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中国宗教评论

Statistics on Religions and Churches in the People's Republic of China – Update for the Year 2022

Katharina Wenzel-Teuber

Translated by Sr. Jacqueline Mulberge SSpS

In our annual statistical updates, we usually bring figures of China's five major state-recognized religions: Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, Protestantism and Catholicism. This year, however, we first focus on traditional folk beliefs which are not officially counted as religion but are now partly tolerated and sometimes even encouraged by the authorities. With new data from the China Family Panel Studies, Chinese researchers endeavored to find the proportion of folk religion adherents in the population. They also wanted to know which combinations of beliefs are particularly frequent in this syncretic system. For Buddhism, there are findings from a survey of Buddhist students on the compatibility of faith and "real" life, for Islam there are figures on "Muslim cultural heritage." Since new data are not available for each religion every year, we fall back partly on figures from previous years to complete the picture. The figures given in the following text refer to the religions in Mainland China.

1. News from the China Family Panel Studies: How Widely Distributed is Traditional Folk Religion in China?

According to many anthropologists, traditional folk religion is widespread among the Chinese population, but in surveys on religion it is either not taken into account at all or only achieves vanishingly small percentages. According to Chinese researchers Zhang Chunni, Lu Yunfeng and Sheng He, this is due to the methods applied to measure Chinese religion.[1] Using new data from the 2018 survey of the China Family Panel Studies (*Zhongguo jiating zhuizong diaocha* 中国家庭追踪调查, CFPS for short), they tried to get to the bottom of the phenomenon. The researchers wanted to know not only how widespread folk religion is among the people, but also how the different beliefs are combined in the religious life of the Chinese. They further asked how different types of folk religion adherents differ in terms of commitment.[2] According to their research, 70% of all Chinese are followers of folk religion, almost 50% adhere to two or more religious beliefs and only

1 Zhang – Lu – Sheng 2021, pp. 576-578. – Zhang Chunni and Lu Yunfeng belong to the Department of Sociology of Peking University, the affiliation of Sheng He could not be established.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 576.

25.2% have no religious belief at all.[3] The methods of analysis they used to arrive at these figures and further results of their study will be presented below.

"Denomination-based" scheme versus "deity-based" scheme and the renewed question module on religion of CFPS 2018. The China Family Panel Studies, which have already been discussed several times in the *RCTC* annual statistics, have become a preferred data base for ever new questions, also in the field of sociology of religion. It is an annual longitudinal survey funded by the Chinese government through Peking University.[4] Since 2012, the study participants have also been surveyed on the topic of religion every two years. The study designers experiment with different questions in order to capture the phenomenon of religiosity in the Chinese context as well as possible. The 2012 and 2016 CFPS surveys (CFPS 2012 and CFPS 2016 for short) used a "denomination-based" scheme: "Which religion do you belong to?" CFPS 2014 applied a "deity-based" scheme: "What do you believe in?" When this "deity-based" form of question was used, the proportion of those who stated a religious belief increased.[5]

In CFPS 2018, the question scheme was again deity-based. Unlike CFPS 2014, where the question was asked in the "check-all-that-apply" format (i.e. respondents are asked to mark all responses that apply from a list of options), CFPS 2018 used the "forced-choice" format, where a choice between yes and no must be made for each item of religious belief. According to the authors, the latter format leads to a deeper engagement with the question and thus to more accurate results.[6] The first question in the CFPS 2018 religion module was "Do you believe in Buddha or Bodhisattvas?" (*Nin shifou xiangxin fo huo pusa*? 您是否相信佛或菩萨?) Possible answer "Yes" (*shi* 是) or "No" (*fou* 否). In the same "Do you believe in ... " form, respondents were asked in separate questions if they believed in [Daoist] deities and immortals (*shenxian* 神仙), in the true God Allah (*zhenzhu anla* 真主安拉), in God (*tianzhu* 天主 [Catholic name of God]), in Jesus Christ (Yesu Jidu 耶稣基督), in ancestors (*zuxian* 祖先), in ghosts (*gui* 鬼) and in geomancy (*fengshui* 风水).[7] The question "Do you believe in Jesus Christ?" was designed to measure Protestant religious adherents; this was a change from CFPS 2014, where belief in the "Protestant God" (*jidujiao de shangdi* 基督教的上帝) had been offered as an option to measure Protestant

3 Zhang – Lu – Sheng 2021, pp. 582-583. – The percentage 25.2% for the proportion of those who stated no religious belief is found in the text on p. 582 and in Table 1 on p. 583, whereas Chart 1 on p. 582 states the percentage as 25.1%. Obviously, rounding up was different in both cases. In this "Statistical Update" we use a uniform 25.2%.

4 Since 2010, the Institute of Social Science Survey of Peking University has periodically surveyed a fixed panel of families and individuals in 25 of China's 31 provinces, direct-controlled municipalities and autonomous regions, i.e. all except Xinjiang, Tibet, Qinghai, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia and Hainan, on topics such as economic activities, education, family situation, migration, health, etc. The survey does not include Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan. The survey has a target sample size of 16,000 households. See the project website www.isss.pku.edu.cn/cfps/index.htm (Chinese and English versions, last accessed on March 22, 2023). For the religion-related findings of the survey already discussed in *RCTC*, see Wenzel-Teuber 2015, pp. 21-28; the same 2017, pp. 26-28; the same 2020, pp. 21-30; the same 2021, pp. 20-24.

5 See Zhang – Lu 2020; cf. also Wenzel-Teuber 2017, pp. 26-27.

6 Zhang – Lu – Sheng 2021, p. 580.

7 These questions can be found in the overall CFPS 2018 questionnaire (中国家庭追踪调查2018年汇总问卷) on p. 158, available online at www.isss.pku.edu.cn/cfps/docs/20201221114508915650.pdf?CSRFT=GOWZ-LAIL-VP83-W5EQ-D6Y3-2VRA-G6AV-VOUL (accessed on March 9, 2023).

believers. The first 5 questions were intended to detect followers of the 5 major religions. For identifying followers of folk religion, CFPS 2014 had already included the category of ancestors, CFPS 2018 additionally added belief in ghosts and belief in geomancy.[8]

To anticipate: The change to the "forced-choice" question format in CFPS 2018 apparently encouraged a significant proportion of respondents to answer "Yes" to more than one belief question. This led – as researcher Min Li (Institute of Daoism and Religious Culture, Sichuan University) noted in another paper – to the result that in CFPS 2018 the number of identified faith adherents was far higher than the number of respondents![9]

How widespread is folk religion among the Chinese population? To explain the method they use to trace the spread of folk religion, Zhang, Lu and Sheng first point out some of the characteristics of Chinese folk religion. According to the authors, it is characterized by diffuseness. They are referring to the terminology used by C.K. Yang in his influential book *Religion in Chinese Society. A Study of Contemporary Social Functions of Religion and Some of Their Historical Factors* (Berkeley – Los Angeles 1961). Yang distinguishes between diffused religion and institutional religion in China. The term "diffused" means that traditional Chinese religiosity does not exist independently, but is highly mixed with everyday life, without significant differentiation. According to the authors, Chinese folk religion is



