

## Refugee Review Tribunal

### AUSTRALIA

#### RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

**Research Response Number:** CHN17352  
**Country:** China  
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This response was prepared by the Country Research Section of the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RRT within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

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#### Questions

1. What information is available on the "Genuine Jesus Church" or similar (allowing for translation vagaries) in Fujian / Fuqing?
2. Have newly built churches in Fujian been demolished and property confiscated from those who helped finance them? If so, do such circumstances continue?

#### List of Sources Consulted

##### Internet Sources:

Google search engine

UNHCR      *REFWORLD*      UNHCR Refugee Information Online

##### Databases:

Public	<i>FACTIVA</i>	Reuters Business Briefing
DIMIA	<i>BACIS</i>	Country Information
	<i>REFINFO</i>	IRBDC Research Responses (Canada)
RRT	<i>ISYS</i>	RRT Country Research database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State <i>Country Reports on Human Rights Practices</i> .
RRT Library	<i>FIRST</i>	RRT Library Catalogue

Barrett, David B., Kurian, George T., and Johnson, Todd M. 2001, *World Christian Encyclopedia*, Oxford University Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, Oxford

#### RESPONSE

## 1. What information is available on the "Genuine Jesus Church" or similar (allowing for translation vagaries) in Fujian / Fuqing?

### Background information

No information was found in the sources consulted on the "Genuine Jesus Church". However, this Church may refer to the "True Jesus Church".

According to Ward and Humphreys:

This Church [True Jesus Church] began in China in 1917 as an indigenous Pentecostal body teaching one-ness doctrine, the Saturday Sabbath and foot-washing, with water baptism by immersion in living water. Forgiveness of sins is effected by baptism. If a believer does not receive the Holy Spirit with initial evidence of speaking in other tongues, he does not belong to the Lord Jesus.

Deacons (men and women) and elders (men only) exercise leadership at the local level. There are full time evangelists paid by headquarters (which are now in Los Angeles). Tithing is practised. National and International Assemblies send out the evangelists, and there are regular seminars and training programmes (Humphreys, Robert and Ward, Rowland 1995, *Religious Bodies in Australia*, New Melbourne Press, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed, Wantirna, p.249 – Attachment 1).

Further detailed information on the True Jesus Church may be found in:

Zhaoming, Deng 2001, 'Indigenous Chinese Pentecostal Denominations', *China Study Journal*, Vol.16, No. 3, December, pp.7-14 – Attachment 2);

Tang, Edmond 2002, 'True Jesus Church, the "Spirit-Spirit Sect" and other Pentecostal groups' in "Yellers" and healers – "Pentecostalism" and the study of grassroots Christianity in China', Churches' Commission on Mission, 13-15 September, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland website <http://www.ctbi.org.uk/index.php?op=modload&name=knowledge&file=kbasepage&LinkID=148> – Accessed 26 May 2005 – Attachment 3);

Hunter, Alan and Chan, Kim-Kwong 1993, *Protestantism in Contemporary China*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp.120-121, 153-154 – Attachment 4).

### True Jesus Church in Fujian

Sources indicate that the True Jesus Church is "strong" in Fujian province (Johnstone, Patrick & Mandryk, Jason 2001, *Operation World: 21st Century Edition*, Paternoster Lifestyle, 6th ed, Cumbria, p.169 – Attachment 5); (Lambert, Tony 1999, *China's Christian Millions: The Costly Revival*, Monarch Books, London, p.210 – Attachment 6).

Lambert estimated that there were some 70,000 True Jesus Church members in Fujian, being "very strong" in Putian County with about 20,000 members (Lambert, Tony 1999, *China's Christian Millions: The Costly Revival*, Monarch Books, London, p.210 – Attachment 6).

In October 2003 the UK Home Office cited sources which stated that the True Jesus Church operated openly and that it had "a large prominent church building in Fuzhou" (UK Home Office 2003, *China Country Report*, October, para.6.39 – Attachment 7).

