsible for the Sunday School work. He/she will identify people to help, but they can’t be too old. If they’re too old they won’t be able to really look after the children. We want people who can sing, who can teach the principles of the Bible, that kind of thing... At the moment, the trend is to get younger people because they will teach better. Take Xixia Congregation, for example, the teachers are all about thirty years old. They are better educated as well as having graduated from colleges and universities. Now, we have a lot of people like that in the church. At first I wanted to request that people would be trained so that we would know if they were good enough or not but I couldn’t really say it because people weren’t at that level. If they have experience in children’s education as well as being a Protestant, then that’s best. However, there aren’t many people like that. That’s what the situation is at the moment.

This drive towards the professionalisation of the children’s work goes hand in hand with the development of the work taking a more visible role in the life of the churches, again, surprising considering the “grey” status of this work. The importance which church leaders place on getting who they regard to be quality teachers can be seen from one example where Preacher Zhang managed to persuade a young lady, Teacher Zhou, to give

¹⁴⁴ Most of these single mothers are divorcees but some are young, unmarried mothers. It is clear that by engaging in this work the Enlin congregation is questioning state categories of what constitutes family. I also met a Protestant believer who helped to protect an unmarried friend from having a forced abortion by allowing her to live for six months in his apartment before helping her to the countryside where she gave birth.

up her job and come and work as a full-time worker in Enlin Church, overseeing children and youth work. It is quite surprising that she was willing to give up a job and to agree to work in the congregation, which she did unpaid for a short while until it was agreed that she should be kept on to develop the work. Teacher Zhou recounts in her own words:

I couldn’t come to church because work was busy. When I did get a chance to come, I told Preacher Zhang my situation. He knew that I had experience in leading Sunday School work and he asked me to serve in the children’s work here. Then I had another couple of busy weeks at work and I didn’t have time to come to church. At that time he contacted me and asked me again to come and work with the Sunday School. I told him I had to sort things out at work... By the time I came again in late October, I had already prepared a month’s curriculum 课程 for the Sunday School. I had an opportunity that time to come to church and I said to Preacher Zhang that I was willing to come and serve in the Sunday School work and then I had him take a look at what I had prepared. He seemed really pleased and told me to come and start work. So, on the first Sunday in November in 2007, the Sunday School work began, here, in this very room. At that time I served here full time with no salary.

The roles and responsibilities of the children’s work teachers are also well-defined. It is clear that the purpose of the work is to teach children the Protestant faith. In order to attract children from both inside and outside the churches, a range of activities and subjects are covered and teachers suitable for different activities are selected. One preacher from Mashan Church related to me that “Some [teachers] teach painting and drawing, some teach singing, some teach English and some teach more faith-specific things. So, their jobs are laid out clearly.” While these activities may be available in the myriad weekend classes for children which are found throughout the city, the church classes remain popular and it is no surprise since many of the teachers are professional educators in their own right. Their enthusiasm for the work is clearly evident. The teachers I talked with were motivated by religious convictions and did not view the work as a job but rather as serving God.¹⁴⁵ Parents hold the classes in high regard and particularly like the fact that there is a relatively low teacher-student ratio compared to many of the weekend classes available in the city.

Training events for children’s work teachers have taken place in Jinping on two occasions. Deacon Xun from Mashan Church explained it in this way:

The teachers need to have training. We have done training in the past. We had a church worker who was in a university, Haidong University. She teaches children’s education. So, she prepared a faith-based curriculum and she set up training for Sunday School teachers. The training wasn’t just for our congregation; all the Sunday School teachers in all congregations [including meeting points] in the district took part in the two training

¹⁴⁵ Teacher Zhou (Enlin Church) was the only salaried children’s worker in Huanghaicheng.

sessions. That was in the last two years... But, the teacher isn't around at the moment because she is needed at the University.

Despite these training events, Pastor Zheng is not satisfied with the extent to which the work has expanded so far in Jinping. He sees a need for more training with the central purpose of exploring how to teach the children to read the Bible for themselves.

Now, there's a lot more going on. But in my heart, I still think we're not doing enough. We could still train the teachers more. We did have a teacher who trained the rest of the Sunday School teachers. That was the year before last and it was too short. She was only able to cover the basics of teaching for each age group. She's a teacher at the teacher-training university and she majors in education. I think we could do more. I mean, it's alright to say we need to help the children read the Bible, but how do we do that, that's the issue, right?

As we have seen above, there is a fair degree of organisation of the Sunday Schools work in Huanghaicheng. It should, therefore, not be too surprising that teaching and learning materials have been developed over time with some being quite sophisticated. The leaders of churches have been fairly savvy in their recruitment of helpers and many churches benefit from having children's workers who have backgrounds or experience in children's education 儿童教育. As we can see from the narratives below, materials are chosen to attract children, while at the same time the faith element is constantly emphasised. In Youfu Church, for example, one preacher told me:

We have study materials [for the Sunday School]. They're similar to the ones used in the other churches [in the district] although perhaps they aren't quite as detailed. Because we have all the children studying together we don't have different materials for all the levels but it's something we're working on.

In Mashan Church the leaders produce their own printed syllabus which is used along with other materials:

We have teaching materials for the children. They were written by one of our own fellow workers. We also have some materials from the National Two Committees. They are quite systematic and useful. We don't use all the materials but we use bits of them together with our own. We use what we consider useful.

Those involved with the Sunday School work in Baisong Church also use a variety of materials, as Elder Lu explains:

They don’t only study the Bible. We have a set of materials that we use. We have some for teaching English which are widely available. We also have some of the books for children’s work from the Provincial Two Committees. We have two teachers who are in charge of all the work and they have copies of their own materials. There are different sets of materials which we take turns in using. There are four or five different sets. We don’t only look at Bible stories. We also look at other stories like the short stories with a message 小故事大道理. As well as really trying to get the things of faith into their hearts, we also do these other things in order to attract them. Then they will listen and accept things from us. This makes them more responsive.

It is clear that there is the exchange of experience in running children’s work as well as of materials across the churches. The churches in Jinping seem to have shared a great deal of materials and other churches in the city are aware of what is going on in the other congregations. There is even the sharing of materials from other parts of the province. I met one businessman who spent some time in Huanghaicheng. He had previously been a senior leader in children’s work in another city in the province. He had also helped extensively with children’s work in a large network of unregistered churches in Beijing. As well as having experience with leading children’s work, he had experience of materials writing and I know that he spent time with Teacher Zhou from Enlin Church exchanging ideas and making suggestions for children’s work teaching materials. These are the kinds of exchanges which are taking place on a regular basis between believers and leaders from a range of different church backgrounds.

These exchanges do not simply provide material resources, however. They also provide a sense of solidarity and as a result, Pastor Zheng now feels more confident than ever that he can encourage the churches in Huanghaicheng to expand their children’s work. He points out that officials now say very little on the subject and that old ideas about religion and its relationship to the state are slowly changing. There is still a hint of tentativeness in his tone, though, suggesting that the status of the children’s work is still sensitive to some degree.

Now we’re aiming to buy books that the students will want to use. We also have those books from the National Two Committees. We got them shipped in from Hong Kong. They have Bible stories in cartoon format. They use those every week. Now the government doesn’t say anything 没有话. Even *Tianfeng* has reports and activities about children... There used to be an issue with ideas 思想, especially the notion that the Party and Protestantism were in contest 争夺. There were people who didn’t think like that but there were people [in the local state] who thought in that way. It [the issue of Sunday School] wasn’t clear in the past. Even Document Nineteen [wasn’t clear]. Now it has lost much of its influence. The Regulations on Religious Affairs 宗教事务条例 is the new thing. The effects of Document Nineteen and Document Six aren’t very big. It’s pretty much that way.

The profile of the children’s work was high throughout my time spent in Huanghaicheng. There were children’s classes’ performances during the major festivals of Christmas and Easter, as well as Harvest Thanksgiving. For example, at all the Christmas services I attended there were several performances given by children from the children’s classes. At one packed-out service in Mashan Church, twenty-seven children, accompanied by five adult leaders sang songs and danced to modern dance tunes. Two of the children spoke briefly about the meaning of Christmas and concluded by saying, “We give thanks [to God] for sending Jesus and thanks for new life in Him.” This particular performance ended with one boy saying, “In our Sunday School we study the Bible, memorise verses, learn how to pray and learn songs. Jesus loves us!” This certainly came across like an advertisement to those children at the meeting who did not attend children’s classes. Other performances included children playing tunes to Protestant songs on traditional folk instruments. Similar performances were given by the children’s classes in Youfu Church. At the start of one performance, one child announced, “It’s because of God’s love that you [Jesus] came to be born among people.” They then performed a dance to a modern, upbeat tune from Korea that I had heard before. The dance was quite complex and the children were helped along by one of the young children’s work leaders. A variety of dances and songs were performed by children from the different children’s classes in Enlin Church as well. A similar style of performances were made at Easter meetings in all the churches and Enlin Church also had a whole day of events, including dances and songs by the children, on Harvest Thanksgiving Sunday. All of these events were videoed and photographed so that copies could be made for those who took part. Photographs and video were even put online by Enlin Church and could be viewed by anyone visiting their church QQ webpage.

Yet, perhaps most surprising, considering the ambiguous status of children’s work, was the event held for the children’s classes in Jinping. There was no forward announcement given in meetings leading up to the event. I found out about it from a preacher who told me about it and said that it may be of interest to me. It was a Saturday in early March and I turned up at Desheng Church in the early afternoon. There was a huge red banner 条幅 hung above the stage which read “[Huanghaicheng] Church Children’s Worship” [黄海成] 教会儿童崇拜. Before the official start time, Preacher Fang went through some songs with the children. It was announced that the day was World Prayer Day 世界祷告日 which was the first I knew of it. The meeting included children from all the churches and some of the meeting points in Jinping. Some parents were in attendance but the event seemed to be aimed entirely at the children, many of whom took part in the meeting as it progressed.

It was led by two preachers and included singing, prayers and a short talk about the gospel and the need to consider those in other countries who needed help. The meeting finished with photographs and in traditional fashion people left fairly quickly at the end of the whole event. When I questioned the two preachers who had organised the event, they told me that there was no need to apply for permission or notify the RAB because it was not considered a large-scale religious activity. At the same time, they could not define exactly what a large-scale religious activity actually was. However, I do not think that the situation is simply that clear cut and I would argue that the manner in which the event was staged reveals something of another strategy employed by the churches in Huanghaicheng when engaging in grey area activities. The way in which children were encouraged to participate in singing and in the rehearsed prayers is another example of the way in which Pastor Zheng is seeking to encourage children to become more involved in the life of the church. He sees this as an important basis for the church in the future, as well as a prime source of new leadership.

Brother Bai, one of the young men who was at that time hoping to take the seminary entrance examination in 2011 and who had just finished high school planned to work in Baisong Church for a year to get further experience. He told me the following when I questioned him about his experience in the Baisong Church Sunday School:

I was here when the Sunday School was first set up and I was part of the first group of children. It really gave me a feeling of the warmth of home. It made me feel like we were all blood brothers and sisters; it was that sort of happiness. We were surrounded by love. I felt that when I played with children from society there was always a slyness about them; a dishonesty. Every Sunday we came here, I felt like I was heart to heart with the other children. We were all equally honest with each other and there was nothing sly about us at all. It was like that whatever we did. Everything was done in love. There was nothing nasty. There was no need to read into what others were saying to get the meaning or to know how to treat somebody. There was openness and honesty. Even now, regardless of whether we are together with the fellow workers, or the elders, or Teacher Qian we feel really good, really happy. They are like mothers. The love that the aunts and uncles give us is like our own mothers and fathers. I remember when I first opened my shoe store it was winter and it was snowing but at six o'clock in the morning, Aunt Li came with breakfast for me. Because I was there on my own I didn't really make breakfast. I was lazy on my own. Really lazy. The breakfast she brought was soup but it was a kind of soup that I don't like drinking. But I was really touched so I forced myself to drink it. I drank it all at once. Although I didn't enjoy drinking it, I drank it because I was thankful to her. She made me feel loved. I think she is really great. She was like a mother to me. Here, it doesn't matter whether you're ill or have some issue, you just have to tell one of the aunts and she'll do her best to help. That kind of love is holy 神圣的. It reminds me again that the community in Jesus is ideal, it's blessed. It's the love of Jesus that binds us together. It's the love of Jesus that makes strangers become one big family, a big collective; a collective full of love. It's great. It's really great.

There were similar comments from other young people who had come through the children's classes and I think that this sentiment demonstrates the value that the young

people place on their experience in this work. They valued the feeling of community that the children’s classes and the wider church provided. Many, like the young man above, also emphasised how they felt the church was different from school because of the degree of trust they could place in the adults and the other children.

It is clear that the Three-Self churches in Huanghaicheng utilise their registered status and relationship with the local state to employ strategies which facilitate the expansion of the congregations. Despite the initial restrictions placed on the churches by the RAB with regards to establishing a children’s work, Pastor Zheng proceeded to encourage activities for the children. At first, the churches camouflaged the work as basic childminding so as not to attract negative attention from the state and second, by changing its name. Pastor Zheng was quick to utilise the collection of Bible stories published by a state-owned publisher which added a degree of legitimacy to the developing children’s work.

Yet another issue which makes it difficult for the RAB to systematically disallow children’s work is the drive to train younger clergy. This state-driven policy means that there is a need for younger Protestants with the potential for church leadership to be firstly, be recognised, and secondly, to be encouraged to think about sitting the seminary entrance examination. For this to happen and be sustainable in the long-term, there needs to be a pool of younger Protestants from which candidates can be selected.

The work in Desheng Church has clearly become a model for the other churches in the city. Activities acceptable to the churches in Jinping are quickly mimicked in other districts. The fact that the Jinping churches are managed directly by the City Two Committees gives their activities a heightened sense of legitimacy and a degree of authority that perhaps is not so evident on other congregations. The City Two Committees, therefore, serves as a form of protective umbrella to the Three-Self churches. In addition, it is clear that the children’s work is increasingly institutionalised and has become the norm in the Three-Self churches. This form of institutionalised practice makes it ever more difficult for the authorities to interfere or prohibit despite what policy documents or regulations might suggest.

However, an incident which occurred while I was towards the end of my time Huanghaicheng serves to illustrate the point that such church projects still have an ambiguous status. The parenting classes run by Enlin Church were reported to the City PSB by a local police officer 片警. The City PSB then contacted Department Chief Dong to seek further information regarding the classes which had been reported as an illegal

adult education programme. The City PSB told Dong that they would investigate the matter. Preacher Zhang had had contact with the police officer when the church first moved into the building. According to regulations, fire safety equipment needed to be installed. The local police officer had relatives in the fire safety business and he tried to pressure Zhang into ordering the equipment from them. Zhang refused on the basis that if he “gave in” once, the police officer would come back with further demands. It seems that the reporting of the parenting classes was an act of revenge. However, if the matter is investigated, Preacher Zhang feels that the church would receive attention that would be detrimental to some of their other projects.

We have seen in this case study of children’s work in Huanghaicheng several aspects of the dynamics between church and state but most significantly, how the Three-Self churches capitalise on their symbiotic relationship to the local state. We have seen how the churches camouflaged the children’s work in the early 1980s both in terms of content and name. We have also seen how the work has become increasingly institutionalised as the work has developed in other churches in the city and as materials were published first by a state-owned publisher and then by the Provincial and National Two Committees. The churches have also been quick to utilise the socio-political environment where the state has emphasised the need for younger (and better-trained (read “politically reliable”) clergy as well as fears of heretical groups which are perceived to destroy social harmony. These strategies reveal the churches as active actors negotiating grey areas in policies and regulations in order to forward the mission of the churches, leaching authority from the RAB. The churches are able to further their mission by utilising their role as supporters of the state and preachers of an orthodoxy palatable to state definitions of religion while developing their own programmes. Lastly, the case study revealed the still ambiguous position of some aspects of the work with Enlin Church facing investigation for providing training not to children but to parents.

Baptism of minors, cadres and Party members

“Grey” baptisms in Huanghaicheng reveal the emphasis which the churches place on growth as well as their reach into the local state. As with the establishment and development of children’s works in the Three-Self churches of Huanghaicheng, the importance of grey-area baptisms should not be underestimated. When we grasp the manner in which local believers perceive baptism, the baptism of minors and Party

members becomes even more significant. There are three main categories of grey-area baptisms: minors, baptisms conducted outside religious activities venues and baptisms of Party members (and other cadres). Since these activities are prohibited in Huanghaicheng, the prevalence of such activity reveals that the churches place more emphasis on the ritual which solidifies membership than prohibitions which the state has great difficulty in even regulating let alone implementing. I would also suggest that, in particular, the baptism of cadres and Party members reinforces the belief in the churches that the message of Protestantism has more to offer than the CPC. However, it must be stressed here that the Protestants in Huanghaicheng with whom I talked did not see the church or their own faith in direct opposition to the state or the CPC in particular. People sometimes prayed for the leaders of China during church meetings and asked God to give them wisdom in their decision-making. On one occasion, a believer asked God to save the “lost leaders” of the country. We will begin our analysis by looking at policy and regulations.

Although there is no restriction on baptising minors in religious policy and regulations relevant to Huanghaicheng, the church leaders have been told in policy training classes with the RAB as well as during their seminary training that the baptism of minors is prohibited.