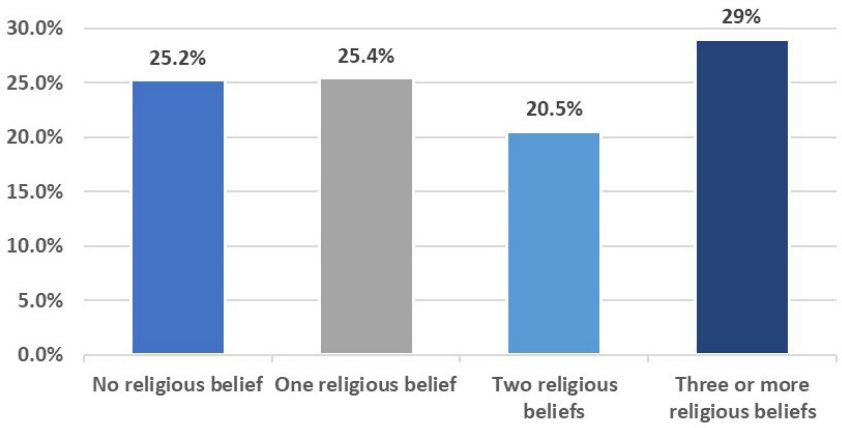
In the streetscape of Macau, folk religion is even more visible than in Mainland China: combined mini-shrine for door, earth and wealth deity at the threshold of a residential building in Macau.
Photo: Katharina Feith, 2012.

8 Zhang – Lu – Sheng 2021, p. 580.

9 Min 2022, p. 113. According to Min, the various beliefs had been stated 55,020 times by respondents, while the number of respondents was 37,356. (According to Zhang – Lu – Sheng 2021, only 29,996 people aged 16 and over answered the religion related questions in CFPS 2018. It is possible that Min Lin's figure includes the survey participants under 16 who were not asked about religion). According to Min Lin, of those surveyed at CFPS 2018, 27.03% believed in Buddhism, 15.89% in Daoism, 3.12% in Islam, 4.71% in Protestantism, 3.42% in Catholicism, 46.89% in ancestors, 8.33% in ghosts and 37.9% in geomancy. *Ibid.*, p. 112, Table 5.

a syncretic system, a complex mixture of elements of Buddhism, Daoism and traditional beliefs such as gods, ghosts, ancestors and some supernatural forces.[10] The combination of several beliefs is, as it were, a characteristic of Chinese folk religion. However, according to the authors, so far "we do not quantitatively know how these elements combine with each other." They point out that in previous surveys, including CFPS 2014, less than 1% of respondents had chosen more than one religious identity.[11]

Graph 1: Total Number of Religious Beliefs Reported by Respondents, CFPS 2018



Graph according to data in Zhang – Lu – Sheng 2021, pp. 582-583.

This has now changed with the modified questioning method described above: in CFPS 2018, 20.5% of respondents said they had two religious beliefs, and 29% even named three or more religious beliefs. "Undoubtedly, they are folk religion believers," Zhang, Lu and Sheng conclude. Among the respondents who named only one belief, 14.5% believed in ancestors, 6.5% in geomancy and 0.3% in ghosts; the authors also classify them as practitioners of folk religion. In total, they arrive at a proportion of folk religion adherents of over 70% of the sample.[12]

Only 25.2% of the respondents in CFPS 2018 did not affirm any religious belief; in CFPS 2014, this was 62.3%. By contrast, the proportion of adherents of institutionalized religions (in which the authors apparently include those who had chosen only one faith, namely in one of the deities represented in the five major religions) was only 5% in CFPS 2018.[13] According to the authors, it is highly unlikely that this drastic decrease in religious non-believers from 62.3% in 2014 to around 25% in 2018 is due to the conversion of individuals surveyed. Rather, they see as the cause the additional options of belief in geomancy and in ghosts, which 46.9% and 10.3% of respondents affirmed respectively,

10 Zhang – Lu – Sheng 2021, pp. 578-579.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 579. They refer here also to their own 2020 study: in CFPS 2014 (deity-based questioning), only 0.8% of the sample had indicated more than one religious belief, and in CFPS 2016 (denomination-based questioning) only 0.1%; see Zhang – Lu 2020, pp. 421 and 422.

12 Zhang – Lu – Sheng 2021, pp. 581-582.

13 If we add the data for "single" [choice] for the corresponding deities from Zhang – Lu – Sheng 2021, p. 583, Table 1, we even get only 4.2%.

and the forced-choice question format, which apparently led many to state more than one belief.[14]

Table 1: Distribution of Responses for Each Religious Category, CFPS 2018 and 2014

	Single choice or multiple choice	2018, Percentage of Respondents	2014, Percentage of Respondents
No Religion		25.2	62.3
Buddha/Bodhisattva	single choice	2.1	12.2
	multiple choice	31.3	2.3
Daoist Deities	single choice	0.4	0.8
	multiple choice	19.2	0.7
Allah	single choice	0.4	0.7
	multiple choice	3.4	0.0
Jesus Christ / Protestant God	single choice	1.2	2.0
	multiple choice	4.6	0.1
Catholic God	single choice	0.1	0.3
	multiple choice	4.1	0.1
Ancestors	single choice	14.5	4.4
	multiple choice	43.4	2.1
Ghosts	single choice	0.3	–
	multiple choice	10.0	–
Geomancy	single choice	6.5	–
	multiple choice	40.4	–

Table simplified according to Zhang – Lu – Sheng 2021, p. 583, Table 1.

"Single choice" here means the respondents only indicated one faith, "multiple choice" means they have indicated that faith in combination with other religious beliefs.

How are different beliefs combined? The authors wanted to find out in another step. For this, they used latent class analysis to develop a typology of four latent classes of religious believers, which are presented in the following:[15]

Class 1 is labelled by the authors as "non-believers and single-belief believers." It includes the sub-group of those who did not indicate any belief, as well as those who stated exactly one belief, excluding those who only believe in geomancy. Class 1 makes up 46.1% of respondents, but half of them are non-believers.

Class 2 is labelled as "believers of geomancy." This class consists mainly of those who only believe in geomancy and those who combined geomancy with other religious beliefs. Class 2 comprises 30.3% of those questioned. Within Class 2, the most common combinations are "geomancy + ancestors" (37.3%), "geomancy + ancestors + Buddha/Bodhisattva" (20.3%) and geomancy alone (19.9%).

Class 3 is labelled "believers of diffused Buddhism and Daoism." The members of Class 3 tend to combine elements of folk religion with the institutionalized Chinese religions

14 Zhang – Lu – Sheng 2021, pp. 582-583 with Figure 2 and Table 1.

15 This method is explained in detail in Zhang – Lu – Sheng 2021, pp. 580f. The four latent classes of religious belief are described there, pp. 584-586.

(Daoism and Buddhism). 20.3% of those questioned belong to Class 3. The combination most occurring in Class 3 is "Daoism + Buddhism + ancestors + geomancy" (31.7%). 72.5% of those assigned to Class 3 believe in both Buddhism and Daoism.