A 1996 paper appears to identify the church building in Fuzhou as follows:

...In Fuzhou a huge True Jesus Church sits on a tiny island in the middle of the Min River and next to a bridge with heavy traffic. It is very visible...(Woo, Jean 1996, 'The Church in China: Some Main Concerns of the Late 1990s', 1996 Orlando Costas Consultation on Global Mission, Modernization, the Church and the East Asian Experience Conference Paper, 15-16 March, Boston Theological Institute site <http://www.drsc.com/clients/bti/progs/imep/costas96.htm> - Accessed 4 February 1997 – Attachment 8).

Another paper presented at the same 1996 conference also includes information on the True Jesus Church and briefly refers to Fujian:

In 1958 the Chinese government outlawed the True Jesus Church. As with so many other Christian groups, it was forced underground. Nevertheless, in the 1970's in Fuqing during the Cultural Revolution, one elder recounts how he witnessed the growth of the church, people copying hymnals by hands, and exchanging the equivalent of 55 kilograms of potato chips for a Bible. Although the exception to the rule, one group in the village of Nandian near San Shan in Fuqing have met continuously since 1949 (May, Grace 1996, 'The True Jesus Church' in 'A Comparative Study of The Christian Assembly, the True Jesus Church, and the Jesus Family: Three Ecclesial Case Studies of Protestantism in China', 1996 Orlando Costas Consultation on Global Mission, Modernization, the Church and the East Asian Experience Conference Paper, 15-16 March, Boston Theological Institute site, p.9 <http://www.drsc.com/clients/bti/progs/imep/costas96.htm> - Accessed 4 February 1997 – Attachment 9).

In a September 1997 advice DFAT responded to a question on the attitude of the Fujian authorities to the True Jesus Church in the following terms:

We are unable to give an authoritative answer, but would venture to suggest that as a member church of the Three Self Organisation it would not be banned as such, but inasmuch as members operated outside that fold, particularly if this involved some of the activities referred to above, some at least of these activities would be regarded as illegal. This would allow the authorities to employ the usual formulation that there is freedom of religion in China, but that religion cannot be allowed to be used to cloak law-breaking, any more than any other form of organisation or activity (DIMIA Country Information Service 1997, *Country Information Report No. 475/97 – China: True Jesus Church: CIS Information Request No. AA265* (sourced from DFAT advice of 26 September 1997), 29 September – Attachment 10).

Of interest is the attached RRT Country Research Response CHN15645 which provides information on Christians in Fujian (RRT Country Research 2002, *Research Response CHN15645*, 23 December – Attachment 11).

## **2. Have newly built churches in Fujian been demolished and property confiscated from those who helped finance them? If so, do such circumstances continue?**

Little information was found in the sources consulted on newly built churches in Fujian being demolished and no information was found on property confiscated from those who helped finance them.

A news article, dated August 2000, mentions that in 1999, according to parishioners and church workers, local officials “blew up” more than 20 Christian churches in Changle (in Fujian). The article continued that some of the churches “had not even been completed”. It was suggested that the churches had been funded from Chinese immigrants overseas (Langfitt, Frank 2000, ‘Faith, power collide in a changing China Churches: Houses of Christian worship spring up, financed largely by illegal immigrants in the United States. But officials demolish many that are not registered with the government’, *The Baltimore Sun*, 27 August – Attachment 12).

The US State Department wrote:

...In addition, according to press reports, in 1999 more than 20 unregistered Catholic churches were demolished, some with explosives, by the authorities in Changle and other localities in Fujian province. The churches were destroyed on the grounds that they had been built without the required permit or had been built with the wrong type of permit (such as with a permit for a building other than a church). Most of the churches reportedly were built by local congregations with the with the aid of remittances from relatives working abroad (US Department of State 2000, ‘Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom’ in *2000 Annual Report on International Religious Freedom: China*, 5 September – Attachment 13).

*Reuters News*, citing Fides (an agency of the Vatican’s missionary arm), stated that thirteen church buildings were destroyed in 1999 in Fuzhou diocese of Fujian (Pullella, Philip 2000, ‘Campaign against Catholics in China-Vatican agency’, *Reuters News*, 31 January – Attachment 14).

