

Introduction

This atlas provides a bird's-eye view of the religious landscape in China. It maps the officially registered venues of five major religions—Buddhism, Christianity (Protestant and Catholic), Daoism, and Islam—at the national, provincial, and county levels, and draws the contours of Confucianism, folk religion, and the Mao cult. It describes the main organizations, beliefs, and rituals of various religions, and the social and demographic characteristics of their respective believers. Putting various religions side by side in their social, political, and cultural contexts, this volume offers a comprehensive overview of religion in contemporary China.

Although religion can be studied in different academic disciplines, three broad approaches may be distinguished. The first approach is through theological or philosophical studies, which provide rational justification or criticism of certain beliefs and practices. The second approach is grounded in the humanities and interprets scriptures, commentaries, and other sacred texts. The third approach applies social scientific methods to empirical data, including historical records, fieldwork observations, and quantitative data from surveys and censuses. This volume follows this third approach. It is multidisciplinary, combining sociological and geographical studies of religious organizations and individuals. The analysis marries some economic concepts with Geographical Information System (GIS) research to analyze and visualize religious sites in China.

Definition and Classification of Religion

This atlas treats religion as a complex social institution comprising both beliefs and practices. Religion includes four elements: “(1) a belief in the supernatural; (2) a set of beliefs regarding life and the world; (3) a set of ritual practices; and (4) a distinct social organization or moral community.”¹ Some religions demonstrate a systematic development of beliefs, rituals, and organizations.² In other religions, one or more of the four elements may not

have developed in a systematic manner; this is often the case with so-called folk religions.

In the People's Republic of China, only five religions are officially recognized and legally allowed to operate. Among the five, only Daoism is native to China. Buddhism, Catholicism, Protestantism, and Islam are world religions that have existed in China for hundreds or thousands of years and have large numbers of believers. It must be noted that China treats Catholicism and Protestantism as two distinct religions. Orthodox Christianity existed in pre-Communist China and has revived in recent years in some locations, such as Heilongjiang, but has not been recognized as a legally permitted religion at the state level.³

In addition to practitioners of the five legally allowed religions, many people hold beliefs in certain supernatural beings or forces, engage in rituals and practices in reference to the supernatural, and form social relations with spiritual leaders and fellow believers. According to the definition of religion introduced above, their beliefs, practices, and social institutions are clearly religious. Therefore, we include them in our description and analysis in this volume. In his classic study of *Religion in Chinese Society*, C. K. Yang 杨庆堃 distinguishes two structural forms of religion, institutional religion and diffused religion. An institutional religion is separate from secular social institutions, while a diffused religion is merged with or embedded in secular institutions.⁴ Countering the claim frequently made around the turn of the twentieth century that the Chinese lack religion, C. K. Yang convincingly argues that diffused religion was pervasive in pre-Communist China. Under Communist rule, religious elements have been expunged from the state, the family, communities, and guilds, but folk religious beliefs and practices aligned with weak social organizations have shown resilience under religious suppression. The Mao personality cult, once a political religion or pseudo-religion, has now become part of folk religion in China.⁵ In this atlas, we provide descriptive contours of some major folk religious beliefs and practices.

1 F. Yang, *Religion in China*, 36.

2 J. C. Hemeyer (*Religion in America*, 17) writes that a “developed religion is an integrated system of beliefs, lifestyle, ritual activities, and social institutions by which individuals give meaning to (or find meaning in) their lives by orienting themselves to what they take to be holy, sacred, or of the highest value.” For the idea of a “complete” religion, see Yinger, *The Scientific Study of Religion*, 10.

3 Some Orthodox Christians have appealed to the authorities for legal recognition, and there are some Orthodox Christian churches in operation in Heilongjiang and Inner Mongolia, but the number is extremely small and they do not seem to be accounted for in the economic census that we have used for this atlas.

4 C. K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society*, 20.

5 Zuo, “Political Religion”; F. Yang, *Religion in China*, 139.

Finally, there is a third category of religious sects that maintain a high-tension relationship with society, culture, or the political order. These sects have been labeled as “evil cults” (*xiejiao* 邪教) by the Chinese authorities and are excluded from classifications of religion in official Chinese documents. Again, according to our academic definition of religion, these groups are either traditional religious sects or new religious movements and are thus included in our description and analysis.

Religious Markets

In recent decades, some sociologists and economists have applied economic concepts to analyze the dynamics of religious change in the United States, Europe, and other societies.⁶ The adoption of certain economic terms in a social scientific theory of religious change does not imply a vulgarization or commercialization of religion. Rather, these terms serve as analytical tools for describing some social aspects of religion. The idea of religious markets provides a useful way to conceive of the relationships that treat religion as a social institution. The institution of religion can be analyzed in terms of supply and demand, and the causes and consequences of religious change may often be explained in terms of a dynamic supply-demand equilibrium. Broadly speaking, the supply side includes religious organizations, venues, materials, services, and clergy, while the demand side includes religious adherents, who may also participate in the production of religious rituals, goods, and services.

Building on this theoretical development, I have adopted a political economy approach for analyzing the changing dynamics of religion in China under Communist rule and developed the triple market theory, the shortage economy theory, and the oligopoly theory.⁷ Whereas previous economic theories focused on supply-side explanations, my political economy approach emphasizes the importance of regulation, which may shape the supply side or the demand side, but often with unintended consequences. Under the restrictive and repressive regulations, the religious economy does not form a single market, but splits into three parallel and intertwined markets, which I have labeled the red, black, and gray markets. Red is the color of the Communist Party and thus the red market represents the religions sanctioned by the party-state and

includes the five legal (officially permitted) religious organizations, believers, and religious activities. The black market, on the other hand, comprises all illegal (officially banned) religious organizations, believers, and religious activities. The gray market of religion lies somewhere in between: it comprises all religious and spiritual organizations, practitioners, and activities with ambiguous legal status.⁸ Overall, religious supply is very low in China compared with most of the other countries, and the main reason for this shortage is the Communist party-state's imposition of restrictions on religions. The increase in supply in recent decades lags behind the rapidly increasing demand for more religious venues, activities, and services.

Each of the three markets has its distinct characteristics and dynamics in relation to the state and society. In the first part of the atlas, we describe and analyze the three markets of religion at the national level. The second part of the atlas includes descriptions and analyses of the red-market religions province by province.

The Religious Landscape: The Importance of Space and Place

Religious venues are a major component of religious supply. Indeed, religious buildings may be considered the most tangible and visible component of religion. They often signify the prevalence or significance of religion in a given society in a given historical period. During the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), all religious venues were closed down. Although there is still a shortage of religious venues in China, in recent decades the numbers of temples, churches, and mosques have increased. Nowadays it is hard to ignore the towering mosques of Western China or the large-scale cathedrals in southeastern China (Photos 1, 2). Of course, there are other important components of the religious supply, including religious organizations, clergy, staff, artifacts, and so on. We will describe religious organizations and seminaries or religious academies whenever information is available. However, we have mapped the religious landscape largely on the basis of data that records religious sites associated with the five red-market religions.

The spatial dimension is essential for religion. However, it has been very much neglected by social scientists, with only a few exceptions.⁹ In the last several decades, the social scientific study of religion has been dominated by the individualistic approach, relying heavily on surveys

6 For a systematic theoretical construction applying economic terms to the sociological study of religion, see Stark and Finke, *Acts of Faith*.

7 F. Yang, *Religion in China*.

8 F. Yang, *Religion in China*, 86–87.

9 For a summary review, see Carroll, “Religion in Space.”



PHOTO 1 Mosque in Yanqi county (Xinjiang).
CREDIT: XUEGANG MA.



PHOTO 2 Three churches in Yishan, Cangnan county (Zhejiang).
CREDIT: SHIDANG OU.

of individual religiosity, which is commonly measured in terms of the three B's: religious belonging (identity or preference), beliefs (e.g., in God, the Bible), and behaviors (e.g., church attendance, prayer). Emile Durkheim, one of the founders of the social scientific study of religion, stressed the social nature of religion. Religion is a social institution with collective rituals and a moral community. However, in modern scholarship, only a minority of scholars have focused on congregations and communities or pursued the historical study of institutional differentiation.

Following Durkheim's distinction between the sacred and the profane, Mircea Eliade draws attention to sacred space, which is a social and cultural phenomenon constructed by rituals, symbols, and relationships. Through consecrating rituals, structured space becomes a sacred center around which people orient themselves.¹⁰ Thomas Tweed argues that religion is a fundamentally locative process of finding a place and moving across space.¹¹ Roger Stump clarifies the inherent spatiality of religious systems. Religious groups do not simply exist in space, but seek spatial realization of their beliefs.¹² Hence, the spatial dimension of religious practice deserves close examination. In cultural geography, Henri Lefebvre argues that space is a primary dimension of competition and conflict involving production, appropriation, and redefinition.¹³ Yi-Fu Tuan articulates the relationship between space and place, pointing out that space is an unorganized realm of motion, whereas place is the functional node in space; places become centers of values that people distinguish from the surrounding space by assigning meanings to them and forming emotional attachments to them.¹⁴ Jonathan Z. Smith further shows that sacred places often develop not in symbolic centers but on social and geographic peripheries, where they function politically to interrogate, disrupt, and escape the hegemonic power of the center.¹⁵ These theoretical advances have been extremely helpful in examining the displacement and re-emplacement of religion in modern and modernizing China.

Around the turn of the twentieth century, in their struggle to modernize China according to Enlightenment ideals, Chinese elites claimed that the Chinese had never been religious. Meanwhile, they worked with the state to appropriate Buddhist, Daoist, or folk-religious temples as sites for new schools incorporating a Westernized modern

curriculum. This movement, often called the *Miaochan xingxue* 庙产兴学, or "converting temple properties to establish schools," called for the destruction of traditional temples and the introduction of new schools of modern education.¹⁶ These same attitudes became radicalized in mainland China under Communist rule, especially during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), when all temples, mosques, and churches were closed and all religious activities were banned. Many religious buildings were torn down, and the rest were converted for secular use as factories, public schools, government offices, or gathering halls of the Communist Party. Interestingly, religious eradication failed. Religion survived, and began to revive in the late 1970s. The surviving beliefs have sought embodiment in practice and in the emplacement of sacred space.

The Chinese Communist Party and state has established a complex institution to regulate religion.¹⁷ The major control apparatus for religious affairs is the United Front Department (*Tongzhanbu* 统战部, hereafter UFD) of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The UFD is in charge of making religious policies and rallying religious leaders around the CCP. The daily administration of religious affairs is the task of the Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB); at the national level the bureau was renamed the State Administration of Religious Affairs (*Guojia zongjiao shiwuju* 国家宗教事务局, hereafter SARA). Its duties include processing requests for approval of the opening of temples, churches, and mosques; of special religious gatherings and activities; and of the appointment of leaders of religious associations. The SARA has sub-branches at the province, prefecture, and county levels, responsible for addressing religious affairs at each level.¹⁸ Meanwhile, the Ministry of Public Security (*Gong'anbu* 公安部) deals with illegal religious activities and monitors some religious groups and active leaders, while the Ministry of State Security (*Guo'an bu* 国安部) monitors religious activities involved with foreigners. In 1999, a special "610 Office" (*610 bangongshi* 610 办公室) was created to monitor and suppress the so-called evil cults. The 610 Office has branches at various administrative levels. Instead of wiping out religions, however, these regulations have resulted in a complex religious field composed of legal and illegal activities and groups, as well as those of uncertain status.

10 Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*.

11 Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling*.

12 Stump, *The Geography of Religion*.

13 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*.

14 Tuan, *Space and Place*.

15 J. Z. Smith, *To Take Place*.

16 See P. R. Katz's study of these events in his *Religion in China and Its Modern Fate*.

17 For more on the control apparatus for religious affairs, see Katz, *Religion in China and Its Modern Fate*, 65–84.

18 In spring 2018, the State Administration of Religious Affairs merged into UFD, and the lower level RAB is being merged into UFD at the provincial and municipal levels too.

Over the last several decades, the number of religious believers in China has continuously increased. Moreover, religious believers have strenuously contended with the party-state to reclaim religious sites, restore and construct buildings on traditional religious sites, and sometimes occupy state-owned or collectively owned spaces and construct new religious buildings. In short, the contention for space and place has been central in the religious revivals during the last several decades in China. In this atlas, we are able to offer an overall view of sacred places for the first time.

To put the religious sites in their social, political, and cultural contexts, we provide social and demographic profiles of adherents of each of the five religions recognized by the state in the first part of the atlas. We also sketch some of the characteristics of adherents of gray-market and black-market religions. In the second part, we present the demographic characteristics of the general population in each province, along with pertinent religious events. While the semi-legal and illegal groups are frequently mentioned in the second part, we have not mapped these groups because of the lack of geographical information.

Religious Organizations in the Economic Census of China

While administrative documents may record some rough estimates of the number of religious venues, little data has hitherto been available on the distribution of religious communities. Fortunately, through Dr. George Hong's introduction, Dr. Shuming Bao from the China Data Center at the University of Michigan approached me in 2009 with a dataset extracted from a 2004 Chinese Economic Census. The file includes 72,887 religious sites from all of China's 31 provinces and province-level regions and municipalities. From the outset, we knew this list certainly did not represent all religious sites in China. First, the economic census only listed a church, temple, or mosque if it was officially registered with the government. But there are many religious communities in China that cannot register or choose not to register with the government authorities. We have been in parts of China where unregistered groups certainly outnumber officially sanctioned ones. Second, given the economic focus of the census, it overlooked a great number of places whose annual income was too small to record. In some northwestern cities of China, such as Lanzhou, the census focused primarily on mosques that doubled as economic enterprises. When we visited the city in 2016, we discovered nearly three dozen churches not mentioned in the census, even though some

of them already existed when the economic census was conducted in 2004.

From the outset, we knew that the 2004 Economic Census would not give us a comprehensive overview of all religious sites in China. On the other hand, this data set did enable us to study the spatial distribution of religions in ways not previously possible. Previously, scholars were limited to conducting case studies and regional studies focusing on a single religion, and it was not possible to gain an accurate sense of large-scale developments in religion in contemporary China. This data set, however, gave us the name, location, leaders' names, relative size, and reported annual income of religious organizations throughout China. Furthermore, even though not all religious sites were included, all provinces were represented.

Initially, our team had little experience in the technologies needed to clean and verify the data. Beginning in 2010, I assembled a small team of graduate students to begin cleaning the data. We encountered many challenges along the way. First, there was a considerable amount of inconsistency in the way that geographic data, such as the names of cities, towns, and villages, was recorded in the census. In addition, there was much conflicting information in the data that needed further examination. The most common problem was that the name of a religious establishment indicated that it was located in one village while its address pointed to a different location. According to the name of site #19238, for example, it was a church in Zhangzhuang Village 张庄村 in Zengfumiao Town 增府庙乡 of Changge City 长葛市, but it was associated with an address in Niutang Village 牛堂村 of Changge City 长葛市. Nearly one-fifth of the sites included in this dataset needed to be examined on a case-by-case basis.

Finally, the administrative geography of China has been revised and changed since 2004. At the time of the census, many sites belonged to one administrative division but are now located in another one. Sometimes an address was misspelled, or it turned out that there were two villages with the same name in the same region. All of these inconsistencies made cleaning the census data tedious and time-consuming. After seven years of effort, we have developed the dataset for informative description and analysis, and the results are incorporated in this atlas.

An Overview of This Atlas

By early 2017, we had finally cleaned the data as much as possible. Where the census listed a specific address, we were able to pinpoint the corresponding site. Where the census listed only a village or township name, we were able to find coordinates for the administrative center of

that location. We estimate that at least 90 percent of the religious sites in the dataset are associated with points located within 5 km of the real site. We have recorded the coordinates for these points, as well as the names and addresses of the associated religious sites. These will be made publicly available in a data archive. We are confident that this list of sites and coordinates can serve as a benchmark for scholars who will continue to expand, refine, and correct the information gleaned from the dataset in the future.

There are other sources that include religious sites along with their coordinates, such as Google Maps, Google Earth, Baidu Map, and Gaode Map. At present, however, none of these online resources provides information on a greater number of religious sites than the 2004 economic census, nor do they provide more systematic information on the religious sites included in that census. Yet even in the 2004 Economic Census, underreporting appears to be a problem in many counties and provinces. The underreporting of religious sites in the 2004 census is most conspicuous in Beijing, Tianjin, and Hainan Province. Focusing on these three provinces, we experimented with various ways of collecting additional information on religious sites, including thorough searching of websites and books, contacting local residents, and on-site visits. The maps of Beijing, Tianjin, and Hainan Province reflect the more recent information we collected. However, due to the cost of these methods, we were not able to employ them in other areas before producing this atlas.

The distribution of religious sites associated with the five red-market religions in each province is visualized on a point map using five different colors. However, many religious sites associated with one or more religions may occupy identical or adjacent locations, making it difficult to recognize them on the map. We have tried to show the location of as many sites as possible by arranging the points in layers: on each map, the points depicting sites associated with the religion best represented on that map (i.e., the religion associated with the greatest number of sites in that province) form the bottom layer, and each successive layer contains the points associated with the next best represented religion on the map. Unfortunately, it is not possible to represent each and every site on the point map. To complement the point map, we have provided a bar graph and a frequency table with information on the number of sites associated with the five religions at the prefecture level. A pie chart shows the proportions of the five religions in each province. Some provincial maps also include one or more inset maps showing locations where there is a high density of sites associated with multiple religions.

In an effort to contextualize the distribution of religious sites in the 2004 economic census, we provide information on the sociodemographic characteristics of China's provinces and their counties and prefectures. Many of our observations draw on data collected in China's 2000 and 2010 Population Census. The two censuses provide key demographic characteristics at the county and province levels, including level of education, urbanization, immigration, age structure, sex ratio, and family structure. In addition, by utilizing information from two time points, we are able to depict demographic changes at the county level.

