

**Rural Urbanization and Religious Transformation:
A Case Study of Zhangdian Town**

Liu Zhijun

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to engage the impact of rural urbanization on the transformation of rural religions based on description of the urbanization situation and religious transformation of a specific community. Zhangdian Town of Pinglu County, Shanxi Province is selected as the target community to do the case study. Documentation method, questionnaire method, participant observation and intensive interview are methods applied in this research. In general, the author attempts to find out how the economic structure, population structure, life style, social interaction, mass media and value concept of the target community have been affected by rural urbanization, and thus its impact on local religions. Then, the author analyzes the relationship between rural urbanization and transformation of local religions, the dialogue between traditional Chinese diffused religions and western institutional religions along with the process of rural urbanization, and attempts to predict the fate of religions in a climate of increasing rural urbanization.

Research findings and highlights:

1. “Rural urbanization” ought to be defined as the process of the integration of rural & urban productive means, rural & urban life styles, and the integration of rural & urban civilizations.

2. Impact of rural urbanization upon the religious transformation of Zhangdian Town: Religious aspiration inspired by rural urbanization; Modernization of values; Smaller family scale and the wane of formal organizations; Problems caused by rural urbanization and its settlement; Influence from globalization.

3. In Zhangdian Town, the conflict between Chinese traditional religions and western institutional religions, Christianity and Catholicism, is mainly concentrated on idealistic domains. Even in idealistic domains, the conflict is relatively mild because of the localization of Christianity and Catholicism. For most of the Christians and Catholics, what makes them feel a bit of nervous is the problem of whether or not to worship ancestors and how to consecrate them.

4. Urbanization and industrialization will advance the need for religions. But what particular religions will be selected by the majority of the people will depend on their particular history and reality. If we consider that many shrine buildings of Chinese traditional religions were destroyed before and after liberation, and all religions were once regarded as harmful to society for several decades, we can get some idea that why it is Chinese traditional religions such as folk religion, Buddhism, Taoism that are declining even after Reformation and Opening to the World.

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Rural Urbanization and Religious Transformation: A Case Study of Zhangdian Town

Introduction

1. 1. Selection of the topic and its purpose

In order to collect materials for my master's dissertation that focuses on Guangong Belief (a branch of Chinese folk religions), I did fieldwork in several provinces of inner China in 1998 and 1999. During my field research, I found several locations impressed me for Christianity was prosperous there while some traditional Chinese folk religions were declining at the same time. With great enthusiasm, I did some elementary fieldwork in Zhangdian Town of Shanxi Province to initially explore these ideas.

Prof. Yiyuan Li, a famous anthropologist of Taiwan, said in his article "Burgeoning religions and traditional rituals: an anthropological survey" (Published in *The Front Line of Thought*, Volume 3 of 1997. Kunming, P.R. China) that along with the industrialization and urbanization in Taiwan, traditional Chinese diffused religion continues to flourish while the western institutional religions began to decline. But it's probably not the truth in Mainland China. Anyhow, the data I got in Zhangdian Town of Shanxi Province won't confirm to this assertion. In order to make clear what had actually happened to religion, especially to rural religion along with urbanization and industrialization, I'm inspired to do this case study to make some kind of verification.

Thus the purpose of this project is to engage the impact of rural urbanization on the transformation of rural religion based on specific description of the urbanization situation and the local religious transformation of the target community.

So, in this project, I will attempt to find out how the economic structure, population structure, life style, social interaction, mass media and the value concept of the target community have been affected by rural urbanization, and thus its impact on local religion. Then, I will analyze the relationship between rural urbanization and the transformation of rural religion, the dialogue between traditional Chinese diffused religion and western institutional religions along with the process of rural urbanization, and to predict the fate of Chinese rural religion in a climate of increasing rural urbanization.

As a case study on the Chinese rural urbanization and the transformation of Chinese rural religion, the conclusions drawn may not agree with other rural communities of China, but I'm convinced that they can be used as hypothesis in many spheres of urban anthropological research and the information got in this project can be used as a basis for further comparative research.

Few investigators have explored the intersection between urban anthropology and religion in China before. But many related field research had been down in different parts of Mainland China such as the study performed by Ye Naizi in Ha'erbin City of Heilongjiang Province [Ye Naizi (1993)] and the research done by Liu Zhongwei in Quanjiao County of Anhui Province [Liu Zhongwei (1997)], other articles are (Mo Fayou, 2000), (Lu Zhaoyang, 1999), (Yao Shunzeng, 2000), (Xu Ping, 2000), (Gong Zhebing, 2001), (He Chengwu, 2001) etc. But the field research is not so sufficient and specialized.

1. 2. Selection of the target community

Zhangdian Town belongs to Yuncheng City. Yuncheng is the hometown of “Marital Sage” Guangong who are as known as “Cultural Sage” Confucius in Chinese history. So Guangong Belief, a traditional Chinese diffused religion, had deep influences here over a long period of time. Yuncheng is also one of the most important original centers of traditional Chinese culture. For a long time, it is a district famous for its far-reaching influences on China and the world. As a traditional cultural center of china, it has a long history of Chinese ancestry worship, Guangong Belief and other traditional folk religions.

Just along with the “Reformation and Open to the World” of China, the pace of rural urbanization here is accelerated and the economic structure, population structure, life style, social interaction, mass communication and value concepts here changed a lot during this period. At the same time, there have been great transformations of the local religion including religious structure, believer components, causes and motives of religious conversion, religious activities and attitudes. A prominent phenomenon is the prosperous development of Christianity and the declining of some traditional Chinese folk religions including Guangong Belief. It is reported that Zhangdian Town is one of the towns that boast their most numerous Gospel Churches in Mainland China. It is said that there were 6 Gospels and 500 or so Christians in this town in 1999. Now there are about 677 Christians and 246 Catholics in this town.