In relation to the baptism of Party members, policy documents are very clear on the matter. Document 19 (Part IX) states: “The fact that our Party proclaims and implements a policy of freedom of religious belief does not, of course, mean that Communist Party members can freely believe in religion. The policy of freedom of religious belief is directed toward the citizens of our country; it is not applicable to Party members” (MacInnis, 1989, 20). Document 6 (Part VI) also reiterates the policy that Party members are not to believe in religion (Asia Watch Committee, 1992, 34).¹⁴⁶

Lastly, the PRMRA (Chapter Three, Article 21) allows certain named religious practices to be conducted at funeral parlours and hospitals (amongst other places), suggesting that it would be acceptable to conduct the baptism of a terminally ill believer in a hospital (Huanghaicheng RAB, 2007, 17-18). However, religious specialists in Huanghaicheng were criticised by the RAB for baptising people who had requested it in hospitals. The baptisms that the clergy conducted in private homes went unnoticed but they felt that they would be criticised for doing so.

¹⁴⁶ Candidates joining the CPC are also required to sign a statement stating that they support the idea of atheism.

It is interesting to note that in the accounts given by church leaders, they never mentioned policy, regulations or the RAB when describing their decision to baptise minors or not. Pastor Zheng’s account is indicative of such descriptions:

There aren’t many children baptised in Huanghaicheng. One of the meeting points in Jinghai called me to conduct baptisms there. It was a Korean minority congregation led by Piao Cheng. Well, anyway, I went to help them with baptisms. They sprinkle water to baptise because the Presbyterian tradition is still strong. There was a believer and she had a daughter who was seven or eight years old and another with a girl who was twelve or thirteen. The parents were from the Northeast and they asked if I would baptise the children. It was a little difficult for me because we usually don’t baptise minors 未成年. In church history there are traditions which say that it’s okay and church traditions that say it’s not okay. I had a think about it and then decided it was okay because that’s what they really wanted. They really watched out for their children. These children are lives 生命. The second reason I decided to do it was because that’s their own view. That’s how they understand it. So, if parents are clear about what they’re doing and still want to go ahead then I’ll do it.

Pastor Zheng’s decision was based on the perceived needs of the believers and respect for their theological tradition. The issue of policy or regulation is not central to the debate. This theme can be seen in the following comments made by a preacher involved in vetting candidates for baptism (although she did not have the authority to conduct the baptisms herself):

I think it’s fine to baptise children. This can be accepted. An eight or nine-year-old child being baptised is usually very important for the parents, right? If parents think that it’s time for their children to get baptised then that shows that they really care for their child. It’s the responsibility of parents to look after their children in all areas of life. One important aspect of this is hoping for your child to get baptised. I think in this case the children should be accepted. I know that in some countries children are baptised when they are very small and then later they get confirmed 坚信礼. This has been part of church tradition in China but I don’t have any experience of it at all. If there was something like that then I’d want to have a look.

Again, there is no mention of policy or regulations in this commentary. The baptisms of these minors were simply not reported to the City Two Committees by the individual church and meeting point leaders. This was an unspoken agreement between the churches and the City Two Committees. It is the responsibility of the individual church and meeting point leaders to vet the candidates for baptism, so even although it was the elders and pastors who conducted the baptisms, they simply did so without asking questions, leaving the onus on the congregation’s leaders. In this way, the leaders in the City Two Committees could play down the numbers of minors who were baptised should they ever be questioned by the authorities and the churches could continue to encourage the faith of the younger believers.

In Huanghaicheng, a clear distinction is made between infant baptism 婴儿施洗 and the baptism of believers 信徒施洗 regardless of their age. From what I can establish, infant baptism is not commonplace in Huanghaicheng which may, at least to some extent, be a reflection of pre-1949 denominational traditions. We have described in Chapter Four the officially-sanctioned procedure which allows believers to be baptised.

However, there were minors baptised in all eight churches in which I conducted research. Pastor Zheng, the head of the City Two Committees, baptised babies from time to time. This usually took place in congregations predominantly made up of Korean minority 朝鲜族 Protestants due to their affiliations with the Presbyterian tradition, which recognises child baptism. I witnessed some of these baptisms myself during 2010 when I observed the different baptism days for the four city districts. In the Enlin Church baptisms, several children were baptised and a member of the Provincial Two Committees was there to preach. He had no issues with the minors being baptised.

It was also common for believers in their teens who were recruited into the church choir or became involved in some other church activity such as children’s work to be baptised quietly in a simple ceremony with a few friends or family members. This is another strategy for the church leaders to avoid confrontation with the RAB or other state actors. Before Christmas in 2009, a fourteen-year-old choir member was baptised by Pastor Liu in Baisong Church in order that he could be in the choir and wear the choir gown 圣依 (lit. holy clothes).

As religious activity, baptisms should be conducted within a registered religious activities venue. However, until recently, many of the baptisms conducted in Xicheng took place in the river which flows along the edge of the urbanised area of the district. Even Sister Shen, now one of the preachers in Yongding Church, was baptised there when she was in her teens. The reason she gave for the baptisms no longer being conducted there was that the river had become too polluted, and not that the RAB had cracked down or someone had been criticised for it.

Baptisms conducted for believers close to death in hospitals received criticism from the RAB. It is difficult to be discreet about such an activity in the busy hospitals in Huanghaicheng and the news of such activities sometimes got reported to the RAB. However, this did not prevent the pastors and elders from conducting the ritual. In fact, in one sermon, Assistant Pastor He described in detail a baptism he had conducted on a new

believer who was close to death.¹⁴⁷ He told me personally that this was one issue that he wanted to see a change on in the religion regulations. Pastor Zheng had also raised this issue with the Provincial People’s Congress when he served his five-year term, showing the importance of the issue to these leaders. There had not been any official change by the time I left Huanghaicheng. However, the desire to engage with the issue and negotiate along official channels still demonstrates that the church leaders do not really want to engage in activities which are either illegal or whose status is ambiguous.

Lastly, we have seen that policy prohibits CPC members from believing in religion. In Huanghaicheng, the pastors and elders baptised Party members on a regular basis. These baptisms were conducted in private after the candidates had been vetted by the church leaders. Churches made no records of these Party-member baptisms.¹⁴⁸ The same thing happened for many serving cadres who requested baptism. While the regulations do not prohibit non-Party member cadres from believing in religion, some believers had encountered problems with their work unit. One sister, a librarian in a school, was requested by the school principal to be at work in the library on a Sunday, even although the library was not open on that day. This happened after she handed out gospel leaflets to her colleagues and effectively meant that she could not attend the Sunday morning worship meeting. This reveals the sensitivity with which belief in religion and the practice of such beliefs still has within some state institutions and why cadres who get baptised chose to do so clandestinely.

The Party members who have been baptised tend to keep their faith quiet and many do not attend large church meetings regularly. Most of those who I was able to speak to had already retired and had become quite involved in church life. Senior members of the City Two Committees and the District TSPM Committees claimed to know “quite a few” 不少 CPC members and cadres who were Protestants. Pastor Liu and the elders at Baisong Church told me that the head of the RAS in Moushan said that he wanted to join Baisong Church when he retired, although he had not yet made a claim that he was a Protestant. While it is difficult to verify these reports, the frequency with which I heard these accounts tells us that some officials in Huanghaicheng are Protestant believers and this is

¹⁴⁷ He used this as an illustration of what people think is important in life. At the same time he emphasised that if the believers had not been baptised before he passed away, he would still have gone to heaven but the important point was that despite his pain, he wanted to receive baptism as a sign of his love for God.

¹⁴⁸ Madsen (2011, 19) reports that the PSB has conducted surveys within the CPC and the results show that perhaps 15% of CPC members are religious believers.

significant because church leaders and lay believers can sometimes utilise these connections for the benefit of the church as we have already seen.

We have seen in this case study that locally-prohibited baptisms are prevalent in Huanghaicheng. The baptisms of babies, other minors and Party members are sensitive and the churches and City Two Committees leadership play down the numbers while allowing, if not encouraging, the practice. Churches generally conduct these baptisms in secret and almost always fail to report such baptisms shielding themselves and those who were baptised from any criticism from the RAB. The needs of believers are placed over the stipulations against conducting baptisms outside officially registered religious activities venues. It is arguably because the baptism of minors and the baptism of the terminally ill in hospitals occupy a grey area in terms of religion policy and regulations that churches are able to continue such practices without significant reprisals from the authorities. The baptism of CPC members and other cadres tend to take place in secret thus shielding them from the RAB. It is certainly likely that the congregations can benefit from recruiting highly-connected officials in terms of resource flow.

“Superstitious”¹⁴⁹ activities

This case study reveals the prevalence of “superstitious” activities in Huanghaicheng’s Three-Self churches. In Chapter Three, we discussed “religion” and “superstition” as categories used by the state to delineate the boundaries of activities. These categories have been directly informed by debates associated with modernity and what constitutes “religion” in modern states in the last one hundred years or so. This debate was prominent amongst missionaries to China in the first half of the twentieth century as well as amongst Chinese reformers themselves. The issue of “supernatural” 超自然 activities has been a thorny one and has been specifically mentioned in policy documents since reforms began, often being equated by the state with “superstition.” For example, superstition is seen as an issue affecting the uneducated and those with little scientific knowledge (MacInnis, 1972, 189-190; MacInnis, 1989, 390-391) and includes prayer for healings, fortune-telling and exorcism, (MacInnis, 1989, 390-410). Some scholars have drawn parallels

¹⁴⁹ These activities would be what some may call “supernatural” – miraculous healings, visions, dreams, prophecies, and glossolalia. I do not seek to explain these phenomena in this dissertation, nor do I see the need to because I am primarily interested in the perceptions of what the participants in this study see as happening. While I think that these perceptions require further study, this is not an objective of this study.

between some Chinese Catholic practices and popular religion (see Madsen, 2001; Madsen 2004a).

In recent documents connected with the crackdown on *Falun Gong*, particular activities such as miracles, praying for healing and exorcism and visions have all been named as the activities of “evil cults” (see Shiwei xuanchuanbu 1999a; Shiwei xuanchuanbu, 1999b). Such activities are not regarded within the state’s concepts of religion as normal religious activities and are suspected of upsetting the social order or harming the health of citizens. However, claims of healings were widespread in Huanghaicheng and were a significant reason why people joined the church. This has been a common phenomenon across China and is frequently given as a reason by many people for converting to Protestantism. Dreams and prophecies are also a part of the life of the church and I also met many Protestants who claimed that they could speak in tongues 说方言.¹⁵⁰ These activities are regarded by many in the Three-Self congregations as an integral part of Protestantism and a means by which God interacts with the world.

Document 19 (Part X) clearly equates superstition with counter-revolutionary activities (MacInnis, 1989, 19-20). Document 19 does not specifically name any superstitious practices but the category of “normal” religious practice could exclude practices which are specifically named in other official documents as superstitious such as faith healing, fortune-telling and exorcism.

The RRA (Chapter 1, Article 3) indirectly connects religious activities which are not “normal” with activities which “upset social order, harm the health of citizens, or obstruct the state education system” (Huanghaicheng RAB, 2007, 1-2). The PRMRA (Chapter 1, Article 2) makes similar statements, emphasising the concept of “normal” religious activity (Huanghaicheng RAB, 2007, 14).

Specific “superstitious” activities have been named as prohibited in provincial-level TSPM/CCC regulations in the past. Exorcism and faith healing without seeking medical help were both specifically mentioned in the Yunnan TSPM/CCC regulations (Point 6) (Yunnan TSPM/CCC, 1987, 214). However, I was unable to find any evidence to suggest that the Huanghaicheng City Two Committees banned these practices. In fact, as we shall see below, these practices were even encouraged by members of the City Two Committees and Three-Self church leaders.

¹⁵⁰ See Ma (2008, 11-12) for a description of similar activities.

In the Huanghaicheng training handbook for RAB personnel the difference between “religion” and “superstition” is discussed. Religion is protected by law, whereas superstition is not. The handbook also states that “As long as they do not obstruct socio-political life or economic life, or violate the Constitution or laws, the government will generally not interfere with individual superstitious practices” (Huanghaicheng RAB, 2004, 110). No specific practices are named.

The belief in the supernatural intervention of God in the world and in the lives of believers and non-believers alike is part and parcel of the faith of many Protestants in Huanghaicheng’s Three-Self churches. Church leaders and believers alike claimed that they had been “moved by the Holy Spirit” 圣灵感动. This experience was seen to help change people’s lives and was regarded as a direct experience of God, as a senior member of the City Two Committees told me:

When I first believed I experienced the filling of the Holy Spirit and my life changed. I felt that my whole person, my whole outlook on life had changed. My emotions and every aspect of my life had changed. I became really cheerful and happy. So, the first thing that I experienced was that God can change a person completely. He can heal any of the hurts that are in your heart. He can heal things that this world can never heal. Jesus can heal these things. This is something I experienced in the beginning. God got a hold of me on this one thing because up until that point I had never experienced such happiness, such joy or such peace. So, God changes us when we are here on this earth. And then he gives us eternal life and calls you to serve him. This is the most precious thing that you could have in this life.

This idea of being “moved by the Holy Spirit” had a close connection to the practice of glossolalia and other supernatural activity. Believers regarded the moving of the Holy Spirit as God’s active participation in their lives and a signal that he could help believers speak in tongues or heal people.

The most direct evidence of a broad consensus in the Three-Self churches on supernatural activity during my time in Huanghaicheng was during a series of Bible studies on the book of 1 Corinthians and Chapter 12 which lists “gifts” 恩赐 which the Holy Spirit 圣灵 gives believers.¹⁵¹ These are the positions of apostle 使徒, prophet 先知 and teacher 教师, the ability to perform miracles 行异能, heal 医病, provide help 帮助, administrate 治理事, provide a word of wisdom 智慧的言语, give a word of knowledge 知识的言语, discern spirits 辨别诸灵, speak in tongues 说方言 and interpret tongues 翻方言. All these gifts were said to be important for the Three-Self churches in Huanghaicheng. To emphasise the importance of these spiritual abilities, the preacher asked everyone present to write down

¹⁵¹ The preacher spent several months going through the book of 1 Corinthians and she spent three weeks on the topic of “spiritual gifts.”

what gifts they thought they possessed and then had a time for questions the following week. This was not simply a passive admission that these ideas were practiced in Huanghaicheng but was a detailed statement regarding acceptable activity in the churches and meeting points and the active mobilisation of lay believers by the religious specialist to seek these gifts and practice them.

There were many reports of healings in the churches and these were often talked about when people gave their testimony 见证. Some claimed to have been healed of cancer, some miraculous recovery from near death and some claimed healing from addiction such as gambling or alcohol. Healings for a wide range of illnesses were a common topic during the prayer meetings and in requests for prayer in church literature (such as the Youfu Church magazine). One church leader recounted that he had prayed for people and that they had been healed as a result:

I’ve prayed for others and been prayed for myself and have seen relief from pain brought to people. I’ve seen people healed from illnesses like children with a fever. I’ve seen parents with some serious illnesses, the kind that you can’t pull yourself out of, be healed when we have got down on our knees to pray. Sometimes the pain is eased or the stress is taken away. This kind of power comes from God who gives us the ability to overcome 战胜 the difficulties we find ourselves in.

Other healings were specifically connected with the work of “evil spirits” 邪灵. Elder Xie claimed to have the gift of driving out demons 赶鬼 and regularly met with people who were deemed to be suffering from spirit possession to pray for them. One lay believer I talked to related this account of her healing:

I used to be a teacher and teach classes but then I got ill and developed mental difficulties. Then my husband was involved in a car accident and nearly died so he couldn’t work. Later, because of the crash, he believed in God. Thank God. He often says that if he never had that crash then he would not have believed. He’s already believed for seven years. I was ill. Satan was on me. I used to have attacks. There was a small Protestant gathering in my house and my husband laid hands on me and prayed for me with the other brothers and sisters. Satan left me and now I’m well. I’m now really happy in my work.

Similarly, a preacher related to me his experience of driving away a demon:

There was a woman who had a demon attached to her. It was like her whole person 整个人 was unconscious and she was talking strangely. When she spoke it wasn’t her voice. A few of us went to her house to pray for her and cast the demon away. We started to pray for her and while we were praying...I experienced this myself...the wardrobe started to shake. Whenever we prayed there was this sound. The lady herself spoke as we prayed. She spoke the words of demons 鬼的话, such as, “What have you come here to do?” Then

there were more noises in the house. At the time I felt quite scared. It put shivers down my spine. We all heard the noises in the house as we were praying together, as we were unified in prayer together for the sister. After we had prayed she was peaceful and normal. After the event she came along to church and was a normal Christian. This was a success.

It was surprising how many of the accounts of exorcism which I listened to contained similar themes. An unconscious-like state was often mentioned as was speaking in a voice which was not the normal voice of the person affected. Other physical abnormalities such as rooms or cupboards shaking or windows rattling were common.