In order to better understand the social location of religious followers in China, we mainly consulted three kinds of survey data: the 2007 Chinese Spiritual Life Survey (CSLS), the 2010 China General Social Survey (CGSS), and the 2010 Chinese census. The CSLS, which yielded one of the best datasets available for studying religion in China, was conducted by Horizonkey Information and Consulting Co., Ltd. Focusing on the spiritual life of Chinese residents, this dataset includes information on people's religious life and spiritual pursuits. This survey used multistage probability sampling and included 7,021 respondents randomly selected from 56 locales in mainland China, including 3 metropolitan cities, 6 province-level capital cities, 11 prefecture-level cities, 16 county-level cities, and 20 administrative villages. In our analysis, we mainly relied on the CSLS 2007, unless otherwise noted.

The CGSS is one of the most prominent surveys of the Chinese population in mainland China. The project, launched jointly by Renmin University of China and the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, conducts multistage stratified national probability surveys. As a survey that was designed to survey general social values in China, the 2010 CGSS, conducted independently by Renmin University, included a Religion Module to investigate the religious life of Chinese people. We used the CGSS 2010 to complement the CSLS 2007. With a response rate of 73.2 percent, the 2010 CGSS surveyed 12,000 individuals randomly selected from 125 cities, townships, and villages, covering a wide range of administrative units across mainland China.

Relying on the 2007 CSLS, the 2010 CGSS, and the 2010 Chinese Population Census, we compared the sociodemographic characteristics of the religious population with that of the general population. Aiming to better understand the religious contours in China, we specifically compared the distribution of age, gender, educational attainment, and area of residence (urban or rural) of religious followers with the rest of the respondents in the survey sample. Because of the political significance

of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Chinese Communist Youth League (CCYL), we also compared the proportion of the members of each organization in the religious population with the rest of the respondents in the surveys or in the general population. Even though the CCP and CCYL officially prohibit their members from believing in or practicing religion, in reality the majority of them do hold spiritual or religious beliefs and practices. To roughly estimate the proportion of CCP and CCYL members in the general population, we used data from the Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China website and from Xinhua.net.¹⁹ As of 2009, which is close in time to the surveys of CSLs survey in 2007 and the 2010 CGSS, the number of CCP members was almost 78 million²⁰ and the number of CCYL members was about 75.5 million.²¹ According to the 2010 Population Census, about 17 percent of the total population of 1,339,724,852

were under age 14.²² Therefore, among the adult population aged 15 or above, 7 percent were CCP members and nearly 7 percent were CCYL members. Thus, 7 percent is the baseline reference for religious beliefs and practices of the CCP or CCYL members in the population.

Due to political restrictions and practical obstacles, it has been extremely difficult to collect or acquire data on religious organizations and individuals in China. By piecing together available census and survey data, supplemented with news sources and scholarly studies, we are able to present this description and visualization of the geographical location of religious sites and the social location of religious followers. I hope this first attempt will lead to more and better scholarly studies of religion in contemporary China.

19 State Council of the People's Republic of China, "The Number of Chinese Communist Party Members."

20 State Council of the People's Republic of China, "The Number of Chinese Communist Party Members Reached 77,995,000 by the End of 2009."

21 Xinhuanet, "The Number of Chinese Communist Youth League Members Reaches 75,439,000."

22 National Bureau of Statistics of China, "Communique ... on Major Figures of the 2010 Population Census [1] (No. 1)"; "Communique ... on Major Figures of the 2010 Population Census [1] (No. 2)."

PART 1

The Three Markets of Religion in China

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Introduction of Triple Markets

The triple market theory helps make sense of the complex religious situation in contemporary China.¹ It differentiates three types of religious organizations, individuals, and activities. The Communist party-state treats these three types of religions very differently, pursuing strategies ranging from co-option to eradication. In response to the varied control measures of the party-state, different types of religions have manifested different responsive patterns. Moreover, because both the control measures and religious groups have changed over time, some religious groups have shifted from one market to another. To observers, the red-market religions are readily visible, the gray-market religions are less visible because of their ambiguous legal status, and the black-market religions are least visible because of their underground nature. In order to present a fuller picture of the religious landscape in China today, in addition to the visible religious sites that have been officially approved, we must also take into account the less visible religions in the gray and black markets. The triple market theory helps to make invisible religions visible.

The red market in China comprises all legal (officially permitted) religious organizations, believers, and religious activities. After the CCP took power on the mainland in 1949, the newly founded People's Republic of China (PRC) sanctioned five religions—Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism—and established the so-called patriotic associations to control them.² During the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), all religious organizations were banned, religious venues were closed down, and religious activities were prohibited. Since 1979 the party-state has adopted a relatively more pragmatic religious policy permitting these associations to re-establish a limited number of temples, mosques, and churches. Although the officially approved religious groups under the patriotic associations have enjoyed an enlarged social space of freedom in the last several decades, the red market is not a free market. The party-state not only bars other religions from entering into this market, it also imposes many restrictions on the approved religious groups, such

as limiting the construction and renovation of religious buildings, limiting the frequency and size of religious activities, controlling the selection of clergy, demanding political loyalty in addition to religious piety, and so on.

The black market comprises all illegal (officially banned) religious organizations, believers, and religious activities that are conducted underground or in secrecy. Before 2000, the black market included all Protestant house churches, the underground Catholic Church, and new or traditional sects seen by the party-state as “counterrevolutionary organizations” or “evil cults.” A major segment of the black market was comprised of underground Catholics. When the PRC was founded, the anti-communist pope Pius XII prohibited any collaboration between Chinese Catholics and the Communist government and its organizations. The Chinese party-state responded by jailing many Catholic leaders. Since 1979, an underground Catholic Bishops Conference has operated parallel to the national association. Similarly, many indigenous Protestant churches initially refused to join the national church system. They resorted to gatherings at private homes, which is why they are often called “house churches” (*jiating jiaohui* 家庭教会). Since around 2000, the party-state has reduced its crackdowns on most of the house churches and underground Catholics, thus moving large parts of the black market into the gray market. However, some Catholic bishops and priests and some Protestant leaders have been treated as black-market offenders and have been jailed or pursued by police. Currently, the black market comprises about two dozen “evil cults” banned by the government. Some of them are heretical Christian groups, such as the Church of the Almighty God (*Quannengshen jiaohui* 全能神教会), also known as Eastern Lightning (*Dongfangshandian* 东方闪电), and the Three Ranks of Servants (*Sanban puren* 三班仆人). Others are new religions rooted in Chinese tradition or recently imported from other parts of the world, such as the True Buddha Sect (*Zhen fo zong* 真佛宗) and the Unification Church (统一教).

The gray market comprises all religious and spiritual organizations, practitioners, and activities with ambiguous legal status. These groups, individuals, and activities lie in a gray area of religious regulation and may be perceived as both legal and illegal, or neither legal nor illegal. The gray market is the key element of the triple-market model. It can be analyzed via two general categories: explicitly religious and implicitly religious phenomena. Explicitly religious phenomena include illegal activities conducted by

1 The triple market theory was first articulated in an article (F. Yang, “The Red, Black, and Gray Markets”) and was subsequently modified and incorporated into F. Yang, *Religion in China*.

2 For further analysis of the relationships between official religious organizations and the government, see Bays, “Chinese Protestant Christianity Today”; Madsen, *China's Catholics*, 25–49; Gladney, “Islam in China”; Yang and Wei, “The Bailin Buddhist Temple.”

legal religious organizations and individuals. For example, religious clergy of the official patriotic associations may venture out to proselytize at unapproved underground churches. Meanwhile, many groups in the gray market are sponsored by government officials, for either political or economic reasons. For example, many officials in local governments are eager to contribute to building Buddhist and Daoist temples because they wish to attract overseas Chinese investment and strengthen cultural ties with overseas Chinese. The Bureau of Tourism may renovate or construct some temples for the purpose of tourism while stationing staff dressed as priests in them to attend to tourists' religious expressions. Many villages and towns have revived popular practices, including building temples dedicated to ancestors, historic heroes, and immortals who have become tutelary gods.

Government restriction of religion influences the dynamics of the tripartite markets. The black market is a logical consequence of heavy regulation. When government tries to restrict and eliminate certain religious groups, a black market will emerge in spite of high costs to individuals. And there are always people who are willing to pay a higher price for their religion, even to the point of sacrificing one's life. A recent example is the Beijing Shouwang Church, where several house church leaders refused to join the official Protestant association and have been placed under house arrest since 2011. Further, when the red market of religion is restricted and the black market is suppressed, a gray market will emerge. When people cannot find satisfaction in the red market but are unwilling to risk black-market penalties, the gray market fills the gap. Moreover, the more restrictive and suppressive the regulations, the larger the gray market becomes.

Over time, religious groups may shift from one market to another. Many Qigong groups, operating under the name of "science of health," belonged to the gray market for most of the 1980s and 1990s. In 1999, however, Falun Gong 法轮功, a large Qigong group spreading throughout the country, launched a sit-in surrounding the headquarters

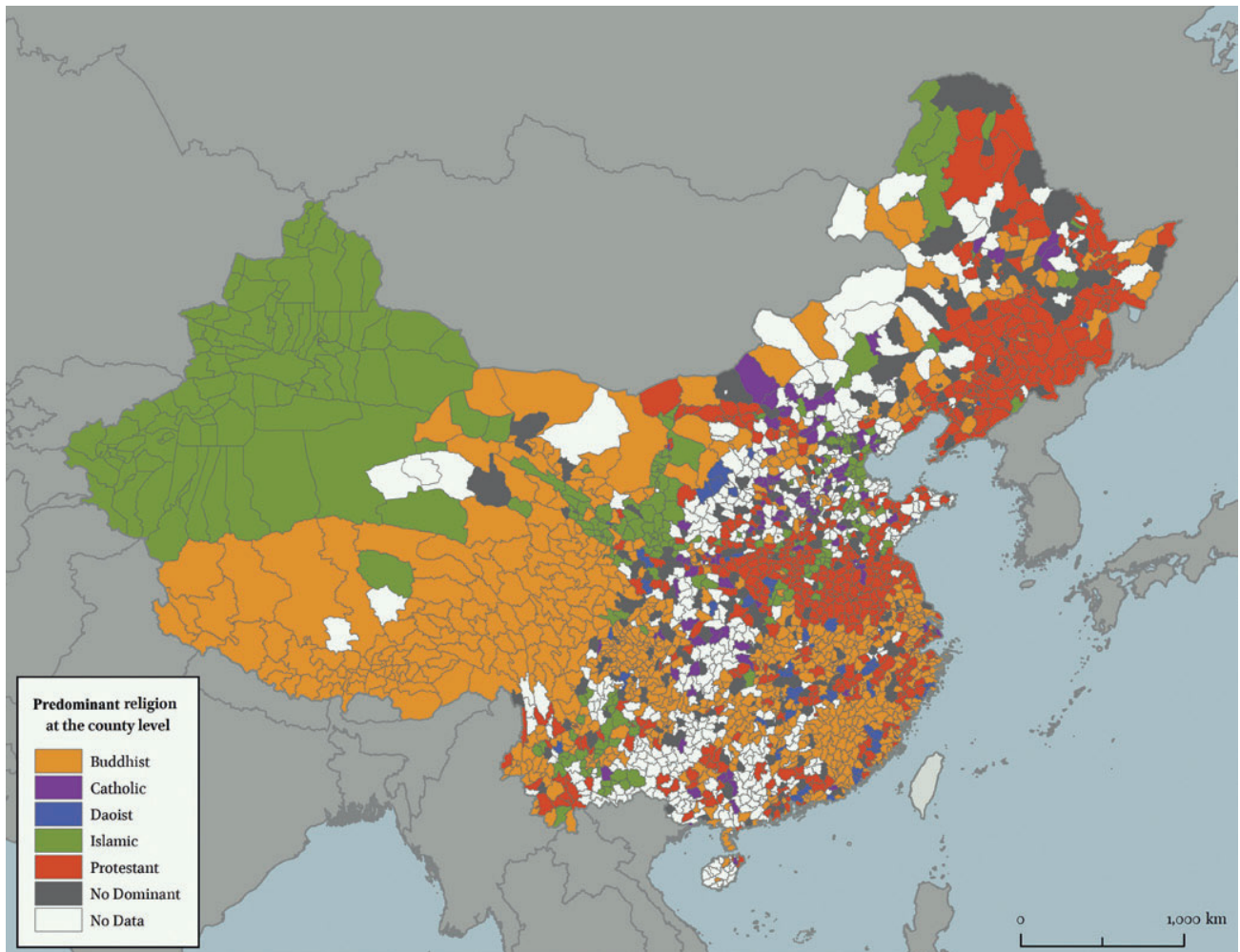
of the CCP. This event irritated the party-state, which ruthlessly suppressed Falun Gong and also disbanded all other Qigong sects, thus driving Qigong practices into the black market. Moreover, through policy adjustments and pressure, the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, the official Protestant association, has reached out and successfully convinced some house churches to be incorporated into the legal group. These churches moved from the gray market to the red market. They obtained legal status and more resources, but at the price of submitting to party-state scrutiny and control. Other market shifts are possible as well. A red-market group can shift to the black or gray market if its leaders decide to pursue more autonomy. For example, between 2013 and 2016, Zhejiang authorities carried out a campaign to remove crosses on church rooftops. Many defiant church leaders were punished, and some pastors were jailed. In response, many ministers within the official association dropped out and began to work with house churches or went underground.

The religious landscape in China is complex, extending over a vast land with diverse geographical terrain, local and ethnic cultures, and political and economic contexts. It is also subject to sudden changes, as China is in the process of rapid modernization. The descriptions of the three markets in the sections that follow can only provide a broad overview of major religious groups at the national level. The five red-market religions are presented in chronological order, according to the year in which the corresponding national association was established: Buddhism (1953), Islam (1953), Protestantism (1954), Daoism (1957), and Catholicism (1957). The gray-market religions vary widely and have fluid boundaries, and thus we could only describe a set of distinctive examples, including Confucianism, folk religion, house churches, underground Catholic churches, and the Mao cult. There is a lack of scholarly studies on the black-market religions, with the exception of Falun Gong. We have provided a profile of each of these religious groups based on the available published evidence.

The Red Market: Legal Religions

In the beginning of the twenty-first century, the government-approved sites of the five religions, as recorded in the 2004 Economic Census, show some interesting patterns of spatial distribution. Map 1 shows the predominant religion at the county level, which is the religion with the highest number of sites in each county. Islamic mosques are predominant in most counties in the northwest, and Buddhist temples in the southwest. This is not surprising, given that the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region and Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region are in the northwest and Xizang (Tibet) Autonomous Region in the southwest; these ethnic groups are traditionally

associated with these particular religions. Buddhism is also predominant in most of Qinghai, Gansu, Inner Mongolia, and many counties in south-central and south-east China. What is surprising, however, is that Protestant Christianity has become the predominant religion in central China between the Yellow River and the Huai River, in many counties along the Yangtze River, and also in most counties in the northeast. Catholicism is most prominent in many counties in Hebei, some counties of Inner Mongolia, Heilongjiang, and various counties in the middle. The distribution pattern of each religion is depicted in the following sections.



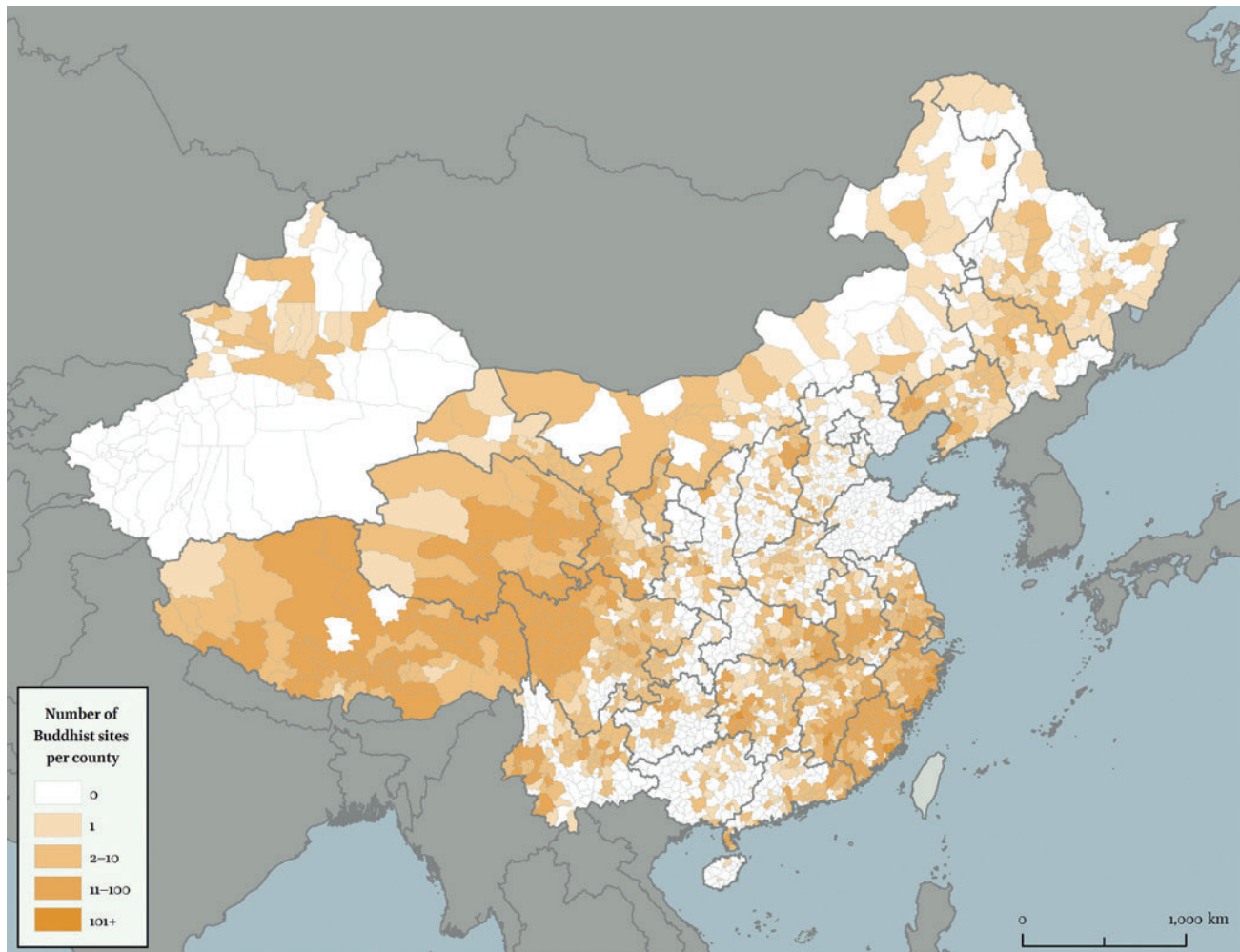
MAP 1 Predominant religion at the county level.