A Chinese central town with ancient and far-reaching traditional Chinese culture especially traditional Chinese diffused religion becoming an important Christian parish along with rural urbanization is a typical phenomenon worthy of thorough investigation and detailed analysis. For this reason, select this particular community as the investigation spot to do case study when limited by time, money and personnel is a relatively practicable choice.

1. 3. Explanation of the research methods

1. 3. 1 Documentation method

I collected investigation reports, media news, statistics, official and folk documents related to the urbanization situation and religious transformation of the target community as the basic materials to do this project. I also got some related information of other Chinese rural communities as comparative materials.

1. 3. 2 Questionnaire method

Semi-structural questionnaires were used in this project to investigate the rural urbanization situation, local religious transformation. Subjects were selected by random. Most part of the information obtained was analyzed by using SPSS and Microsoft Excel.

1. 3. 3 Participant observation

My partner and I went to Zhangdian Town three times during this period. We stayed there for about 70 days not only to collect documentation and fill in questionnaires but also to observe local urbanization situation and contemporary religious belief throughout our fieldwork. By participant observation, we saw closely and clearly the day-to-day activities of our community of interest, what is their real situation, how do they really think, and our conclusions was inspired partly by our experiences. In addition, the information got by participant observation was also used as comparative materials in concert with questionnaires and documentation.

1. 3. 4 In-depth interview

We selected some representative subjects in the target community to conduct deep interviews. The purpose was to build a specific understanding of their family situation, individual history, economic background, social network, social interaction, value concept, religious belief, religious transformation, causes and motives of religious conversion, religious comprehension and religious enthusiasm, etc. Thus we acquired some useful concrete source materials to make individual descriptions as a basis for further generalization.

1. 3. 5 Focus group discussion

We held two focus group discussions to listen to participants' opinions about the process of urbanization, the religious reality of their community and the impact of rural urbanization on their local religious belief.

2. Background of the Target Community

2.1. General Situation of Pinglu County

Pinglu County is located in the middle reaches of Huanghe Rive, between North Latitude 34° 41' 20" ~35° 00' 59" and East Longitude 110° 52' 47" ~110° 37' 42" , neighboring Henan Province to the south, Yuncheng City to the north, Xiaxian County to the northeast, Shanxian County, Lingbao County and Miancheng County to the southeast. It's a ancient cultural center of humankind. In Xia Dynasty, Shang Dynasty and the beginning of Zhou Dynasty, it belonged to State Yu. During Han Dynasty, it was called Dayang County. Then in North Zhou period, the name was change to Hebei County. From 742 in Tang Dynasty till now, it was known as Pinglu County.

The total area of Pinglu County is up to 1173.5 sq.km. It currently has 15 towns. According to the Fifth Census, there is a total population of 242,000.

2.2. General Situation of Zhangdian Town

Zhangdian Town is a part of Loess Plateau. It is located in the middle of Yuncheng City and Pinglu County. To the northeast is Xia County. And to the east, Qinglan Town, to the west, Buguan Town. Zhangdian is surrounded from three sides by mountains. It's about 20 km long and 13 km wide. The total area of Zhangdian Town is up to 94.5 sq. km. The totally cultivated lands of Zhangdian Town are 65667 mu. The climate is windy and frigid.

It currently has 15 administrative villages. According to the Fifth Census, there is a total population of 242,000. There is an immigrant village, Nongchang Village in which more than 400 immigrants from Sanmen Gorge Reservoir area are located since 1958.

Zhangdian is an ancient town that boasts its centuries-old civilization. One of its villages, Gucheng, whose name means "ancient castle", is once the capital of state Yu in Zhou Dynasty. Now, people in Zhangdian still observe four ancient congregations on March 15th, April 12th, July 7th and October 12th according to lunar calendar. These four mass congregations, once were and still are great events for Zhangdian and surrounding regions though their main purpose have transformed from amusing different gods to exchanging commodities and information. Because of its relative convenient traffic conditions, Zhangdian is outstanding in the development of transportation and telecommunications. That's why there are so many labor forces are engaged in

transportation and so many stores in Zhangdian serve for transportation. There are about 18 motor repair shops and 9 motor fittings stores in this town. More than 50% percent of all the families are equipped with telephones and have the access to all over the world.

In addition, Zhangdian is very famous for the high quality of its fruit. Almost every rural family here is involved in fruit planting and have earned a lot by selling their output to other places.

3. Rural Urbanization Situation of Zhangdian Town

3.1. About the “urbanization” and “rural urbanization”

The traditional definition of “urbanization” is more concerned with the congregation of rural population in urban areas along with the concentration of industrial development. The rate of urban population serves as a very important indicator of the degree of urbanization. For example, once Mr. Guo Shutian and Liu Chunbin pointed out “In general, urbanization is referred to the concentration of population to urban areas. i.e. the transformation of agricultural to non-agricultural population, the transformation of rural to urban population. In the process of urbanization, more urban areas are built and there is an increase of urban population” (Guo Shutian & Liu Chunbin, 1990).

The definition forwarded by Stuley D. Brunn & Jack F. Williams in their book “Cities of the World: World Regional Urban Development” emphasized the transformation of life style in addition to the population movement. This amendment represents a new orientation of urban research.

In fact, there are many sociologists, anthropologists, geographers have pointed out the limits of traditional definition of urbanization and tried to propose some new ideas. Some creative work is done by Anthony Leeds, Gregory E. Guldin, Daming Zhou, Chunguang Wang, etc. They emphasized the communication between urban and rural areas and the transformation of life styles other than the change of vacation and residence. Related to rural urbanization, there are different opinions about how to realize China’s rural urbanization according to assorted definition of rural urbanization. Someone said that the only way to realize rural urbanization is to develop township enterprises and make it possible for more peasants immigrate to towns and to fulfill its industrialization. Another proposal is to develop industries in existing urban areas or construct new urban regions to accommodate immigrants from countryside.