Class 4 is labelled "believers embracing all beliefs." Class 4 members show the highest degree of faith mixture with a high probability of adhering to all beliefs. Class 4 is the smallest of the identified types of religious adherents, accounting for 3.3% of the sample. In this category, belief in "Western" institutional, community-based religions (Catholicism, Protestantism, Islam) is combined with other beliefs, which the authors find particularly noteworthy.

How strong is the religious commitment of folk religion adherents? Earlier studies – according to Zhang, Lu and Sheng – often claimed that adherents of the folk religion were religiously less engaged than adherents of institutionalized religions, because they did not belong to a community and only visited the temple or religious specialists in times of crisis. The authors therefore wanted to find out how the different types of folk religion adherents they identified – Classes 2 to 4 presented above – differed in terms of their religious commitment. For this, they drew on the following data:

- Membership in a religious organization (this was asked about in CFPS 2018), and additionally
- Frequency of religious practice and the importance of religion in one's life (asked in the CFPS surveys in 2012, 2014 and 2016).

It will not be explained here what the collected data and calculation methods look like in detail.[16] The authors come to the conclusion that among the adherents of folk religion, the practitioners of ancestor worship have the lowest religious commitment, followed by the believers of geomancy (Class 2) and the believers of diffused Buddhism and Daoism (Class 3). The highest commitment is shown by the members of Class 4, believers embracing all beliefs. The authors conclude that the higher the degree of faith mixture, the higher the religiosity, and that the inclusion of monotheism leads to stronger religiosity. They also conclude that while the adherents of folk religion (i.e. Classes 2-4) are less committed than pure adherents of Western institutionalized religions, they are to some extent more committed than adherents of Eastern institutionalized religions. For example, members of Class 3 (believers of diffused Buddhism and Daoism) were more likely to participate in religious activities and to report a higher importance of religion in their lives than pure followers of Buddhism and Daoism.[17]

My own comments. The results of the study by Zhang, Lu and Sheng are in striking contrast to many surveys that attest a low level of religiosity in China. To mention only the WIN/Gallup International survey published in 2015, according to which China was the least religious country in the world: 61% of respondents in China described themselves as

16 This can be found in Zhang – Lu – Sheng 2021, pp. 581 and 586-589.

17 Zhang – Lu – Sheng 2021, pp. 589-590.

convinced atheists, and a further 29% as non-religious.[18] As Zhang, Lu and Sheng themselves note, such differences are explained by the question schemes and survey instruments used in each case. When using the term *zongjiao* 宗教 ("religion") – which only entered the Chinese language in the 19th century via Japanese – difficulties of understanding are likely to arise in the Chinese context, which leads to a large number of people stating that they are not religious. If, on the other hand, people are asked about concrete beliefs or practices, the percentages are much higher. For example, in the Chinese Spiritual Life Survey (CSLS) carried out in 2007,[19] 58% of respondents said they did not believe in any religion; however, a large proportion of them answered positively to additional questions about religious activity or religious beliefs in the broadest sense, leaving only 15% "pure atheists." In CSLS, the percentage of folk religion adherents was 55.5%.[20] With both figures, the CSLS is relatively close to the results of Zhang Chunni, Lu Yunfeng and Sheng He.

For the authors' intention to determine the prevalence and the range of combinations of folk religion in the Chinese population, the method of subsuming all those who claimed more than one religious belief under folk religion adherents was reasonable and purposeful. However, this also leads to the result that only very few "pure" adherents of the five major institutionalized religions remain, namely a total of 5%. One might question whether it always makes sense to discount people who affirm further beliefs from the five major religions. Is a Daoist no longer a Daoist if he also practices geomancy?

Applied to Catholics, the authors' principle leads to the following curious result: Catholics who believe in both God (*tianzhu*) and Jesus Christ (Yesu Jidu) are not Catholics according to the authors' definition, but folk religionists because they have stated more than one faith. It should be noted that although Catholic and Protestant Christians in China use different names for "God" (Catholic *tianzhu*, Protestant *shangdi* or *shen* 神), they use the same Chinese name for Jesus Christ – Yesu Jidu. Thus, belief in Yesu Jidu does not seem to me to be a suitable criterion for identifying only Protestant Christians.

It is impressive to see how further insights are gained with new questions and methods in each round of CFPS questions. We can look forward to the evaluation of CFPS 2020.

18 In 2014 WIN/Gallup International asked 63,898 persons world-wide the following question: "Irrespective of whether you attend a place of worship or not would you say you are: a. a religious person, b. not a religious person, c. a convinced atheist, d. do not know/no response." See WIN/Gallup International 2015.

19 CSLS 2010 – For the CSLS, from May to July 2007, a sample of 7,021 individuals aged 16 to 75 years was interviewed in 56 selected localities of different size as to their religious self-identification. In July 2010, Yang Fenggang from the Center on Religion and Chinese Society at Purdue University (West Lafayette, USA) presented the results of the study in Beijing.

20 The figure of 55.5% comes from Zhang -Lu - Sheng 2021, p. 577. The paper on CSLS by Yang Fenggang *et al*. that I have does not mention a percentage, but gives the following figures, among others: 215 million Chinese over the age of 16 believed in the existence of ancestral spirits or prayed to them; 754 million practiced ancestor worship. 141 million believed in the existence of the God of Wealth (*caishen* 财神); 145 million had observed *fengshui* restrictions or consulted a *fengshui* master in the past 12 months; 362 million had practiced some form of divination; see CSLS 2010.

2. Buddhism

There is still no official data on the number of Buddhists and Daoists in Mainland China. The White Paper on freedom of religious belief (State Council 2018) states that:

> *China has numerous Buddhist and Taoist believers, but it is difficult to accurately estimate their numbers as there are no set registration procedures which ordinary believers must follow as part of their religion.* [...] *China also has many folk beliefs which are closely linked to local cultures, traditions and customs, in which a large number of people participate.*

As the analysis by Zhang, Lu and Sheng discussed in point 1 above showed, many of the respondents in CFPS 2018 believed in Buddha/Bodhisattvas and at the same time also in Daoist deities, sometimes combined with other folk religious belief elements. Here again is the figure determined by the three authors for the followers of Buddhism (see Table 1):

33.4% of the population over 16 years believe in Buddha/Bodhisattvas (of these 2.1% exclusively, i.e. they did not mention any other belief).

For comparison, the figures of the Chinese Spiritual Life Survey (CSLS),[21] which was already conducted in 2007 and still offers some orientation:

185 million self-identify as Buddhists, i.e. 18% of the population above the age of 16.
17.3 million have taken the triple refuge (in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha), i.e. have formalized their adherence to Buddhism through ritual.