1. Buddhism

Buddhism, known as Fojiao 佛教 [Buddha teaching], has a history of about two thousand years in China. In 1953, Buddhists became the first religious group to be organized as an official, national association in the PRC. Many of the regional Buddhist clerical and lay organizations had already formed vast networks in China during the first half of the twentieth century. In the Republican era (1912–1949), especially in Shanghai, Buddhist associations made sharp distinctions between their religion and the “superstitions” of village temples. This new vision of Buddhism coincided with the new society envisioned by the Westernization projects launched by the Republican regime.¹ At the same time, Buddhist clerics and groups needed to organize to protect temples and other assets during a tumultuous period. They founded

multiple associations and competed for the recognition and resources of the government. Finally, the Buddhist Association of the Republic of China (*Zhonghua Fojiao hui* 中華佛教會, hereafter BAROC) became the official representative of Buddhism under the Guomindang (also known as the Kuomintang or Nationalist) regime.

In 1949, the BAROC moved to Taiwan along with the nationalist government. The CCP felt it necessary to have an official representative organ of Buddhism for its unofficial diplomacy. Meanwhile, some pro-communist Buddhists felt an urgent need to cooperate with the new regime, but most did not. In 1952, the Peace Conference of Asia and Pacific Regions was held in Beijing, during which Chinese monks joined Buddhists from eight countries in signing a call for international peace. This led the Communists to realize that Buddhism, as an influential world religion, could be utilized to endorse its foreign policy. With the support



MAP 2 Number of Buddhist sites per county.

1 Goossaert, “Republican Church Engineering.”

of the Communist Party, 20 Buddhists formed a preparatory committee in November 1952.² Subsequently, the inaugural meeting of the national Buddhist Association of China (*Zhongguo Fojiao xiehui* 中国佛教协会, hereafter BAC) was held from May 29 to June 3, 1953. While the BAC was never officially dismissed, even during the Cultural Revolution, it was hardly visible until it resurfaced in 1980.

According to official numbers from the current BAC website, there are about 33,000 Buddhist temples and monasteries and 240,000 Buddhist monks and nuns.³ There are higher concentrations of Buddhist temples located in southeast and southwest China, but they are scattered in most of the other counties throughout the country (Map 2).

BAC positions itself as a corporatist body representing Buddhist practitioners and their concerns to the government and assisting party and government leaders in implementing religious policies. Since 1980, a focus of BAC has been the propagation of “Humanist Buddhism” (*renjian fojiao* 人间佛教), which refers to an attempt to integrate Buddhist practices into everyday life and to serve both the Chinese people and the CCP regime. The association publishes four journals: *Fayin* 法音 [Dharma voice], *Foxue yanjiu* 佛学研究 [Buddhist research], *Fojiao wenhua* 佛教文化 [Buddhist culture], and *Zhongguo foxue* 中国佛学 [Chinese Buddhist studies]. These journals serve as venues for the scholarly study of Buddhism, discussions of Buddhist art and culture, and dogmatic discussions.⁴

The BAC is directed by the SARA. Local Buddhist associations at the county, prefecture, and province levels are linked by overlapping membership but not as chapters of a single association.⁵ For example, Xuecheng 学诚, the current president of the National Buddhist Association, is also the head of the Buddhist Association of Fujian Province. Many of the regional Buddhist associations support Buddhist academies, where monks and nuns receive training.

According to the national BAC in Beijing, there are 38 Buddhist academies (seminaries) in the country, not counting Tibetan Buddhist or Theravada academies. The coursework in these academies include courses in Buddhist philosophy and history, but these schools also require students to take courses in English, Chinese

philosophy, Indian philosophy, Western philosophy, law and political policies, and elementary computer science.⁶ Many of the Buddhist academies in China predate 1949. The Minnan Buddhist Academy, for example, was founded in 1925 at Nanputuo Temple 南普陀寺 in Fujian Province. Many monks graduated from the academy before the invasion of Japan in 1937, which forced the academy to close. The academy was reopened in 1986 and provides preparatory courses, an undergraduate program, and a master's degree program. To date, over one thousand monks and nuns have graduated from the academy (Photo 3).⁷

The two main branches of Buddhism in China are Han Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhism (Map 3). There are also a number of Theravada Buddhist temples in Yunnan Province. Tibetan Buddhism is not only influential in the Tibet Autonomous Region of China and the surrounding Tibetan areas in other provinces, but also in other regions around the Himalayas, such as Bhutan and Nepal, as well as Mongolia. In recent years, Tibetan Buddhism has become popular in some metropolitan areas in the eastern parts of China. Buddhism spread to Tibet in the seventh century and incorporated some elements of a local religion, Bon. Tibetan Buddhism is composed of four major sects: Nyingma 宁玛, which is the oldest one, Kagyu 噶举, Sakya 萨迦, and Gelug 格鲁. Gelug (*Gelupai* 格鲁派) is also called “Yellow Hat.” Kagyu, which narrowly refers to the “Red Hat” sect, can sometimes be applied to all non-Gelug sects. The two most famous monks, the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama, who are believed to be incarnations of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva and Amitābha Buddha, practice Gelug Buddhism. Most Tibetan monasteries are in western regions, such as Qinghai, Tibet, and western Sichuan (Photo 4). Some are in Inner Mongolia and the Northeast.

Temples identifying as Han Buddhist are found in most provinces. There are a variety of sects, although many that were historically prominent are now marginalized or have disappeared completely. One of the most common forms of Han Buddhism is the Pure Land lineage (*jingtu zong* 净土宗), which developed as early as the sixth century CE; it focuses on the veneration of Amitābha Buddha (*amitufo* 阿弥陀佛), who is thought to preside over a vast paradise in another universe in the west. Practitioners often feel compelled to honor Amitābha to advance their spiritual progress toward reincarnation in the western paradise. According to Pure Land Buddhism, the main

2 Welch, *Buddhism under Mao*, 472.

3 For more information, see Buddhist Association of China, “A Brief Introduction.”

4 For detailed information about these Buddhist journals, see Buddhist Association of China, “The Journals of the Buddhist Association of China.”

5 Ashiwa and Wank, “The Politics of a Reviving Buddhist Temple.”

6 Buddhist Academy of China, “Education and Teaching.”

7 For a brief history of the academy, see Minnan Buddhist Academy, “A Brief Introduction”; see also Travagnin, “The Impact of Politics on the Minnan Buddhist Institute.”



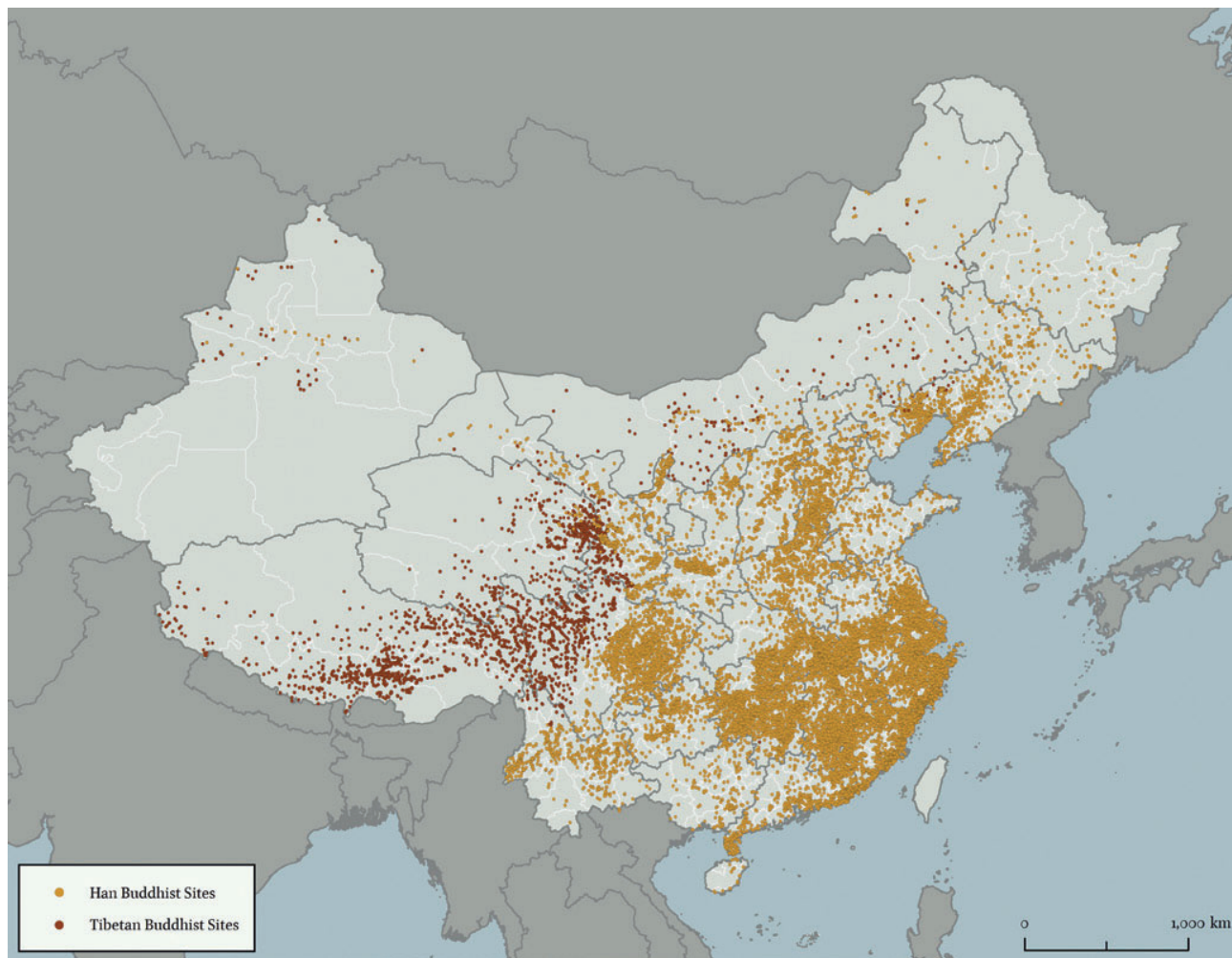
PHOTO 3 The inaugural transmission of second-tier ordinations at Famen Monastery in the fall of 2014.
CREDIT: ZHENCHAN SHI.

way to accumulate merits is to repeatedly recite the name of Amitābha (*nianfo* 念佛). Compared with the practices required by other Buddhist traditions, such as intense meditation, reciting Amitābha's name is often touted as an accessible and easier path for lay followers.

Another influential tradition of Han Buddhist sites is Chan, or Zen (*chanzong* 禅宗). The Chan tradition is attributed to Bodhidharma (*Putidamo* 菩提达摩), a Central Asian or Indian monk, who came to China and founded this practice in the sixth century. Chan Buddhism gained popularity off and on throughout imperial China, and often took on local characteristics in different parts of China. In general, Chan Buddhism emphasizes sudden awakening (*dunwu* 顿悟), a sudden insight into the Buddha-nature (*foxing* 佛性) of sentient beings or the void (*kong* 空) of all things that typically occurs under the instruction of a Buddhist master. A mythical and personal understanding of Buddha-nature or the void, instead of mere knowledge of sutras and doctrine, is a core element of Chan Buddhism. In dynastic China, Chan Buddhism was popularized among the educated elites, especially those who retired from, were forced out of, or

failed to obtain an imperial office, as reflected in their paintings, poetry, and various writings.

Despite the many different expressions of Buddhism in China, there are a few practices that are quite common throughout the country. Most practitioners of Buddhism incorporate some form of meditation into daily life and/or communal rituals. Meditation involves directed thought and reflection, and practitioners attempt to enter into a state of deep concentration and, with practice, arrive at a higher state of consciousness. Through meditation, a Buddhist practitioner trains the body and mind for spiritual enlightenment. Meditation is often cited as an important practice for following the Noble Eightfold Path (*bazhengdao* 八正道). First, meditation allows Buddhists to practice "right mindfulness." During meditation, Buddhists become intentionally aware of their present ideas, feelings, and bodily actions. Second, meditation helps Buddhists develop "right concentration." In the act of meditation, Buddhists cultivate clear and focused thought. Third, meditation helps Buddhists develop "right view," which, in turn, strengthens one's capacity for understanding and enlightenment. It is common for Buddhists



MAP 3 Location of Tibetan and Han Buddhist sites.

to meditate in a seated posture and to direct their attention toward a statue or other idol. The meditating Buddhist may contemplate personal experiences, reflect on selected teachings of the Buddha, or focus on breathing. The object of meditation that a Buddhist chooses depends on the specific goals of each meditation experience and the Buddhist tradition they follow.⁸ At local monasteries or Buddhist centers, masters advise students of Buddhism on the proper techniques, offer suggestions on meditation subjects, and share their own reflections on the Buddha's teachings.

Written scriptures also play an important part among clerical and lay Buddhist groups in China. Texts are sung during ceremonies and scriptures are distributed (often for free) among lay practitioners. Many different canons of Buddhist scriptures developed in China over the centuries. Many of these collections are based on early canons

developed in India and central Asia, which include the *vinaya* (monastic codes), *sūtras* (scriptures), and commentaries. These three parts of the canon are often referred to as the "three baskets" of the Buddha's teachings. There are various canons in use among Han and Tibetan Buddhist organizations, which include translations of various sutras, as well as writings by significant commentators.⁹ Unlike the Bible or Qur'an, however, people rarely possess their own copies of a Buddhist canon. Not all lay practitioners have an interest in reading Buddhist scriptures. Those who do often refer to "morality books" (*shanshu* 善书). These are often scriptures revealed through a spirit-medium and written in vernacular languages, and they are often freely distributed at Chinese Buddhist temples.¹⁰ This was a popular practice of folk religion, and the mixing of Buddhism and folk religion was very common.

8 Greene, "Meditation, Repentance, and Visionary Experience," 5.

9 J. Wu, "The Chinese Buddhist Canon," 363.

10 G. Fisher, *From Comrades to Bodhisattvas*, 140.



PHOTO 4 A lecture at the Labrang Monastery (Gansu).
CREDIT: WEIJIAN DENG.

Another common feature of Buddhism in China is celebrations in honor of the birth of the historical Buddha, on the eighth day of the fourth month of the lunar calendar. Other common days for pilgrimage and gathering are the celebrations of the enlightenment of the Buddha (the eighth day of the twelfth month) and the passing of the Buddha into nirvana (the fifteenth day of the second month). Some Chinese Buddhists, however, celebrate all three events of the Buddha's life on a single day. This day, Buddha Day, is observed during the first full moon of the fourth month of the lunar calendar. To celebrate the life events of the Buddha, Chinese Buddhists visit local temples to offer flowers, fruits, incense, prayers, and donations. Buddhist temples also host local festivals, which may include fireworks, colored smoke displays, formal teachings, music, and dance. Across China, festivals vary in complexity and scale.

In some parts of China, Buddhist temples receive financial support from local officials to host large and elaborate festivals that attract visitors from around the country and the world. Since the end of the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese government has embraced Buddhist festivals as an opportunity to strengthen tourism and develop local

economies. It is common for local officials to play a role in promoting these festivals as celebrations of Chinese traditional culture.¹¹ Many festivals involve pilgrimages to regional mountain temples, especially the four sacred Buddhist mountains in China: Mount Wutai 五台山 in Shanxi, Mount Emei 峨眉山 in Sichuan, Mount Putuo 普陀山 in Zhejiang, and Mount Jiuhua 九华山 in Anhui.¹²

Many ideas about the supernatural are common among Buddhists in China. The first teacher of Buddhism, Shakyamuni (*shijiamoni* 释迦牟尼), is believed to have attained full enlightenment while meditating under a peepal tree (*puti shu* 菩提树). Buddhists believe that Buddhahood is attainable for all people. Any person can become a Buddha by nurturing the Buddha-nature that every human possesses. In this sense, all people are equal; all are capable of achieving enlightenment and transcendence. Upon reaching Buddhahood, a person ceases to exist in any spiritual or material form. It is common to hear Buddhist monks, nuns, and lay leaders exhort devotees to strive for enlightenment (*kaiwu* 开悟). One of the most

11 Ryan and Gu, "Constructionism and Culture in Research," 170.

12 Robson, "Buddhist Sacred Geography," 1383.

prominent ideas is the notion that sentient beings should model their thoughts and actions on the past Buddhas (*fotuo* 佛陀) and bodhisattvas (*pusa* 菩萨) who have lived at various times and places in the universe. While many Buddhists believe that all people have the potential to become a Buddha, most regard Buddhas and Bodhisattvas as spiritual beings like gods, spirits, or angels, who can be called upon for rescue from danger or for salvation from the suffering in this world and alleviation in the Pure Land of another world.