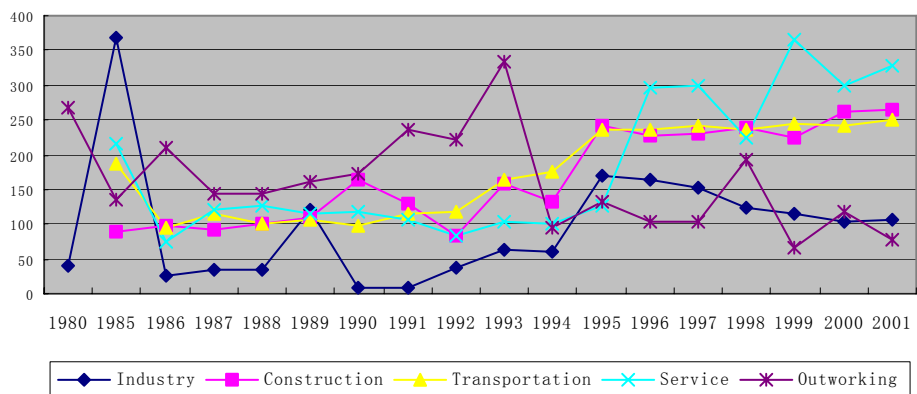
Here I will adopt the theory put forward by Daming Zhou. He pointed out that rural urbanization is a process of the transformation of life styles and civilization. There are five dimensions in this process. First, the differentiation of vocation, i.e. the increased ratio of non-agricultural labor forces, and the change of family structure. Secondly, the diversification of economic and revenue structure, i.e. the ratios of the Secondary Industry and the tertiary industry rise gradually. The third, the urbanization of life styles. The fourth, the prevalence of mass media using. The fifth, the modernization of values and the enhancement of educational level.

3.2. Rural Urbanization of Zhangdian Town

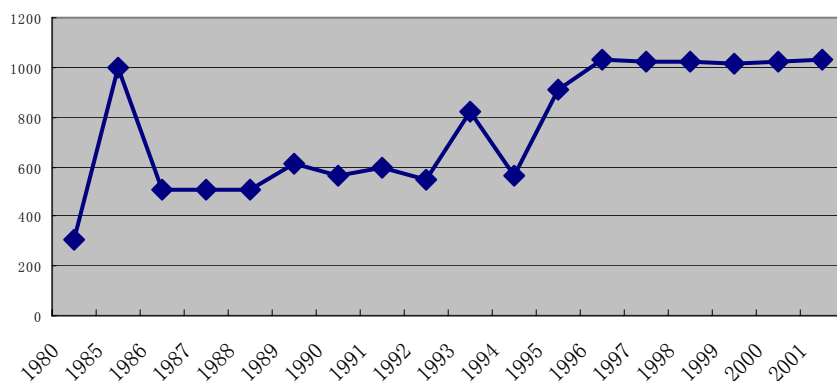
3.2.1 The transformation of professional and family structures.

According to statistics, the ratios of non-agricultural and commercialized agricultural labor forces rose generally. This was signaled by the vocation structure.

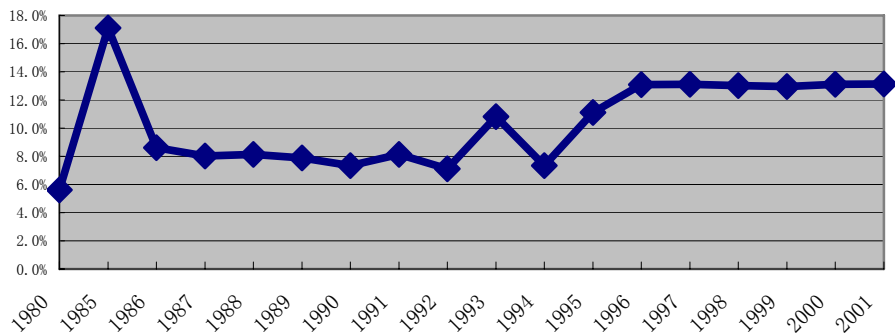
Labor forces served in different sectors



Non-agricultural labor forces

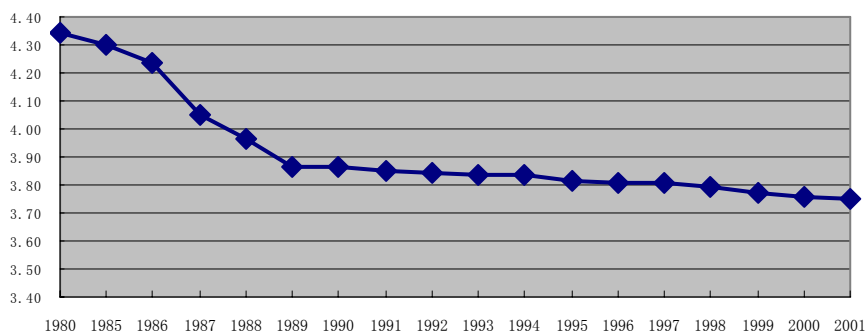


Percentage data of Non-agricultural labor forces



The family structure also changed. The average family population decreased bit by bit from 4.35 persons in 1980 to 3.75 persons in 2001.

Average household population



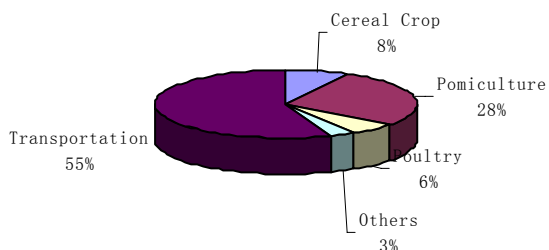
3.2.2 The diversification of economic and revenue structure

Along with the change of vocation structure is the diversification of economic and revenue structure.