In institutionalized Buddhism there are also:

34,090 registered Buddhist sites for religious activities according to NRAA database 2023,[22] of which:
- 28,528 Han-Chinese Buddhism
- 3,857 Tibetan Buddhism
- 1,705 Theravada-Buddhism

222,000 Buddhist religious personnel (monks and nuns) recognised and registered with the authorities according to NRAA 2017 (as also State Council 2018), of which:
- 72,000 Han-Chinese Buddhism
- 148,000 Tibetan Buddhism
- 2,000 Theravada-Buddhism

41 Buddhist Academies (State Council 2018)

Between 2015 and 2020, 32,878 persons [monks and nuns] were ordained (*shoujie* 受戒).[23]

21 Numbers cited here according to CSLS 2010 and Wenzel-Teuber 2012, pp. 30-36.

22 National Religious Affairs Administration (NRAA) database "Basic Data on Sites for Religious Activities" at www.sara.gov.cn/gjzjswj/zjjcxxcxxt/zjhdcsjbxx/index.shtml, retrieved March 20, 2023. These NRAA database figures are unchanged from the last retrievals of March 1, 2021 and March 8, 2022. The results of a detailed search conducted on March 17, 2016 which also takes into consideration the distribution according to province can be found in Wenzel-Teuber 2016, p. 27, Table 1.

23 Work Report at the 10th Buddhist National Assembly 2020, p. 11; cf. Wenzel-Teuber 2022, p. 20.

2.1 New Online Database for Officially Accredited and Registered Buddhist Clergy

On 22 February 2023, a "Search System for Data on Buddhist Religious Personnel" 佛教教职人员信息查询系统 went online on the website of the National Religious Affairs Administration (NRAA), at the same time as a similar search tool for Daoist religious personnel. According to a report of *Zhongguo xinwenwang*, for every Buddhist cleric the database contains details of name, sex, religion, religious discipline and religious office, the serial number of the certificate for religious personnel, as well as a photo. Users must validate themselves with their mobile phone.[24] Access from abroad was not possible, which is why no detailed statements on the functioning of the database can be made here. It is not known how many Buddhist religious personnel are registered there.

The religious affairs authorities have been working for years on a publicly accessible "Search System for Basic Data on the Religions" 宗教基础信息查询系统. A database for registered Buddhist and Daoist sites for religious activities has been accessible on the NRAA website since 2014; it was used for this statistical update (NRAA database 2023). A database for the registered institutes for religious education for all five religions has been online since 2016. All databases of the "Search System for Basic Data on the Religions" can be found at www.sara.gov.cn/gjzjswj/zjjcxxcxxt/index.shtml (last accessed on March 20, 2023).

2.2 Survey: The Dilemma between Sacred and Secular as a Problem for Young Buddhists in China

What are the problems of young Buddhists in China? This question preoccupied Han Qi in interviews with Buddhist university students in Beijing. According to the result, it is the "dilemma between the sacred and the secular" (*sheng su liangnan* 圣俗两难), specifically, the fusion and connection between Buddhist faith and "real life" (*xianshi shenghuo* 现实生活). By exploring this dilemma, Han Qi hopes to achieve a deeper understanding of how the Sinicization of Buddhism is being implemented today.[25] Han Qi, born in 1982, is a research assistant at the Institute of Marxism of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, with a research focus on atheism and the sociology of religion.[26] Her survey was done on a small scale and is interesting not so much for the statistical data as for the information it contains about, among other things, the attitudes and role of parents. How she links the results of her study with the politically salient issue of Sinicization is also informative.

Han surveyed a sample of 23 students from three universities in the Beijing area. The condition was that the students had had contact with Buddhism for at least three years and described themselves as having a firm faith. Five of the 23 respondents did not meet the three-year criterion [they were nevertheless included in the evaluation]. Three at the most came from the same Buddhist group. 12 were men, 11 women. The average age of

24 "Fojiao, daojiao jiaozhi renyuan xinxi chaxun xitong shangxian fabu" 2023.

25 Han 2021, p. 91.

26 See her entry on the Institute of Marxism website at http://myy.cssn.cn/yjry_46764/zghyjb/kxywslyjs/201408/t20140806_1969077.shtml (accessed on March 15, 2023).

those questioned was 27.65 years. 2 of those questioned were Bachelor students, 2 Master students, 19 were PhD candidates. The length of the interviews varied from 43 minutes to 2 hours and 20 minutes. Names and locations were kept anonymous in the evaluation.[27] In which year the survey was made is not stated.

In the analysis of her interviews, Han Qi considers the dilemma of sacred and secular firstly in the family context and secondly in the lives of individuals.

The Dilemma of Sacred and Secular in the Family

According to Han Qi, Buddhism, as a religion of salvation that strives for detachment from the world, has certain norms of behavior. Sie names especially vegetarianism, which responds to the command not to kill any living being, and the tendency to "leave the family" (*chu jia* 出家), i.e. to live celibate lives as a monk or nun, stemming from turning away from the world. According to Han, these two attitudes can lead to considerable tension with the secular environment.[28] She exemplifies this in the reaction of parents to their children turning to Buddhism.

Regarding the faith of the respondents' parents, Han makes the following observations:

The parents of 18 of the 23 respondents did not formally acknowledge any religion. Some parents adhered to forms of folk belief, such as ancestor worship or worship of the god of wealth. Other parents practiced Qigong or believed that there is a God. Some parents were members of the Party and thus atheists, but turned to divination in some situations. Among the parents there were also adherents of Daoism who rejected Buddhism as superstitious. The parents of 3 respondents originally had no faith but turned to Buddhism due to the influence of their child. One of the respondents came from a Buddhist household. Common to all the parents was that they considered family, health and earnings important.[29]

The following reactions of the parents came up:

- A very harmonious connection between the Buddhist faith of the child and the family was only in one of the respondents from a Buddhist household.
- In 2 other cases the parents were aware of their child's faith and were supportive of it.
- For 11 respondents, the parents knew about the child's faith and tolerated it, although it sometimes took a long process to get there, which was also influenced by the parents' experiences with the child's attitude.
- In the case of 7 respondents, the parents knew about the child's faith and were permanently against it. The parents' motives here were mainly the concern that their child would not lead a "normal life" as a "normal person." A Daoist father worried that the daughter would be betrayed by "superstitious" Buddhism with its "unnatural" taboos. In two cases, the conflicts were ignited by the child's temporary wish to enter a monastery; in one case, the parents refuse contact to this day.