Most Buddhists in China also view the sum of a person's deeds and actions in this and in previous lives as determining their path of rebirth in future lives. This notion, called karma (*ye* 業), stems from the idea stressed by Buddhist philosophers that all phenomena are inherently empty (*kong* 空). Every cosmic process has its beginning and ending; nothing is eternal. Everything has its formation, existence, destruction, and emptiness, just as every human experiences the cycle of living, illness, and dying. The repeated cycle of living, dying, and rebirth is called *samsāra* (*lunhui* 轮回), and when a person achieves Buddhahood, he/she will be liberated from suffering and the repeating cycle of life. In general, good karma that a person has accumulated in past lifetimes will result in happiness in a person's present life; bad karma will bring suffering in the next life.

It is difficult to determine the number of Buddhists in China. The BAC and its affiliated temples and monasteries do not maintain membership lists, except for monks and nuns. Many believers may not engage in regular practices, and many people who burn incense sticks in temples may not be more than casual tourists. However, in surveys we may use two criteria to identify Buddhists: self-identification with Buddhism and a claim of "having taken refuge in the Three Jewels" (*guiyi sanbao* 皈依三宝), which is a ritual somewhat comparable to Christian baptism. Like baptism, taking refuge in the Three Jewels signifies a person's commitment to the Buddha, Dharma (teachings), and Sanga (community). Unlike baptism, which is a unique event, a Buddhist may take refuge with multiple masters at different temples. In the 2007 Chinese Spiritual Life Survey, about 18 percent of the respondents self-identified with Buddhism, which corresponded to about 200 million adults in China, a surprisingly large number compared with the BAC claim of about 100 million Buddhists. However, among the respondents with Buddhist identities, only about 9 percent said they had taken refuge. This indicates that 90 percent of the self-identified Buddhists are cultural Buddhists who do not have a religious commitment.

TABLE 1 Demographic characteristics of Buddhists and others (%)

	Buddhists	Others
Age group*		
16–59	88.7	90.8
60 or above	11.3	9.2
Gender***		
Male	40.3	49.2
Female	59.7	50.8
Educational attainment		
Middle school or below	61.7	61.8
High/vocational school	28.7	27.2
College or above (including some college)	9.6	11.0
Residential area		
Urban	37.7	36.8
Rural	62.3	63.3
Political affiliation**		
CCP	3.8	6.0
CCYL	10.3	10.6
Others	85.9	83.5
Total number of cases	1,267	5,753

Notes: (1) CCP: Chinese Communist Party. CCYL: Chinese Communist Youth League; (2) Numbers do not always add up to 100 due to rounding; (3) two-tailed *t*-test ****p*<.001 ***p*<.01 **p*<.05.

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of self-identified Buddhists in comparison with the others polled in the 2007 Chinese Spiritual Life Survey. Over 11 percent of Buddhists were 60 years old or older, which is a slightly larger proportion than that of the other respondents in the survey; this age difference is statistically significant at the .05 level. Women made up about 60 percent of Buddhists, significantly higher than the proportion of women among other respondents.

The educational levels of Buddhists were not significantly different from those of other respondents (Figure 1). Nearly 62 percent of Buddhists completed middle school or below, almost 29 percent graduated from high school or vocational school, and nearly 10 percent attended college or above.

China has been rapidly urbanized in the past decades.¹³ According to the 2010 Population Census, nearly half of the Chinese population lived in urban areas. The majority

13 State Information Center, "The Past and Future of Urbanization in China."

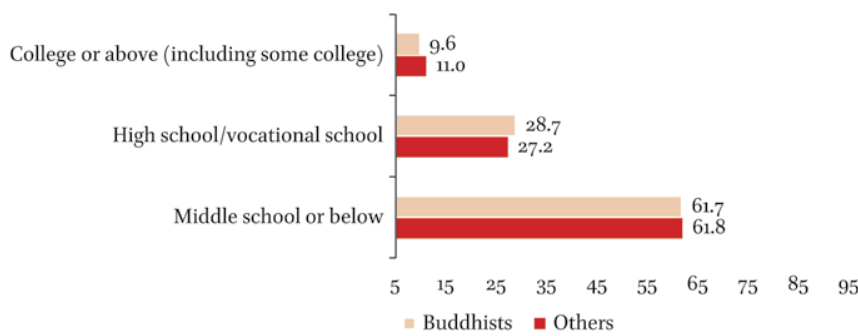


FIGURE 1
Educational attainment of
Buddhists and others (%).

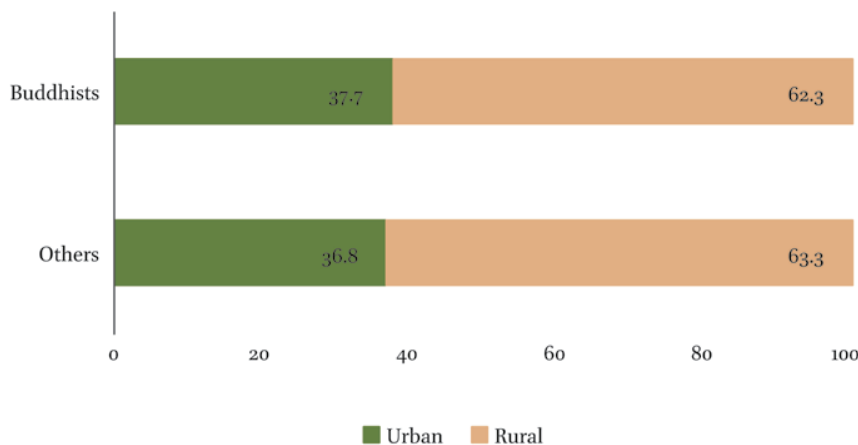


FIGURE 2
Residential area of Buddhists and others (%).

of Buddhists, however (62 percent), lived in rural areas (Figure 2).

Although both CCP and CCYL members are required to uphold atheism as the orthodox ideology, survey findings show that 3.8 percent of self-identified Buddhists were CCP members and 10.3 percent were CCYL members.

2. Islam

The Chinese National Islamic Association (*Zhongguo yisilanjiao xiehui* 中国伊斯兰教协会, or *Yixie* 伊协) was founded in Beijing in 1953 by a group of prominent Muslims, such as Burhan Shehidi 包尔汉·沙希迪. Unlike the other national associations, the Islamic Association was first categorized as an ethnic organization under the bureau of ethnic minority affairs. Ten of the 55 ethnic minorities officially recognized by the PRC, who receive various affirmative-action policy benefits, are considered as traditionally following Islam.¹⁴ Among them, Hui (回) and Uyghur (*Weiwu'er* 维吾尔) are the big two, with 10,586,087 and 10,069,346 people in 2010, respectively, followed by

the third largest group, Kazakhs (*Hasake* 哈萨克), with a population of 1,462,588. The other seven minority groups have significantly smaller populations, with about 621,500 Dongxiang (东乡), 130,607 Salar (*Sala* 撒拉), 51,069 Tajiks (*Tajike* 塔吉克), 20,074 Bonan (*Bao'an* 保安), 18,608 Kyrgyz (*Ke'erkezi* 柯尔克孜), 10,569 Uzbeks (*Wuzibieke* 乌兹别克), and 3,556 Tatars (*Tata'er* 塔塔尔).¹⁵

In 1959, the Islamic Association was moved to the bureau of religious affairs, although the bureau of ethnic minority affairs has continued to administer the ten ethnic minorities through the Islamic Association. Gradually, Islamic associations were established at lower administrative levels (e.g., province, prefecture, county). All of these associations are organizationally independent from each other. That is, the lower-level associations are not branches of the higher-level association. This vast network of Islamic associations has shaped local affairs by executing governmental policies. These associations serve as a bridge between the Chinese party-state and China's Muslim minorities, with the aim of promoting a harmonious relationship between Islam and socialism. The double administration by the bureau of religious affairs and the

14 For details, see China Islamic Association, "The Population of Muslims among Ethnic Minorities in China."

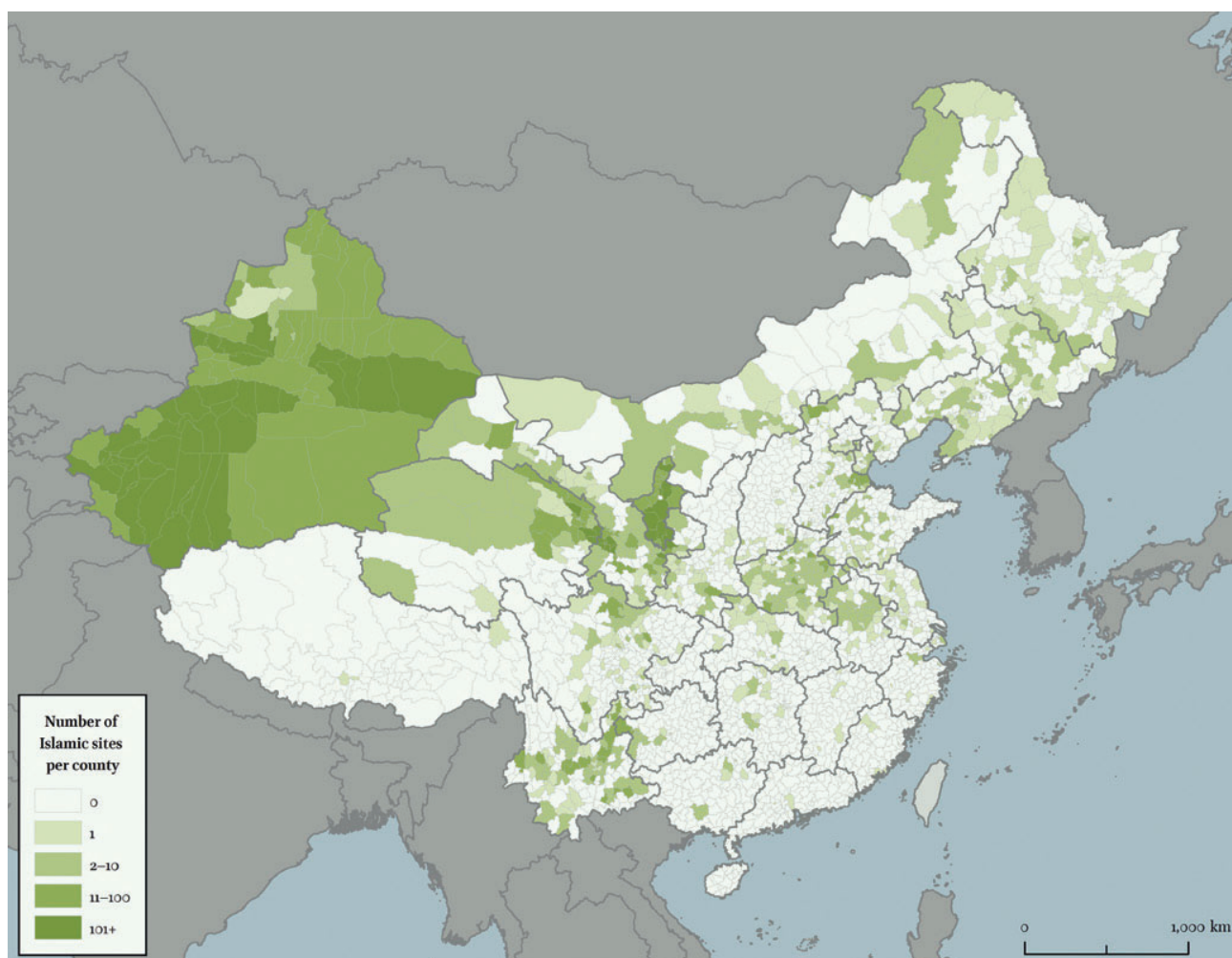
15 National Bureau of Statistics of the PRC, "Tabulation of the 2010 Population of the People's Republic of China."

bureau of ethnic minority affairs seem to have created advantages for Islam in China. The officially registered mosques listed in the 2004 Economic Census numbered 34,305, the largest number of sites associated with any of the five officially recognized religions, which accounts for 47 percent of all religious sites. While mosques are scattered widely throughout China, they are located primarily in the northwest, and Yunnan Province, with pockets of concentration in the north-central and northeast as well (Map 4). However, there are large areas of deserts in Xinjiang and the population density is low in many counties. Map 5 shows the location of Islamic mosques in the 2004 Economic Census.

The day-to-day tasks of Chinese Islamic associations mainly include the education of Muslims, research on Islam, and communicating with other Muslims in China and abroad. The national association has three sections in charge of these tasks. The Education Section (*jiaowubu* 教务部) holds competitions for giving sermons and

Qur'an recital contests; it also monitors the manufacture of halal goods and arranges visits of Muslim leaders within China. The International Section (*guojibu* 国际部) coordinates friendly communications with Muslims abroad. The association is also in charge of pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia (*mai jia chao jin* 麦加朝觐). There are a limited number of Chinese Muslims permitted to make the pilgrimage each year; any person who wants to go on the trip must first apply through the local Islamic association. The association holds training courses and arranges for transportation and lodging. The Cultural Research Section (*wenhua yanjiubu* 文化研究部) is in charge of publications on the history and culture of Islam. The association publishes a journal, *Chinese Muslim* (*Zhongguo musilin* 中国穆斯林), in both Chinese and Uyghur.

Like other religions in China, Islam is associated with national and regional education centers. The China Islamic Institute (*Zhongguo yisilanjiao jingxueyuan* 中国伊斯兰教经学院) is the national institute, and was founded by



MAP 4 Number of Islamic sites per county.



MAP 5 Location of Islamic sites.

the Chinese Islam Association in Beijing in 1955. The institute recruits students from all over China through national examinations and trains them to be future imams, referred to as *akhoond* (*ahong* 阿訇). Graduate students from this institute often take positions in the local, prefectural, and provincial offices of the SARA, or serve as lecturers at local Islamic institutes (Photo 5). Many students choose to continue their study abroad, in countries like Egypt, Malaysia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Syria. In China, female graduates can also serve as imams or teachers in Islamic academies. In fact, they have played an important role in educating Muslim girls, especially those in remote areas of China.¹⁶

The Islamic Institute also develops and offers senior college and vocational courses for aspiring clerics. Besides the study of the Qur'an in Arabic, students learn history, geography, politics, Chinese literature, and other subjects

in the social sciences.¹⁷ The institute was closed in 1966 at the start of the Cultural Revolution and was not reopened until November 1982. Since the 1980s, nine additional Islamic institutes have been established, such as Xinjiang Islamic Institute in Urumqi and Lanzhou Islamic Institute. The China Islamic Association has hosted many leaders from Muslim countries since 1979, such as Muammar Gaddafi, the former president of Libya, and played an important role in establishing friendly connections with the Chinese Muslim diaspora.¹⁸

Besides the 10 government-run institutes, independent Islamic academies have been established since the 1980s. One of the most respected independent Islamic academies is located in a village outside Dali 大理 in Yunnan

16 Armijo, "Islamic Education in China."

17 IslamiChina, "Islamic Education in China."

18 For more information, see China Islamic Association, "A Brief Introduction to the China Islamic Association." <http://www.chinaislam.net.cn/about/zbyx/about90.html>.



PHOTO 5 Imam Yiping Ma delivers a sermon at Huaquexiang Mosque (Xi'an).
CREDIT: XIN CUI.

Province, which was opened in 1991. Courses offered are similar to those in government-run institutes. Graduates from independent Islamic academies are often sent to villages needing teachers. Only a limited pool of these graduates can continue their studies overseas or become teachers at schools.¹⁹

It is uncertain when Islam was first introduced to China. Liu Chih, in his *Life of Muhammad*, writes that Islam entered China as early as the Sui Dynasty (581–618). According to Liu Chih, the prophet Muhammad 穆罕默德 (570–632) sent his maternal cousin Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas, along with three other men, as an envoy to China.²⁰ On the other hand, Dai Kangsheng says that Sa'd's visit as a diplomatic envoy does not necessarily mean that Islam was propagated in China.²¹ He finds evidence of several envoys after Mohammad's lifetime, such as the one sent

by the third caliph, Uthman bin Affan (奥斯曼·伊本·阿凡), to the Tang emperor Gaozong in 651 CE. Another was sent during the Abbasid period to help fight alongside Chinese soldiers to quell a rebellion. In Dai's opinion, the later interactions mark the true beginning of Islam's propagation in the mid-eighth century. The Abbasid veterans settled after the war and intermarried with Chinese women. They became ancestors of many Chinese Muslims. Some historians think that trading routes to China, along the sea and the Silk Road, may have been the most important factor leading to the establishment of foreign Muslim enclaves and the practice of Islam in China.²²

There are several Muslim traditions operating in China. The four most common ones are Qadim (*Gedimu* 格底目), Ikhwan (*Yihewani* 依赫瓦尼), Xidao Tang 西道堂, and Menhuan 门宦. The majority of Chinese Muslims are Qadim Muslims, following Sunni doctrines. There is only a small proportion of Shi'i communities in China, mainly in northwestern China among the Tajik people who live in Tashkurgan County in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region.

19 Armijo, "Islamic Education in China"; Noor, Sikand, and van Bruinessen, *The Madrasa in Asia*.

20 Winters, *Mao or Muhammad*.

21 Kangsheng, "Research on the History of Chinese Islam in China Today."

22 Winters, *Mao or Muhammad*.

Qadim means “ancient” in Arabic. Qadim Muslims try to preserve traditional rules and rituals. They believe in following the orthodox teachings of Sunni Islam and the teachings of the Qur’an and emphasize principles of the Hadith and rituals.

Ikhwani is an interpretation of Islam popularized by Ma Wanfu 马万福 (1853–1934). There are now 10 clerics in Hezhou 河州 (*Linxia* 临夏, Gansu Province). The faction was not popular until the 1940s when it won support from local Muslims in Gansu, Qinghai, and Ningxia provinces. Ikhwani Muslims distinguish themselves by asserting their respect for the Qur’an, opposing all Chinese customs, and rejecting heresy. They oppose kneeling down to people on the grounds that Allah alone deserves worship. The Ikhwani faction is proud of their fidelity to the Qur’an but criticizes Qadim Muslims for being influenced by Chinese customs.