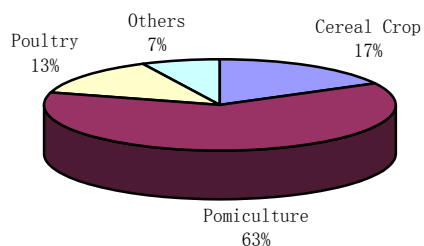
i . the commercializing degree of the primary industry has increased. For example, the commercial percentages of three main cereals wheat, soybean and millet are respectively 27.3%, 86.25%, 84.8%.

From the following maps, we can find out that those non-cereal-planting sectors such as pomiculture, transportation act as very important roles in improving farmers' family revenue.

Annual Revenue Structure of Households Engage in Transportation



Annual Revenue Structure of Other Households



ii. The development of the secondary industry especially the tertiary industry.

In 1990, there were 7 township enterprises in Zhangdian. But none of them survived to 1998. There are 18 small-scale private enterprises till 2001. But their businesses were slack at most of the time. The transportation and other service businesses were a bit of better and contributed a large part of national & family revenues. According to my sampling survey, 14.8 percent of the families in question are involved in the business of transportation.

Compared with reality, this ratio is a bit of magnifying. There was no accurate statistics about how many families owned trucks and engaged in transportation. It is estimated that the actual number maybe 3.1 percent.

I once did a fast statistics along the main street of Zhangdian Town in August 2001. There were more than 150 front stores there. Among them, there were 18 motor-repair shops, 9 motor-appurtenances stores, 2 gas stations, 13 restaurants, 10 barbershops, 5 fashion houses, 7 clinics, 4 photo studios, 6 inns and 6 fruit trade centers etc.

3.2.3 Urbanization of life styles

Influenced by rural urbanization, the traditional, autarkic, unitary, self-contained, leisured life styles had transformed into modernized, inter-dependent, diversified, open-minded, high-speed life styles.

Costume fashion, food fashion, dowry fashion, fitment fashion, furniture fashion, and etc. are almost the same as in urban areas. The means of communication are modernized and diversified. According to my sampling survey, 56.5 percent of the total specimens have the access to telephone in home

The frequency of visiting urban areas also enhanced. On average, one visits Pinglu (county city) 9.81 times per year, visits Yuncheng (prefecture city) 4.19 times per year, and visits other cities 1.06 times per year.

3.2.4 Dissemination of mass medias

Behaviors of the majority are becoming more and more media-orientated along with the rural urbanization.

According to sampling survey, 97.2 percent of the specimens regard “watching TV or listening to broadcasting programs” as one of the main channels through which to obtain outside news and information. About 97.2 percent of the specimens watch TV everyday. On average, they watch TV for 2.24 hours a day. About 76.9 percent of them watch TV over two hours every day. About 38.9 percent of the specimens regard “reading” as one of their main means to gain news and information outside. TV, broadcasting and publication are three main mass medias in modern society. We can judge from these data that people who reside here are becoming more and more media-orientated. In addition, about 55.6 percent of the specimens regard “hearing from others” as one of the main channels through which to keep touch with the outside world. This is a common phenomenon even in urban areas though is not so important as in countryside. This channel is once the most important one before Reformation and Open to the World. The falling of its importance is the result of rural urbanization accompanied with the popularization of mass medias.

3.2.5 Modernization of values

With the communication with outside world becoming more and more often, their values are influenced in different degrees. It is impossible to maintain all of their original opinions and values without adjustment or transformation.

In our sampling survey, we asked, “Who are your ideal models?” About 78.7 percent selected “anyone with a happy family life”. That means people began to attach much importance to happy family life and the spiritual pleasure brought by harmonious family atmosphere after the satisfaction of material life.

About 66.7 percent selected “intellectuals or knowledgeable persons”. That means people began to recognize and cherished the value of knowledge and skills. About 20.4 percent selected “successful businessman” as their model. Once this percentage was very high in most part of Mainland China in the early stage of Reformation and Open to the World. The mark down of its popularity means a more modernized perspective about fortune and the standard of success. About 10.2 percent selected “anyone with a secure job”. About 5.6 percent selected “anyone who is powerful”. About 3.7 percent selected “anyone who live in urban regions”. Once these three kinds of person represented the characteristics of urban residents. Though urban life is still aspired by them, they can now enjoy most part of it in their own community thanks to rural urbanization.

The modernization of values also can be manifested by most of the non-believers’ open-minded attitude toward Christians and Catholics. According to sampling statistics, few of the believers’ family numbers, neighbors, relatives, friends and even village cadres object to their religious activities. Only 1.6 percent of them are objected by family members, 0.8 percent are objected by their neighbors, 1.6 percent are objected by relatives, 2.4 percent are objected by their friends and 3.2 percent of them are opposed by village cadres. A large part of village cadres, about 53.5 percent, are indifferent to them believes. 32.3 percent of their friends, 28.3 percent of their relatives and 19.7 percent of their neighbors also are indifferent to what they believe in.

The transformation of values is also exhibited by the change of family institutions. An interesting phenomenon is the increase of the number of new married couples who reside and live in brides’ families. There were 8 couples of this kind during 1999-2001, about 18 percent of the total 45 new married pairs. In the case of family politics, most of the examined families, accurately 84 percent of them both the male and female family members have equal powers over family decision-makings.