I also heard of “miracles” 奇迹 such as the multiplying of *mantou* at a church gathering where they ran out of food or of the local mafia 黑社会 (lit. “black society”) deciding not to steal building materials when the young girl looking after the yard prayed. I also heard accounts of God-given “dreams” 梦; for example, Preacher Zhang established Enlin Church after a dream. I heard believers speaking in unintelligible languages at prayer meetings,¹⁵² which they described as “speaking in tongues.” Some of the church leaders and members of the City Two Committees also claimed to have the gift of speaking in tongues. Pastor Liu’s wife apparently prophesied that a member of the church who had given birth to a girl with severe mental deficiencies would one day give birth to a healthy son. The girl died at a young age and the believer gave birth to a healthy son. One elder claimed that his spirit 灵 could leave his body to commune directly with Jesus.¹⁵³

While I could give further detailed accounts of such “supernatural” phenomena, I think that the above examples highlight colourfully the manner in which these activities inspire faith and belief in the work of the church. Also of importance is the fact that these practices are not limited to the leadership of the churches but are believed and practiced by the City Two Committees and lay believers as well. There is no exclusivity about these beliefs and practices. This arguably helps to construct community and brings people into the church, especially when the message preached is perceived to have power over illness.

Church leaders and believers alike were aware that exorcisms and speaking in tongues and such activities were a sensitive issue with the authorities. Since some of these activities were named in documents which listed the practices of “evil cults,” there was a general consensus that such activities would not be a central feature of the main meetings of the churches. In fact, in my experience, I only ever heard believers speaking in tongues

¹⁵² Not the local dialect which I am familiar with.

¹⁵³ Lian (2010) relates that members of the True Jesus Church 真耶稣会 claimed that their spirit could leave their body and go to be with Jesus.

in the more intimate prayer meetings when people were knelt on the floor and some were sobbing as they prayed for people. In meetings such as those, you could hear people muttering in “tongues.” As we saw above, people often related accounts of healings and other miracles when giving their testimony. The practice of many of these things took place after the main church meetings, in small groups and in people’s homes. Almost exclusively, prophecies were given and exorcisms conducted outside of the main church meetings. During my research, I only heard of one instance of an exorcism taking place during a church meeting and that was the exception rather than the rule.

When I asked about whether or not these named activities were acceptable to the state, people generally told me that they were not, so they were conducted in such a way so as not to draw attention to them. I asked one church leader whether or not, for example, permission had to be given by the RAS for the church to conduct an exorcism. He replied, “Driving away demons doesn’t need any application. The CPC has always believed in atheism so how could they try to manage something they don’t even believe exists? There’s nothing else to be said on that.” This comment reveals the firm belief that such activity can not be regulated by the state but also reveals the perception that some of the regulations on religious activity appear contradictory.

We have already seen in Chapter Three how the “Spiritual Gifts Movement” in the 1920s and 1930s helped to catalyse the idea of faith healing, speaking in tongues, visions and exorcisms in the Protestant community in Huanghaicheng. We have seen in this section the range of these “supernatural” activities and how they help to encourage the faith of the believers and build a sense of community as well as bringing people into the churches. We have also seen how the registered and legitimate status of the Three-Self congregations provides space for such activity. The ordered Sunday worship meetings provide a veil of legitimacy for other activities. However, because these activities are sensitive in the eyes of the state, the churches tend to engage in such activities almost exclusively on a more personal level in small groups and in people’s homes where it is almost entirely impossible for the activities to be regulated. Distance from the state in home-based activities brings security and less likelihood of state scrutiny. In addition, because these groups tend to be led by lay believers, there is less likelihood that the state would take any strong action against the churches.

Printing of prohibited religious materials

This case study reveals that church leaders are prepared to disregard the regulations on the printing of religious materials in order to meet the perceived needs of the churches and to facilitate proselytising which will help the church expand. Further, we will see in this case study that these printing projects are ongoing and highly organised. The churches utilise the highly unregulated but competitive printing industry to their advantage. It is more difficult for the authorities to detect the printing of religious materials in the many unlicensed privately-run printing houses. At the same time, the local state’s perception of the orthodoxy in teaching of the Three-Self churches makes them an important ally in the fight against “evil cults” and maintaining social stability, encouraging them to give tacit approval to the printing of materials which should be cleared in advance with the provincial-level RAB.

It is clear from religious policy documents that printing religious materials for internal use in the churches is permitted by the state but on the condition that permission is granted by the relevant Religious Affairs department. The RRA (Chapter Three, Article 21) has such a clause (Huanghaicheng RAB, 2007, 6) as does the PRMRA (Chapter Two, Article 17) (Huanghaicheng RAB, 2007, 15). These regulations also stipulate that the printing of any religious material should be done in accordance with other “relevant state regulations.”

The “relevant state regulations” in these articles refers to the 2001 Regulations on the Administration of the Printing Industry.¹⁵⁴ There are several articles in these regulations which affect the publication and printing of religious materials. For example, Chapter Two (Article 7) stipulates that printing houses should have the relevant printing license. Chapter Three (Article 18) stipulates that printing of religious materials should only be done with permission from the Provincial RAB (State Council, 2001). Furthermore, Chapter Five (Article 31) prohibits individuals (without a state-approved printing license) in the printing industry from printing religious materials (State Council, 2001).

While provisions have been made by the state for the printing of religious materials, it is also clear that the clergy in Huanghaicheng’s Three-Self churches believe that permission would not be granted for certain printing projects even if they did apply for it. It is also clear that these leaders perceive that there is a constant need for religious materials. For

¹⁵⁴印刷业管理条例.

example, churches in Huanghaicheng have printed songbooks, magazines, study materials and gospel leaflets.

Pastor Liu printed the “Spiritual Songs Collection and Songs of Worship” songbook¹⁵⁵ which was originally from the Northeast of China (Heilongjiang Christian Council, 1999).¹⁵⁶ He used the copies in the meeting points he helped to pastor before Baisong Church was built. He also distributed the songbooks to unregistered groups in Moushan and this action was highly-praised by the groups who had few materials to use for worship.

Several of the churches print their own magazines. Enlin Church produces a magazine “Springs of Meditation” 默想之泉 on the front of which is written “Enlin Church Spiritual Study Materials” 灵修材料 and “For internal use” 内部使用. It has a glossy colour front cover and contains advertisements from local Protestant businesses (shops, factories, job adverts, professional photographers, and restaurants), Bible readings and a short background explanation of a passage for each day of the month. There is also a section entitled, “focus on small groups” 探访小组, reports about church events written by lay believers (for example, the marriage course, or the choir trip to another province), testimonies, and book reviews. There are also small group studies (4-5 each month) and a space for sermon notes. It is clearly an extensive monthly publication and was overseen by an unofficial Korean staff member, Teacher Jin. The design is done by a qualified graphic designer who attends Enlin Church.

Similarly, Youfu Church produce their own monthly magazine, “Eternal Blessing and Truth” 永福恒真 which is printed in black and white with the name of church on the front. It contains study sessions 课程 on topics such as biblical approaches to raising children or cultural issues such as what the meaning of a Protestant funeral is. There are sections on the Protestant family, apologetics and a spiritual journey guide 灵程指南. There are studies for new believers 初信课程 and a “prayer room” where the names of people who need help, “salvation,” or healing are listed. There are also notices and advertisements for people to take part in various church works such as the children’s work. There is always a notice stating that the elderly or those with serious illness can request baptism at any time. The addresses and contact details of local small groups connected to the church are listed along with their meeting times. In addition, study materials, especially for the church

¹⁵⁵ 灵歌集、灵歌赞.

¹⁵⁶ This songbook was originally printed by the Heilongjiang Christian Council.

Bible studies are printed to order for lay believers as are children’s work teaching and study materials. The churches also print thousands of gospel leaflets annually (see below).

None of the church leaders seek permission for any of these materials to be printed. They are all printed in the myriad small-scale privately-run printing houses that can be found in every district in Huanghaicheng. Competition for business is fierce and few printers would refuse to print materials for the churches, making the chances of printers reporting the churches to the authorities highly unlikely. In fact, many printers would probably not think in terms of whether or not what they were printing was legal or illegal. The church leaders had no problem reconciling the fact that they were contravening regulations for the sake of the church. In fact, they argued, it was because they were doing this for the work of the church and not for personal profit or gain that they were willing to do so. The lack of apparent regulation of the whole industry makes it even easier for the churches to engage in this activity and also makes the likelihood of punishment from the authorities less likely. The majority of the materials are used internally for believers and generally, it is only the gospel leaflets which are intended for use outside of the churches.

We have seen in this section how Three-Self churches disregard regulation on the printing of religious materials in order to produce literature which helps to build up the faith of believers. We have also seen that some of this printed material is highly-organised and has become a key part of dissemination within churches. In addition, the churches are able to avoid the authorities in the highly-unregulated printing industry. Most of the literature which the churches produce is for internal use and this may be one factor in the risk the congregations are willing to take since they feel that if it is not for profit or gain then the authorities will be lenient should they be discovered. These risks are taken in order that the churches can further the expansion of the church.

Unofficial church leaders and workers

We will see in this case study that there are two main types of unofficially-sanctioned church leaders and workers involved in the Three-Self churches in Huanghaicheng. The first type of church workers are Chinese nationals. Many of these workers have connections with unregistered churches or church networks. The second type of unofficial church workers are non-Chinese nationals. In Huanghaicheng these church workers tend to be either from the USA or South Korea for reasons which will become apparent below. The fact that church leaders in Huanghaicheng are willing to either allow or actively

promote the participation of unofficial church workers – both Chinese and non-Chinese nationals – reveals something significant about the way in which the Protestant community is regarded as global in its scope. It also demonstrates the importance placed on the development and expansion of this community by Protestant leaders in Huanghaicheng even if this means taking risks by involving workers who have not been officially trained – an area that is sensitive in the eyes of the state. It further shows us how religious policy is viewed by those who lead churches and the Protestant organisations.

All of the churches in Huanghaicheng either had their origins as new congregations which were established towards the end of the “Cultural Revolution” era or congregations which had ties to congregations which pre-dated 1949 but which met clandestinely before the church in Huanghaicheng was formally allowed to re-open in the 1980s. Through interviews and a reading of the available histories on the different Protestant denominations in Huanghaicheng, there are several prominent features which I argue have contributed to this porosity in the boundaries between the Three-Self churches and some unregistered congregations. Firstly, there was a great deal of flux between churches in the missionary era. I spoke to many elderly Protestants who told me that they not only attended the meetings in their own church, but also attended meetings in other churches. I would argue that this culture in the churches before 1949 has contributed to the blurring of boundaries between the TSPM and unregistered congregations because this phenomenon is based on personal networks.

There are several pieces of legislation which affect who can work in official positions in the Three-Self churches. The Rules for the Implementation of the Provisions on the Administration of Religious Activities of Aliens within the Territory of the People’s Republic of China¹⁵⁷ (Article 6) states that foreign nationals may preach at registered religious activity venues with permission from the Provincial RAB and having received an invitation from the relevant religious organisation at the provincial level or above (Huanghaicheng RAB, 2004, 39-40).

This clearly means that non-Chinese nationals can preach in Three-Self churches with the permission of the Provincial Two Committees and the provincial-level RAB. Article 16 of the same regulations clarifies further that non-Chinese nationals are *not* allowed to “establish religious organisations, set up religious offices, set up venues for religious activities, run religious institutions or hold religious classes in any name or form”

¹⁵⁷中华人民共和国境内外国人宗教活动管理规定实施细则.

(Huanghaicheng RAB, 2004, 42). Religious mission work of any kind by non-Chinese nationals is prohibited as Article 17 states in great detail (Huanghaicheng RAB, 2004, 42).

Similarly, the National Two Committees have published their own regulations detailing what constitutes religious personnel. The Measures for the Recognition of the Religious Personnel of the Chinese Protestant Church,¹⁵⁸ Article 2, recognises religious personnel as bishop, pastor, elder, teacher and preacher (CCC/TSPM undated). Article 4 of the Measures states that preachers “should have formal theological training, or be educated above middle school level, have believed for at least five years and received County [equal to District] Two Committees training which has been recognised by the Provincial Two Committees” (CCC/TSPM undated). The same article also stipulates that “seminary graduates who have not been ordained as clergy should be recognised as preachers” (CCC/TSPM undated).

Furthermore, according to Article 9, any Chinese citizen engaging in preaching in Three-Self churches should be qualified to the same level as a preacher. Preachers (and all other religious personnel) should be issued with a Certificate for Religious Personnel of the Chinese Protestant [Church] 中国基督教教职人员证¹⁵⁹ by the relevant Religious Affairs department (CCC/TSPM undated).

Lastly, no religious personnel should be responsible for more than one religious activities venue except in exceptional circumstances and with the permission of the Provincial RAB, as Article 13 of the Measures for the Reporting of Principal Religious Personnel in Religious Activities Venues states (Huanghaicheng RAB, 2007, 32). We will see, however, that these regulations are not always followed.

As I became more and more familiar with the churches and the church leadership in Huanghaicheng, I began to notice the number of instances of people in some key leadership positions who were trained in unregistered seminaries or had close contact with unregistered Protestant groups. Brother Deng who leads the “service” team 服务组 of about sixty people in Desheng Church was originally the member of a “house church” in Huanghaicheng and still has strong links with some unregistered groups in the city. Another lady who was a prominent member of the same church and active in the hospitality team was also active in a local unregistered group. Prominent members of the Desheng Church choir also attended a group several nights a week for Bible study and

¹⁵⁸ 中国基督教教职人员认定办法.

¹⁵⁹ This was often referred to as simply “preacher’s certificate” 传道证.

prayer. This group, “All Nations Worship and Praise Ministries” 万国敬拜赞美 (ANM) was Korean and fronted by a cosmetics company. The group was treated with some suspicion by some of the church leaders (because it was Korean) but little pressure was put on these believers not to attend. In fact, several leaders in the church told them to “be careful” 注意一些 rather than try to prevent them from attending. Elder Xie, based in Desheng Church took time out from her work in the TSPM to work for a Korean company which housed a Bible school and discipleship training centre. Elder Xie had a central role in Bible teaching in this setup.¹⁶⁰ One difference between this and the Enlin Church group in Yuehua Company, is that the Enlin Church small group is too small to register and therefore within the law. The other major difference is that Yuehua is Chinese and this company is Korean. The plans to open a meeting point within the Yuehua complex is also within the law since it will be registered with the RAS.

All of the main leaders in Enlin Church are unofficial. We have discussed Preacher Zhang’s position at length. Both Teacher Zhou and Teacher Xu who are central figures in Enlin Church were both trained in “underground seminaries” 地下神学院. A businessman who was a very active member in Enlin Church had helped lead an unregistered congregation in another city and had also lectured in an unregistered seminary for a short time. He was offered a full-time post but felt his “calling” was to conduct business. As well as his activities in Enlin Church he was also heavily involved in a nation-wide fellowship for Protestant businesspersons. He had written articles for the organisation’s monthly publication and helped run an online forum. Brother Shan who had been a leader in a network of unregistered house churches in China’s Northeast joined Enlin Church as a member of the staff in 2010 and worked unpaid. He took it in turn with Teacher Zhou to preach at the Thursday evening youth meeting. He was also involved in staff training and taught systematic Bible study one afternoon a week. Outside Enlin Church, Brother Shan was involved with setting up and managing Bible-study classes 圣经学班 which run for three months at a time. He was also one of the main lecturers on these courses together with some prominent figures in the unregistered church networks. None of these unofficial leaders, some of whom preached in the Three-Self churches, had the required

¹⁶⁰ There is little doubt in my mind that these kinds of “factory Bible schools” (for want of a better term) are common across China. While I did not visit one in Huanghaicheng, I have visited a similar setup in Qingdao, Shandong Province where I knew someone who worked there. The factory was owned by South Korean Protestants. While workers did have a job on the factory assembly line, they were expected to get up between four and five in the morning to attend a prayer meeting. This lasted several hours. Further study meetings were held in the evenings and on weekends and those who had enrolled worked through a systematic study course. They also learned Korean and some had the opportunity to go to Korea for further Bible training.

training or the relevant “preaching certificate” 传道证.¹⁶¹ As they saw it, they were in those positions to forward the mission of the church.

Xixia Church, a new congregation in Huanghaicheng, had several active members who had good connections with various unregistered groups in the city. One lady, Teacher Chen, was a university lecturer and had been instrumental in establishing the student group, “Living Spring” 活泉 (see details below). She had been converted, together with her husband, by a missionary who worked as a foreign teacher. Although the management of the student group has now been handed over to the students themselves, Teacher Chen was still involved in it and was instrumental in speaking for the group when university authorities tried to shut it down. She also helped in leading the new youth meeting set up in Xixia Church and was very open about her involvement with the student group in her university. Another sister who helped with the running and leading of the Saturday evening youth meeting had strong ties with Korean Protestants. She, herself, had worked in Korea for several years and had been involved in a church there. These sisters and several others involved in the youth meeting had connections with and sometimes attended unregistered groups in the area around Xixia Church. There were even times during the youth meeting when prayers were made for these different groups.

In addition to these unofficial church workers, a senior member of the City Two Committees who also managed one of the Three-Self churches in Huanghaicheng, unofficially took over the running of a large meeting point which had run into difficulties in the south of Jinping. He had already been responsible for the meeting point for several months before I arrived in Huanghaicheng and according to the regulations we looked at above, he should have reported this work to the RAB. However, since he regarded this as an unofficial post and matter of internal church affairs, he did not see the need to make any report. He also had the backing of Pastor Zheng which helped to legitimise the work. The primary reasoning for these various unofficial posts and involvement in projects was the strengthening of the perceived mission of the church.