27 Han 2021, p. 92.

28 *Ibid.*

29 *Ibid.*

– 2 respondents had not told their parents anything about their faith in Buddhism, so as to avoid conflicts.[30]

According to Han Qi, therefore, the main factor for parental rejection of Buddhism was the parents' concern that their child might become a monk or nun and not start a family.[31] In the category of parents who supported or tolerated the Buddhist faith, the child had pledged not to enter the monastery or had already married. It was also helpful if parents noticed that the child's attitude towards them had improved under the influence of the Buddhist faith. In the case of parents who were permanently opposed to the faith, they were first concerned that the child might make a mistake and choose the wrong path, and later on, hurt by the child's words and deeds. While Han Qi believes that a "democratic," tolerant atmosphere in the family is important, she ultimately sees the key to the conflict and its resolution primarily in the behavior of the Buddhist children towards the parents, such as whether they made communication impossible by reacting extremely to the parents' prejudices and concerns.[32]

The Dilemma of Sacred and Secular for the Individual

Han Qi also attributes the problems of individuals in practicing their Buddhist faith to the dilemma between sacred and secular as the underlying cause. She distinguishes between two areas:

Problems with the Buddhist tradition: Here Han Qi includes e.g. "Difficulties with the vegetarian diet." In the Buddhism of the Han tradition, vegetarianism is a comparatively widespread lifestyle change among converts, according to Han. 50% of her respondents were consistently vegetarian. A further 25% had practiced it for a time but then given it up again, to avoid friction with the environment and not cause any inconvenience.[33]

Only a minority of the respondents kept strictly to the Five Precepts.[34] The majority break them here and there and drink alcohol for instance. The question of how to deal with sexuality was particularly difficult for many. Most respondents went through a process regarding the Five Precepts and, after a period of constant conflict, reached a more pragmatic view – "with more maturity you know how to control yourself sensibly," said one respondent, and according to another person you have to see the rules in the context of life.[35]

The question of whether to become a monk or a nun was also difficult for many. According to Han, the monastic community (*sangha*) is one of the Three Jewels of Buddhism and thus has a very high value; on the other hand, not everyone is suitable for it. Only one

30 Han 2021, pp. 92-93.

31 Han Qi does not report whether the respondents were an "only" child, which would make acceptance of celibacy more difficult for their parents. Considering the age group of the respondents, it is likely that the majority were only children.

32 Han 2021, pp. 93-94.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 94.

34 Chin. *wu jie* 五戒 (Sanskrit pañcaśīla). The Five Precepts are to refrain from killing living beings, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and drinking alcohol (不殺生, 不偷盜, 不邪淫, 不妄語, 不飲酒). These apply to all practicing Buddhists (lay and monastics).

35 Han 2021, pp. 94-95.



The Buddhist Longquan Monastery is popular with students. It is located in the Fenghuangling Nature Park in the north of Beijing's Haidian District, which is also home to many universities. Here, a feeding station outside the gates of the monastery. The banner at the entrance to the monastery indicates a Dharma assembly.
Photo: China-Zentrum, 2012.

person in the sample had actually entered a monastery. Three others said they might do so if their parents agreed. Most had thought about it at some point, but family resistance and other factors turned them away. Their relationship with their parents then often improved, according to Han. The Buddhist parents, on the other hand, would have let their son enter the monastery, but he decided against it by himself.[36]

Problems with the orientation of the faith: According to Han it is very difficult for young Buddhists university students to find their own way in the faith. Almost half the respondents had participated in courses of a Buddhist group that Han refers to with the pseudonym "Mahayana Teaching of Detachment." This group is very popular among students, according to Han. Since it emphasizes leaving the world (monasticism), those who seriously engaged in its courses feel a strong inclination towards monastic life and, as a result, there is tension with secular life – Han observes. For the two respondents who had the greatest conflicts with the family, the study course of the "Mahayana Teaching of Detachment" was the permanent Buddhist reference group. The others in the sample gradu-

36 Han 2021, pp. 95-96.

ally withdrew from it and sought their own path. Han Qi described this path as "practicing immersed in the world" (*ru shi qian xiu* 入世潜修), that is, the attempt to combine the faith with the worldly life.[37]

The *chu jia* Conflict and Sinicization of Buddhism

Han Qi places the assessment of her survey results under the headings "The Historical Practice of Sinicizing Buddhism: Adaptation" and "The Contemporary Practice of Sinicizing Buddhism." Even two thousand years after the arrival of Buddhism in China, 39% of the parents of the respondents were permanently and 48% temporarily opposed to their children's Buddhist faith, with the main point of conflict being the question of *chu jia*, i.e. a life as a monk or nun, Han Qi argues. According to her, this shows that there is still clearly a feeling of something "foreign" about Buddhism, even though most people today hardly think about the fact that it originally came from abroad [i.e. India]. Early in the history of Chinese Buddhism, its opponents had criticized the *sangha* as endangering authority and stability, being unproductive and useless, suitable only for uncivilized people, as well as endangering the traditional order and therefore being immoral, Han says. Of these charges only the moral one remains more or less visible in the psyche of today's Chinese, she explains, for the family is the foundation of society in ancient China and filial piety the highest virtue. Therefore, according to Han, the ideal of a celibate life goes against the most elementary ethical sensibilities of the Chinese. She says that this is also reflected in the fact that Buddhist apologists have repeatedly tried to reconcile monastic life with traditional Chinese ethics throughout history. After two thousand years, as Han Qi sees it, Buddhist thought has penetrated the marrow of Chinese culture, but Buddhist faith has not been able to weaken the traditional ethic of filial piety.[38]

Han's finding is that young Buddhists today are confronted mainly by the problem of combining faith and "real life." They try to find detachment in the midst of the world, that is, both to take into account the feelings of their parents and to conform to the morals of society, and to preserve their own faith. This, thus her interpretation, can be seen as Sinicization of Buddhism practiced from the perspective of the believers: The conflict over the question of *chu jia* that these young Buddhists are confronted with is, at its core, a manifestation of the Sinicization question today. With the exception of Buddhist families, in the Han Buddhist tradition almost every individual who has come to the faith through his or her own choice experiences such a process, in which one's own course has to be found between family and Buddhist tradition, she says. On the one hand, this is a process of faith, but on the other hand, as Han sees it, it is also a confrontation with cultural differences, with another culture. Through countless such processes, Buddhism has Sinicized itself since time immemorial. Its Sinicization, according to Han Qi, is still not complete today.[39]

37 Han 2021, pp. 95-96.

38 *Ibid.*, pp. 96-97.

39 *Ibid.*, pp. 97-98.

3. Daoism

Similarly, as already noted above for Buddhism, there are no official figures on the number of Daoists in Mainland China. A point of reference is provided by the analysis of Zhang, Lu and Sheng discussed in point 1 above, based on data from CFPS 2018. Here again is their figure for Daoist adherents (see Table 1 above):

19.6% of the population over 16 years of age believe in Daoist deities (of which 0.4% exclusively, i.e. they did not name any other belief).

For comparison, we recall the figures of the Chinese Spiritual Life Survey (CSLS) carried out in 2007:[40]

12 million of the adult population clearly identify with Daoism [corresponding to 1,17% of the population above 16 years, kwt].[41]
173 million have exercised some Daoist practices or taken part in such, but these are difficult to distinguish from popular belief.

In institutionalized Daoism there are in addition:

8,349 registered Daoist sites for religious activities according to NRAA-database 2022,[42] of which
- 4,011 Quanzhen tradition
- 4,338 Zhengyi tradition

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

3.1 New Online-Database for Officially Accredited and Registered Daoist Clergy

On 22 February 2023, a "Search System for Data on Daoist Religious Personnel" 佛教教职人员信息查询系统 went online on the website of the National Religious Affairs Administration (NRAA). For this new database, which was launched at the same time as a similar search tool for Buddhist religious personnel, see the comments above under point 2.1. Access from outside China was not possible. It is not known how many Daoist religious clerics are registered there.