The Menhuan orders are prevalent in the northwest provinces of Gansu, Ningxia, and Qinghai. They include Muslims who follow Sufism, which first became prevalent in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when Arabic and Central Asian Sufis came to China through trading opportunities.²³ Sufism became popular among local people. Four prominent orders of the Menhuan movement include Khufiyya (*Hufuye* 虎夫耶), Jahriyya (*Zhehelinye* 哲赫林耶), Qadiriyya (*Kadilinye* 卡迪林耶), and Kubrawiyya (*Kubuerye* 库布尔耶). Most of the followers think that leaders (*jiaozhu* 教主) have the ability to guide believers to heaven, and a shrine or *qubba* (*gongbei* 拱北) is often built at their tombs.²⁴

The Xidao Tang group was founded by Ma Qixi 马启西 (1857–1914), who claimed independence from Menhuan in 1902 in Lintan 临潭, Gansu Province. The group is also known as “Study the Han Fraction” (*Han xuepai* 汉学派) for interpreting the scripture using Confucianism, as proposed by Liu Zhi 刘智 (1655–1745). In theological matters, the Xidao Tang group is similar to the Qadim Muslims, as it stresses the Qur’an and Five Pillars; organizationally, however, it is close to the Menhuan orders, especially with respect to the high prestige and power of order leaders.

In recent decades, Wahhabism (*Wahabi zhuyi* 瓦哈比主义), a conservative religious movement in Sunni Islam, has become visible in western China.²⁵ Wahhabism is named after its founder, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, an eighteenth-century preacher who started a movement to abolish idolatrous practices like the worship of saints

and shrine and tomb visitation.²⁶ This reform movement began in Saudi Arabia and has spread worldwide over the past four decades.²⁷ Followers of Wahhabism reject that term in favor of the name Salafiyya. The movement is referred to as “fundamentalism” (*yuanjiaozhi zhuyi* 原教旨主义) in Chinese.²⁸ An important aim of the conservative movement is to implement Islamic law or *sharia*. *Sharia* defines the obligations of Muslims with regard to crime, politics, marriage contracts, trade, economics, hygiene, diet, and sexual intercourse. In modern societies, such as Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Iran, *sharia* permeates law and policy. In other countries, it is used to legislate certain civil rights. As of 2013, more than 70 percent of Muslims supported making *sharia* the official law of the land in countries such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Iraq. There is less support for *sharia* among Muslims in Russia, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan.²⁹ The social consequences of this religious movement have been controversial. Some news sources have reported that Wahhabism has fueled riots in the western provinces of China.³⁰

Regardless of doctrinal affiliation, Muslims in China all understand that the Qur’an is a divine scripture revealed through the archangel Gabriel (Jibril) to Muhammad on multiple occasions during 610–632 CE. Over a period of 23 years, Muhammad heard the words of God from the Archangel Gabriel and memorized them precisely. The Qur’an was written in Arabic, the language in which it was believed to be revealed to Muhammad, and consists of 114 suras or chapters. The suras discuss Allah and his prophets, previous nations, the afterlife, codes of conduct, and how a reader can live a pious and righteous life in obedience to the commandments of Allah. Muslims read and consult the Qur’an for spiritual guidance and also recite verses from the Qur’an during the five daily prayers (*salat*). For many centuries, Chinese Muslims learned the teachings of the Qur’an predominately through oral tradition. Chinese Muslim leaders feared that a translation of the Qur’an from Arabic to Chinese would blaspheme the words of Allah. A full translation of the Qur’an into Chinese was not completed until 1927.³¹

²³ China Culture, “Menhuan.”

²⁴ Acharya, Gunaratna, and Wang, *Ethnic Identity and National Conflict in China*.

²⁵ Tatlow, “A Model of Inclusion for Muslim Women.”

²⁶ C. M. Blanchard, “The Islamic Traditions of Wahhabism and Salafiyya.”

²⁷ Al-Sudairi, “Chinese Salafism and the Saudi Connection.”

²⁸ G. Chen, *Handbook for A-hong in the New Period*.

²⁹ Pew Research Center, “The World’s Muslims: Religion, Politics and Society.”

³⁰ Netease, “Dangerous Signals about Conservatism”; Ifeng, “Believing in Wahabism Is a Form of Passive Resistance.”

³¹ Jin, “The Qur’an in China,” 99.

Many of the daily practices among the various Muslim communities in China also follow similar patterns. Like Muslims elsewhere in the world, Chinese Muslims are obliged to perform five basic religious acts in their lives, which are called the Five Pillars of Islam (*wuda tianming* 五大天命):

1) Testimony (*nian* 念; Arabic *shahādah*) includes the recitation of the statement, “I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except the One God, Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is the Servant and final Messenger of God.” The testimony is also recited during daily prayers.

2) Prayer (*li* 礼; Arabic *salāh*) is conducted five times throughout the day. During prayer, Muslims must be in a state of purity and must face in the direction of the Ka’bah (*Ke’erbai* 克尔白), the sacred center of the Islamic faith (see below). When praying, Muslims recite verses of the Qur’an and praise Allah using phrases such as “All the salutations, prayers, and good things are for Allah.”

3) Almsgiving (*ke* 课; Arabic *zakāt*) consists of taxes on certain types of wealth (gold, silver, and cash) that are collected each lunar year to be given to Muslims who are in need. Almsgiving is not expected from all members of Muslim society but is obligatory on those whose wealth exceeds a limit established by the prophet Muhammad.³²

4) Fasting (*zhai* 斋; Arabic *ṣawm*) is performed from dawn to dusk during Ramadan (*lamadan* 拉马丹 or *zhai-jie yue* 斋戒月), the ninth month of the lunar year. During fasting, Muslims refrain from eating, sexual intercourse, and foul language. The fasting is a purification process tied to the worship of Allah, and it also reminds believers to consider their fellow Muslims in need. It is obligatory for all practicing adult Muslims to observe Ramadan, excluding those who are sick, elderly, pregnant, or menstruating. During Ramadan, Muslim men and women refrain from eating during daylight hours. They commonly eat a meal before sunrise, the *suhoor* (*fengzhai fan* 封斋饭), and a meal following sunset, the *iftar* (*kaijie fan* 开解饭). In some parts of China, party officials, public servants, and students are prohibited from fasting during Ramadan. In recent years, those who break the fasting ban have been fined, arrested, or imprisoned.³³

5) Muslims are expected to make a pilgrimage (*chao* 朝; Arabic *Hajj* 哈吉) to the sanctuary of Mecca in Saudi Arabia at least once in their lifetime if they are physically

and financially able to make the trip.³⁴ To perform the Hajj, one completes the ritual bath, enters a state of ritual purity, and dresses in white clothes. Men wear two garments: one covers the lower body and the other is a shawl worn on the shoulders.³⁵ The ability of Chinese Muslims to make the Hajj has historically depended on the quota set by Saudi Arabia, the restrictions set by the Chinese government, and the ability of individual Muslims to finance their journeys. During the Cultural Revolution, from 1964 to 1979, Chinese Muslims were prohibited from making the Hajj. The first group of Chinese Hajjis permitted to travel after the Cultural Revolution made their pilgrimage in October 1979.³⁶ Presently, all Chinese citizens who embark on the Hajj must register with officials and earn a spot on one of the trips organized by the Islamic Association of China. Making the Hajj can be costly due to transport expenses, guide costs, passport fees, and, in some parts of China, trip deposits.³⁷

Most Muslim communities also observe *jumu’ah* (*juli* 聚礼), or Friday prayer, which is a congregational prayer held on Fridays at midday. *Jumu’ah* is an occasion for Muslims to gather at local mosques, listen to the teachings of Islam, and join together to worship Allah. It is recommended that before attending *jumu’ah*, Muslim men and women take a shower or perform a ritual ablution and dress in clean clothes, and men wear perfume. The Friday prayer service typically includes two parts, a sermon and a communal prayer. During the sermon (*khutbah*), an imam (*yimamu* 伊玛目) or cleric (*ahong* 阿訇) provides religious guidance to the congregation and reads verses from the Qur’an or Hadith. Following the prayer, members of the congregation may choose to offer voluntary prayers. In some parts of China, women attend *jumu’ah* in separate mosques from men. In men-only mosques, *jumu’ah* is led by male imams. In women-only mosques, *jumu’ah* may be led by a male imam or a female spiritual leader.³⁸

Islam is a monotheistic religion. The word “Islam” itself means voluntary submission to worshipping the one god, Allah (Ala 阿拉). For Muslims, Allah is pre-eternal and perpetual, omniscient and omnipotent, unique and absolute. Muslims believe that the world was created by Allah’s will, and that the purpose of humans is to honor Allah. He is beyond comprehension by human intellect. “There is

³² Tarsin, *Being Muslim*.

³³ U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. 2015 *Annual Report*.

³⁴ G. Chen, *Handbook for A-hong in the New Period*.

³⁵ Tarsin, *Being Muslim*.

³⁶ Dillon, *China’s Muslim Hui Community*.

³⁷ Wong, “Wary of Islam, China Tightens a Vise of Rules.”

³⁸ Jaschok and Shui, *The History of Women’s Mosques in Chinese Islam*, 104.

nothing like him,” thus any visual representation of Allah is prohibited. Allah is understood by Muslims through his attributes, which are described in the Qur'an (*Gulan jing* 古兰经) and the Hadith (*shengxun* 圣训).

Survey data helps us gain a sense of the Muslim population in China. Table 2 shows demographic characteristics of self-identified Muslims and others according to the 2010 Chinese General Social Survey. The majority of Chinese Muslims are ethnic minorities. According to the Islamic Association of China, as of 2015, the 10 ethnic groups accounted for about 2 percent of the Chinese population, which corresponds to about 24 million people. However, many members of these 10 ethnic groups do not believe or practice Islam. On the other hand, a small number of Muslims are also found in other ethnic minority groups, such as Tibetans, Mongolians, and the Dai people in southwest China.³⁹

TABLE 2 Demographic characteristics of Muslims and others (%)

	Muslims	Others
Age group***		
16–59	87.5	79.0
60 or above	12.5	21.0
Gender**		
Male	43.8	51.5
Female	56.2	48.5
Educational attainment***		
Middle school or below	79.2	67.8
High/vocational school	12.7	18.4
College or above (including some college)	8.2	13.8
Residential area**		
Urban	63.1	56.0
Rural	36.9	44.1
Political affiliation		
CCP	6.4	11.7
CCYL	9.0	4.8
Others	84.6	83.5
Total number of cases	339	11,444

Notes: (1) Data source: China General Social Survey 2010; (2) CCP: Chinese Communist Party. CCYL: Chinese Communist Youth League; (3) Numbers do not always add up to 100 due to rounding; (4) two-tailed *t*-test ****p*<.001 ***p*<.01 **p*<.05.

39 Chinese Ethnicity and Religion, “Mongolians and Islam”; idem, “Walking Close to Tibetan Muslims in Shigatse”; idem, “The Dai Muslims.”

According to the SARA, the total number of Muslims was 21 million in 2010.⁴⁰

Self-identified Muslims tend to be significantly younger than the others, with 87.5 percent under age 60 and only 12.5 percent age 60 or older. In contrast, 79 percent of the others were under age 60 and 21 percent were age 60 or older. Women constituted a significantly greater proportion among Muslims than among the others (Figure 3), with 56.2 percent women.

The educational attainment of Muslims in China was significantly lower than the others; 79.2 percent attended middle school or lower, 12.7 percent completed high school or vocational school, and only 8.2 percent attended college.

The majority of Muslims, especially those in Xinjiang and Ningxia autonomous regions, live in rural areas. According to the 2010 CGSS, however, more than 63 percent of Muslims were urban residents (Figure 4). The high percentage of urban Muslims in the CGSS sample is probably

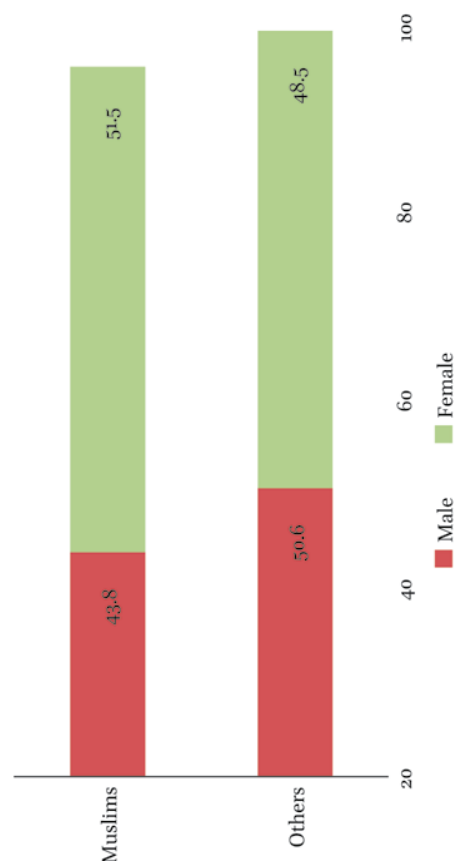


FIGURE 3 Gender distribution of Muslims and others (%).

40 State Administration for Religious Affairs, “Introduction to Religions in China.”

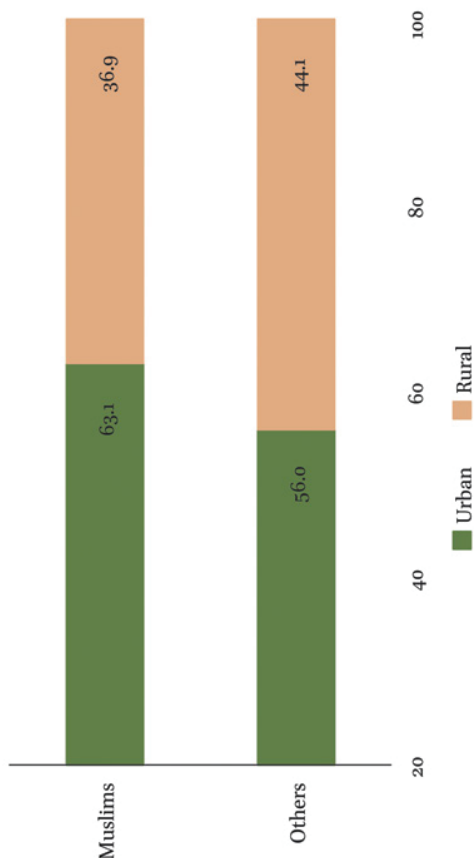


FIGURE 4 Residential area of Muslims and others (%).

due to the exclusion of Xinjiang and Ningxia from the sampling frame. This may also mean that outside the autonomous regions, the scattered communities of Muslims tend to live in urban areas.

The proportion of CCP members was lower among Chinese Muslims than among the others, at 6.4 percent versus 11.4 percent. However, 9 percent of Muslims claim to be CCYL members, which is higher than that of the others.

3. Protestantism

In China, Protestantism is known as *Jidujiao* 基督教 [Christianity], whereas Catholicism is known as *Tianzhujiao* 天主教 [Lord in heaven religion]; the two are seen as different religions. Informed scholars in China often use *Jidu zongjiao* 基督宗教 for all traditions of Christianity, and *Jidu xin jiao* 基督新教 for Protestantism in order to differentiate it from Catholicism. Protestant denominations have been banned by the Communist party-state since 1958, but in reality there are various Protestant groups, sects, networks, and traditions.

The Protestant mission to China began in 1807 when Anglo-Scottish missionary Robert Morrison (1782–1834) arrived in China. After the Opium Wars (1839–1842 and 1856–1860), hundreds or thousands of Protestant missionaries came from various countries and denominations. During the first half of the twentieth century, foreign missions played a key role in funding educational institutions, modern hospitals, and charity organizations. At the same time, several indigenous denominations and sects emerged. By 1949, there were between seven hundred thousand and one million Protestant Christians in China.