Many of the Three-Self church leaders in Huanghaicheng were well-networked with foreign Protestants. Some had received gifts of books and Bibles from these foreign Protestants as well as from missionaries, in violation of restrictions on bringing religious materials into China except for personal use according to the “Rules for the Implementation of the Provisions on the Administration of Religious Activities of Aliens

¹⁶¹ The preaching certificates give the preachers a legitimate status and therefore some degree of protection as formally-recognised religious specialists.

within the Territory of the People's Republic of China” Article 14. As with many cities across China, Huanghaicheng had its own missionaries from overseas. Missionaries who I came into contact with were either from South Korea or countries such as the USA, Canada, or New Zealand. Some had spent many years in China or in other countries and were “career” missionaries. Other missionaries generally tended to be young graduates recently finished college or university or older people who had just retired. Most of the Western missionaries worked in educational institutions in Huanghaicheng (of which there are many) or were involved in businesses which served as a front for their mission work. They generally saw their mission to be to proselytise to students, contrary to the regulations which we analysed above. Many of these missionaries seemed to have few contacts outside of these institutions (except with other missionaries). Some were very suspicious of the Chinese state. Many tended to be reluctant to even attend a Three-Self church and I met few who had more than a cursory understanding of the Protestant church in China.

There were exceptions to this, though. One North American missionary named Jean had been in China for over a decade and was very knowledgeable on both the Three-Self and unregistered Protestant churches in Huanghaicheng. She was greatly admired by Pastor Zheng and his wife as well as Assistant Pastor He and his wife, Teacher Liang (who was a key figure in the work for the deaf and mute in Huanghaicheng). Jean was quite involved in Desheng Church and helped to organise the teaching schedules for the English-language classes. Generally only Protestant foreign teachers were asked to teach in this class (though there had been one or two exceptions to this rule over the last decade or more). This highlights again the extensive networks which Pastor Zheng has as well as the importance of them for the expansion of church projects. Many of the foreign teachers involved in this weekly work were, themselves, missionaries and used this as an opportunity to proselytise to the students. Since Pastor Zheng’s wife, Teacher Hong, always sat in on classes, she was fully aware of this. In fact, I was quite surprised with the openness of Pastor Zheng towards Jean’s work in Huanghaicheng. He was fully aware of her activities in the university where she worked. This work involved proselytising amongst the students, providing a place for them to meet and encouraging Bible study. Pastor Zheng was fully aware that Jean was a member of a mission agency. Assistant Pastor He and his wife had both attended the group which Jean oversees. Prior to my knowledge of this, when I asked Assistant Pastor He what he thought of foreign missionaries working in Huanghaicheng, he told me:

I really admire 佩服 those foreign missionaries. If I had the opportunity to spread the gospel in a university, I’d be really happy. I really admire them. I used to know a foreign doctor who took part in a lot of different Protestant activities here in Huanghaicheng. I also know a lady called Jean. They really have a strong faith. Personally, I really approve 赞同 of what they do.

Pastor Zheng, Pastor Liu and other church leaders told me that they found Western missionaries “unproblematic” 没什么问题, they felt that some missionaries from South Korea were a “nuisance” 麻烦. One preacher told me that he often felt some of the Koreans he came into contact with would say one thing but then do another. As a result, he felt that they lacked integrity. Despite this, there were many Protestant Koreans working in Huanghaicheng. Many were from mainline denominations and some were from smaller or newer denominations. While there are three “legitimate” South Korean congregations in Huanghaicheng, there are many more which are not formally recognised by the state. Those congregations which are “legitimate” have “temporary registration” 临时登记 and this has been done through the City Two Committees.¹⁶²

Almost all the church leaders in Huanghaicheng have contacts in the Protestant Korean community. The most blatant example of the role that Korean nationals play in the church in Huanghaicheng is that of Teacher Jin, who with his wife and family, had worked in China for a number of years. They were sponsored by their church back in South Korea and Huanghaicheng was the second location in which they had worked in China. Jin spoke good Chinese and was quite knowledgeable about the Protestant church in China. Teacher Jin had initially been responsible for “discipleship training” 门徒训练. After working for some time, Department Chief Dong, the district Religious Affairs officer, found out that Preacher Zhang was allowing a foreign national to teach in Enlin Church and ordered him to stop. Zhang reluctantly had to ask Jin to stop his role in discipleship training and asked him to oversee the production of the Enlin Church magazine (an illegal publication). Jin worked together with a small team to produce the very professional church magazine as we saw above. Jin’s wife, Teacher Li, taught piano and music in

¹⁶² A growing trend in China seems to be encouraging the (temporary) registration of foreigner-run churches for foreigners. There are often restrictions placed on those who can attend; for example, a stipulation is often made that those attending should have a passport. There are sometimes restrictions on allowing Chinese nationals to attend. In Huanghaicheng, Chinese nationals are not supposed to attend the South Korean churches but it would seem that this is not monitored and it is easy for Chinese nationals to attend if they know someone in the church. Clearly, Chinese nationals who would want to attend are either those of the Chinese Korean minority or speakers of Korean.

Enlin Church and helped with the children’s work. They continued with this work until they left Huanghaicheng with his family in the summer of 2010 to return to Korea.

Besides Teacher Jin and his family, there were other Koreans working in Three-Self churches and meeting points in Huanghaicheng. One young Korean man, Xiao Li, worked with the deaf and mute community. He had worked as a sign-language interpreter in Korea before heading to Beijing to study Chinese. While he was there, he began to learn Chinese sign language. When I met him he was already very proficient and was helping several deaf and mute Protestants to study theology. They were sponsored by Korean Protestants (more about this below). There were also Korean Protestants working in several unregistered meeting points in the city (though they had tacit approval from Pastor Liu and Religious Affairs). These meeting points were quite large and were attended mainly by Chinese Koreans. One of them, in Jinping, had started out meeting in Mashan Church but because of the location of the Chinese Korean neighbourhoods, they had decided to move to another place to meet. Several of the leaders in the meeting point had been theologically trained in South Korea. One had even been “ordained” as a pastor in Korea.¹⁶³ While Pastor Liu referred to him as “pastor,” he could not formally recognise his theological qualifications although Pastor Liu was trying to utilise other channels by seeing if he could get the pastor involved to undertake formal seminary training and then fast-track him into a position which would be recognised by the RAB.

We have seen in this case study the porous nature of the boundaries between the Three-Self churches and unregistered churches with regards to personnel and resources. This porosity of boundaries is rooted in extensive personal networks amongst people with a common faith. Officially under state management, the TSPM structure offers legitimisation for Protestantism. The space provided by this legitimisation is extended by Protestant activity which falls beyond the scope of official policy while some is in direct violation of regulations. The mission of the church is perceived to be of great significance and the gifting and skills of believers are utilised despite what official regulations (both of the National Two Committees as well as the local state) may demand.

¹⁶³ It is very difficult for this type of theological training to be received by the TSPM or the RAB. The plethora of training institutes in South Korea means that it is difficult to verify what kind of training people have received. Pastor Liu, for example, told me that this was one issue that he felt was extremely difficult to deal with. While he wanted to help people, regulations on training were generally against this phenomenon. When people claimed to have studied theology for two years, this was difficult to prove. I would also argue that there were language difficulties which further made clear communication difficult. This resulted in several Korean minority meeting points being given tacit approval but without a clear legal standing.

Unofficial training and placements

As the state defines it in relation to Protestantism, religious training is the teaching of the Bible in relation to beliefs and practices and for the purpose of proselytising. The Chinese state has generally been suspicious of any religious training outside of established and officially-recognised institutions. Across China, there are currently twenty-three seminaries and myriads of Bible-training programmes. Baisong Church currently had three of its members at various seminaries in 2010 with another who started in 2011. Enlin Church also has a member in seminary. Mashan Church, Desheng Church, Chongfan Church, Xixia Church and Youfu Church all have recent seminary graduates working in them. Some are on their probationary training period (of one year) while some have finished their initial probation and are now official “preachers.” Huanghaicheng has its own training programmes for church leaders and workers from across the entire administrative region. Those that take part in several of these programmes (and pass the tests at the end) will have the opportunity to take the examination in order to become recognised preachers. These training programmes are “official” in that the City Two Committees will receive permission to hold them. A specialist on religion from the PSB, Hu Bin, is often invited by Assistant Pastor He to give a lecture on sects, cults and foreign infiltration. (This seemed to be more of a pragmatic move to keep the PSB happy. Ignoring them would be inappropriate and allowing them a legitimate voice in the work of the church meant that they were less likely to want to get involved where the City Two Committees would not welcome them.) Apart from these official Three-Self seminaries, there are many more unregistered seminaries across the country, although it is impossible to give a figure on how many there may be. However, as we have already seen, there are Three-Self church workers in Huanghaicheng whose seminary training took place in unregistered (or “underground”) seminaries or Bible-training programmes.

The training of religious personnel in the state-approved seminaries has received specific attention from the Chinese state. One of the purposes of these institutions is to help to cultivate “patriotic” 爱国 religious leaders who support the CPC and socialism as Document 19 (Part VIII) states that the aim of the seminaries is to “create a contingent of young religious personnel who, in terms of politics, fervently love their homeland and support the Party’s leadership and the Socialist system and who possess sufficient religious knowledge” (MacInnis, 1989, 20).

The Rules for the Implementation of the Provisions on the Administration of Religious Activities of Aliens within the Territory of the People’s Republic of China (Article 13)

stipulates that Chinese nationals should only go abroad for religious study as part of an agreement with the national religious organisations (Huanghaicheng RAB, 2004, 41-42). The permission, though not stipulated here, should come from the provincial-level RAB according to Three-Self church leaders in Huanghaicheng. However, despite these regulations and requirements, there was a great deal of unofficial training taking place in Huanghaicheng as well as some recruitment for seminaries overseas. According to the PRMRA, Chapter Two, Article 7, “Any religious training carried out by a religious organisation should be reported to the RAB” (Huanghaicheng RAB, 2007, 15). There was a great deal of unofficial training taking place across Huanghaicheng when I was there conducting fieldwork.

I met a prominent preacher in Huanghaicheng who had strong links to one of the Three-Self churches. Apart from her involvement with the TSPM in Huanghaicheng, she was involved with various unregistered church projects in China’s Northeast. This preacher had a degree from a TSPM seminary and had done further study in a well-known seminary in Singapore. She also does teaching in the same seminary from time to time and is involved with church projects in China involving “foreign” groups.

Brother Shan, who currently works in Enlin Church, had trained in an unofficial seminary. He had also taught for some time in another unregistered seminary before going on to be one of five main leaders in a network of unregistered Protestant churches. It is interesting to note that despite his criticisms of some aspects of the TSPM, he felt that the TSPM seminaries trained their students better than many unofficial seminaries because they offered a more comprehensive and systematic overview of the Bible and theology. He seemed to be fairly knowledgeable on the TSPM seminaries and had contacts in some of them. He was also quite close to several of the recent seminary graduates who worked in churches in Huanghaicheng. Brother Shan said that despite efforts from the National TSPM to push “theological reconstruction”¹⁶⁴ (which he largely dismissed) many seminary lecturers and teachers continued to teach what he regarded as a “correct faith” 正确信仰.¹⁶⁵

In addition to Brother Shan in Enlin Church, we have already mentioned that Enlin Church employed two other unregistered seminary graduates, Teacher Zhou and Teacher Xu. They had both completed two-year courses in seminaries in Beijing. Towards the end

¹⁶⁴ See Wickeri (2007) for an in-depth analysis.

¹⁶⁵ Kindopp (2004) and Vala (2008) both give accounts of how the Theological Reconstruction Campaign has met with resistance at the national level. They also cite local-level pastors as being dismissive of the theological ideas incorporated in the campaign.

of my year in Huanghaicheng, Teacher Xu left Enlin Church to pursue further training in music, again at an unregistered institute. She plans to return to Enlin Church after her training and had the full support of Preacher Zhang and the other leaders. In addition, Enlin Church ran a highly-organised training programme for church members. Much of this was taught by Preacher Zhang and on completing each stage of the three-part programme, the candidates were presented with a certificate. Baisong Church also organised a three-day training event for the leaders of registered and unregistered meeting points. This was done without the approval of the City Two Committees or the RAS.

During my time in Huanghaicheng, I often came into contact with a businessman, Brother Hong, who had extensive contacts in both registered and unregistered Protestant churches in many provinces across China. He had helped on a voluntary basis in many different churches and had built up a great deal of experience in music, children’s work and Bible study. He was considering leaving his profession and going into full-time church work but wanted to undertake theological training before he did so. He was unsure that he would be able to get into a TSPM seminary and was considering enrolling in an unregistered seminary. He had visited several of these seminaries while on business trips. Although he did not spend all his time in Huanghaicheng, he attended Enlin Church with some regularity and got to know Preacher Zhang during my year there. Zhang offered an overseas (Singapore) placement to Brother Hong. The seminary placement was only open to men (perhaps because of the theological slant of the seminary) but because it was sponsored by a Singaporean church organisation, all the costs of the seminary training would be covered meaning that Brother Hong would have little expense himself. Another preacher working in a church in another part of Huanghaicheng had also been overseas for study.

Some of the Korean minority Protestants received sponsorship from Korean seminaries or mission agencies. It seemed that many of them wanted to be trained well but the competition for places in China’s seminaries meant that many did not have the opportunity. It was also evident that many of these foreign-trained Protestants returned to Huanghaicheng to continue serving either in Three-Self churches or in unregistered congregations which worked closely with Three-Self churches.

The deaf and mute community in Huanghaicheng are also part of extensive networks with many ties to overseas Protestant organisations. Assistant Pastor He’s wife, Teacher Liang, has been involved in the deaf and mute work in Huanghaicheng. She was one of the first Protestants in Huanghaicheng to learn sign language and has inspired many Protestant

university students to get involved with the work. Several have been inspired to pursue graduate studies in education and learning for the disabled or Protestant education. Training for the deaf and mute Protestants is sponsored by Korean churches that run annual training classes in another city outside Huanghaicheng. Although Assistant Pastor He and Pastor Zheng work closely together, He has purposely kept the information about the training classes from Zheng in order to protect him should the PSB or anyone else find out. An American donated money for the purchase of a digital media projector so that the deaf and mute church who meet in Desheng Church can make use of PowerPoint which has revolutionised their worship meetings. Teacher Liang is working hard to raise funding to help some of the deaf and mute Protestants with potential for church leadership to go abroad for specialist deaf and mute theological training. One lady has already gone to the US to do a Masters degree. While foreigners may volunteer in Three-Self churches with the approval of the Provincial RAB, we see in the activities described above, a wealth of foreigner activity in the Three-Self churches and meeting points in Huanghaicheng. None of these cases have been approved by the RAB and many run with the tacit approval of church leaders. In fact, we see in some cases, the encouragement of these activities by key members of the City Two Committees.

It is clear that part of the driving force behind these activities is the lack of officially-trained personnel in the churches in Huanghaicheng. Religious policy to date does not take into account the needs of Protestant minority groups such as the deaf and mute who need specialist clergy to work with them. These areas of perceived unmet need are being filled by individuals and groups from outside China who have the resources to carry out the work. These activities are significant because the supply of personnel and resources from outside of the TSPM structure effectively means that the state will have an inaccurate understanding of the church. Those personnel trained in TSPM seminaries and assumed by the state to be “patriotic” are, in fact, using their positions to offer protection to activities deemed to be unacceptable by the state. While some scholars (Vala, 2009) have written about the issue of TSPM clergy being disaffected with the TSPM and leaving to serve in unregistered congregations, we see in Huanghaicheng more of an ongoing relationship between the Three-Self churches and some unregistered congregations. We have even seen those with leadership positions in unregistered church networks coming into Three-Self churches to take up work there.

This case study clearly reveals the ways in which Three-Self church leaders and workers make use of resources for training outside of the state-approved system of TSPM seminaries. While there are official training classes each year in Huanghaicheng

organised by the City Two Committees, the number of places is restricted and some of the training does not meet specific needs, such as for the deaf and mute fellowship. Much of this training takes place without any official permission, despite the fact that some of it is highly organised. We also see here a willingness of some church workers trained in unregistered seminaries to work in Three-Self churches, highlighting the interactions between registered and unregistered congregations. Church leaders are able to utilise their networks to provide opportunities for training outside of the approved system. New informal channels have been established through which resources for training flow while the Three-Self churches in Huanghaicheng benefit from these resources in multifarious ways.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

We have seen in this chapter how the Three-Self churches in Huanghaicheng utilise their symbiotic relationship to the RAB in order to conduct activities which clearly have an ambiguous status in relation to policy and regulations on religion. These activities directly aid the expansion of the Three-Self churches across the city, revealing that it is not the state which decides what benefits the churches should derive from their relationship to the state. We have seen how the symbiosis has provided the channels for negotiation between the Three-Self churches and the local state in terms of what is acceptable religious practice. This is the case for children’s work which has been a particularly sensitive area because of its involvement of minors in religious activities. Some “grey” activities, such as the printing of prohibited religious materials, the mobility of church workers and the unofficial training of church workers are camouflaged or concealed from the local state and so remain undetected. However, they are possible in large part due to the level of trust between the RAB and the churches. Churches also take advantage of political factors to negotiate with the state over projects such as printing religious literature by playing into local state fears of heretical groups disrupting social harmony. These activities also reveal the extensive networking between the Three-Self churches; however, much of this networking is hidden from the local state.