4. Islam

In the People's Republic of China ten ethnic groups are considered Muslim. Their population size is generally equated with that of Muslims in China in statistics by Chinese

40 Numbers cited according to CSLS 2010 and Wenzel-Teuber 2012, pp. 30-36.

41 The percentage 1.17% was calculated by the author of this statistical update (kwt) by analogy with the data given by CSLS for Buddhists (185 million equals 18% of the population over 16 years).

42 Accessed on March 20, 2023. The number of registered Daoist sites listed in the NRAA database has remained unchanged since 2018.

authorities and scholars. According to the 6th census of 2010, about 23 million people belong to these ten ethnic groups, which is 1.74% of the total population,[43] distributed as follows:

Table 2: Muslim Population according to Ethnicity

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

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

In 2020, the 7th national census took place in the People's Republic of China. As far as could be ascertained, a detailed evaluation of this census with regard to the Muslim ethnic groups has not yet been published.

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

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

4.1 Muslim Cultural Heritage

On "Muslim cultural heritage" in China, Pascale Bugnon has published an article on the academic blog of the Confucius Institute of the University of Geneva, of which she is a Confucius Institute Fellow.[44] Bugnon is an anthropologist and sociologist with a PhD in Chinese Studies. She has researched the process of listing tombs of Muslim saints and other Muslim sites as national monuments in China – referring to Xinjiang in her Master's thesis and Southeast China in her PhD thesis published in 2022.[45] The text of her blog entry contains the following figures:

A total of 55 Muslim sites were elevated to national heritage status between 1961 and 2019. In the first list of national monuments in 1961 only one Muslim site was included, namely the Qingjing Mosque of Quanzhou (FJ). The second list in 1982 has no Muslim

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

44 Bugnon 2022. I thank Chne Daniel Salzgeber CRB for pointing out this contribution.

45 See www.unige.ch/ic/equipe/membres-associes/pascale-bugnon (accessed on March 7, 2023).



A national monument since 1988: The Great Mosque of Xi'an, founded in 742. The present buildings were constructed during the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1911) dynasties. Here a passage gate between two courtyards of the mosque. Photo: Barbara Hoster, 2016.

sites, the list in 1988 seven, that of 1996 one, in 2001 six sites were entered, in 2006 thirteen, in 2013 twenty-four and in 2019 three.

These 55 sites are distributed as follows among China's provinces and autonomous regions:

Table 3: Muslim Monuments Listed Between 1961 and 2019 at National Level by Province

Province / Autonomous Region / Municipality	Number of Monuments
Xinjiang	15
Henan	5
Qinghai	5
Fujian	4
Jiangsu	3
Anhui	2
Guangdong	2
Hebei	2
Heilongjiang	2
Neimeng	2
Ningxia	2

Province / Autonomous Region / Municipality	Number of Monuments
Shaanxi	2
Shandong	2
Beijing	1
Gansu	1
Jilin	1
Shanxi	1
Sichuan	1
Yunnan	1
Zhejiang	1
Total	55

Table created according to data from Bugnon 2022, Graph "Répartition du patrimoine musulman par province et municipalité."



Map: d-maps.com/carte.php?num_car=27749&lang=de

People's Republic of China: Provinces, Direct-Controlled Municipalities and Autonomous Regions – List of Abbreviations

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

The Appendix of Bugnon's essay has a list of Muslim cultural sites at the national level (1961–2019). From that list the following additional information could be gained:

- Among the 55 Muslim monuments listed across the country there are 31 mosques, 4 minarets and 15 tombs or mausolea.
- The Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region has by far the majority of the national Muslim cultural monuments. Of its 15 monuments 8 are tombs and mausolea – presumably due to the very widespread veneration of Sufi saints in Xinjiang.
- Regarding the age of the monuments, 3 of the sites listed are from the Tang era (618–907) – that is the time in which Islam first came to China. They are the minaret of the Huaisheng Mosque and the Tomb of the Ancient Islamic Sage in Guangzhou (GD) as well as the ruins of the Mazar Tagh fortress in Xinjiang, which serve as a Muslim shrine. According to the list, two Muslim monuments are from the Song era (960–1279), 6 from the Yuan era (1279–1368), and all the others from the last two dynasties of the Ming and Qing, as well as the time of the Republic.

According to Bugnon, "Muslim cultural heritage" is not an official category in Chinese heritage protection; Islam is treated as a "cultural feature" of some ethnic minorities rather

than a universal religion. In the course of the State's constant (re)definition of orthopraxy, says Bugnon, "some mausoleums become tourist attractions that allow the government to illustrate its discourse on the richness of 'national traditions,' while others [...] are simply closed."

In 2013, the list of new national monuments was particularly long, with 1,943 sites. Incidentally, it included not only the 24 Muslim monuments mentioned by Bugnon, but also numerous buildings of other religions. As *Religions & Christianity in Today's China* reported at the time, these included 17 Catholic church and seminary buildings, most of them from the early 20th century.[46]

5. Protestant Churches

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

38 million	believers (Gao Feng 2018 and State Council 2018)
60,000	churches (Gao Feng 2018 and State Council 2018)
14,000	professional clerics (male and female pastors, teachers, presbyters) as well as 22,000 male and female preachers (Gao Feng 2018)
57,000	religious personnel (State Council 2018)[47]
22	theological seminaries (Gao Feng 2018)

The figure of 38 million is presumably based on a study by researchers Lu Yunfeng, Wu Yue and Zhang Chunni (Peking University). In an analysis of religion-related data from the 2012, 2014 and 2016 surveys of the China Family Panel Studies (CFPS), they concluded that there were around 40 million Protestants in China in 2016.[48]

There are also higher estimates, such as that of the Pew Forum which in 2011 arrived at the number of 58 million Protestants.[49] In 2020, five researchers and pastors gave their "preferred estimates" of the current number of Protestant Christians in Mainland China to the Protestant portal ChinaSource; these ranged from 50 million to 116 million (the

46 Cf. "News Update on Religion and Church in China March 2 – June 15, 2013," compiled by Katharina Wenzel-Teuber, translated by David Streit, in: *RCTC* 2013, No. 3, pp. 3-17, here pp. 3-4.

47 Why the entry for the number of religious personnel / clerics and preachers is so much higher in the State Council's White Paper than in the work report of the Protestant bodies is not clear.

48 Lu Yunfeng – Wu Yue – Zhang Chunni 2019. Cf. discussion of their detailed study in Wenzel-Teuber 2020, pp. 21-30, here esp. p. 27. On CFPS see above point 1, especially note 4.