4. Religious Transformation of Zhangdian Town

4.1. Brief history of the religion history of Zhangdian Town

4.1.1 Chinese traditional religion, Buddhism and Taoism

Before the invasion of Japanese army in 1939, there were 7 temples in Zhangdian: Earth God Temple, Temple of Emperor Yan & Huang, Horse God Temple, Birth-control Granny Temple, Temple of Liubei & Guanyu, Buddha Temple, Emperor Dragon Temple and Mercy Buddha Hall. Every March 15th, April 12th, July 7th and October 12th according to lunar calendar, there were

four temple fairs that were great events for Zhangdian and surrounding regions. The original purpose of these mass congregations was to entertain all kinds of god that in charge of Zhangdian to make them protect and bless them. During those days, people did business and communicated with each other at the same time.

There is no significant difference between Zhangdian and other places of China in other aspects of traditional religions.

4.1.2 Christianity

Christianity was first introduced to Pinglu County by Priest Pei Keming of Ruicheng County in 1928. In 1929, there were 15 followers. There were 166 Christians in 1933. The number increased to more than 400 in 1945.

After liberation in 1949, the development was retarded. During the period of Cultural Revolution, most of the Christians were persecuted. The freedom of religion was regained after the close of Cultural Revolution in 1976. Christianity developed steadily thereafter. In 1990, there were 2074 Christians, one church, 13 informal churches, 1 presbyter and 17 deacons in Pinglu County. In late 1970s and the early stage of 1980s, Christians in Zhangdian held Christian activities in the home of an old female Christian. After 1990, more and more people converted into Christians. There was an urgent need to build a formal gospel. They formed an administrative committee to take charge of this task. It was fulfilled in 1997. All the money spent in constructing this gospel was gathered through Christians' voluntary contribution. It was said more than 120,000 RMB was spent. Right after 1997, Christians in different parts of Zhangdian constructed five small gospels in Fengkou Village, Xiniu Village, Nongchang Village, Angou Village and Zaoyuan Village. In Zhangdian Gospel, there were two large-scale churches every year on which priests from other parts of China were invited to preach.

4.1.3 Catholicism

During 1930s, Catholicism was prosperous in Pinglu. There were 357 Catholics in 1933. In the same year, there were only 166 Christians and less Buddhists and Taoists in Pinglu. After liberation, Catholicism suffered a lot. There were only 54 Catholics in 1957.

The first group of Catholics in Pinglu County resided in Chenzhang Village of Zhangdian Town. Before liberation, several families emigrated to Chenzhang from Henan Province. There were few Catholics in them. In addition, a priest came from Netherlands once preached there. That why Chenzhang became the first Village of Pinglu in which Catholics reside. Catholicism developed smoothly from late 1970s. In 2002, there are 246 Catholics in Zhangdian. The only Catholic Church of Pinglu County is located in Chenzhang, which was built in 1997.

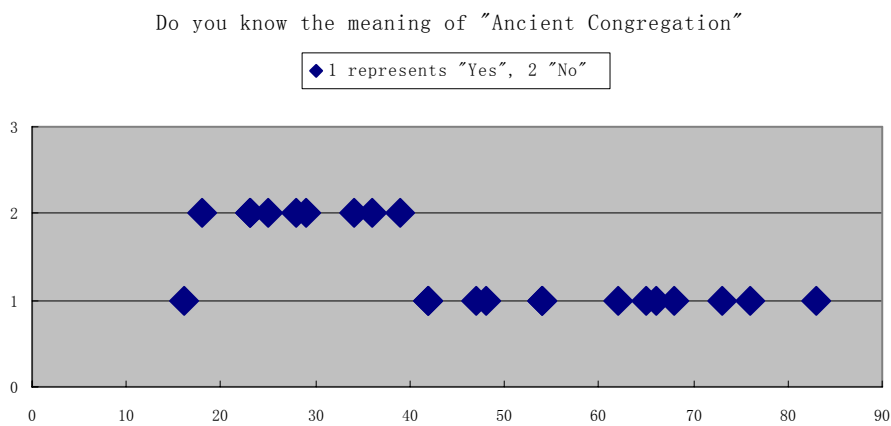
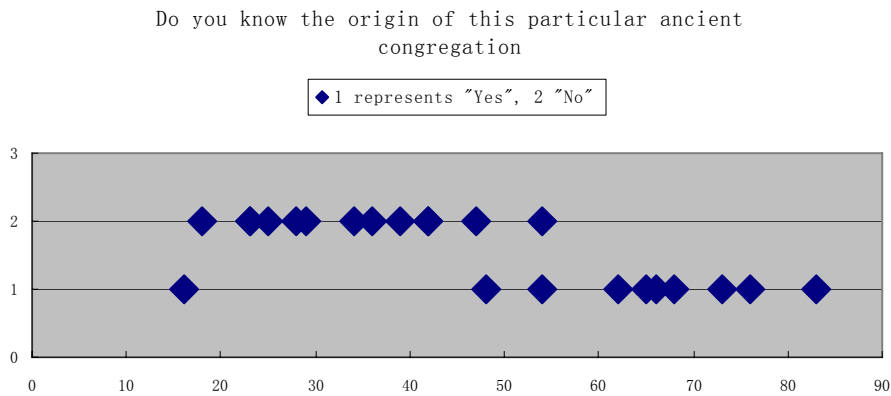
4.2. Contemporary Religious Situation of Zhangdian Town

4.2.1 Chinese traditional religion, Buddhism and Taoism

Formal activities related to Chinese traditional religion, Buddhism and Taoism are almost disappeared in Zhangdian because of the destruction of their material buildings. But people's behaviors, values and thoughts are still influenced by these religions.

For example, those four traditional temple fairs are still maintained. But the religious function is disappeared entirely. Few young people can recognize the religious meaning of these fairs. According to my situational survey during one of these four temple fairs on August 25th, 2001,

most of the young people under 40 years old don't know the origin of temple fair or the particular meaning of that ancient congregation.



Once Guangong Religion was a popular folk religion in Zhangdian and other places of Guangong's hometown, Yuncheng Prefecture. Now only a few families still enshrine and worship Guangong in their own rooms. Most of the people in Zhangdian Town only regarded him as a great historic hero.