Chapter Nine

The “Grey” Contact of Huanghaicheng’s

Three-Self Churches with Society at Large

INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the grey area activities the Three-Self churches have initiated through which they seek to reach out to the local community and bring people into the church. While there have been suggestions that some space should be provided for religious organisations to engage with society (see Hu, 2007), religion policy and regulations prohibit overt expressions of religious activity in public places.¹⁶⁶ In this section, we will see how the churches use their registered status to conduct activities beyond the remits of policy while at the same time engaging in other activities camouflaged as something else. This kind of activity is sensitive since it brings into question the role of the local state in providing welfare. While all the Protestants that I spoke to in Huanghaicheng’s Three-Self churches did not hold any anti-state or anti-CPC opinions, the churches indirectly question the narrative of the local state in its claim to meeting the needs of the people.

Church Signs

This case study analyses the manner in which Huanghaicheng’s Three-Self churches advertise their presence in society through the placing of signs outside churches. These signs are illegal on several levels and yet churches are persistent in placing these signs in public spaces. We will see that although the signs placed by Enlin Church have been removed by the local state, Preacher Zhang has devised ways around this problem. We will see that these signs are meant to demonstrate to the general public something of the message of Protestantism while seeking to attract people to the churches.

¹⁶⁶ See Liu (2011) for a general discussion on the problems facing religious groups engaging in social welfare projects.

The PRMRA, Chapter Five, Article 33, clearly prohibits the building or construction of “religious markers” 宗教标志物 outside (Huanghaicheng RAB, 2007, 20). Despite this regulation, most of the churches in Huanghaicheng have put up signs outside on main roads or at junctions to alert people to the presence of the churches. These signs typically read “Protestant Church” 基督教会 and show the symbol of a red cross. However, some of the signs are elaborate affairs and are highly noticeable from some distance away. Youfu Church, for example, has an elaborate series of signs out on the main road which runs past the entrance to the church.

There is one large sign out on the main street with three crosses depicting the death place of Jesus Christ. Laid over the picture is some text which reads “The Lord of the universe is giving you an invitation.”¹⁶⁷ Below this are four bullet points three of which are Bible texts (although the references are not given). The first bullet point is “[You are] the meaning of life and the origin of all life”¹⁶⁸; the second, “When you believe in Jesus, you and your family will all be saved”¹⁶⁹; the third, “Outside of Jesus there is no other who can save because in heaven or on earth there is no other name by which we can be saved”¹⁷⁰; the fourth, “God loves the world and even sent his only son to us so that anyone who believes him will not perish but will have eternal life.”¹⁷¹ A red cross with the text “Jesus loves you” (耶稣爱你) and a sign further advertises the presence of the church. These signs are printed in colour and are highly visible.

On the main junction near Yongding Church, a sign reading “Protestant Church” is attached to an electricity pole at the entrance to the road on which the church resides. The main entrance to the church property is a traditional courtyard door. Above the door are the characters “Protestantism” 基督教. A set of couplets 对联 comprising red paper and gold script are pasted above the door and on both sides of it. They read “God loves the people of the world [and] gives favour [and] peace to the people of the world”¹⁷² and “Power [and] glory belong to God.”¹⁷³

Signs on the outside of the building at street level advertise the presence of Chongfan Church. The main sign reads “Protestant Church” helping to identify this as a meeting point. A sign beside the entrance to the building where Chongfan Church is located reads:

¹⁶⁷ 宇宙的君王向你发出邀请。

¹⁶⁸ 人生的意义与生命的源头。

¹⁶⁹ 当信主耶稣你和你一家都必得救。

¹⁷⁰ 除耶稣以外别无拯救因为在天下人间没有此下的别的名我们可以靠着得救。

¹⁷¹ 神爱世人甚至将他的独生子赐给我们叫一切信他的不止灭亡反得永生。

¹⁷² 神爱世人恩惠平安赐世人。

¹⁷³ 全能荣耀归上帝。

“Protestant Church” and the text John 3:16. It also has a contact mobile phone number so that people can make enquiries and a bold statement in that it points to an individual, Deacon Han.

The front of the Enlin Church building which opens directly onto the street has two signs attached to it. The first has a cross and the characters “Protestant Church” 基督教会. This sign lights up at night and can be seen from some distance away. The second large sign reads “Jesus loves you” 耶稣爱你. After moving into the current building, Preacher Zhang arranged for signs to be made and placed on the main road, advertising Enlin Church. He thought at the time since there were a lot of other signs advertising the various businesses and services in the area that the Enlin sign would not attract much negative attention from the local state. He was wrong. Within several weeks of the signs going up, the Urban Management personnel had paid a visit and removed all the signs. Despite the fact that all the signs were illegal 违法 in that none of them had been approved by Urban Management, many of them had been there for years without any trouble. Preacher Zhang felt that it was because he was advertising the church that Urban Management took action, possibly because of a directive from the PSB. Not wanting to cause more trouble for the local businesses or get into trouble with Urban Management, Zhang developed a new system. He had made several portable signs which advertise the church and list the meeting times. On a Sunday morning before the main worship meeting, members of the service team take the signs out to the main roads where they also hand out gospel leaflets. In this way, the church can advertise, albeit temporarily.

While these signs have not been a major issue between the churches and the RAB, church leaders have sought to explain the importance of these signs in ensuring those looking for churches to come to a registered church. This argument carries with it the notion that the Three-Self churches are legitimate and offer support to the state (regardless of whether or not they do). In the case of Enlin, Urban Management have already been responsible for confiscating gospel leaflets (see below) and this may be an attempt by the local state to draw a line with regards to some activities. However, Zhang, while not wanting to enter a direct conflict with the local state, has devised ways to get round this restriction which serves the purpose of the church in seeking to draw people in.

Gospel leafleting

This case study reveals the ability of the Three-Self churches to negotiate with the RAB/RAS over the practice of a religious activity specifically prohibited in religious regulations. The case study analyses proselytising through the handing out of ‘gospel leaflets’ 福音单 by the Three-Self churches in Huanghaicheng. While this activity is prohibited according to local religious policy, we will see how Protestants view this activity and the reasons behind why they engage in it. Further, we will see that despite repeated requests from the RAB for churches to stop the distribution of gospel leaflets, churches continue nonetheless. The case study will reveal how the limits on the activity set by the local state have inadvertently helped the churches develop more effective methods. Lastly, it seems that now the local state agencies prefer to employ soft tactics when dealing with the churches, opening up an even greater space for dialogue and negotiation. However, we will see how the City Two Committees, District TSPM Committees and Three-Self church leaders support the handing out of leaflets and how this activity is encouraged within churches and meeting points. We will argue that this activity reveals the importance placed on the Protestant message by the church leaders and also to what extent church leaders are willing to push beyond the limits of policy boundaries. Furthermore, we will see to what extent the state is willing to accommodate such activity in light of other political processes.

In terms of policy and regulation, Document 19 (Part VI) states that proselytising outside of a religious activities venue is prohibited (MacInnis, 1989, 17-18). In addition, the RRA (Chapter Three, Article 12) states that “Group religious activities of religious citizens should generally be carried out at registered venues of religious activity” (Huanghaicheng RAB, 2007, 4).¹⁷⁴ The “generally” suggests that there are opportunities for some religious activities to be conducted outside of the religious activities venues. The same regulations in Chapter Three, Article 22 also state that “If a religious group or temple/church... intends to hold a large-scale religious event outside of a place of religious activity,” then it should make an application to the relevant Religious Affairs office (Huanghaicheng RAB, 2007, 6). While this also suggests that there is the possibility to engage in religious activities outside of religious activities venues, the term “large-scale” is left undefined. However, the PRMRA (Chapter Three, Article 25) states that “No organisation or individual may proselytise, evangelise, preach scriptures or distribute religious propaganda materials outside religious activities venues” (Huanghaicheng RAB, 2007,

¹⁷⁴ 信教公民的集体宗教活动一般应当在经登记的宗教活动场所内举行.

18).¹⁷⁵ This makes it quite clear that distributing gospel leaflets is a violation of the religion regulations in Huanghaicheng.

Handing out gospel tracts 发福音单 has become more-or-less part of church life in Huanghaicheng and is a major source of bringing in new members to the various congregations: churches, meeting points and small groups. Church leaders and church workers throughout the city, however, are well aware that current religious policy does not allow for proselytising outside of a recognised religious activities venue as we saw above. This includes passing out leaflets and any form of what we might call ‘evangelism,’ although arguably there are varying perceptions of just what this means. In 2009, Enlin Church printed and distributed 20,000 Christmas service cards in the run up to the festival in an attempt to attract people to the church. Mashan Church printed and distributed 10,000 Christmas service invitations and brothers and sisters from the churches in Jinping take away 100,000 gospel leaflets to hand out each year. In Jinping, the City Two Committees provides some leaflets and the finances for the printing of other leaflets, demonstrating that the City Two Committees directly encourages leafleting. Leaders in the other three District TSPM Committees are also supportive of leaflet distribution. In this way, tens of thousands of gospel leaflets are distributed in and around Huanghaicheng annually.

The church provides these for free and believers can often be seen helping themselves to supplies. Sometimes people are given some on the way in to meetings by members of the service teams and asked to hand them out during the week. On more than one occasion, I heard preachers praise and give examples of brothers and sisters who talked to people about the message of Protestantism and handed out gospel leaflets. For example, during one sermon, the preacher said that he knew one elderly lady who had handed out over 10,000 gospel leaflets when she took the bus over a period of time. The preacher asked, “What would happen in Huanghaicheng if we were all so willing to spread the gospel?” However, not all religious specialists would be as direct in their encouragement, as one preacher told me:

From the perspective of religious policy, handing out gospel leaflets isn’t allowed. I wouldn’t directly tell the brothers and sisters to go and hand out gospel leaflets and I wouldn’t broach the subject when I’m preaching, although I would encourage them to spread the gospel when I preach. If brothers and sisters want to hand out gospel leaflets outside then I don’t have a problem with that. On the contrary, I would be very supportive. When I see the gospel being spread, it makes me very happy. If they were criticised [批评] by the PSB or by the Urban Management people, then it wouldn’t have anything to do

¹⁷⁵ 任何组织和个人不得在宗教活动场所以外传教, 布道, 讲经, 散发宗教宣传品.

with me directly. The government keeps more of an eye on Preachers than on normal believers. I think using a gospel leaflet when you spread the gospel is a good thing and many people take them home to read.

There are also advertisements made for new editions of gospel leaflets, for example, in the Youfu Church magazine (see below). The same advertisement also says “please take according to your needs” 请按所需拿取. These direct and indirect encouragements to use gospel leaflets for proselytising do not fall on deaf ears.

There seem to be two different types of leaflets. One type of leaflet, which comes in various designs, is a simple explanation of the gospel. The other type of leaflet looks more like a brochure for particular churches and they are different in different districts. All of the gospel leaflets that I collected in Huanghaicheng from Three-Self churches had at least the name, address and contact details for at least one church. Some leaflets listed more than one church, emphasising the coordinated effort in the leafleting enterprise. The first type of leaflet tend to be small and the content is limited as a result. They are printed in colour on glossy paper. The first example of such a gospel leaflet is one entitled, “What Kind of Life do You Have?”¹⁷⁶ The leaflet is divided into four sections, with the first three pointing to three perceived situations for those who are not Protestants with a short explanation on what the Bible says about each of the possibilities. The first, following on from the title, states that one possibility is that you have “A Life Like one that Lacks Clarity.”¹⁷⁷ This is followed by “A Life Like one which Clutches the Wind and Chases the Shadows”¹⁷⁸ and thirdly, “A Life Like a Lost Sheep.”¹⁷⁹ The last section is entitled “A Life Like one that is Blessed by Heaven.”¹⁸⁰ This section contains a short explanation of how a blessed life is a gift from God. The text of Psalm 23 is printed on the last page.

Another example is a gospel leaflet also printed in colour on glossy paper entitled “Who is The True God?”¹⁸¹ The leaflet then describes how the “real God” must meet five criteria (条件). These are, “There is only one God,”¹⁸² “Idols are not God,”¹⁸³ “The true God carries out salvation,”¹⁸⁴ “Worshipping idols does not bring peace”¹⁸⁵ and “The true

¹⁷⁶ 你是怎样的人生?

¹⁷⁷ 如云雾版的人生

¹⁷⁸ 如捕风捉影般的人生.

¹⁷⁹ 入迷样板的人生.

¹⁸⁰ 如天堂版的福乐人生.

¹⁸¹ 谁是真神?

¹⁸² 神只有一位.

¹⁸³ 偶像不是神.

¹⁸⁴ 真神实行拯救.

¹⁸⁵ 拜偶像没有平安.

God is pure and just.”¹⁸⁶ There is a prayer on the back, often called an “acceptance prayer” 决志祷告 for people wanting to convert to Protestantism.

All of the second type of leaflet generally have an explanation of the gospel and details of church meetings and the best bus routes to take in order to get there. Most of these leaflets are printed in black and red on white A4 paper which is folded into three. They have a distinctive red cross on the front. The leaflets from Enlin Church are somewhat more professionally put together than the others, although this is a recent development and other Three-Self churches will probably follow suit. For now, the Enlin Church gospel leaflets are designed by a graphic designer from the congregation. These leaflets have also changed over time but I will describe here the last leaflet which Enlin Church produced before I left Huanghaicheng.

The front of the latest Enlin Church leaflets states “Good news” 好消息 along with the Bible text John 3:16 and the words “Knowing Jesus is the most beautiful blessing in this life”¹⁸⁷ which is a line from a song often sung in the churches in Huanghaicheng. The back of the leaflets contain photographs of performances at church events as well as group photos full of smiling church members. The main contents of the leaflets vary but typically contain a simple introduction to the gospel under headings such as “Look at the most amazing event in world history,”¹⁸⁸ “Who was Jesus really?”¹⁸⁹ “Christianity is not superstition, Jesus is the saviour”¹⁹⁰ and “Science proves faith [is true].”¹⁹¹ They also include details of church meetings and events as well as the church address and contact numbers, transport to the church and the church instant messaging (QQ) contact details allowing people to contact the church or make their own way there. This demonstrates to people the welcoming attitude of the church.

There are a variety of strategies employed by the Three-Self Protestants who distribute gospel leaflets in Huanghaicheng. These are mainly divided into collective and individual distributing. Most of the gospel leafleting is conducted by individuals but there is also highly-coordinated leafleting which takes place on a regular basis. Most individual leafleting is done in the busy parts of the city: near department stores, shopping malls and restaurants and I have seen people on a number of occasions handing out the distinctive cross-fronted leaflets. I have also seen people hand out leaflets at bus stops as people

¹⁸⁶ 真神圣洁公益.

¹⁸⁷ 认识耶稣是这一生最美的祝福.

¹⁸⁸ 看看世界历史最惊人的一件事.

¹⁸⁹ 耶稣到底是谁?

¹⁹⁰ 基督教不是迷信耶稣是救主.

¹⁹¹ 科学证明信仰.

alighted and boarded buses. There were also occasions when I was spending time with Protestants and they gave a gospel leaflet to a bus driver or taxi driver. I also met taxi drivers who had been given gospel leaflets by passengers. One preacher from Youfu Church had recognised that individual gospel leafleting would not attract any attention from the RAB or any other state organ. It is organised activities which can be the focus of criticism.

It’s really about limiting numbers. If you are outside on your own then it doesn’t matter how you spread the gospel, no one will bother you. But if you are doing it in the name of a specific church and if there are more than fifty people or more than one hundred people, then that would be different. If there are too many people and you are all together outside handing out gospel leaflets then that would be too many.

RAB personnel had called in at Mashan Church on several occasions to ask the leaders to stop believers from distributing gospel leaflets. When I spoke to one preacher in Mashan Church, she at first told me: “The whole gospel leafleting issue gives me a headache. We’ve even talked about it from the front on more than one occasion and have encouraged brothers and sisters not to casually hand out gospel leaflets like they were just some advertisement or something.” I immediately thought that she was against the idea of gospel leafleting but she continued by explaining the strategy she encourages the believers to use:

When you hand out leaflets, the best possible thing you can do is to explain to people the gospel and if they want to take a leaflet then you can give them one; if people don’t want to take a leaflet then you can’t force them. There are some believers who walk along the street handing out leaflets. However, there are some people who take a leaflet, look at it and then throw it on the ground which I think is a waste. So, we advise believers not to hand out gospel leaflets like they are just like other leaflets but rather, if people have time, to sit down with them somewhere or even standing on the street, give them a good explanation of the gospel starting with the basics so that they will be able to listen and take on board what you are saying. If people are really willing to accept [the gospel] then you can also give them a booklet 小册子.

Other preachers related similar accounts, emphasising the need for engaging with people rather than simply handing out large numbers of leaflets.

Preacher Zhang and the evangelism small group at Enlin Church who are involved in leafleting seek to distribute the gospel leaflets in a manner different from the myriads of other people who hand out leaflets for restaurants or new businesses. This reveals their strategies and techniques which they have developed through trial and error and which are taught to new Protestants. They leaflet before Enlin Church’s two largest meetings. On these occasions a large group will go to the busiest places in the district; for example,

outside the shopping centres, the job centre or the beach area. They have usually prepared some form of street dance and songs usually sung in church meetings. This attracts a crowd and makes it easy to give out a lot of gospel leaflets in a short amount of time. As Preacher Zhang says in his own words, this method was developed through experience:

We know how to do it now. We perform dances and then sing first to get a crowd and then give out the leaflets last. We pick up the leaflets that people have dropped and if they are clean, we hand them out again to someone else. The Urban Management [城管] people used to come and get angry with us because of the litter but now we make sure we pick up the discarded ones.