49 Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life (ed.), *Global Christianity. A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Christian Population* (with „Appendix C: Methodology for China"), www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2011/12/ChristianityAppendixC.pdf, published on December 19, 2011, last accessed on March 23, 2023; cf. Wenzel-Teuber 2013, p. 21.

latter being an estimate by Yang Fenggang, Purdue University).[50] On the other hand, a decline in the number of Protestant Christians has also been reported by some recently.[51]

6. Catholic Church

It has become more difficult to give reliable, statistical data on the Catholic Church in Mainland China. Basis for the following figures are data of the Holy Spirit Study Centre of the Diocese of Hong Kong and its periodical *Tripod*. Account is also taken of the information provided by the official Catholic governing bodies, according to their work report presented at the 10th National Assembly of Representatives of the Chinese Catholic Church in 2022, and the White Paper on freedom of religious belief (State Council 2018). Other important sources are the website of the Shijiazhuang (Heb)-based Catholic newspaper *Xinde* 信德 (*Faith*), www.xinde.org (hereafter abbreviated to *xdo*) and other Chinese Catholic websites.

6.1 General Data

Faithful

ca. 10 million total number of Catholics, including both the official and unofficial (Underground) parts of the Church, estimated in *Tripod* 2022, p. 228.

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

Dioceses

147 (116 dioceses plus 31 other ecclesiastical circumscriptions), according to the Catholic hierarchy (*Tripod* 2021).

98 dioceses according to the figures of the official Church and the Chinese authorities (Work Report at the 10th National Assembly of Catholics 2022).

Bishops

95 of whom

- 69 bishops in the official Church
- 26 bishops in the Underground[52]

50 Joan Pittman, "How Many Christians in China? Preferred Estimates," three-part series on the portal ChinaSource, 2020, at www.chinasource.org/resource-library/series-index/how-many-christians-in-china (last accessed on March 24, 2023); cf. Wenzel-Teuber 2021, pp. 33-34.

51 For example, two pastors of the official governing bodies of the Protestant churches of Shandong Province and Guangzhou City reported in October 2018 at the "Forum of Christianity Research 2018" organized by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences that the number of Protestant Christians in their area was sinking. See "Kan Baoping mushi: Bu yao jujiao yu neidi jidutu shuliang zhenglun, yao jieli jianzao jiankang jiaohui" 阚保平牧师: 不要聚焦于内地基督徒数量争论, 要竭力建造健康教会 (Pastor Kan Baoping: We should not concentrate on the dispute regarding the number of Protestants in the country, but rather give our best to build up a healthy church), *Fuyin shibao* 福音时报, Nov. 15, 2018; https://gospeltimes.cn/index.php/portal/article/index/id/46244 (last accessed on March 14, 2023); cf. Wenzel-Teuber 2020, p. 29.

52 These figures also include the emerited bishops. At the end of 2021, 98 bishops had been counted, 71 of them in the official church and 27 in the underground Church, see *Tripod* 2022, p. 228 (same figures in Wenzel-Teuber 2022, p. 26).

Priests

ca. 4,000 in total in the official and unofficial parts of the Church. How many priests from the Underground have meanwhile become registered is not known (*Tripod* 2022, p. 235).

Seminaries and Seminarians

6 major seminaries (for priest candidates) with a total of around 350 seminarians in the official Church (*Tripod* 2021).

Thus, of the original 10 seminaries in the official Church of Mainland China, only six are still operating, even though state agencies (e.g. State Council 2018) continue to report their number as nine. No data is available for Underground formation communities.

Sisters

ca. 5,000 in total, in dozens of congregations in the official and unofficial parts of the Church (*Tripod* 2022, pp. 235f.).

Churches

4,202 churches and

2,238 ecclesial sites for activities (Work Report at the 10th National Assembly of Catholics 2022).

6.2 Baptisms

The total number of baptisms in Catholic communities of Mainland China in 2022 was not reported. The latest baptismal statistics published by *Xinde* give the number of 48,365 baptisms for 2018.[53] By contrast, the Work Report presented at the 10th National Assembly of Catholics in August 2022 spoke of only "nearly 110,000" baptisms in China between 2016 and 2022.[54]

The following examples show that despite long lockdowns and church closures in 2022, larger baptismal services also took place:

40 baptisms, Wenzhou Cathedral, Wenzhou Diocese (ZJ), June 29, 2022: These were participants in the parish's 21st catechumenate course which began on October 16, 2021 (*xdo* July 4, 2022).

101 baptisms, Beijing Cathedral (North Church), Beijing Diocese (BJ), July 16, 2022: On that day, services were allowed to be held in the cathedral again for the first time after six months of closure due to the pandemic (*Fides* July 18, 2022).

26 baptisms, Beijing South Church, Beijing Diocese (BJ): On June 30, 2022, 26 faithful from the 72nd (!) catechumenate course of the South Church received their baptismal certificates; the baptisms had mainly taken place earlier in the year (*xdo* Aug. 4, 2022).

53 Cf. Wenzel-Teuber 2019, pp. 24-26.

54 Work Report at the 10th National Assembly of Catholics 2022.



Baptism of 40 adult catechumens in Wenzhou on June 29, 2022. The people in white sitting on the right and left of the central aisle of the church are the baptismal candidates. Photos: *xdo*.

6.3 Priestly Ordinations

Only 15 deacons were ordained as priests in the official part of the Catholic Church in China in 2022 – or at any rate, only 15 ordinations could be identified from the publicly available sources (see Table 4). The number is certainly incomplete; so there are likely to have been more priestly ordinations in the Underground. Even so it is extremely low. The

Table 4: Priestly Ordinations in the Catholic Church in Mainland China in 2022

Province / Municipality	Diocese	Number of Ordained	Date of Ordination	Ordaining Bishop*	Names of Those Ordained
CQ	Wanzhou	1	June 29	He Zeqing	Jiang Fuxin 蒋福鑫
FJ	Fuzhou	2	June 29	Lin Jiashan	Lin Feng 林风, Lin Weirui 林位端
Hen	Zhengzhou	1	Aug. 10	Zhang Yinlin, Anyang	Ma Zhao 马昭
SC	Leshan	2	June 29	Lei Shiyin	Xiao Feng 肖锋, Zhou Tao 周涛
SN	Xi'an	2	Oct. 18	Dang Mingyan	Duan Chenyang 段晨阳, Tong Yuanbo 童渊博
SN	Zhouzhi	1	Aug. 22	Wu Qinjing	Li Zeyi 李泽逸
SX	Yuncheng	1	June 13	Meng Ningyou, Taiyuan	Jia Hongwei 贾宏伟
YN	Dali, Zhaotong	2	July 18	Ma Yinglin, Kunming	Tang Tiancong 唐天丛, Cao Guoxin 曹国新 (Tibetan)
ZJ	Ningbo	3	Aug. 27	Jin Yangke	Gao Dicong 高迪聪, Liu Sheng 刘盛, Yu Liting 俞立挺
Total		15			

* The diocese is only mentioned here if the ordaining bishop was not the competent local ordinary of the diocese concerned, but was invited from another diocese to perform the ordination.

Sources: chinacatholic.cn June 29, 2022; July 22, 2022; *Fides* Jan. 7, 2022; Aug. 3, 2022; *xdo* June 13, 30, 2022; July 8, 2022; Aug. 15, 28, 31, 2022; Jan. 2, 2023.

coming year will show whether this was also due to the prolonged closures of churches and suspension of religious activities in many places because of the Corona pandemic. What is certain, however, is that the number of vocations has been declining sharply for years. In previous years, the following numbers of newly ordained priests were counted: 2021 – 40 new priests; 2020 – 39 new priests; 2019 – 48; 2018 – 75; 2017 – 97; 2016 – 61; 2015 – 59; 2014 – 78; 2013 – 66; 2012 – 78.