4.2.2 Christianity and Catholicism

i. Believer structure

A. Gender proportion

According to questionnaires, 85.4 percent of all the Christians are women in 2001. The result is close to what obtained by statistics: 87 percent. According to questionnaires, 68.4 percent of all the Christians are women in 2001. The result is also close to what obtained by statistics: 70 percent.

We can see from these statistics that women composed the majority of Christians and Catholics in Zhangdian. The numbers of male believers are small. But the percentages are higher in Catholicism than in Christianity. Yet if we examine it with dynamic perspectives, we can find out the male percentages were increasing steadily and slowly from 1995 to 2002 but those of Catholicism were relatively constant (varied from 30 to 36 percent) after 1994.

B. Age structure

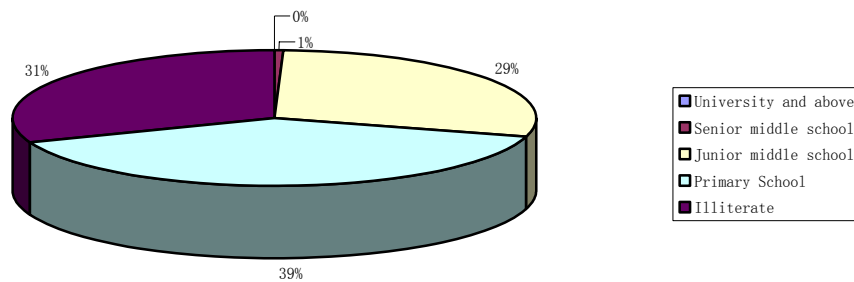
According to statistics, only 5 percent of all the Christians are under 30 years old. 70 percent are between 31 to 60 years old. The remained 25 percent are over 60 years old. The result is very close to what obtained by questionnaires: 5 percent, 68 percent and 27 percent. About 27 percent of all the Christians are under 30 years old. 50 percent are between 31 to 60 years old. The remained 23 percent are over 60 years old. The result is a bit of different from what obtained by questionnaires: 32 percent, 63 percent and 5 percent according to sampling error. The result is very close to what obtained by questionnaires: 5 percent, 68 percent and 27 percent.

Compared with what described before, the age structure of Catholics is more harmonious than that of Catholicism. This can be explained by the family-oriented tradition of Catholicism in Zhangdian.

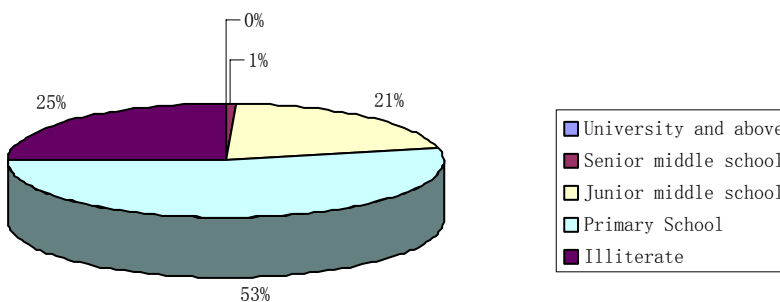
C. Education structure

As the basis of comparison, let's take a look at the general situation of Pinglu County. In 2001, the education structures of Christians and Catholics in Pinglu are illustrated bellow respectively.

Education Structure of Christians of Pinglu in 2001

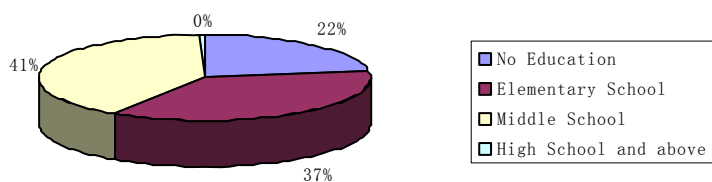


Education Structure of Catholics of Pinglu in 2001

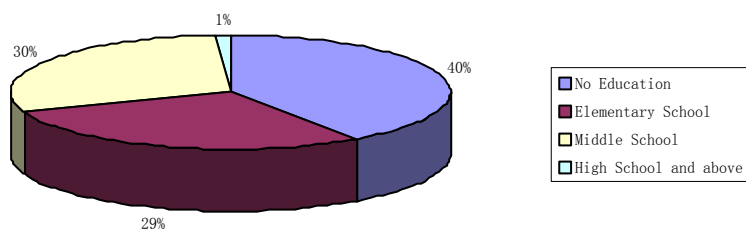


Here are the education structures of Christians and Catholics in Zhangdian in 2001 according to statistics.

Education Structure of Christians of Zhangdian in 2001



Education Structure of Catholics of Zhangdian in 2001



As the supplemental materials, here also provide the results obtained by sampling survey that was done in 2001.

Christians of Zhangdian:

		Education			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Illiterate	17	19.1	19.1	19.1
	Semi-illiterate	8	9.0	9.0	28.1
	Elementary school	21	23.6	23.6	51.7
	Junior high school	36	40.4	40.4	92.1
	Senior high school	7	7.9	7.9	100.0
Total		89	100.0	100.0	

Catholics of Zhangdian:

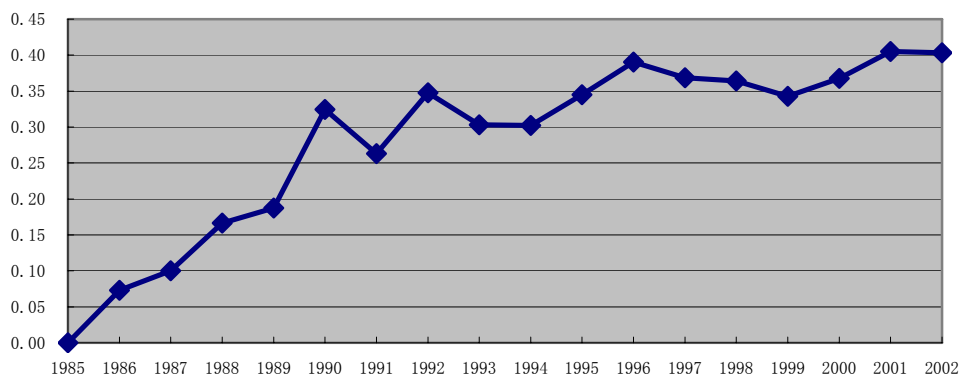
		Education			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Elementary school	12	31.6	31.6	31.6
	Junior high school	18	47.4	47.4	78.9
	Senior high school	4	10.5	10.5	89.5
	Industrial school	2	5.3	5.3	94.7
	Secondary technical school	2	5.3	5.3	100.0
Total		38	100.0	100.0	

In summary, we can merge all these data in one table.

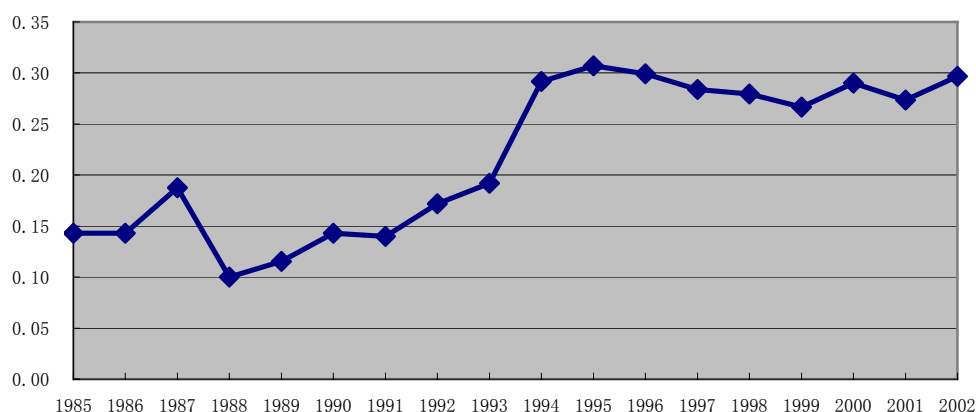
		Statistics of Pinglu	Statistics of Zhangdian	Sampling survey of Zhagdian
Christianity	No education	31%	22%	28.1%
	Primary school	39%	37%	23.6%
	Junior high school	29%	41%	40.4%
	Senior high school and equals	1%	0	29%
	College and above	0	0	0
Catholicism	No education	25%	40%	0
	Primary school	53%	29%	31.6%
	Junior high school	25%	30%	47.4%
	Senior high school and equals	1%	1%	21.1%
	College and above	0	0	0

We can see from this table that the average education level of Zhangdian's Christians is higher than that of Pinglu. But the average education level of Zhangdian's Catholics is lower than that of Pinglu. If we examine their historical development, however, we can find out that the average education level of both Zhangdian's Christians and Catholics increased 1985 till now. This trend is illustrated by the steadily increasing numbers of middle school educated Christians and Catholics of Zhangdian Town.

Percent of Middle school Educated Christians in Zhangdian



Percent of Middle school Educated Catholics in Zhangdian



ii. Conversion motive and religious piety

According to questionnaires, 48 percent of the investigated admitted that “any family member suffering from disease” was one of his or her conversion reasons. About 38.6 percent selected the reason “family trouble or other frustrations”. 26 percent of them converted to Christianity or Catholicism influenced by “family religious tradition”. 38.6 percent admitted that they “got persuaded by witnessing some believers were benefited”. Most of them, that are 85.8 percent, were “influenced by preaching” before they decided to convert to Christianity or Catholicism. About 1.6 percent of them admitted that they were just “attracted by religious rites and activities”. Nearly 3.9 percent declared that they converted to Christianity or Catholicism because of spiritual aspiration.

Though most of them had utilitarian causes in their conversions, the spiritual actors are becoming more and more important once they have been attracted into the participation of religious rites and activities. Religious piety was illustrated by the frequency of going to church and the followers’ voluntary contribution. Just as manifested by sampling statistics, the average frequency was high, that was 3.34 times a month, and the average contribution was plenty, which was 218.86 RMB per year.

iii. Religious activity

Religious activities of Christianity and Catholicism are now close to regular and standard in Zhangdian. At least, there is no difference between Zhangdian and Pinglu. Some communication programs are now established there. For example, there are two great churches held in Zhangdian Gospel every spring and autumn on which priests from outside (Taiyuan, Wenzhou of Zhejiang Province, Tianjin, etc.) are invited to preach.

5. Reflection upon Rural Urbanization and Religious Transformation in Zhangdian

5.1. Impact of rural urbanization upon the religious transformation of Zhangdian Town

5.1.1 Religious aspiration inspired by rural urbanization

Along with the rural urbanization is the development of local economy. After the satisfaction of people’s material demand, farmers began to seek for spiritual gratification. In addition, people are thirsty for protection and security in the backdrop of rapid social changes. Therefore, religion has got more space to exist and thrive.

As a matter of fact, the development of spiritual life is a very important part of urbanization. Religion, which plays a significant role in people's spiritual life, is naturally a core content that must be taken account of in the process of urbanization. It is more important during the process of rural urbanization because other sectors that act as the integration strength in countryside have deteriorated at different degrees.

5.1.2 Modernization of values

People's values are becoming more and more modern as the result of rural urbanization. Their open-minded perspectives make them ready to accept alien religions and to retrospect to and ponder upon traditional values and beliefs.