Leaflets are also distributed before and during the main Sunday meeting at Enlin Church. The “service team” 接待组 meet and greet passersby on the main road outside the church. Members of the team are all uniformed and bring with them a makeshift sign pointing to the church. They hand leaflets to people saying, “Jesus loves you” 耶稣爱你 and inviting them to church. They never appear worried about getting into trouble and people almost always took the leaflets. As with the other churches, large numbers of gospel leaflets are also handed out by Enlin Church members in their spare time. I have seen them in action myself down at the beach chatting to people, inviting them to church and handing out leaflets. I never heard of any accounts of leaflet distributors getting shouted at or abused by members of the public.

There appears to have been some development in the dialogue between the churches and the state with regards to leafleting but Enlin Church provides a particularly enlightening example in its interactions with the local state over the past few years. Preacher Zhang often leads the leafleting teams himself and there were times in the past when Section Chief Dong called Preacher Zhang to ask him to stop. He related to me that he and another relative had been taken to the Public Security Bureau¹⁹² for questioning several times when they began to set up the church three years previously. He was found responsible for organising mass leafleting activities near local department stores and at the beach and warned not to do it again. However, this did not deter them. They reasoned with the PSB personnel on two accounts, as other church leaders in Huanghaicheng have also done. Firstly, they argued that the message they share with people is a good one 好消息. Secondly, they claimed that if they do not get out there, “evil cult” 邪教 groups will. After a while they stopped taking Zhang to the PSB office and phoned him instead. It has

¹⁹² As we saw in Chapter Four, the PSB investigates reports of illegal religious activities or religious activities which are not registered. I know that in Huanghaicheng they investigated the Seventh Day Adventists 安息日会, the Wenzhou church 温州教会 and various smaller groups who were meeting without being registered. There is a distinction between registered groups doing illegal activities and unregistered groups.

now come to the stage where Section Chief Dong from the RAS asks him not to leaflet on major holidays such as National Day.¹⁹³ He says that he agrees to this because he wants to “respect those in authority”¹⁹⁴ because this is what he thinks the Bible teaches. In his own words:

We need to be open in doing our spreading of the gospel... *Now* if you give out [gospel] leaflets you won’t be arrested. We usually go out [to hand out gospel leaflets] on a Thursday and a Saturday.¹⁹⁵ A lot of people come [to our church] because they have been given a leaflet. There used to be some trouble when we did this before but not now. They [PSB] used to come and check up on what we were doing. We usually go out on the street to hand out [leaflets]. We hand out more when the weather is better... If you do something really out of the ordinary 另类 it isn’t good. We want to do things within the law.

Religious Affairs officials have also called or visited church leaders in the other districts to ask them to curb gospel leafleting. Their response has been to encourage believers to go out individually or in small numbers so as not to attract attention. Apart from the RAS Section Chief Dong and the PSB, Urban Management 城管 personnel also try to prevent the church from leafleting in the city, especially in Jinghai. Preacher Zhang is convinced that the Urban Management personnel are sent by the PSB sometimes. Other gospel leaflet distributors said the same. These pep talks have done little to stymie the distribution of gospel leaflets in Huanghaicheng. In fact, I would argue that this action by the state to attempt to curb the activity of leafleting has inadvertently led to a refining of leafleting strategies which may be arguably more effective than earlier strategies as we saw above.

One of those involved with leafleting from Enlin Church told me that Urban Management also employed young thugs 小混混 to confiscate their leaflets on one occasion. She was pleased that when she went to reason with them for the return of the leaflets, the men handed them back but kept a few to read themselves which she saw as an added bonus to her efforts in spreading the gospel.

We can see from leafleting activities that a tacit agreement has been made between the church in Huanghaicheng and the local state. Although leafleting is still prohibited

¹⁹³ It should be noted here that this is obviously a Chinese (political) holiday, not a Christian holiday. Because there will be so many out-of-area visitors on this holiday, Section Chief Dong probably does not want provincial-level or other outside officials to see such activities as this may harm his own career.

¹⁹⁴ 尊重在上执政掌权的。

¹⁹⁵ On a Thursday to attract people to the evening youth meeting and on a Saturday to attract people to the Sunday meeting.

according to religious policy, local authorities allow churches to leaflet although there may be gentle reminders from time to time and agreed restrictions on the manner in which the leafleting is carried out. Although Preacher Zhang may be an exception in the fact that as a church leader he actively participates in leafleting, the City Two Committees and the churches are complicit in the activity through their supply of leaflets and their encouragement of brothers and sisters to distribute them. The state is still engaged in detecting and suppressing ‘evil cults’ and the distribution of leaflets – viewed as a form of orthodoxy – is seen as one way to help in this campaign. This provides a degree of legitimacy for the activity while at the same time the leaflets are inexpensive to produce while being effective at bringing people into the church.

Unofficial charity work

We have already seen in Chapter Four how the Three-Self churches engage in official charity projects in order to promote the church and share what they feel is part of the Protestant message. This case study will demonstrate the ways in which these churches in Huanghaicheng negotiate religious policy and engage in charity projects which have an overt proselytising aim. To help legitimate these activities, the leaders argue that these projects help to contribute to the construction of a “harmonious society” 和谐社会. This activity was almost impossible to research and there was no opportunity for me to conduct participant observation because my presence would have drawn too much attention and may have, for example, made hospital staff more wary or suspicious of the group of brothers and sisters involved in hospital visits.

We have already seen in the last case study how proselytising outside of a registered religious activities venue is prohibited by religion policies and regulations. There is a range of unofficial charity projects in the Three-Self churches. Some are aimed specifically at believers in the church or people who are not Protestants but have connections through family or friends to the church. Announcements are regularly made in the churches about a brother or sister or a family known to the church that is in some sort of difficulty and needs financial or other material support. This is most often for medical treatment. When visiting Youfu Church on one occasion early on in my fieldwork, an announcement was made about a family where the mother had died, the father had to have a cancerous tumour removed and the child was also ill. The sister, who gave the notice, explained that if anyone could make a donation then it would be

appreciated. At the end of the meeting, I was surprised by the number of people who gave and the amounts of the donations. Many of the believers that I talked to claimed to give ten percent of their income to the church and these donations were often over and above the ten percent they normally gave.

On another occasion, the hospitality team at Desheng Church helped a couple over several months. The husband had gambled away his money and then got into debt to the local mafia. The wife came into contact with the church and in her despair became a believer. For some time she did not share her story but then the apartment the couple lived in was burned down. At that point some of the church members heard about it and got the hospitality team involved. People donated money and basic household necessities. The husband then converted and after he started coming to church, some of the brothers and sisters lent him money so that he could set up a barbecue stall in order to make money to pay back his debts. Before I left Huanghaicheng his stall was doing well and the couple were getting back on their feet. Brothers and sisters donated money to people in difficulty who wanted to set up a business or to university students who were considering dropping out of their course because of financial difficulties.

All of the churches have “visiting small-groups” 探访小组 which visit the elderly, those in hospital and those with other needs. These groups often seek to spread the gospel through these activities. Assistant Pastor He related to me how Youfu Church proselytised through unofficial charity projects:

We have a brother in one of our small groups who runs a nursing home. We’ve been doing this work for nearly three years. We go there to help out and spread the gospel. Last year, some of the staff and some of the elderly people asked to be baptised. We are expecting more this year. Our visiting small group now also go to Jinping Hospital to visit the sick and to pray, sing and read the Bible with them.

Through visiting hospitals, there were reports of both patients and staff converting to Protestantism. The churches also seek to help families and individuals before Spring Festival by distributing clothes, cooking oil and food to those in financial difficulty as one church leader describes:

The church has two types of charitable activities 慈善活动. The first one is coming up to Spring Festival we’ll find some families who are in financial difficulty 困难户, those who are living in poverty. We’ll usually try to find families who are outside the church but if we can’t find any families we’ll give help to people within the church. Of course, this is not the same as the daily help we give to those amongst us who are ill or have financial problems...

In this way, the churches were engaging with the local community, creating avenues for sharing the Protestant message and bringing people into the church.

These unofficial charity projects are a sign that the Three-Self congregations in Huanghaicheng are growing in confidence and seeking to engage with the local community, not just on an individual but in an organised and collective manner. Though the state has made indications that there should be more space for religious groups to engage with society, many of the official projects are done in tandem with local state agencies and the brothers and sisters feel that it is difficult to spread the gospel in situations where officials accompany them. The state has traditionally monopolised the provision of these types of social services so this remains a delicate area and opens up the possibility of the local state losing legitimacy. When I talked with brothers and sisters and church leaders, they said that they felt these projects should be acceptable since they fit in with the state project in establishing a harmonious society while their main intention is to spread the gospel.

English classes

The analysis of the English classes organised by the Three-Self community in Huanghaicheng reveal how church leaders utilise their relationships within the RAB to engage in activities which aid the spread of the gospel. It should be emphasised from the outset the idea of foreigners teaching English in a church is a sensitive issue with the local state, though admittedly the issue is somewhat less sensitive than the early 1990s when the classes began. The English classes run by individual churches or organised by the City Two Committees have two primary aims. Firstly, they raise the profile of the church in Huanghaicheng society. Secondly, they serve as a forum for spreading the gospel. The English classes run by churches are unofficial although they may exist with the tacit approval of the RAB. More recently, the City Two Committees has begun to organise a city-wide summer English training programme which has been officially approved by the RAB, the purpose of which is to create more officially-recognised space for such activity.

In the 1990s, Pastor Zheng was based at Desheng Church. He was looking for ways to involve young people in the church and came up with the idea of setting up an English class. He knew that the idea of having foreigners play a role in the church was sensitive, especially after the events of 1989. However, at the same time, he was getting to know

career missionaries working in colleges and universities in the city. They shared a common aim with Pastor Zheng in wanting to spread the gospel. He utilised these contacts and started an informal group which met after the main Sunday worship meeting finished. He describes it in his own words:

In the early 1990s I took a big risk 大冒险. I wanted to raise the profile 提升 of the church [in society] so I began to contact foreign Protestant English language teachers in the city. There were no such independent foreign-taught English classes in Huanghaicheng at that time. When I really thought about it I realised that this was quite a sensitive 敏感 venture. The government felt uneasy about foreigners at that time but in order to really find out, we began to invite young people to stay after the main worship meeting to practice English [together with the foreign teachers]. So that was how we began. It wasn’t a formal training class.

The real purpose of the classes, though, was to reach out to young people who did not attend church. Pastor Zheng involved the RAB directly in this informal group in order to gauge whether or not he should expand it. He did this by inviting a young RAB official to come along to practise his English. This “clever tactic” 小聪明, as Pastor Zheng called it, resulted in the classes receiving tacit approval from the RAB. He continues with his account:

Then, I came up with a way round the issue. One of the RAB personnel was quite young so I asked whether he would be interested in coming along to practice English. He started coming along so I knew that the English classes wouldn’t be a problem [for the RAB]. After that, we began more formal English classes. We began bringing in more students... We talked with the RAB in order to make it a bit more official. I invited their children along, and some of them came to study. We had more than 100 students at a time during our peak. Several thousand students altogether have attended our classes.

The classes are divided into levels. Protestant university students teach the beginner and intermediate classes while the foreign instructors teach the advanced classes. Most of the foreign teachers who are involved with the English classes are career missionaries. They are unpaid for the teaching and welcome the opportunity to build relationships with the young people. Pastor Zheng, and his wife, Teacher Tang who helps oversee the programme, are complicit in the proselytising which takes place through these classes. The students are charged a fee for the semester and most of this money goes toward supporting primary-aged children from impoverished areas to pay school fees.

These English classes have been running in Desheng Church for about twenty years but remain in a grey area of being tacitly-approved by the RAB but having no official status.

Other churches in Huanghaicheng have organised short-term English or Korean training classes during summer holidays in order to attract young people. Their short-term nature means that they are easier to conceal but there is always the danger that local RAS officials will clamp down on them. As head of the City Two Committees, Pastor Zheng asked the RAB for several years to allow him to organise a city-wide summer English training camp. Permission was finally granted during the year I spent in Huanghaicheng and a summer camp was run at Xixia Church that summer for two weeks. Teachers came from a church in North America (with which pastor Zheng has contacts) and all of them were ethnic Chinese. The classes were a success and Pastor Zheng hopes to arrange such programmes every year. But perhaps it is pertinent to ask why Pastor Zheng would go to the bother of going through the official channels to run an annual English class when there are other unofficial classes being run simultaneously. We see here a strategy employed in other areas of Three-Self churches working with the RAB on official projects for the sake of conducting other projects unofficially. The churches want to appear compliant knowing that their relationship with the local state is beneficial to their survival. In addition, such official activities set a precedent for future activities. If Xixia Church can run a summer English class without any incident, it is likely that such activity will be normalised and other churches will run similar programmes which are seen as important for raising the profile of the church in society.

We have seen in this case study the significance of running English classes both unofficially and officially. The unofficial classes not only raise the profile of the church in society, they also attract young people and serve as a forum for proselytising. The official English classes which began in 2010 demonstrate to the local state that the Three-Self churches want to engage with official procedures. At the same time, however, this engagement serves to camouflage other activity. Once such official activities have been negotiated they can more easily be accepted in other districts, thus helping to further the mission of the church through engaging with society.

Unregistered groups, Three-Self churches and the local state

These case studies will demonstrate that the interactions between some unregistered Protestant groups and the Three-Self churches in Huanghaicheng reveal that there is not a clear division between the registered and unregistered congregations in terms of teaching and practice, contrary to what much literature on Protestantism in China might claim. The

relationship between the Three-Self churches and the local state allows these registered congregations to actively seek to protect Protestant groups with whom they have contact. We will see that these networks are increasingly organised and that Three-Self churches share resources with unregistered groups in the form of personnel and material goods. Central to these relationships is the belief in Protestantism and the perceived importance to extend the mission of the church in Huanghaicheng.

In Huanghaicheng I visited one company where a Protestant friend of mine worked and which was owned by a South Korean couple who were Protestants. The factory had recently expanded and taken over an adjacent company, including its buildings and staff. When the manager was walking round the company during her lunch-break one day, she found three workers having a meeting. They had previously been at the company she had just taken over and were reading the Bible. The manager was delighted and when she made plans for the use of the new buildings, set aside a large room for use as a meeting room and paid for it to be fitted out with a lectern, chairs and instruments to be used for worship. A section manager in the company who was a Korean minority helped to lead the group. He had completed two years of Bible training in a seminary in Korea. Although this group had a tentative link with Pastor Liu, it functioned without the knowledge of the local state and also contravened local religion regulations since it utilised a “non-religious venue” for religious activities (see PRMRA, Chapter Two, Article 20 which states: “Non-religious organisations should not establish temples or churches, donations boxes or other religious facilities” (Huanghaicheng RAB, 2007, 17)).

While I was in Huanghaicheng, Pastor Liu and the manager of the company were trying to arrange for someone from Baisong Church to visit the company once a month to preach. The manager of the company was happy for her employees to lead the group themselves but also wanted a native Chinese speaker to come regularly to teach. Pastor Liu would clearly have welcomed any of the workers in the factory to come to Baisong Church on a Sunday but the location of the factory would have meant the workers taking three different buses to get there. Pastor Liu was happy for the meetings to take place and had no desire to encourage them to register (which would have been difficult anyway). Having met and talked with a number of South Koreans who run factories and other businesses in Huanghaicheng, I get the impression that Korean managers establishing or encouraging Protestant groups within their businesses is not uncommon across the city, particularly in those areas designated for development.

Elder Xie had previously taken time out from her work in the church in Huanghaicheng to work in a South Korean-owned factory where the manager encouraged her to study the Bible during the day (as her job, for which she was paid) and lead meetings for the factory workers. She gave them systematic Bible study and served in a pastoral role during the two years that she worked there. From our discussions, she emphasised the importance of this time in broadening her own Protestant experience and helped her consider the possibilities for her role as an Elder in the Three-Self church to which she returned. Certainly, other scholars have described the activities of Christian bosses at length (Cao, 2011) but these have largely been discussed within the context of unregistered groups rather than in the interplay between Three-Self and unregistered congregations.

There are unregistered Protestant student groups in all of the major universities and colleges in Huanghaicheng. This is significant since officially there should not be any religious organisation operating within an education institute (Document 19, Chapter IV reads “religion will not be permitted to meddle in the administrative or juridical affairs of state, nor to intervene in the schools or public education” (MacInnis, 1989, 15)). The authorities are nervous about student activism and do not like any organised groups operating on campuses. In addition, universities are certainly cautious of their reputations resulting in competition between them. It is generally safer for religious groups on campus than off because universities usually attempt to deal with issues themselves rather than calling in the security or other organs. As a result, these Protestant groups try to strike a balance between actively proselytising and keeping a low profile.

