



Round table on Orthodoxy in China takes place as part of the Nativity Readings.



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On 23rd January 2024 as part of the XXXII International Nativity Readings a round table was held at the pilgrimage centre of the Moscow Patriarchate entitled “The Traditions of Orthodox in China: Losses and Gains of the Past and the Image of the Future”. The organizers of the round table were the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate and the metochion of the Chinese Orthodox Church in Moscow.

Gathered in the Annunciation Conference Hall of the Universitetskaya Hotel were clergy, sinologists

and representatives of the scholarly and educational community from the Institute of Eastern Studies at the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow State University, Saint Petersburg State University, the Russian State University for the Humanities, the International State Institute for International Relations, the Moscow Architectural Institute and other institutions of higher learning. Those wishing to participate in the meeting, including guests from China, were able to do so by videolink.

Hieromonk Kirill (Peregudin) from the secretariat for affairs of the Far East under the Department for External Church Relations and professor of the Moscow Architectural Institute doctor M.Yu. Shevchenko acted as moderators of the session.

Before the work of the round table began, Father Kirill served the Divine Liturgy in Church Slavonic in the domestic Church of Saint Olga located on the fifteenth floor of the pilgrimage centre. Concelebrating with him was cleric of the metochion of the Chinese Orthodox Church deacon Anatoly Goldman. Church hymns in both languages were sung by the choir of the metochion under the direction of O.S. Lesina. During the Litany of Fervent Supplication the prayer for the people of China by Saint Nicholas the Serb was offered.

In his greetings to the participants of the round table the director general of the pilgrimage centre hierodeacon Sergei (Turkeyev) wished all the participants success and practical results in their work.

Hieromonk Kirill (Peregudin) conveyed to those present the blessing and good wishes for success from the chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate the metropolitan of Volokolamsk Anthony. In his introductory speech he also noted the special importance and relevance of the topic of the present round table in connection with the joint decision by the Russian president Vladimir Putin and the president of China Xi Jinping on making the years 2024 to 2025 a time of celebration of Russian and Chinese cultures.

The presentations given by the participants were on various topics, ranging from Orthodox architecture in the context of China and the peculiarities of translating online in Chinese for the purposes of missionary work.

Doctor M.Yu. Shevchenko, professor at the Moscow Architectural Institute and leading scientific specialist at the Institute for Eastern Studies at the Russian Academy of Sciences, spoke on the examples and possibilities of church architecture in the Chinese style. Complementing the architectural theme of professor Shevchenko was N.A. Ivanova (art historian at the Moscow State Institute for International Relations) and N.S. Gorshenev (candidate of philology at the Moscow State Institute for International Relations) with presentations on the semantics of the architecture of an Orthodox church building as one of the aspects of intercultural communication between Russia and China.

The problems of translation were touched upon by the clerics and missionaries of the Chinese metochion. Father Alexei Yusupov spoke on the legacy of translations that had survived from the Beijing spiritual mission, deacon Anatoly Goldman (senior teacher at the department of theology at the Saint John the Theologian Russian Orthodox University) spoke on the problems of the reception of translations of Scripture in Chinese, and T.V. Ivchenko (doctor of philosophy and lecturer at the Russian State University for the Humanities) spoke on the psychological difficulties in the process of translating texts with an Orthodox content into Chinese and the attempts made at overcoming these difficulties.

The linguistic preparation of Chinese students as a form of missionary activity was examined in her presentation by Ye.A. Vasina (senior lecturer at the department of theory and methodology of translation at Moscow State University, senior lecturer at the department of the Chinese, Vietnamese, Burmese, Thai, Lao and Khmer languages at the Moscow State Institute for International Relations), while the study of Chinese at the Russian spiritual mission as the foundation for the translating of theological texts was touched upon by A.V. Lebedeva (senior lecturer at the department of Chinese philology at the faculty of Eastern Studies at Saint Petersburg State University).

Also giving presentations were Chinese postgraduate students at Moscow State University Konstantin Tchou Jutsi (department of church history at the faculty of history) and Yulia Tjan Siuanu (department of the philosophy of religion and religious studies at the faculty of philosophy). Konstantin touched upon the distorted notions of Orthodoxy within Chinese society, while Yulie informed the audience with a comparison of the concepts of equality in Confucianism and Christianity.

Priests carrying out their pastoral service in various parts of China Father Ioann Scholokov (Shanghai), Father Andrei Bukhteyev (Dalian) and Father Kirill Shkarbul (Taipei) shared their experience of the modern-day life of the Orthodox communities in China in their online presentations. They all noted the presence of unfading interest in Orthodoxy among the Chinese.

After the presentations a discussion was held on the topics and the practical steps that were to be taken with regard to Orthodoxy becoming a Chinese phenomenon.