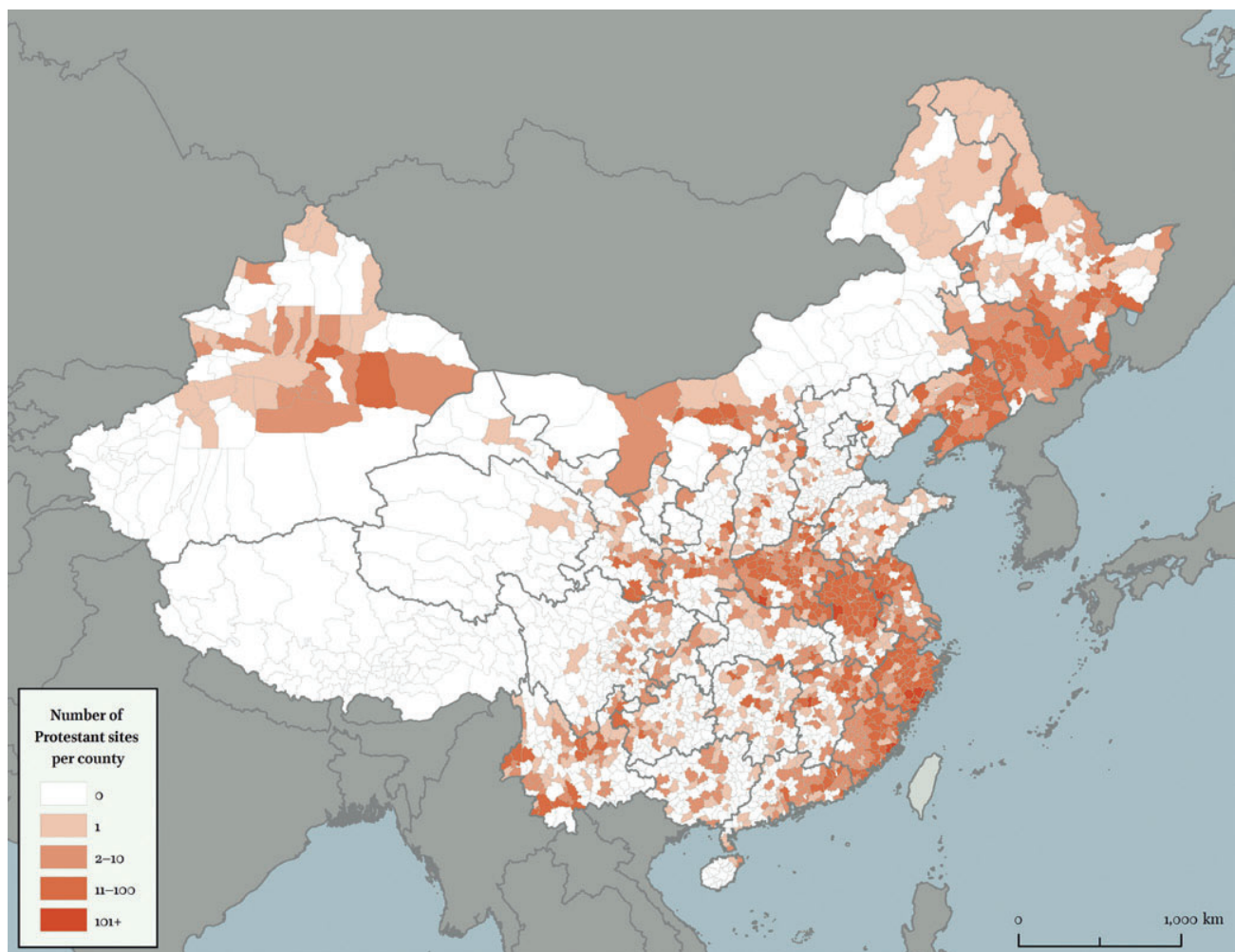
When the CCP United Front Department commissioned a small group of individuals in July 1950 to investigate the religious situation in China, a central concern was the presence of foreign missionaries. The institutions and churches that were receiving funding and subsidies from the United States and other Western countries were among the chief targets of these investigations. In part as a response to anti-Western sentiment, Chinese Protestant leaders underscored their independence from foreign missions. Working in cooperation with the CCP, Wu Yaozong 吴耀宗 (1893–1979), the head of Shanghai's Young Men's Christian Association, campaigned for patriotism and independence from foreign missions. Wu was instrumental in developing the movement based on the three-self principle—self-ruling (*zizhi* 自治), self-supporting (*ziyang* 自养), and self-propagating (*zichuan* 自传). The three-self principle was initially proposed in Shanghai during the late nineteenth century by foreign missionaries who understood that an indigenous expression of Christianity was essential for its successful evangelism. Upon the establishment of the PRC, the CCP perceived these ideas as useful means to mobilize Christians to send foreign missionaries away and cut off ties with Western missions and international organizations such as the World Council of Churches. In 1954, Wu's efforts to adapt Protestantism to the CCP social vision resulted in the creation of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee (*Sanzi aiguo yundong weiyuanhui* 三自爱国运动委员会, hereafter TSPM). Thereafter, TSPM committees were established on the provincial, prefecture, and county levels. These TSPM associations are independent from each other in organization. That is, the lower-level committees are not branches of the higher-level committee. However, some individuals hold offices on multiple TSPM committees at different levels. Initially, the TSPM was a coalition of denominations and independent churches. In 1958, denominations were disbanded, and all Christians were conglomerated into “union services” (*lianhe libai* 联合礼拜) based on residence. The local TSPM committees became the single administrative organization of Protestants, managing church properties, assigning ministerial and clerical positions in churches,

and supervising preaching and ministries. Officially, the party-state designates the TSPM committee as the organization bridging between Christians and the party-state.

Like other religious associations, the TSPM ceased operations during the Cultural Revolution and was restored in 1980. In addition, the China Christian Council (*Zhongguo jidujiao xiehui* 中国基督教协会, hereafter CCC) was established in 1980 to give direction on doctrine, liturgy, and theological education. In reality, the TSPM Committee and the CCC have become intertwined and inseparable from each other, so much so that they are often referred to as *lianghui* 两会 [The two councils]. Since the 1950s, one of the most visible leaders of the TSPM, and then of the *lianghui*, was Ding Guangxun 丁光训 (1915–2012). Ding contributed to the CCC's successful effort to become a member of the World Council of Churches in 1991. Following the lead or instruction of the CCP, Ding advocated reconstructing theology and accommodating

to socialist society and Communist ideology in China.⁴¹ The TSPM and CCC claim that Chinese Protestantism has moved into a postdenominational era, which means that no denomination is legally recognized by the TSPM/CCC or by the party-state. In reality, some denominational traditions and organizational structures continue to exist in less visible ways within the TSPM/CCC.

Protestant leaders convene every five years for the National Congress of Delegates (*Quanguo daibiao dahui* 全国代表大会) to elect the leaders of CCC and TSPM. These two groups also jointly publish statistics about the church in China. As of 2017, the website of the two organizations claimed that there were 53,000 official churches, 70 percent of which were founded after 1979. The distribution of these churches may not be very different from the distribution of churches reflected in the 2004 Economic Census data (Map 6), with higher numbers in Henan, Anhui, Zhejiang, and north and northeast China. The website



MAP 6 Number of Protestant sites per county.

41 F. T. Ying, "The Church-State Relationship in Contemporary China."

also claimed that there were nearly 20 million Protestants, but provided no information on the geographical distribution of Christians. Asia Harvest, a Christian missionary organization, provided an estimate of the proportion of Christians in each province. Although the exact numbers may not be accurate, the general pattern of the uneven geographical distribution looks plausible: the proportion of Christians is highest in Henan, Anhui, and Zhejiang provinces, and relatively high in north and northeast China. Map 7 shows the location of Protestant churches throughout China.

A 2006 article stated that there were about 3,700 pastors and associate pastors in China, as compared to 36,000 lay workers.⁴² A recent report indicates that there has been an increase in the number of pastors: between 2007 and 2012, church communities hired an additional 1,057 pastors and 482 associate pastors. According to a SARA report from 2014, there were 48,000 people working for the church, but this number includes both pastors and elders of churches.⁴³ The number of churches, especially in China's southeast (see Photo 6), has risen rapidly, and the demand for ministers has increased demand for Christian educational institutions.

At present, there are 19 theological seminaries in China, all of which are under the supervision of the TSPM/CCC.⁴⁴ Of all China's Protestant seminaries, the largest is Nanjing Union Theological Seminary (*Jinling xiehe shenxueyuan* 金陵协和神学院), the flagship seminary of TSPM/CCC. Its predecessor was Nanking Theological Seminary (*Jinling shenxueyuan* 金陵神学院), which was founded with assistance from U.S. missionaries in 1917. In 1952, 10 other seminaries in East China, along with Nanking Theological Seminary, were incorporated as the Nanjing Union Theological Seminary. The seminary was reopened in 1981 after the Cultural Revolution. As of 2017, there are 22 full-time teachers and 310 full-time undergraduate and graduate students. The number of alumni is about 2,000, most of whom are working in churches throughout the country. There are four programs: a four-year undergraduate program, a three-year master's program, a part-time pastoral postgraduate program for pastors and church staff, and correspondence courses. The courses focus on biblical study, theological research, church history, and practical theology. To date, the Nanjing Union Theological

Seminary is the only one that has been allowed to employ foreign teachers.⁴⁵

The key tenets of Protestantism in China are similar to those of Protestant churches elsewhere in the world. Protestant Christians profess a faith in the Trinitarian God. For Chinese Protestants God is called *Shangdi* 上帝 or *Shen* 神. While some Chinese Protestants insist on using *Shangdi*, others insist on using *Shen*, and many Chinese Protestants use both interchangeably. God is the creator of the world and humankind. Humans, however, have been sinful and imperfect since the very first humans, Adam and Eve, disobeyed God.⁴⁶ According to Protestant teachings, Adam and Eve, seduced by Satan (*Sadan* 撒旦), disobeyed God's commands. By disobeying God's commands, Adam and Eve introduced a separation between the human world and the kingdom of God. Protestants maintain that God sent his only son, Jesus (*Yesu* 耶稣), to redeem the sinful through dying on the cross. Jesus is the Christ (*Jidu* 基督), the redeemer or savior, who was crucified and died, but resurrected on the third day. Following Jesus's ascension, the Holy Spirit (*Shengling* 圣灵) entered the followers of Jesus as a companion (*baohuishi* 保惠师). Protestant Christians believe in the Holy Trinity of God, that is, God the Father (*Shengfu* 圣父), God the Son (*Shengzi* 圣子), who is Jesus Christ, and God the Holy Spirit (*Shengling* 圣灵). Most Protestants seek to discover and follow God's will, and believe that God has a plan for every person. God's plan is revealed to humans through prayer and through reading the words of God in the Bible. Protestants believe individual believers are able to communicate directly with God to discern God's plan for them because the Holy Spirit is present within them. Protestants also consider it important for every Christian to spread the gospel (*fuyin* 福音) to others, in order to fulfill the Great Commission (*da shiming* 大使命) given by Jesus Christ to his followers before his ascension to heaven.

Protestant churches commonly hold worship services on Sundays. During these services, pastors deliver sermons, exegesis biblical verses, and lead congregational worship. Attendees are encouraged to reflect on God's teachings and spend time fellowshiping with other congregation members. Sunday services in China's urban Protestant churches are frequently unable to accommodate the crowds they draw. Many people have to stand or sit outside of the church and listen to the sermon and prayers through loudspeakers. The overcrowding is

42 Gospel Times, "How Many Christians Are in China?"

43 State Administration for Religious Affairs, "Basic Condition of Religions in Our Country."

44 For details, see China Christian Council and Three-Self Patriotic Movement, "A Brief Introduction to TSPM and CCC."

45 For more information, see Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, "A Brief Introduction."

46 China Christian Council and Three-Self Patriotic Movement, "In the Beginning Was the Word"; idem, "Resurrection."



MAP 7 Percentage of Protestants per county (Asia Harvest data).

largely attributable to the shortage of Protestant churches and pastors. During the Cultural Revolution, Protestant churches were closed and Protestant pastors were imprisoned, executed, or banned from practicing their faith. Since the Cultural Revolution, Protestant churches have begun to reopen. Yet, the demand for Protestant services outstrips the supply of available worship spaces and of pastors currently registered to perform the services. To address this issue, some Protestant churches hold multiple services on Sundays or hold additional services on other days of the week.⁴⁷ Meanwhile, some Chinese Protestants insist on holding worship services on Saturday, the Sabbath.

Baptism (*xili* 洗礼) and Communion (*shengcan* 圣餐) are the two common rituals for Protestants. Baptism is the ritual during which a convert pronounces the faith; it may also be performed for an infant born to Christian parents.

Among Chinese Protestants, there are various forms of baptism, including full submersion, pouring water on the head, or sprinkling water on the head. Communion is partaking of bread and wine (or grape juice) during a worship service, as Jesus did with his disciples on the night before he died. The theological interpretation of Communion varies significantly among different Protestant traditions. While denominations are not officially allowed in China under TSPM/CCC, Protestant pastors and believers continue to follow various theological traditions. Some Chinese Christians have maintained a tradition of gathering for worship at believers' homes (*jiating chongbai* 家庭崇拜), which often includes a ritual of breaking bread (*bobing* 擘饼).

The Bible is the foundational text of Protestantism. The Bible is composed of two primary sections, the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament describes the origin of humankind, the first sin against God, and the subsequent relationship between humans and

47 F. Yang, "Lost in the Market," 429.



PHOTO 6 An October 2012 celebration to commemorate the completion of the Panshi Church, Hangzhou.
CREDIT: SIMON GAO.

God. The New Testament details the teachings, life, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The first complete Chinese Bible was published by missionary Robert Morrison and his coworkers in 1823. Following Morrison's version in classical Chinese (*wenyan wen* 文言文), missionaries and missionary organizations published a multitude of Chinese Bibles in local dialects. Currently, the most commonly used is the Chinese Union Version (*Heheben shengjing* 和合本圣经), which was first published in 1919. This vernacular Mandarin translation of the Bible preceded the vernacular movement (*baihuawen yundong* 白话文运动) in the larger society around that time.

For Protestants, the Bible is a potent source of religious knowledge and spiritual guidance. Bible study sessions provide opportunities for directed reading and discussion. During a Bible study session, a small group of Protestants gather to consider the significance of stories and lessons from the Bible. Some Chinese Protestant churches allow congregation members to convene Bible studies on their premises. In China, the Communist party-state rule is that children under the age of 18 are not permitted to participate in Bible study sessions. A church that hosts a Bible

study for minors could be cited for interfering with secular state education.⁴⁸ Likewise, Communist Party members are not allowed to organize Bible study sessions.⁴⁹ In reality, however, many churches do have Sunday schools for children and some Chinese Communist Party members have become converts.

According to the official figures released by the SARA, there were about 23 million protestants in China in 2010.⁵⁰ However, the World Christian Database estimates there were more than 100 million Protestants in China.⁵¹ The Pew Research Center's report on global Christianity estimated that there were 58 million Protestants in China in 2010. In surveys, only about 3 percent of respondents self-identified as Christians. If we look at specific Protestant beliefs or practices, however, the number of believers or followers doubles or triples. In the following discussion,

48 Potter, "Belief in Control."

49 Shambaugh, "Training China's Political Elite," 833.

50 State Administration for Religious Affairs, "Introduction to Religions in China."

51 See <http://www.worldchristiandatabase.org/wcd/>.

we present the basic characteristics of the respondents who had Christian identities based on the 2007 Chinese Spiritual Life Survey (Table 3).

The vast majority, 93 percent, of self-identified Protestant Christians were between the ages of 16 and 59. Only about 7.3 percent were 60 or older. This is not much different from the other respondents. Women accounted for almost 70 percent of Chinese Protestants, which is much higher than among the other respondents (Figure 5).

Survey results also show that the educational attainment of self-identified Protestants is not significantly different from that of the other respondents. As displayed in Figure 6, about 12 percent of Protestants had at least a college degree, 25 percent attended high school or vocational school, and 63.1 percent had at most a middle school education. Figure 7 shows that more than 68 percent of Protestants lived in rural areas, which is not statistically significant from the urban/rural distribution of the other respondents.

TABLE 3 *Demographic characteristics of Protestants and others (%)*

	Protestants	Others
Age group		
16–59	92.7	90.3
60 or above	7.3	9.7
Gender***		
Male	30.6	48.1
Female	69.4	51.9
Educational attainment		
Middle school or below	63.1	61.7
High/vocational school	25.0	27.5
College or above (including some college)	11.9	10.8
Residential area		
Urban	31.8	37.1
Rural	68.2	62.9
Political affiliation**		
CCP	0.2	5.7
CCYL	10.7	10.5
Others	89.1	83.7
Total number of cases	206	6,815

Notes: (1) CCP: Chinese Communist Party. CCYL: Chinese Communist Youth League; (2) Numbers do not always add up to 100 due to rounding; (3) two-tailed *t*-test ****p*<.001 ***p*<.01 **p*<.05.

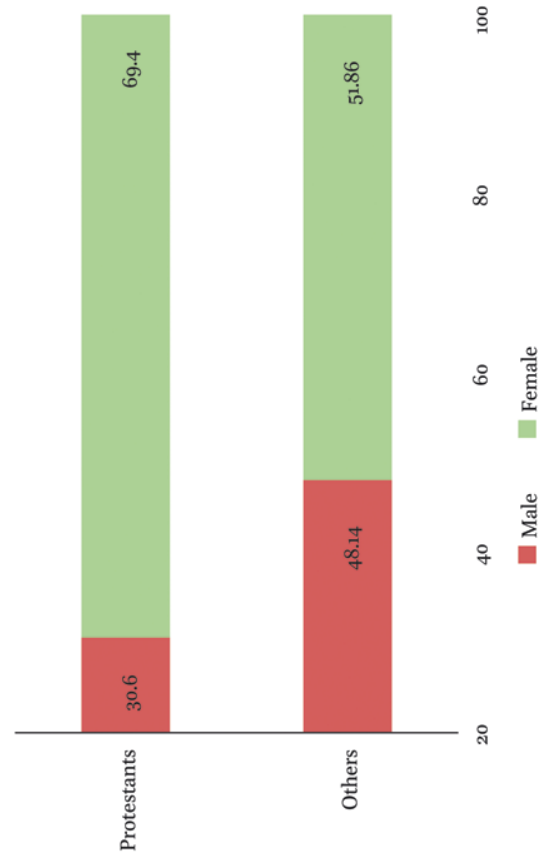


FIGURE 5 Gender distribution of Protestants and others (%).

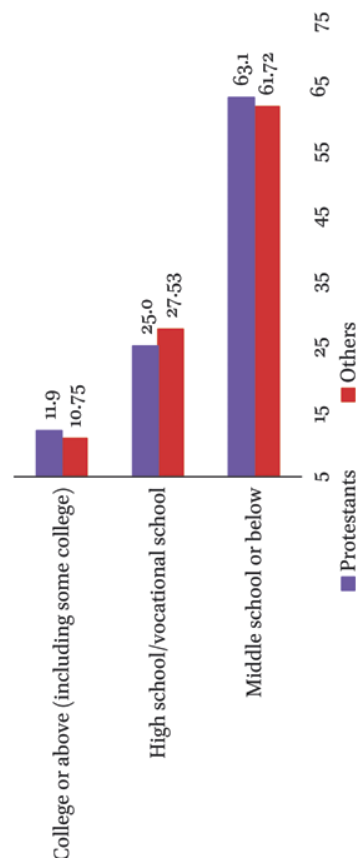


FIGURE 6 Educational attainment of Protestants and others (%).