On the 1999 demolitions DFAT also advised:

According to a well-informed, long-term observer of the unofficial church from whom the Australian Embassy in Beijing sought advice in mid-1999, the authorities in Fujian demolished some churches earlier in 1999 to make the point that all structures must have planning approval. They also demolished a number of unapproved commercial and residential structures. The problem for members of the unofficial church is that planning approval is unlikely to be given for any but official church buildings, so that the existence of an unapproved building depends on the continued tolerance of the local authorities (DIMIA Country Information Service 1999, *Country Information Report No. 297/99 – Refugee Claims relating to treatment of Catholics* (sourced from DFAT advice of 12 August 1999), 13 August – Attachment 15).

A May 2002 *Agence France-Presse* article, sourcing information to a local Catholic resident, reports that two unofficial Catholic churches in Fujian were destroyed by police. The man also said that five large churches were “flattened” in Changle the previous year (‘Unofficial Catholic churches demolished in south China: report’ 2002, *Agence France-Presse*, 21 May – Attachment 16).

## List of Attachments

1 Humphreys, Robert and Ward, Rowland 1995, *Religious Bodies in Australia*, New Melbourne Press, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed, Wantirna, pp.249-250 (RRT Library)

- 2 Zhaoming, Deng 2001, 'Indigenous Chinese Pentecostal Denominations', *China Study Journal*, Vol.16, No. 3, December, pp.4-22 (RRT Library)
- 3 Tang, Edmond 2002, 'True Jesus Church, the "Spirit-Spirit Sect" and other Pentecostal groups' in "'Yellers" and healers – "Pentecostalism" and the study of grassroots Christianity in China', Churches' Commission on Mission, 13-15 September, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland website (<http://www.ctbi.org.uk/index.php?op=modload&name=knowledge&file=kbasepage&LinkId=148> – Accessed 26 May 2005)
- 4 Hunter, Alan and Chan, Kim-Kwong 1993, *Protestantism in Contemporary China*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp.120-121, 153-154 (RRT Library)
- 5 Johnstone, Patrick & Mandryk, Jason 2001, *Operation World: 21st Century Edition*, Paternoster Lifestyle, 6th ed, Cumbria, p.169 (RRT Library)
- 6 Lambert, Tony 1999, *China's Christian Millions: The Costly Revival*, Monarch Books, London, pp.209-210 (RRT Library)
- 7 UK Home Office 2003, *China Country Report*, October, para.6.39
- 8 Woo, Jean 1996, 'The Church in China: Some Main Concerns of the Late 1990s', 1996 Orlando Costas Consultation on Global Mission, Modernization, the Church and the East Asian Experience Conference Paper, 15-16 March, Boston Theological Institute site (<http://www.drsc.com/clients/bti/progs/imep/costas96.htm> - Accessed 4 February 1997)
- 9 May, Grace 1996, 'The True Jesus Church' in 'A Comparative Study of The Christian Assembly, the True Jesus Church, and the Jesus Family: Three Ecclesial Case Studies of Protestantism in China', 1996 Orlando Costas Consultation on Global Mission, Modernization, the Church and the East Asian Experience Conference Paper, 15-16 March, Boston Theological Institute site (<http://www.drsc.com/clients/bti/progs/imep/costas96.htm> - Accessed 4 February 1997)
- 10 DIMIA Country Information Service 1997, *Country Information Report No. 475/97 – China: True Jesus Church: CIS Information Request No. AA265* (sourced from DFAT advice of 26 September 1997), 29 September (CISNET China CX27124)
- 11 RRT Country Research 2002, *Research Response CHN15645*, 23 December
- 12 Langfitt, Frank 2000, 'Faith, power collide in a changing China Churches: Houses of Christian worship spring up, financed largely by illegal immigrants in the United States. But officials demolish many that are not registered with the government', *The Baltimore Sun*, 27 August (FACTIVA)
- 13 US Department of State 2000, 'Governmental Abuses of Religious Freedom' in *2000 Annual Report on International Religious Freedom: China*, 5 September
- 14 Pullella, Philip 2000, 'Campaign against Catholics in China-Vatican agency', *Reuters News*, 31 January (FACTIVA)

15 DIMIA Country Information Service 1999, *Country Information Report No. 297/99 – Refugee Claims relating to treatment of Catholics* (sourced from DFAT advice of 12 August 1999), 13 August (CISNET China CX36797)

16 ‘Unofficial Catholic churches demolished in south China: report’ 2002, *Agence France-Presse*, 21 May (FACTIVA)