Some of these groups were set up and developed by missionaries within the last twenty years and some of the groups are very well established. Pastor Zheng is aware of all of the groups and has visited some of them to preach. He feels strongly that he should encourage young people to take the initiative in matters of faith. The American missionary, Jean, who we have already mentioned manages a group in one university. The group is divided into “small groups” which form a tight network for prayer, Bible study and support. Some students who graduate and remain in Huanghaicheng continue to be part of this group. There have been several attempts by the university authorities to shut the group down and some of the leaders themselves have been questioned but to date there is no sign of the students giving up meeting together. This is also the group which Assistant Pastor He and his wife used to attend often.

Another group, started by a different American missionary in a second university, has grown to between 180 and 200 students. The group initially met on campus in the apartment of the missionary but as it grew the university clamped down and tried to disband the students and discourage the teachers who were involved from attending. One year, several missionaries teaching at the institution were fired for proselytising activities. The group then started to meet off campus in an apartment rented by a group of female students. After the Wenzhou Church opened a congregation in Huanghaicheng they made contact with the group and now provide funds for the students to rent a two hundred square metre apartment in which to meet. While the Wenzhou Church does not manage the group they sometimes send speakers to preach to the students. Some students have also received training in music so that they can lead worship. Pastor Zheng has visited the group several times and seems very impressed with it. He thinks their beliefs and practice are in line with what he regards as “true faith” 正确信仰.

Another university group which no longer meets on campus has grown to around 150 people. It started off on a university campus by an independent preacher and as it grew they began to rent a room in one of the university canteen complexes. At this time, Preacher Qian had just graduated from seminary and came into contact with some of the students. They asked him to come and speak at their meetings. Preacher Qian went along and preached several times before the group were asked not to meet on campus by the university authorities. They then began to rent a function room in a leisure centre but were raided by the PSB during one of their meetings. The leaders were questioned but after the main leader mentioned her connection to Pastor Liu, they left. Pastor Liu vouched for the group despite the fact that they were not registered and had no intention of doing so though the main leader did attend a leadership training event run by Pastor Liu at Baisong Church for all meeting point leaders in the district.

Several of these student groups use the main hall in Mashan Church to hold a joint meeting at the start and end of every university term. They are given the use of the building without charge. Several of the young seminary graduates have been asked to speak at these meetings, which they do without being paid. These preachers told me that the groups are run quite well and that they have no intention of trying to get involved with how they are managed. Some of the groups have even given performances at the Christmas services in the Three-Self churches across the city despite the fact that they are run independently of the TSPM.

I came into contact with a range of unregistered groups and leaders of unregistered groups during my time. In the area near my apartment I came across a lady distributing gospel leaflets and she was talking to a small group of people. When I talked to her, the conversation began like this:

Author: What kind of church are you?

Sister: We are a church led by God. We are a church. We have connections with Baisong Church.

Author: Do you know Pastor Liu?

Sister: Yes. I know him.

Author: Do Elder Lu and Elder Zhu come to speak sometimes?

Sister: Yes. Yes. Yes.

Author: Does no one bother you for handing out gospel leaflets?

Sister: No one bothers us. We have already told Pastor Liu about it. He knows we are spreading the gospel and he is very supportive.

This clearly demonstrates that the sister thought that having a connection with Pastor Liu gave her some form of protection even although the group she belonged to was not registered.

We can see in the above examples the extent to which Three-Self church leaders are willing to identify themselves with groups not attached to the TSPM. Three-Self church clergy encourage these groups by taking up preaching engagements in them but more significantly by providing protection to these groups from state institutions such as the PSB or RAB.

These case studies demonstrate that there is no clear division between the activities of the Three-Self churches and unregistered congregations; they are sometimes well-connected and share resources. In fact, these case studies reveal how some unregistered groups survive under the protective umbrella of the Three-Self churches. Church leaders and the City Two Committees are willing to use their positions of influence to shield some unregistered groups from being shut down or facing harassment from the authorities. It is also clear that the City Two Committees has little influence on protecting student Protestant groups on university campuses (where all religious groups are banned) but it is willing to support these groups where it can. The Three-Self churches in Huanghaicheng, then, serve a purpose somewhat different from that originally intended by the local party state. The Three-Self churches use their veil of legitimacy yet engage in activities outside the scope of regulations which help to bring the Protestant community in Huanghaicheng closer together while sharing resources in terms of training and personnel.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has analysed how the Three-Self churches in Huanghaicheng utilise their symbiotic relationship with and embeddedness in local state organs in order to conduct activities which clearly have an ambiguous status in terms of religious policy and regulations. We have seen how some activities have been negotiated with the local state over a period of time while others are camouflaged by the churches. There is also a degree of space for the negotiation of some “grey” activities and churches have negotiated the placing of church signs and the handing out of gospel leaflets in order to attract people to registered churches which are supposed to provide support for the CPC and the government. Protestants also play on state rhetoric on harmonious society to justify their provision of unofficial charity work. English classes organised by the churches provide a forum for proselytising young people who would not ordinarily come to church. We have also seen how the Three-Self churches interact with unregistered groups and use their legitimate status to protect such groups against the local state. This interaction also provides channels for the sharing of resources which aid in the spread of the Protestant message and the expansion of congregations. We turn now to make some conclusions regarding the nature of church-state relations in Huanghaicheng.

Chapter Ten

Conclusion

INTRODUCTION

In this final chapter we will summarise the main points made in previous chapters before discussing the limitations of the overall project and highlighting several areas for future study not covered in this dissertation. We will then detail the main contributions of this dissertation before drawing some conclusions on the nature of church-state interactions in Huanghaicheng; namely that the churches gain in very practical ways from their symbiotic relationship to the RAB and their embeddedness in other local state institutions. The churches do not support the CPC in the manner officially intended but rather utilise their position as active agents to negotiate with the local state with regards to space for activities which fall beyond the remits of religious policies and regulations. Through this negotiation, Three-Self churches leach state authority and this transforms the state-society nexus.

Summary of main points

It is the concept of symbiosis which has been one of the major contributions of this dissertation. Conceiving the relationship between Three-Self churches and the RAB as symbiotic, we have been able to see that these interactions are not state-centred and that churches and church leaders have a significant degree of agency. This goes beyond previous attempts to conceptualise religion-state relations as state control over religion or of religious resistance to the state. This also goes beyond previous scholarship analysing the relationship between religious groups and the state as state-corporatism or patron-client relations in which the state is the central focus and that it is the state which decides what benefits the religious groups will take from their interactions. By utilising the concepts of embeddedness and symbiosis, we are able to see the agency of religious actors as well as a range of outcomes at any given time. This further allows us to see the complexity of church-state interactions as it reveals that at any one time the relationships

can be mutualistic, commensalistic or parasitic and that the churches can obtain benefits from these interactions not intended by the state.

Early in the dissertation we established that the state has sought to define religion and religious practice using distinct categories which are embodied in policies and regulations on religion. We have analysed the manner in which Protestantism was subjected to the institutionalisation of religion in the modernising Chinese state which began with the collapse of the Qing and saw that under the CPC, this institutionalising project was expanded, resulting in the formation of the TSPM which attempted to bring together all Protestants under the United Front. It was this institutionalisation which facilitated the embeddedness of the TSPM and the Three-Self churches into the local state, and more significantly, brought the Three-Self churches into a symbiotic relationship with the RAB. Our analysis also revealed that as part of this institutionalised relationship religious specialists are given recognition by the state and meeting points and churches which registered are also given state legitimisation as religious activities venues. Senior clergy are given political appointments in the LPCs and the City PPCC as part of this symbiotic relationship effectively embedding them in the local state.

Our detailed analysis of the Three-Self churches in Huanghaicheng and their interactions with local state organs revealed that the Three-Self community is one of vibrancy, with the churches and other meeting points engaging in a range of religious activities, many of which can be characterised as “grey” area activities or specifically prohibited in religious policies and regulations. The Three-Self religious specialists and lay believers utilise their symbiosis with and embeddedness in the local state in a range of ways to benefit the churches. They employ a range of strategies to gain practical benefits for the churches.

We have seen how the churches use the state-defined religious activities venues in a wide manner of ways. Sunday worship meetings tend to be reserved, providing a veil of legitimacy for other activities such as unofficial training or conducting exorcisms. These activities are important aspects of helping to spread the Protestant message. We have also seen how congregations camouflage certain activities so as not to draw attention from local state organs such as the RAB or PSB. In our discussion on clergy mobility we saw how religious specialists sought to downplay their connections by concealing their travels from the authorities. Our analysis also revealed that, for example, with English classes, churches simultaneously ran officially-recognised programmes while running other unofficial English programmes as vehicles for proselytising.

The symbiosis between the churches and the RAB has also created a degree of trust and some religious specialists have utilised opportunities to draft reports on behalf of RAB personnel, allowing churches to play down their numbers or specific activities. Such a relationship has also allowed church leaders to have a more active role in selecting candidates for seminary and ordination as senior religious specialists do the investigations which are supposed to be conducted by the RAB. In our discussion of leafleting and church signs, we saw that church workers are able to take advantage of political issues such as state fear of “evil cults” to negotiate space for their proselytising activities. At the same time, we saw how some churches have developed highly-effective proselytising strategies which draw minimal attention from local authorities.

Our case studies on the return of old church buildings or the construction of new ones revealed how religious specialists were able to utilise their political positions and establish new channels through which buildings could be returned or negotiated. We have also seen how the legitimate status of Enlin Church and relationships with senior religious specialists and the district government Party Secretary provided opportunities for a new congregation in Yuehua Company and funds for a new church building. Significantly, our analysis demonstrated how Three-Self church leaders are able to use their legitimate status to provide protection to unregistered congregations while at the same time sharing resources which aid their expansion.

While I have argued in detail that church leaders and the churches more generally seek to derive benefit for the Three-Self congregations through their embeddedness in the local state and symbiosis with the RAB, it is highly possible that church workers would seek to utilise their relationships with state institutions in order to benefit themselves or their families and other contacts. I was aware that this could be an issue and while I was conducting fieldwork and this was an area which I pursued through interviews and in conversations with leaders and lay believers. During the twelve months I spent in Huanghaicheng I did not come across any accusations or evidence of such activity. I think there are several reasons why church leaders do not seek to gain personally from their positions in significant ways either within the churches or outside the churches. Within the Three-Self churches there are a range of procedures which help to minimise graft, for example. Married couples are not allowed to hold leadership positions in the same church. Offering boxes had two locks and no-one was allowed to have more than one key. They were only ever opened in the presence of three or more people. Accounts in most of the churches were put on display. In addition, none of the church workers appeared to be well off and some really did live in very basic accommodation. However, while I think that

these procedures may have deterred some seeking to gain from their positions within the churches, I think the main deterrent was a moral one. Those seeking personal gain faced the real possibility of sanctions or being ostracised from the Three-Self Protestant community. It would be difficult, though not impossible, in such a case for a church leader to leave the TSPM and set up a new congregation elsewhere. Of course, I have no definitive evidence to state that none of the church leaders utilised their positions for their own gain.

Limitations of the project and suggestions for further research

There are several limitations in the dissertation which could be addressed through further research. Firstly, due to the nature of doctoral training, the fieldwork for the project was conducted for twelve months. While this is normal and adequate for the writing of this dissertation, twelve months is a relatively short period of time in relation to the life of Protestantism in Huanghaicheng and its relationship to the local state. Further research is needed to continue to analyse church-state interactions over a longer period of time in order to provide a more rigorous examination and nuanced picture of the dynamics between church and state.

A range of types of online activities are an important part of the Three-Self and wider Protestant community in Huanghaicheng; however, this whole area was beyond the scope of this dissertation. A significant number of church leaders and those working in the churches as well as other lay believers use the Internet in a wide variety of ways, including as a means to express their faith. The most popular form of online activity is through QQ with its instant message system, micro-blog interface and discussion boards. Many of the blogs set up by Protestants have a clear Protestant identity: Bible verses, reflections on passages from the Bible and photographs of church activities. The discussion boards and discussion groups are very active and serve a variety of purposes from seeking advice on particular issues related to the Protestant faith to advertising Protestant-run businesses and services. Many of the churches would like to have a website but some of the church leaders claimed that something formal would bring with it increased responsibility in terms of content. Instead, some of the churches use QQ as an unofficial forum for communicating church news and information activities with church workers serving as moderators. This is one area which is highly under-researched. We

need answers to questions such as, How does online activity help to establish Protestant identity? What impact does online activity have on church-state relations?

In addition, while the project was not seeking to be representative of the nature of church-state interactions in China as a whole, the time restrictions in terms of fieldwork meant that only one fieldsite could be analysed. Further research in other parts of China could build up an enhanced picture of Three-Self Protestantism at the grassroots and its relationship to the local state in different locales. Further studies will facilitate comparison and the painting of the broader processes affecting the relationship between Protestantism and the state.

The Protestant deaf and mute community in China remains severely understudied: I have not come across any academic treatment of this community. My fieldwork amongst the Protestant deaf and mute community was hampered by the fact that I do not speak sign language although I was able to pick up a rudimentary understanding during the course of my time in Huanghaicheng. Despite the fact that I do not speak much sign language, I was able to interact with many of these participants through participant observation and electronic devices. Furthermore, I extensively interviewed church workers who serve this community. There is a need for further training in the local sign language dialect before more rigorous data can be generated.

Lastly, while this dissertation has touched on the Pentecostal-style nature of Three-Self Protestantism in Huanghaicheng, it has not been the main focus of the study and as a social phenomenon in China, this remains highly understudied. Is there a relationship between popular religion and Pentecostal-style practices in Protestant churches? Does the empowering nature of Pentecostalism have any potential political consequences in church-state interactions? These are just some of the questions which remain unanswered in the literature.

Conclusion

Early on in my time conducting fieldwork in Huanghaicheng, I attended the Saturday evening Youth Meeting at Desheng Church. As normal, the main church hall was nearly full. There had been a lively time of singing before a young preacher still on his two-year probation got up to speak. His topic was the historical need for Jesus and he quoted from Mencius, Laozi and other Chinese religious figures and philosophers. His argument was

that many of the ideas these figures had were good but that they did not address the basic human need of a “new life” 新生命. At the end of his talk, he said the following:

I have a hope that more people in Huanghaicheng will accept the [Protestant] gospel. I have a hope that in the future, all the churches in Huanghaicheng will be filled and that we'll have to add more meetings to accommodate all the people. I hope that all the bus termini will be churches and that when the passengers get off the bus the announcement will be, “Please remember to bring your belongings with you and God bless.”

During the closing stages of my time in Huanghaicheng, I interviewed for a second time, a pastor who was also a senior member of the City Two Committees. Towards the end of the interview I was asking him about his opinion on the relationship between the churches in Huanghaicheng and the local state. The conversation moved on to the topic of “harmonious society.” He said:

The latest thing that is being talked about is harmonious society. I think that's a good thing. After all, China has a lot of contradictions. At the moment, a lot of problems are suppressed. People feel that China is in a kind of crisis. The leaders know about this and have proposed the idea of building a harmonious society. I think this idea can help to solve small issues but it can't deal with the big problems. When we come to talk about the church, I don't think that there is anything that we need to do in particular with regards to building this harmonious society. Protestants get along better with each other than those in government do. We're far ahead of them. Political messages only deal with surface issues but our message deals with the real issues. Our message deals with the root of the problem: our heart. They really need to learn from us. Of course, if you aren't a believer then even if you try to learn what we do, you can't do it. You can only learn some surface things. It's right that the state is trying to address the issues because who can say what China will be like in ten or twenty years? I dread to think.

We will return to these narratives shortly. A significant contribution of this dissertation has been the way in which it has broken down the local state into the different actors rather than simply viewing the interactions between Three-Self churches and state organs as a dichotomy. However, more than just not conceiving of the state as a monolithic entity, we have analysed in detail the nature of the interactions between religious specialists, Three-Self congregations and state personnel.

Our framework of embeddedness and symbiosis has revealed the significance of institutionalised relationships which also provide informal channels and procedures for the movement of resources. In particular, the outcomes of these symbiotic interactions have revealed the religious specialists and Three-Self congregations as dynamic agents in the partnership. There are interactions between the churches and the RAB which are

mutualistic, benefitting both partners, such as in the fight against “evil cults” or charitable donations made for disaster relief by the Three-Self congregations. There are interactions which are more commensalistic such as when the RAB negotiates land for the building of a church but gains little itself. There are also interactions which are parasitic when the authority of the state is leached by the Protestant community for the benefit of the churches such as when Pastor Liu takes over the role of the RAB in doing background investigations on potential seminary candidates.

This analysis reveals that these interactions are not characterised simply by state control over the TSPM/CCC structure or Three-Self congregations. At the same time, these outcomes also demonstrate that the churches are not simply in resistance to the state. The relationship is not simply one of the state co-opting the churches. These interactions are characterised by church leaders and lay believers as active agents seeking to maximise their relationship to state institutions in extracting resources for the expansion of the church. The Three-Self churches in Huanghaicheng are not, as some literature would suggest, simply an extension of the state. The church congregations are vibrant religious communities with a clear mission of spreading the Protestant message.

I think both of the above narratives encapsulate much about the interactions between the Three-Self churches in Huanghaicheng and their relationship to the local state. Both narratives demonstrate the confidence which the church leaders (and lay believers) generally have in their message as well as the emphasis they place on sharing this message with others. This has been clearly evident in the case studies we have analysed. They are not disillusioned with the state or the CPC and its projects. Their aim in spreading their message is not to resist the state. They believe that their message has more to offer than political projects, including the development of a harmonious society. In addition, it is clear from these narratives that the church leaders operate utilising different categories from those laid down by the state.