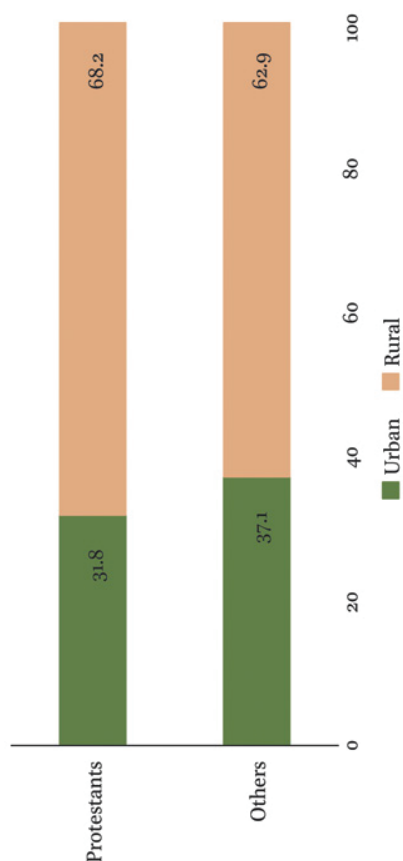


FIGURE 7 Residential area of Protestants and others (%).

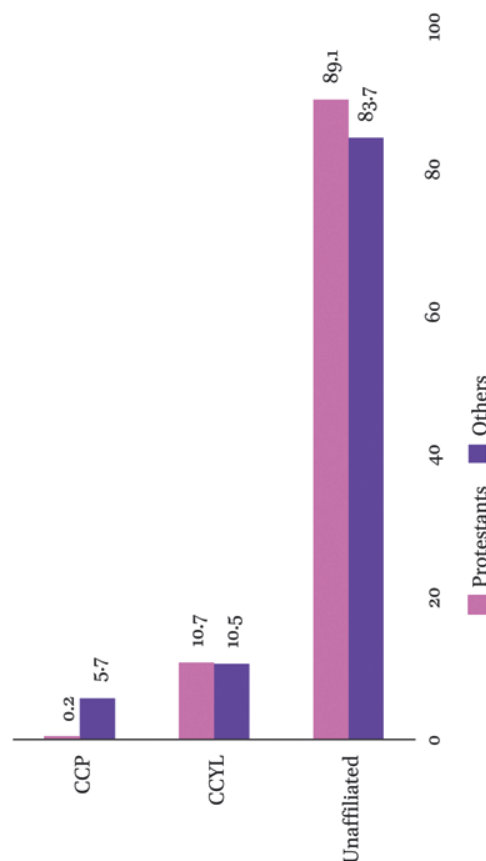


FIGURE 8 Political affiliation of Protestants and others (%).

Very few of the respondents with Protestant identities were members of the CCP. However, almost 11 percent of the respondents with Protestant identities were CCYL members, which is similar to the proportion of CCYL members among the other respondents.

4. Daoism

The Chinese Daoist Association was established in 1957. At the founding of the PRC, Daoist institutions were particularly weak due to guidelines developed by the Government Administration Council of the Central People's Government (*Zhonghua renmin gongheguo zhengwuyuan* 中华人民共和国政务院) in 1950. In an effort to alleviate problems related to land ownership, the council declared that all the land surrounding religious sites now belonged to the state. Since many Daoist institutions relied on rents from tenant farmers, these new guidelines meant the loss of a once lucrative source of revenue.⁵² The Upper

Clarity's Celestial Master Bureau (*Shangqing tianshi fu* 上青天师府) in Guixi 贵溪 (northeast Jiangxi), for example, collected 90,000 bushels of grain as rent in the early part of the twentieth century. The income of most temples during this period is unknown, but based on mid-century land records, some of the numbers must have been staggering. For example, the Baiyun Temple 白云观 of Beijing held over 5,800 *mu* 亩 (over 950 acres) throughout the greater Beijing area.⁵³

The individual who led the effort to form a Daoist association was Yue Chongdai 岳崇岱 (1888–1958, also known as Yue Yunfa 岳云发), the head priest of the Taiqing Temple 太清宫 in Shenyang, Liaoning Province. In the early summer of 1956, Yue contacted many of the top Daoist leaders throughout China asking them to support his proposed Chinese Daoist Association (*Zhongguo daojiao xiehui* 中国道教协会). Yue had risen to prominence nearly two decades earlier when he was elected as a permanent member of the Daoist Central Association (*Daojiao zonghui* 道教总会) of Shanghai in 1927. Just as

52 Welch, "The Chang T'ien Shih and Taoism in China," 192.

53 Y. Li, *Contemporary Taoism*, 45.



MAP 8 Number of Daoist sites per county.

Yue began contacting other top priests in the country, he was invited to reside in Beijing by the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (*Quanguo zhengzhi xieshang huiyi* 全国政治协商会议, hereafter CPPCC), the political arm that helps the CCP communicate with various mass organizations and ethnic groups. Yue met with the chair of the CPPCC, Zhou Enlai 周恩來 (1893–1976), on March 9, 1957. A little over a month later, on April 12, the first meeting of the National Daoist Association convened in Beijing. The meeting had the support of the vice chairman of the PRC, Zhu De 朱德 (1886–1976).

Like the other religious institutions, the Chinese Daoist Association re-emerged in 1979 after a 10-year hiatus. Today its stated purposes are to unite Chinese Daoists, promote love of Daoism, and contribute to a socialist society.⁵⁴ The association coordinates Daoist practices, controls the initiation of priests and nuns, publishes a monthly journal, *Chinese Daoism* (*Zhongguo daojiao* 中国

道教), and maintains Daoist cultural centers for religious and scholarly training. The Chinese Daoist Association is headquartered at the Baiyun Temple in Beijing. The association has over one hundred regional organizations at the provincial, city, and community levels, whose distribution in space corresponds to the distribution of Daoist temples (Map 8). Each association must be registered with the RAB at the correspondent level. Regional associations often provide training in liturgy and scripture, organize the repair and maintenance of temples and religious sites, and recruit new priests and register people who are qualified to perform rituals. The largest regional association is the Shanghai Daoist Association, which publishes its own journal, *Daoism in Shanghai* (*Shanghai Daojiao* 上海道教).

There has been a recent surge in the construction and expansion of Daoist academies, which are postsecondary schools where monks, nuns, and laypeople take courses related to Daoist studies. Chinese Daoist academies typically offer two programs of study: a concentrated study

54 Bokenkamp, "Daoism," 2189.



MAP 9 Location of Quanzhen and Zhengyi sites.

program and a continued study program. Students interested in the concentrated study program must receive a recommendation from the local Daoist organization and pass an admissions test. After completing the concentrated study program, students continue to take courses in the continued studies program. The curriculum of the Chinese Daoist Academies includes courses in religious studies, political studies, and cultural studies. Additionally, students complete courses on current political events, socialist education, Chinese history, English, and Daoist martial arts. Laypeople may enroll in selected courses through “life learning” programs, which focus on specific aspects of Daoism, such as Daoist philosophy, the history of Daoism, calligraphy, current events, and modern Chinese government.

Most academies and large Daoist institutions belong to the Quanzhen 全真 (Complete Perfection) lineage, which originated in northern China (Map 9). Quanzhen teachings trace the school’s origin to Wang Chongyang 王重阳 (1113–1170), a twelfth-century priest who lived in the

Zhongnan Mountains in Shaanxi Province. This school is Daoism’s monastic branch. Quanzhen priests reside in monasteries and abbeys and engage in ascetic practices (Photo 7). They must remain celibate and dress in religious garments. The Quanzhen lineage operates at least 25 large-scale monasteries throughout China that include training centers and sites of ordination.⁵⁵ Other Daoist orders belong to the Zhengyi 正一 (Orthodox Unity) tradition, which is nonmonastic and predominately located in southern China. Zhengyi priests may live in temples or stay with their families. The Zhengyi lineage regards Zhang Daoling 张道陵 (34–156), who was believed to have received revelation from Laozi in the mid-second century CE, as the first Celestial Master 天师.⁵⁶ Since medieval times, the designation of Celestial Master has been passed on generation after generation through Zhang’s descendants. The Zhengyi school embraces a body of scriptures

55 Goossaert, “Quanzhen.”

56 Kleeman, *Celestial Masters*.



PHOTO 7 Daoist acolytes gathering for the morning ritual at Tongbai Temple (Mount Tiantai).
CREDIT: XIANG FANG.

and writings called the Teaching of Orthodox Unity, which includes practices such as spiritual retreats, offering rituals, the use of talismans, and conferring certificates on lay ritual leaders across China. Certificates are divided into grades according to believers' knowledge of and experience with Daoist practice and rites.⁵⁷

In addition to Daoist priests, there are many lay Daoist associations that act as the primary intermediaries between local religious communities and Daoist temples. Lay associations are community-level religious organizations that are commonly led by local religious masters who are not ordained by the Chinese Daoist Association. The practices of lay associations vary widely across China. In general, lay associations serve four primary purposes. First, lay associations perform religious services, which can include Daoist liturgies and rituals. Second, lay associations organize and finance religious festivals and events, some of which can be complex and costly. For certain services and festivals, such as the *jiao* 醮, lay associations arrange for priests of nearby temples to visit and preside

over the religious ceremonies. Third, lay associations provide education and moral instruction to members of the community. Fourth, lay associations coordinate social services, charity, and socioreligious activities.⁵⁸ In China, lay associations function as important vehicles for the transmission of Daoist principles to Chinese local communities. Members of local communities who cannot travel to Daoist temples or academies learn about the Dao from local religious specialists and visiting priests.

Daoist rituals serve various purposes, such as thanksgiving, sacrifice, prayers for rain, exorcizing demons, communicating with deceased family members, and so on. These rituals are a combination of singing, chanting, recitation, and dancing. According to the general pattern of these rituals, the priests first place talismans around the altar to sanctify the space and prepare it for further actions. Then, priests burn talismans and offer incense, tea, wine, or other sacrifices, and invite transcendent beings to come down from heaven or rise up from the underworld. The priest announces his purposes to the divine beings

⁵⁷ Y. Chen, "Zhengyi."

⁵⁸ Goossaert, "Taoist Lay Associations."



PHOTO 8 The spring tea ceremony at Pinggu in Beijing's Lehe town.
CREDIT: ZHENG ZENG.

and asks their assistance. The ritual ends with a feast for the gods, at which time the priest expresses thanks and sends the deities on their way.⁵⁹

A key tool for Daoist rituals is the talisman, a slender object typically made of wood, metal, or paper. To transform it into a religiously powerful instrument, Daoist masters write characters, figures, signs, and symbols on the talisman. The characters that are inscribed on talismans usually concern ideas like *yin* and *yang*, fire, light, and so on. In terms of symbols, small circles represent stars, curves symbolize water, and spirals refer to clouds. In general, a talisman is a tool bearing cosmic force and having various functions. It is burned to create a sacred place or to invite gods. To keep themselves safe and avoid evil, Daoists carry talismans or place them at specific places in the home, such as over a door or beside a bed. Talismans may also be burned and the ashes mixed in a cup of water; a person can drink this talisman-infused water in order to cure sickness.⁶⁰ When conducting rituals, priests often

incorporate spells into their repertoire; this ritualistic language conveys the priest's wishes to deities. The spells usually end with a special phrase: *jiji ru lilong* 急急如律令 "promptly, promptly, in accordance with the statutes and ordinances."

Many Daoist practices, both rituals performed by priests and carried out by lay practitioners, involve various kinds of meditation that may be classified into two types. One type is commonly called *yangsheng* 养生, which involves a wide range of gymnastic and mental exercises intended to improve the state of the body and confer robust health and longevity on the meditator. The second type bears more religious significance, as the meditator aims at becoming immortal (仙 *xian*).⁶¹ Self-cultivation techniques for health and longevity are more popular (Photo 8). In the twentieth century, these techniques have become regarded by many practitioners as a scientific way of ensuring healthy life instead of a religious practice. These techniques include but are not limited to

59 Dean, "Daoist Ritual Today."

60 Despeux, "Talismans and Diagrams."

61 Goossaert, "Daoist in the Modern Chinese Self-Cultivation Market."

(1) breathing exercises in which people inhale *qi* 氣 (vital air) and exhale its impure counterpart in a rhythmic way, in order to get rid of negative moods; (2) abstaining from grains (*bigu* 辟谷), which are replaced with *qi*, medicinal herbs, or fruits; (3) physical exercise and self-massage, which conduct the circulation of *qi* within the body in order to cure disease and prolong life; (4) drinking water infused with the ashes of specific talismans to heal disease; 5) clenching the fists to hold *qi* within the body and prevent it from leaking out.⁶²

These cultivation techniques are the preliminary and preparatory stages of advanced practices undertaken by Daoist masters. Most important is the cultivation of *nei-dan* 内丹, the inner alchemy. Nurturing the inner alchemy within the body is one of the ultimate goals for many Daoist believers, as it can make them more transcendent and unite them with the Dao, enabling them to become an immortal being. The practices of developing the inner alchemy are very abstract and metaphysical. They consist of building a foundation within the body, combining *yin-yang* visualization, ingesting medicines, and circulating fire energy throughout the body.

Daoist rituals are also performed in the local community. The local lineage or neighborhood can sponsor the priests, host the rites, and provide offerings. Daoism has developed alongside many of China's folk arts, such as music, dance, painting, and sculpture, which are common in residences and at festivals. Music is a key component of Daoist rituals, and some of its music is derived from folk songs since many priests are from the countryside. Daoist music is quickly becoming one of the most popular tools to attract potential adherents, and is often used to illustrate Daoist teachings. On the other hand, Daoist music has gradually diffused into other aspects of life, such as weddings, offerings to ancestors, and agricultural festivals.⁶³ Often, Daoist stories are incorporated into plays and public dramas, and many of these recitals, such as *shuochang* 说唱, are now an independent art form without a religious dimension.⁶⁴

Key among the teachings of Daoism is that humans strive to unite with the Dao 道, the central element of the Daoist system of beliefs. The term Dao, originally denoting a "way" or "path," is understood not as the "way" or order of human society, but rather as a metaphysical basis of the natural order itself. Dao—the life force of the universe—is formless and invisible. The Dao manifests in humans as *de* 德, often translated as virtue. In Daoist cosmogony, the Dao was present at the origins of the universe

and dispersed as *qi* 氣, and gradually congealed to form Daoist deities (*shen* 神). *Qi* is energy and matter; it is the basic building block of all things in the universe.⁶⁵ Many Daoists profess that humans can unite with the Dao by cultivating virtue. Many different paths are available to humans who seek to become transcendent. Transcendent beings possess various supernormal powers, such as the ability to fly and ascend to heaven.⁶⁶ If a Daoist lives a particularly virtuous life, he or she might also ascend to higher ranks in Daoism's vast pantheon. There are various traditions and sublineages within the religion that promise believers access to various levels of postmortem rank. As people ascend into the heavens, new gods have been added over time. In Daoism, deities live in divine places that humans cannot easily reach, such as floating islands in the eastern seas, as well as palaces in the sky. There are many stories of Daoist practitioners, including emperors, who attempted to reach these supernatural places.

Many of China's most famous Daoist sites are located on mountains that are viewed as heavenly places transposed to earth. Daoist practitioners seek out these mountains and caves, which are traditionally considered efficacious for the practice of self-cultivation. The most well-known Chinese mountains linked to Daoism are the Five Peaks (*wuyue* 五岳): Mount Tai 泰山 in Shandong, Mount Heng 衡山 in Hunan, Mount Hua 华山 in Shaanxi, Mount Heng 恒山 in Shanxi, and Mount Song 嵩山 in Henan. But there are dozens of peaks throughout China thought to be portals into Daoist realms called Grotto-Heavens (*dongtian* 洞天) and Blissful Lands (*fudi* 福地). The Grotto-Heavens are believed to contain scriptures and treasures, hidden by deities.

While the *Daodejing* 道德经 is perhaps the most famous Daoist scripture, Daoism has an open canon of scriptures; there are hundreds of divinely inspired texts detailing ways to practice and cultivate the Dao for an everlasting life. Daoism sees all existence, humans, and things to be part of Dao. The perfect human is a flawless microcosm of the cosmic whole whose bodily spirits are perfectly attuned to the larger whole, the macrocosm. There are gods and spirits in the body, each having names and functions. According to *Taipingjing* 太平经 (Scripture of great peace), these detailed descriptions are provided as support for meditation: visualizing the inner gods causes them to remain in their corporeal abodes and perform their functions, while their departure would result in illness and death. There are three main terms used to refer to the human body in Daoism. The first, "body" (*ti* 体), designates the physical frame as an ordered whole made of

62 Engelhardt, "Longevity Techniques and Chinese Medicine."

63 Yuzo and Liu, "Daoist Ritual Music."

64 Yuzo and Liu, "Daoist Ritual Music."

65 Bokenkamp, "Daoism," 2177.

66 Pregadio, *Encyclopedia of Taoism*, 1092.

interdependent parts. The second, “form” (*xing* 形), refers to the body as the counterpart and residence of spirit. The third, “spirit” (*shen* 神), denotes the whole human being, including its nonmaterial aspects like feeling and thinking. Daoists believe that what determines a person’s birth and death, or life span, is not any external force but the person herself. Dao is the beginning of everything, and associates with life.

It is hard to accurately estimate the number of Daoists in China, partially due to the lack of reliable sources of data. Also, the mixing of Daoist and folk religious rituals and beliefs makes it hard to distinguish Daoists from adherents of folk religion. According to the 2007 Chinese Spiritual Life Survey, only about 1 percent of the 7,021 respondents claimed Daoist identities, which corresponded to about 11 million Chinese adults in 2010. Nonetheless, the survey also shows that a much larger proportion of Chinese adults participate in one or more Daoist practices (Table 4).