6.4 Episcopal Consecrations

No episcopal consecration took place in Mainland China in 2022.

6.5 Public Installation of Bishops Ordained without Government Permission in 2022

Bishop Peng Weizhao 彭卫照 of Yujiang (JX), 2014 episcopal consecration, on November 24, 2022 officially installed as auxiliary bishop of Jiangxi Diocese.

The Holy See protested against the event on November 26, 2022. The Diocese of Jiangxi is not recognized by the Holy See.

6.6 Deceased Bishops in Mainland China in 2022

Bishop Wu Junwei 武俊维, Peter (June 27, 1963 – May 10, 2022), 1990 priestly ordination, 2010 episcopal ordination, Diocese of Yuncheng (SX), 58 years.

Bischof Ye Ronghua 叶荣华, John Baptist (June 20, 1931 – August 28, 2022), 1981 priestly ordination, 2000 episcopal ordination, Diocese of Ankang (SN), 91 years.

Bischof Gao Hongxiao 高宏孝, Joseph (died December 19, 2022), 2005 episcopal ordination, Kaifeng (Hen) Diocese, 77 years.

6.7 Entrance to Novitiates and Vows of Women Religious





Two Sisters took final vows on December 8, 2022 in Guangzhou. Photos: *xdo*.

The vows of women religious are much less regularly reported than priestly ordinations. The entrance to novitiate and vows in Table 5 can, therefore, only be taken as examples. As

with vocations to the priesthood, the number of vocations among women has also been declining sharply for years.

Table 5: Examples of Entrance to Novitiate and Professions of Women Religious in Mainland China in 2022

Province	Diocese	Congregation	Date	Entrance to Novitiate	Vows
GD	Guang-zhou	Chinese Sisters of the Immaculate Conception	Dec. 8		2 perpetual (Huang Jieqi 黄洁琦, Liu Lili 刘丽丽)
GD	Shantou	Diocesan congregation	Aug. 28		14 temporal
SC	Leshan	Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Mary	March 25		2 perpetual (Jin Guirong 金桂蓉, Wei Fang 韦芳)
SN	Xi'an	Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart	Feb. 26	2	2 perpetual
ZJ	Ningbo	Helpers of the Holy Souls	June 19		1 perpetual (Weng Changshu 翁常熟, religious name Paulus)
			Aug. 22		1 first profession (Chen Shuangbo 陈双波, religious name Jieru 洁如)

Sources (2022): *xdo* March 2; April 7; Aug. 23, 31; Dec. 9; https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/3S0fUVTsR8bAXxMCEwXavA.

6.8 Priests and Women Religious Deceased in Mainland China in the Year 2022

In 2022, according to statistics published on the *Xinde* (Faith) website by author Ye Sheng, 13 priests died. 6 of them belonged to the younger generation trained after the Cultural Revolution, they were under 60 years old. The other 7 were 80 years old or older.

According to the same statistics, 7 Sisters passed away, 3 of them aged 60 years or younger. The 4 other Sisters were over 80 years. Deceased priests and Sisters in the Underground were not covered by the statistics.

From the fact that almost half of the deceased were middle-aged or belonged to the "young old" (60 to 74 years), the author concludes that the state of health of many priests and Sisters in these age groups is worrying and that the clergy and Sisters of the Chinese Church have entered a phase in which the proportion of the elderly is rapidly increasing.[55]

6.9 National Assemblies of Catholics 2022 and 2016 – A Comparison of the Numbers in the Work Reports

From August 18 to 20, 2022, the 10th National Assembly of Representatives of Chinese Catholicism convened in Wuhan. For the first time, the work report presented there by Bishop Shen Bin did not provide official statistical data on the total number of Chinese Catholics, priests, Sisters and seminarians. Instead, it made do with data on "new recruits" of the faithful, priests and Sisters in the last 6 years. In comparison with the figures presented at the 9th National Assembly in December 2016, the following picture emerges:

55 Ye Sheng 2023. – The number of years of life attained in each case by Ye Sheng differs in part from that given here due to the different counting method customary in China.

Table 6: National Assemblies of Catholics 2022 and 2016 – A Comparison of the Numbers in the Work Reports

Data for the official Catholic Church	Work report 2022 for the years 2017–2022	Work report 2016 for the years 2011–2016
Faithful	–	More than 6 million
Persons baptized in the last 6 years	almost 110,000*	–
Dioceses	98	–
Bishops	66	65
Bishops consecrated or installed in the last 6 years**	6 consecrated, 8 transformed and installed	16 [of these 13 consecrated, 3 installed]
Priests	–	3,100
Priests ordained in the last 6 years	289***	–
Sisters	–	5,800
Sisters in vows newly entered in the last 6 years	161	–
Churches and ecclesial sites for activities	4,202 churches and 2,238 ecclesial sites for activities	more than 6,000
Theological seminaries	–	9
Seminarians	–	468
Study returnees from abroad in the database of the official Catholic bodies	over 400, of whom 35 with doctoral and 230 with master's degrees ****	–
Bibles printed in the last 6 years	550,000, over 100,000 were delivered gratis to needy areas	–
Church donations for charitable purposes made in the last 6 years	173 million RMB	185 million RMB

Data from: Work Report at the 9th National Assembly of Catholics 2016 and Work Report at the 10th National Assembly of Catholics 2022.

* 110,000 new baptisms is a very low figure for six years, given that the same bodies reported baptism numbers as high as 100,000 per year in 2011 and a survey conducted by *Xinde* (see point 6.2 above) arrived at 48,365 people being baptized nationwide in 2018 alone.

** Of the 16 bishops mentioned for the period 2011 and 2016 in the work report, by the author's own count 13 were newly consecrated (two of them without papal appointment), and 3 bishops consecrated without government permission were officially installed. In addition to these 13 official episcopal ordinations, at least 5 other episcopal ordinations took place in secret during the same period, and another (Ma Daqin's episcopal ordination in Shanghai) took place with official permission but was subsequently deemed invalid by the authorities. Between 2011 and 2016, therefore, at least 19 episcopal consecrations took place, far more than in the years 2017 to 2022, when – despite the provisional Sino-Vatican agreement on episcopal appointments of 2018 – there were only 6 episcopal consecrations. The term "transformed" (*zhuanhua* 转化) means the "conversion" of clergy from the Underground to registered clergy of the official part of the Church.

*** 289 priestly ordinations: This number is slightly lower than the one identified in the "Statistical Updates" in *Religions & Christianity in Today's China* for the years 2017–2021, where 299 priestly ordinations were counted; in addition, there were 9 ordinations in 2022 before the 10th National Assembly of Catholics took place in August.

**** This certainly refers to those returning from studies since the beginning of the study abroad programs in the 1990s, not just in the last 6 years.

7. Sources and Abbreviations

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