The outcomes of the embedded nature of the churches in local state institutions and the symbiosis between the churches and the RAB in Huanghaicheng in terms of what activities churches engage in also reveals that analysis of policy documents and regulations on religion does not provide a nuanced understanding of religious activity at the grassroots. It is clearly evident from our case studies that embeddedness and symbiosis provide the platform for both the implementation and the negotiation of what activities are acceptable to the local state. We have analysed a wide array of “grey” and officially-prohibited activities which the Three-Self churches in Huanghaicheng engage

in. Some of these are possible because of negotiation with the RAB and other state organs. The churches do not simply follow the dictates of the state.

Our analysis has revealed that the formal institutional procedures are only part of the overall picture. The state can not effectively control the conversion and baptism of local officials and CPC members, though admittedly it is difficult to ascertain how much of an issue this is for local state organs. It is increasingly difficult for the local state to limit the proselytising activities of the Three-Self churches because it fears religious specialists leaving the TSPM structure and engaging in wider clandestine activities which are much harder to monitor. The Three-Self churches and the religious specialists who lead them are active participants in the relationship, seeking to build personnel networks along specific lines which benefit the churches.

It could be argued that the churches are actually being used by the state in order to counter the perceived negative influence of “cults” which have been a particular source of concern to the Chinese state throughout the reform era. These groups, Falun Gong in particular, have been perceived as being a de-stabilising force in society and also of questioning the legitimacy of the CPC. The state may be seeking to use the Three-Self churches to counter the influence of “cult” groups within Huanghaicheng but there are several important points to be made with regards to this issue in the context of our analysis. Firstly, the Three-Self churches and the wider Protestant community do not engage with the issue of “cults” in the same manner as the state. While the state seeks to establish itself as the legitimate source of authority against these “cult” groups, the Protestant community measures the beliefs and practices of these groups against their understanding of Protestant doctrine. The Protestants whom I talked to at length about this issue claimed that the difference between themselves and “cults” was spiritual. I met several church workers who talked to members of various “cult” groups and discussed at length with them issues of “truth” and “correct teaching.” The aim of the churches in seeking to combat “cults” is an issue of doctrinal “truth” whereas the state is seeking to maintain its own legitimacy.

Further, as we saw in the case studies, the Three-Self churches have an increasing voice in the status of unregistered groups in the city in relation to state organs demonstrating that this is not simply a case of the local state dictating to churches which groups is has singled out as “cults.” It is also evident that the church leaders also utilise the fear of the local state of “cult” group influence in order to negotiate space for themselves. This directly calls into question that the local state is simply using the Three-Self churches for

its own purposes. Furthermore, even if the state is benefitting from the churches in relation to combating the influence of “cults”, the churches clearly profit from their relationship to the state in many other ways.

Because of these factors, I would argue that there is a strong case that the symbiotic relationship between the Three-Self churches and the RAB and the embeddedness of the churches in the wider local state benefits the congregations to a larger degree than the local state would be comfortable with were all these factors taken into consideration. While there is general support for the government amongst Protestants, the church leaders and the lay believers believe that what they have to offer in terms of the message of Protestantism is more dynamic than what the local state has to offer. However, it is not that the Three-Self Protestant community sees itself in opposition to the CPC or the state; rather, they believe that the state project is good as far as it goes but that the Protestant gospel is perceived to be a more wholistic answer to perceived human needs. The Protestant community does not regard itself primarily as existing to serve the state.

Many of the believers who are part of the Three-Self community in Huanghaicheng are part of the church because they have a faith. The fact that many believe that the Protestant message can help answer what are considered to be China’s problems is a by-product of the existence of the churches and their belief in a particular message. It could be argued that this common belief and the sense of community which results from a shared identity and common practices means that the Protestants in the Three-Self churches constitute a sub-culture within Huanghaicheng society. While I would argue that the shared identity and the common values in the Three-Self Protestant churches has elements of a subculture, this would require further detailed analysis and is beyond the scope of our discussion here. Although I think we need to be careful as to how we envisage the effectiveness of it, it is clear that the Three-Self community is a force for social and political change.

We saw in our case studies how the churches are involved in welfare projects which cover the spectrum of official and unofficial. There is a clear intention within the churches to get involved with the local community in practical ways and to meet perceived needs. As we have seen, these projects always have the purpose of sharing the “gospel.” Some of the work which churches are engaged in, such as parenting classes for single parents, directly challenges current social norms with regards to what constitutes a family. Church leaders and lay believers alike are considering further ways in which they can engage in society with the Protestant message. While there seems to be little evidence

to suggest that there is a conscious effort to change society in Huanghaicheng, the Three-Self churches, nevertheless are a minority source of social change.

The churches are also a force for political change, albeit on a small scale. We have already established that it is belief in a particular message which drives the religious practices found in the Three-Self churches. Besides a desire to engage with wider society, these practices are the impetus for the churches to negotiate with the local state with regards to what acceptable religious activities are. In addition, these beliefs drive practices which occupy a “grey” area or are clear violations of state religious regulations. The churches utilise their relationship to gain resources from the state which they then use for the expansion of the church. There is certainly the possibility that this relationship enhances the influence of Protestantism. The Three-Self Protestant community in Huanghaicheng is certainly not “politically weak” as one commentator has described Chinese Protestantism (Dunch, 2001, 209). While the Three-Self churches do not confront the state directly, unintentionally, the interactions between the churches and the local state are gradually, and in a small way, usurping state power in such a manner as to transform this aspect of the state-society nexus.

Appendix

District TSPM and Three-Self Church Regulations

Church Management

Huanghaicheng Xicheng District Protestant Regulations for Baptisms

This code of practice has specially been drafted in order to help standardise the ministry of the district church meeting points and to help the church become holy and catholic.

1. Conditions for baptism:
 - a. Congregants seeking baptism should have listened to sermons for at least one year;
 - b. Have a pure faith, accepting Jesus Christ as the only saviour;
 - c. Know that they are a sinner and have clearly repented, been saved and know the truth of being born again;
 - d. Demonstrate through their treatment of others that they have been born again with correct behaviour, treating the church responsibly, involved in the ministry of the church, loving God and loving people;
 - e. Comply with all the church regulations, be patriotic and law-abiding, and be responsible towards society;
 - f. And whose faith and morals have been examined by the church [leaders] are qualified.
2. Requirements for the ministers of baptism:
 - a. Baptism is an important ministry of the church and church pastoral workers should treat it seriously, and should not treat it casually or lightly and should administer it according to the church regulations.
 - b. Baptism must be administered by a pastoral worker (pastor, assistant pastor or elder) and it should not be administered by others.
 - c. Baptism must be carried out in a legally-registered [religious] activities site.
 - d. The normal procedures for the ministry of baptism [are]:
 - i. Those wishing to be baptised must apply themselves;
 - ii. The church must arrange a baptism class for those seeking baptism;
 - iii. Church pastoral workers must examine the faith and morals of baptism candidates;

- iv. Those who have passed the examination can be baptised.
- e. The church should approach this work with a responsible attitude, making a record of the names of the baptismal candidates and ensuring that they are delivered to the City Two Committees within ten days of the baptisms.

Church Management

Huanghaicheng Xicheng District Managed [sic] Protestant Church Meeting Points Code of Practice for Church Workers (temporary)

This code of practice has specially been drafted in order to help standardise the ministry of the district church meeting points and to help the church become holy and catholic.

Outline:

1. “Church workers” refers to those who preach, lead or teach hymns in the church during church meetings.
2. The schedules for all church workers will be organised by the District Two Committees, including professional clergy, seminary students and those voluntary workers who have received a given amount of theological training. Individual churches will provide schedules for those leading meetings and those who teach hymns.
3. Church workers must possess the following qualifications:
 - a. A good citizen, patriotic and loving [their] religion, compliant and law-abiding, supporting the leadership of the Communist Party of China;
 - b. Follow the teachings of the Bible and maintain the orthodox faith;
 - c. Follow the church rules and regulations, give joyfully, minister enthusiastically in the church, support all the ministries of the church and take responsibility for the church;
 - d. A healthy body and mind in order to carry out and shoulder responsibilities, have a testimony of good moral character and behaviour, a good name in and outside of the church, loving the believers and being loved by the believers;
 - e. Able to correctly guide believers whether working or not working, not attracting attention to themselves and not stirring up disagreements or gossiping;
 - f. When working, clothes should be neat, dignified, plain and not overly-fashionable and workers should be civilised and not spit;
 - g. Those who teach hymns and lead meetings should be baptised at least three years, be educated to middle-school level or above and should be between 25 and 60 years of age.

4. Preachers who come from outside Xicheng District must fulfil the following requirements:
 - a. Clergy must hold documents from a provincial-level or above church organisation [TSPM/CCC] demonstrating their clerical qualifications and must also hold local-level church organisation clerical qualifications and only after being examined and being accepted to take on any class or preaching, and having applied to the necessary Religious Affairs department, can preaching be scheduled;
 - b. Seminary students must have a standard certificate from a seminary recognised by the state and a certificate from a local church organisation and only after being examined and being accepted to take on any class or preaching, and having applied to the necessary Religious Affairs department, can preaching be scheduled;
 - c. This does not include those who have already received permission from a provincial-level church organisation.

Church Management

Management of Finances

1. A finance group (including an accountant and cashier) should be set up to take responsibility for the daily church finances.
2. According to church custom, donations given by believers to the church should be accepted but should not be forced. People not members of the church should not organise and hold church activities or accept donations from believers.
3. Church workers in churches and meeting points [which are] democratically managed organisations should work hard to do the work of recording accounts, check accounts and make reimbursements well and should ensure that figures are recorded correctly, clearly and honestly, and the accountant should report donations and outgoings to the church administration committee on a quarterly basis.
4. Approval for expenditures must be given by those in church leadership positions. However, in some circumstances and according to the above principles, the authority to receive or spend money can be given to others involved in church ministry.
5. With regards to travelling for work, funds for long or short trips can be released close to the time of travel. Reimbursements for money spent should be applied for within three days of return. Applications for reimbursement must be made each time

money is spent. If an application for reimbursement is not made within three days then the matter should be pursued by the accountant. Money spent on the buying of any needed items should be reimbursed the same day.

6. Payments for stationery, relevant books, materials and magazines for order should only be made after being referred to the person in charge of church workers or the church office and having received the permission of the church administration.
7. Those making expenditures for large-scale church events such as Christmas and Easter [meetings] should first fill in a claims form and receive the permission of the person in charge of finances before spending any money.
8. No-one is permitted to borrow money for personal use, divert church funds or generate income from church funds and all church income must be promptly put into the bank. Money [kept in the church office] should not exceed 500 *yuan* (except in exceptional circumstances).
9. If anyone seeks to go against the above rules, accountants and cashiers must refuse to lend or use [church] funds otherwise they will be held fully responsible in the event of any investigation.

Church Management

Hygiene and Illness Prevention Management

1. Public hygiene
 - a. The church has established a small group for the oversight of hygiene with a named person responsible.
 - b. Attention must be paid to public hygiene and the [church] environment must be kept clean. No graffiti should be written or drawn on walls or windows, water should not be poured from first floor windows, fruit peelings other rubbish should not be dropped on the floor and no spitting is allowed.
 - c. The offices, main church hall and the children's rooms should be cleaned once a week. Attention should be paid to the following:
 - i. The floor should be clean with no scraps of paper, spittle, cigarette ends and so on.
 - ii. The glass in doors and windows, and desks and chairs should be clean with no cobwebs or dust. Everything should be neat and tidy.
 - iii. Effort should be made to keep windows open in the church hall and offices in order to let in fresh air.

- iv. All shared cups and bowls and the communion cups should be sterilised immediately after use.
 - v. Toilets should be flushed and sterilised regularly.
 - vi. All workers should have regular medical checks and if any infectious diseases are discovered they should maintain their distance [from others] and seek treatment.
2. Rules for the management of food.
 3. Kitchens should strictly follow the Food Hygiene Law. Food which is rotten, sub-standard, poisonous, harmful or out-of-date should not be bought. In order to prevent food poisoning, cooked and uncooked foods, food products and ingredients should be labelled and stored according to type.
 4. Insect screens for doors and windows should be well-fitting. In order to maintain kitchen hygiene, the ‘four harms’¹⁹⁶ should be regularly eradicated.
 5. People working in the kitchen should pay attention to their personal hygiene and should have regular medical checks. If they discover that they have any infectious diseases, they should maintain their distance [from others] and seek treatment. They should then wait until they are fully recovered before returning to work.
 6. After use, all kitchen utensils should be washed immediately to maintain cleanliness. Utensils should be thoroughly washed, rinsed and sterilised.
 7. If a case of food poisoning is discovered, contact should be made immediately with the hospital.
 8. Personal hygiene
 9. Good personal hygiene habits should be encouraged amongst the clergy and believers including regular bathing, changing clothes, cutting hair, trimming finger nails and washing bedding.
 10. They should pay attention to kitchen hygiene including not using the bowls, chopsticks, tea cups and towels of others.
 11. Spitting is prohibited and toilets should be flushed immediately [after use].
 12. They should take part in sports activities and should pay attention to having a good balance of work and rest.

¹⁹⁶ Rats, cockroaches, flies and mosquitoes.

Church Management

Fire Safety Management

Fire safety officers

1. Ensure that there are two fire safety officers on duty.
2. The overseer of the church should supervise fire safety and any weaknesses in the work should be corrected.
3. Fire safety officers should learn well how to limit the chances of fire and [study] the rules and regulations associated with fire safety. They should also learn how to effectively use all fire safety equipment.
4. There should be an annual seminar on fire safety techniques.

Fire safety education

1. There should be a schedule for regular fire safety training and study.
2. Fire safety officers should be trained to the level of four abilities (the ability to educate others, the ability to make checks, the ability to recognise and put right any fire hazards and the ability to deal with fires in the early stages.
3. Educate people regularly on the issues of fire prevention through meetings, posters, etcetera.

Management of fire risk

1. Stoves [for cooking] and fires used during the winter months should be regularly checked by the church administration committee.
2. Stoves should be positioned in a safe place and should be supervised by a trained individual. Flammable substances should not be placed near stoves.
3. Supplies for stoves should be turned off after use to avoid the risk of fire.

The management of fire risk from fitted electrical appliances

1. Electrical appliances and electric cables should be fitted by a qualified professional.
2. Electrical appliances and cables should be fitted according to procedure and should be properly earthed.
3. Proper electric cable and appliances should be used.
4. If, in the process of inspection, any risk of fire from electrical cables or appliances is found, immediate action must be taken to resolve the issue.

The management of fire safety equipment and measures

1. Fire equipment which can deal with the likely types of fires should be used.
2. The types and layout of fire safety equipment should be comprehensive.

3. Fire safety equipment should not be used for anything apart from for the use of putting out fires.
4. Fire safety equipment should be checked regularly and replaced if necessary.

Fire safety management of storage facilities

1. Smoking is not permitted in any storeroom.
2. All materials in storage rooms should be placed neatly, should be clean and hygienic, and should not be highly flammable. All walkways should be clear of obstructions.
3. Open flames should not be used in any storage room.
4. Lights in storage rooms should be turned off after use and plugs should be pulled out from the sockets. All windows and doors should be locked.

Church Management

Safety Management

1. A defending public order small group should be established to safely protect the accountant's office, electrical equipment, offices, etcetera against thievery.
2. During normal church activities, the defending public order small group should take it in turns to work to defend against any action or disruption caused by criminals. If anyone is discovered [thieving or making a disruption] then they should be stopped or the matter should be reported to the police. Serious matters should be handed over to the police in order that they will be dealt with according to the law.
3. During the big church festivals such as Christmas or Easter, there should be sufficient church workers who should work together with professionals to ensure the safety of the electricity supply, road safety, the accountancy office, storage rooms and accommodation and other important places. These areas should be inspected and all hidden dangers avoided.
4. The church does not generally allow outsiders to stay in the church. If a worker from another church must – because of special circumstances – stay in the church, permission should be granted by the overseer of the church.
5. After every church event has finished, every church or meeting point public order personnel should check that every light is turned off and that every window and door is locked before leaving.

6. Every public order safety personnel should receive regular training and study the relevant laws, regulations and policies in order to improve their ability to carry out the work and to improve their ability to take precautions against crime.

Church Management

Notice for Church Visitors

Huanghaicheng Chongfan Protestant Church is a site for religious activities formally registered with the government and has the protection of the laws of the state. All believers and clergy and those from outside the church who visit the church for worship are required to comply with the rules and regulations of the church and respect the worship ceremony.

1. All those who come to the church must accept church discipline and submit to church management.
2. All those who come to take part in church activities should be dressed neatly and modestly.
3. Smoking, spitting and dropping litter is not allowed inside the church.
4. During church meetings switch off mobile phones and listen attentively to the sermon. Making loud noises is not allowed: peace must be maintained in the church.
5. Look after one another after the end of church meetings: take care of the elderly and infirm and leave the building in an ordered manner.
6. If you have money to donate to the church it should be given gladly and placed in the offering box.
7. Those with infectious diseases, mental illness, people who are drunk and those with other such illnesses are not allowed in the church.
8. No-one is allowed to collect money for themselves or hand out leaflets inside the church.
9. Look after your personal belongings. All vehicles should be put in the correct place and locked securely.
10. Look out for the interests of the whole church and look after church property.

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