The transformation of life styles caused by rural urbanization make them more interested in urban activities. Rites and activities of Christianity and Catholicism are well organized and elegant in the eyes of countryside residents. So Christianity and Catholicism are bound to be prosperous especially in the absence of organized traditional religious activities.

The average education level of Christians and Catholics are improved along with the process of rural urbanization. It makes them to strive for more spiritual satisfaction and makes it become more practicable. According to questionnaire, intensive interviews and participant observation, most of them are very active in the participation of religious rites and activities. For instance, most of them, that are 88.2 percent, go to church more than 3 times every month. About 46.5 percent go to church every time. On average, one goes to church 3.34 times per month. Their religion passion also can be manifested by their voluntary contribution to church. Their annual donations vary from 10 to 2000 RMB. On average, each contributes 218.86 RMB per year. Other kind of contributions, such as voluntary work, non-cash donation, is very common among them.

Furthermore, many believers learned a lot though listening to preaching, singing hymns, reading Bible and other related books, etc.

5.1.3 Smaller family scale and the wane of formal organizations

Influenced by rural urbanization, and by China's birth-control policy, the family scale is becoming smaller and smaller, the clan power is also deteriorating by and by. So social function of clans and individual families is feeblar than once it was. In addition, the influence of local government and administrative institutions trailed off too. Then it is no wonder that some people turned to informal organizations such as church to seek for support and sense of teamwork.

The wane and wax of these sectors can be illustrated by some data collected by sampling questionnaires. For example, only 18.5 percent of the investigated regard "informed by government or village committee" as one of the important channels though which to acquire external news and information. Even less people, that are 1.9 percent, believed that village cadres can give them enthusiastic help in need. But more than 98 percent regarded Christians and Catholics as the most likely people to give them ardent help in need.

This means church has become attractive to more and more people. It is regarded as a friendly and large-family-like informal organization. Therefore, once a person is involved into church by any cause, he intends to hold tight to his conversion later. Church here acts as a very important role in local community's life.

5.1.4 Problems caused by rural urbanization and its settlement

There are many negative influences caused by rural urbanization, such as the moral decline of young people, value conflict between generations, sense of tension, fear of uncertainty, loneliness, and other mental disturbances caused by swift social change, etc. How can people solve these kinds of problems? Who can solve these problems?

Government and local institutions concern themselves mostly with economic development and lack the ability to solve them. People now have few choices. They whether try to endure these problems, or to solve them by themselves, or turn to religions, in Zhangdian's case, Christianity and Catholicism.

5.1.5 Influence from globalization

Rural urbanization is a process happened in the climate of globalization. People are inclined to accept western values and life styles other than advanced western technologies and administrative methods. Because culture and economy are bound together to certain degree, it is no wonder that western institutional religions, Christianity and Catholicism, continue to flourish while Chinese traditional diffused religions gradually decline along with the process of rural urbanization.

5.2. Conflicts and interactions between Chinese traditional religions and western institutional religions

Because the material buildings of Chinese traditional religions were totally destroyed long time ago, the conflict between them and western institutional religions, Christianity and Catholicism, is mainly concentrated on idealistic domains. Even in idealistic domains, the conflict is relatively mild because of the localization of Christianity and Catholicism. For most of the Christians and Catholics, what makes them feel a bit of nervous is the problem of whether or not to worship ancestors and how to consecrate them.

Among 89 Christians investigated, all of them declared that that they didn't worship idols such as Bodhisattva after they converted to Christianity. About 76.4 percent said that they didn't worship ancestors after conversion. Among 38 Catholics investigated, all of them also declared that that they didn't worship idols such as Bodhisattva after they converted to Catholicism. But only 21.1 percent said that they didn't worship ancestors after conversion.

We can find that all Christians and Catholics have given up idol worship after conversion. Quite a few of Christians and part of Catholics declared that they didn't enshrine and worship their ancestors anymore after conversion to western religions. In fact, we found out in participant observation and intensive interviews that nearly every Christians and Catholics preserved their ancestral worship tradition to different degrees though they may do it in alternative formats.

Prof. Yiyuan Li said in his article "Burgeoning religions and traditional rituals——an anthropological survey" that along with the industrialization and urbanization in Taiwan, traditional Chinese diffused religion continues to flourish while the western institutional religions began to decline. (Li Yiyuan, 1997) The data we got here in Zhangdian Town is little different from his findings. Then, why?

My argument is that urbanization and industrialization will advance the need for religions. But what particular religions will be selected by the majority of the people will depend on their particular history and reality. If we consider that many shrine buildings of Chinese traditional religions were destroyed before and after liberation, and all religions were once regarded as harmful to society for several decades, we can get some idea that why it is Chinese traditional religions such as folk religion, Buddhism, Taoism that are declining even after Reformation and Opening to the World. Another reason may lie in the different rural-urban relations between Mainland China and Taiwan Region. After liberation in 1949, there was a strict separation between urban regions and countryside, residents lived in these two sectors had different statuses and fringe benefits. In general, urban residents had supremacy upon rural farmers on only in the sense of economy but also in the sense of culture. So many traditional cultures that were retained mainly in countryside were discriminated against, too. But Christianity and Catholicism are brought into rural communities from developed western countries or urban cities by knowledgeable missionaries. Then, why not choose them?

6. Prediction of the religion development of Zhangdian Town

From what we have got till now, we predict that Christianity and Catholicism will develop steadily and become more and more standardized in Zhangdian Town as long as the religious freedom policy doesn't change. More and more young and educated people will convert to them. Among those believers, spiritual aspiration will be more and more important in their religious lives.

Chinese traditional religions will be maintain in the very heart of most of Zhangdian's residents though we can't see now and will not see it in the near future any material existence here. We regard it likely to happen that the ideas and creeds of Chinese traditional religions and western institutional religions will be integrated or at least co-exist harmoniously in the long run.

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