Because of the very small number of self-identified Daoists in the survey, we cannot reliably assess the statistical significance of demographic differences between Daoists and the others. Tentatively, however, we see that

TABLE 4 Demographic characteristics of Daoists and others (%)

	Daoists	Others
Age group		
16–59	95.0	90.3
60 or above	5.0	9.7
Gender		
Male	43.9	47.7
Female	56.1	52.3
Educational attainment		
Middle school or below	64.9	61.7
High/vocational school	15.7	27.6
College or above (including some college)	19.4	10.7
Residential area*		
Urban	25.6	37.1
Rural	74.4	62.9
Political affiliation		
CCP	1.4	5.6
CCYL	17.7	10.4
Others	80.8	83.9
Total number of cases	87	6,934

Notes: (1) CCP: Chinese Communist Party. CCYL: Chinese Communist Youth League; (2) Numbers do not always add up to 100 due to rounding; (3) two-tailed *t*-test ****p*<.001 ***p*<.01 **p*<.05.

the vast majority of self-identified Daoists were between the ages of 16 and 59. Only about 5 percent were age 60 or older. Men comprised 44 percent of all Daoists. The overall educational attainment of Daoists tended to be slightly higher than the others, with about 19 percent college educated. And about three-quarters of them live in rural areas. Among the respondents with Daoist identities, less than 2 percent were CCP members. About 18 percent were CCYL members, much higher than among the other respondents or in the general population.

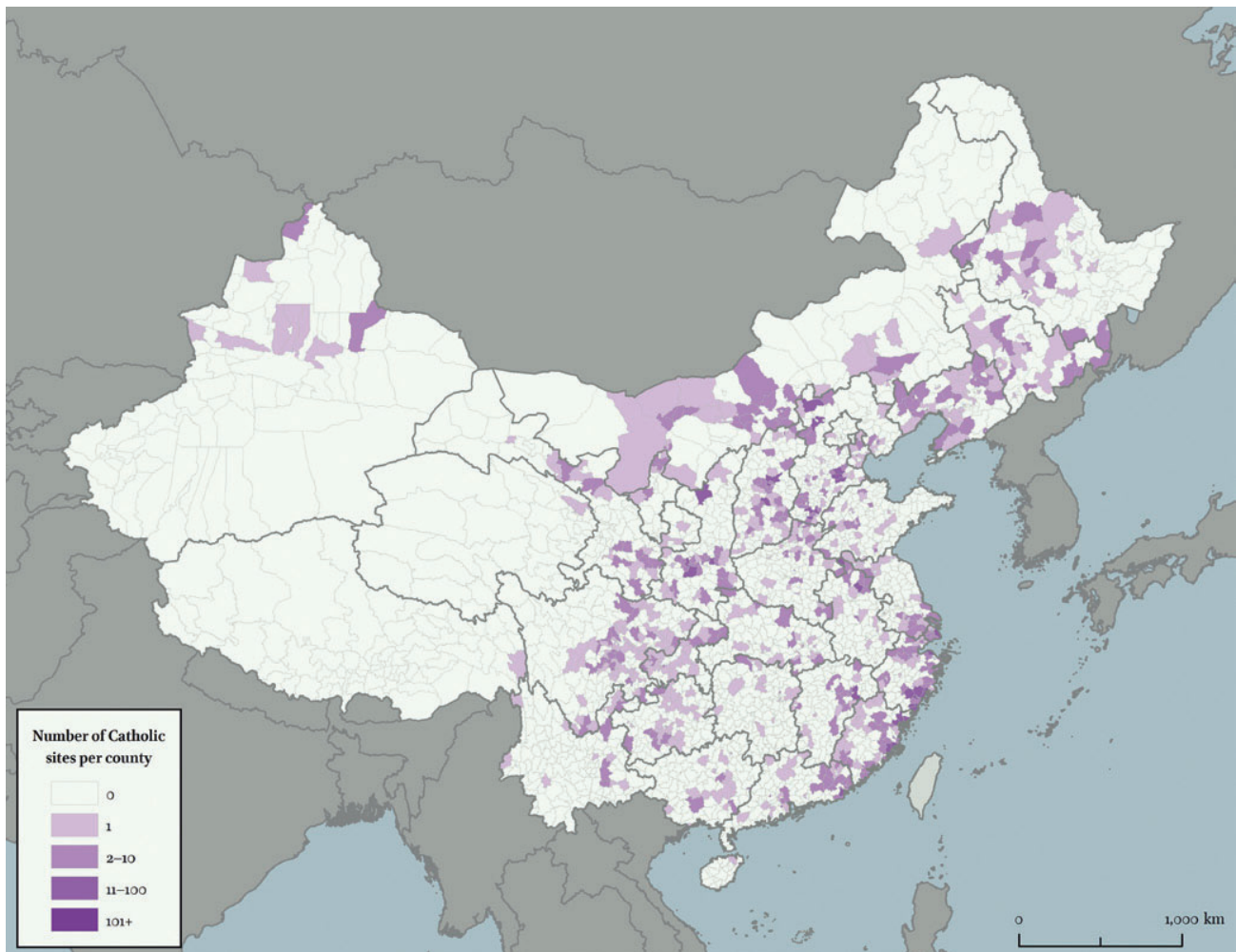
5. Catholicism

Catholicism is known as *Tianzhujiao* 天主教 in China, which literally means “Lord in Heaven religion.” Even though a Catholic presence in China can be traced back to the Yuan Dynasty (1260–1368), when the Franciscan monk Giovanni di Monte Corvino arrived in Beijing in 1293, it ended at the turn from the Yuan to the Ming Dynasty in 1368. More than two hundred years later, in 1583, Jesuit Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) arrived in China and succeeded in converting many Chinese to Catholicism. Ricci consciously chose *Tianzhu* as the term for God rather than other words like *Shangdi* 上帝 [High thearch] and *Tian* 天 [Heaven], which demonstrates that he understood the possible Daoist and Buddhist connotations of these names.⁶⁷

In the People’s Republic of China, a national association of Catholics was first established in 1957, the last of the five associations for officially recognized religions. At the time of the founding of the PRC, Pope Pius XII threatened to excommunicate clergy who cooperated with the Communist Party in China. Without the cooperation of the Catholic clergy, after many years of effort, the party-state managed to form the China Catholic Laypeople Patriotic Association (*Zhongguo tianzhujiao jiaoyou aiguoahui* 中国天主教教友爱国会) in 1957. Thereafter, China selected new bishops whose legitimacy was not recognized by the pope. In 1962, the association changed its name to the China Catholic Patriotic Association (*Zhongguo tianzhujiao aiguoahui* 中国天主教爱国会, hereafter CCPA). During the Cultural Revolution, the CCPA was disbanded and all churches were shut down.

In 1980, alongside the restored CCPA, Catholic leaders formed the Bishops Conference of the Catholic Church in China (*Zhongguo tianzhujiao zhujiaotuan* 中国天主教主教团, hereafter BCCCC) for theological and liturgical matters. The CCPA and BCCCC resemble the Protestant “two councils” and are often jointly called the “One Association

67 Oak, “Competing Chinese Names for God.”



MAP 10 Number of Catholic sites per county.

and One Conference” (*Yihui yituan* 一会一团). In principle, the BCCCC monitors religious affairs and the CCPA is responsible for meeting the church’s institutional need for clergy and churches. Yet institutional and doctrinal affairs can overlap in Chinese Catholicism.⁶⁸ One of the principal roles of the BCCCC is to monitor the education offered in the country’s 11 seminaries.⁶⁹ They are located in Beijing, Shenyang, Chengdu, Hohhot, Taiyuan, Jinan, Wuhan, Xi’an, and Jilin. The largest is the National Seminary of the Catholic Church (*Zhongguo tianzhujiao shenzhe xueyuan* 中国天主教神哲学院, hereafter NSCCC). Founded in 1983 in Beijing, the national seminary has a six-year undergraduate program. Coursework includes dogmatic theology, theology of ethics, canon law, and other theological classes; ontology, epistemology, history of Chinese philosophy, and other philosophical courses; and Latin, Chinese, politics, music, and other cultural courses. More than six

hundred students have graduated from the national seminary; half of these men have been ordained as priests in China and seven have been ordained as bishops.⁷⁰

There are 97 dioceses under the CCPA/BCCC, which are different from yet overlapping with the 137 dioceses designated by the Vatican in 1946. The two sets of overlapping dioceses are a cause of feuds between underground and aboveground Catholics. In 2004, according to the SARA, there were about 4,000 Catholic churches throughout the country.⁷¹ According to the 2004 Economic Census, Catholic churches have spread out throughout China, including Tibet, with high concentrations in North China, especially Hebei Province, and Southeast China, especially Fujian Province. There are also sizeable pockets near Shanghai and in Shaanxi Province (Maps 10 and 11).

68 Madsen, “Catholic Revival during the Reform Era.”

69 *Chinese Catholic Handbook*, 2–3.

70 For more information about the National Seminary, see NSCCC, “Introduction to the National Seminary of the Catholic Church in China.”

71 D. Zhang, “The Chinese Catholic Church’s Surveys.”



MAP 11 Location of Catholic sites.

The theology and devotional practices in China's Catholic churches are centered on the seven sacraments (*shengshi* 圣事): baptism (*shengxi* 圣洗), confirmation (*jianzhen* 坚振), confession (*gaojie* 告解), the Eucharist (*shengti* 圣体), anointing of the sick (*zhongfu* 终傅 or *bingren fuyou* 病人傅油), ordination (*shengyi* 圣秩 or *shenpin* 神品), and matrimony (*hunpei* 婚配). All Catholics must be baptized. When Catholics reach adulthood, they are confirmed into the church by bishops (*zhujiao* 主教), though in special cases the sacrament can be performed by priests (*siduo* 司铎). Confirmation is sometimes referred to as the anointment of the baptized, intended to reinforce their faith.

The most common Catholic ritual is the sacrament of the Eucharist, which is also referred to as the Lord's Supper (*zhu de yanxi* 主的宴席) or "breaking the bread" (*baibing* 掰饼), and is performed during Mass (*misa* 弥撒). Mass is divided into two parts: the Liturgy of the Word (*shengdao li* 圣道礼), which includes scripture readings, a homily, and prayer (*xinyou daoci* 信友祷词); and

the Liturgy of the Eucharist (*shengji li* 圣祭礼), which includes the Eucharistic prayer and the distribution of consecrated bread to the congregation. Historically, it has been debated whether Mass should be celebrated in Chinese or Latin. In 1615, the Roman Catholic Church permitted Chinese Catholics to conduct Mass in Chinese, but this was rarely done until recent times. It was not until 1989, for example, that the Chinese Catholic Diocese at Sheshan Cathedral 佘山天主堂 in Shanghai conducted its first mass in Chinese.

Catholics view prayer and the seven sacraments as the primary ways to receive blessings from God. Prayer refers to any communication addressed to God, and typically expresses praise, admiration, or love for God. During prayer, Catholics may read scripture and meditate (*moxiang* 默想). Catholics can pray to ask for blessings or mercy or to offer thanksgiving to God. Prayer is an important spiritual practice in Catholicism. Catholics often pray in the morning, in the evening, and before and after meals. The Catholic Church also encourages its followers to



PHOTO 9 A procession during a liturgical feast honoring the Virgin Mary in Zhangzhuang (Xingtai 邢台).
CREDIT: YANG LU.

make the sign of the cross before praying. Following the reforms of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), the Catholic liturgy has been adapted to suit Chinese society. The priest Andrew Chao (Yizhou Zhao 赵一舟, 1927–2015) was an expert in localizing liturgy and wrote a series of books, such as *Jiating liyi* 家庭礼仪 [Family rituals] to address the importance of prayer in everyday life. In recent times, church leaders have also encouraged parishioners to pray during the celebration of traditional Chinese festivals such as the Dragon Boat Festival (*duanwu jie* 端午节) and the Double Ninth Festival (*chongyang jie* 重阳节), during ancestor veneration, and also during important life events like birthdays, graduations, and housewarmings.⁷² In villages, it is very common to hold periodic processions, such as the November procession celebrating the Virgin Mary (Photo 9).

In many ways, the principal beliefs of Catholics resemble those of Protestant Christians. Catholicism is a monotheistic religion. Catholics believe that one God created the world and humankind. This God exists in

three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Father refers to the noncorporeal, heavenly form of God; the Son refers to Jesus Christ, the incarnate form of God; and the Holy Spirit refers to the divine will and spirit of God. Together, these three persons are called the Holy Trinity or the Blessed Trinity. The triadic personhood of God—or how one God can exist in three persons—is a central mystery of Catholic life and faith. Furthermore, the Bible plays a key role in Catholic liturgy and devotional life.⁷³ Currently, the most popular version among Chinese Catholics is the Studium Biblicum Version (*Sigao yiben* 思高译本).

Nevertheless, for many, Catholicism is perceived as a distinct and separate religion from Protestantism. For example, there is a strong emphasis in Catholic communities on the need to atone for one's sins before facing God's final judgment. This process involves faith, good works, and the sacraments of baptism and confession. Confession requires that Catholics admit their sins to God and ask for

⁷² Y. Zhao, *Family Rituals*, 77–107.

⁷³ Ren, *Basic Knowledge about Catholicism in China*, 144–146; Chinacath, “The Catholic Theology on the Bible.”

his forgiveness. A bishop or priest conducts the rite in a small room called a confessional (*gaojie shi* 告解室) and declares that a person's sins have been forgiven.

Throughout CCP rule, the pope, as the leader of the Roman Catholic Church, has been a controversial figure. The Chinese government does not permit Chinese citizens to maintain a “double loyalty,” meaning that Chinese Catholics cannot claim loyalty to their country and to the pope. For this reason, the Catholic Church in China is officially separate from the universal Catholic Church. In practice, however, many Chinese Catholics still recognize the pope as a figure of religious authority.⁷⁴ Historically, the Chinese government has been at odds with the Vatican. Chinese officials have often criticized the Vatican as an “imperialist force” interfering in China's internal affairs. Official Catholic churches in China were ordered to ordain new bishops without the consent of the Holy See. Since the 1980s, the relationship between the Chinese government and the Vatican has slowly improved, with each side making concessions. Most bishops have secretly sought and received recognition by the Holy See before or after their ordination in the Chinese Catholic church. On the other hand, the Chinese government, respecting Catholics' concern for sacramental integrity, allows Catholics to express their spiritual allegiance to the pope. Charters of both the CCPA and the BCCCC declare communion with the pope.⁷⁵ More recently, the Chinese government and the Vatican have opened discussions on how to resolve disagreements and establish diplomatic relations.⁷⁶

In the official Catholic churches, priests are ordained by bishops of the BCCC, but only some of these ordinations have been recognized by Roman Catholic church authorities.⁷⁷ In some cases, Chinese priests have been ordained with the approval of the bishops loyal to the pope. In other cases, Chinese priests have been ordained without the approval or with the expressed disapproval of the Vatican.

According to the SARA, as of 2010 there were more than 5.5 million Catholics in China.⁷⁸ Outside sources

estimated that there could be as many as 10 to 12 million Catholics in China. Survey data suggests that about two to four million adults were Catholics in China. While the absolute number of Catholics in China is certainly large, the respondents with Catholic identities contained in the survey datasets were too few to warrant a reliable analysis of the demographic characteristics of Chinese Catholics. Therefore, the following analysis, based on the 2007 Chinese Spiritual Life Survey (Table 5), is a rough sketch of the Catholic population in China.

As with followers of other religious traditions, the vast majority of Catholics fell into the 16–59 age group. Women accounted for 62 percent of Catholics, and 13.4 percent were college educated. The majority (55 percent) of Catholics lived in urban areas. Among the respondents with Catholic identities, about 20 percent belonged to the CCYL but less than 1 percent to the CCP.

TABLE 5 *Demographic characteristics of Catholics and others (%)*

	Catholics	Others
Age group		
16–59	95.6	90.4
60 or above	4.4	9.6
Gender		
Male	38.0	47.7
Female	62.0	52.3
Educational attainment		
Middle school or below	58.4	61.8
High/vocational school	28.2	27.5
College or above (including some college)	13.4	10.8
Residential area		
Urban	55.1	36.9
Rural	44.9	63.1
Political affiliation		
CCP	0.9	5.6
CCYL	20.3	10.5
Others	78.8	83.9
<i>Total number of cases</i>	24	6997

Notes: (1) CCP: Chinese Communist Party. CCYL: Chinese Communist Youth League; (2) Numbers do not always add up to 100 due to rounding; (3) two-tailed *t*-test ****p*<.001 ***p*<.01 **p*<.05.

74 Chu, “China and the Vatican.”

75 Madsen, “Catholic Revival during the Reform Era.”

76 Jucca, Lim, and Torode, “After Decades of Mistrust, Pope Pushes for Diplomatic Breakthrough with China.”

77 Wiest, “Sino-Vatican Relations under Pope Benedict XVI.”

78 State Administration for Religious Affairs, “Introduction to Religions in China.”

The Gray Market: Semi-Legal Religions

1. Confucianism

Confucianism is not officially classified as a religion in the PRC. However, the religious dimension of Confucianism and its religious elements are widely acknowledged by scholars and ordinary people. In recent years, some people have advocated for the party-state to recognize Confucianism as a religion, under the name *Ru jiao* 儒教 [Confucian religion]. Opponents of this position often emphasize Confucianism as a body of teachings, under the name *Ruxue* 儒学 (Confucian teachings). The core teachings of Confucius (Kongzi 孔子 551–479 BCE) and his followers Mengzi (孟子 372–289 BCE) and Xunzi (荀子 313–235 BCE) include the “three cardinal guides and the five constant virtues” (*sangang wuchang* 三纲五常). The three cardinal guides refer to the three key moral responsibilities of humans: a ruler must guide his/her subjects, a father must guide his children, and a husband must guide his wife. The five constant virtues are benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and fidelity (*ren yi li zhi xin* 仁义礼智信).¹

The founding thinkers of Confucianism did not have much to say about the supernatural world—gods, spirits, or life after death.² However, Confucius frequently mentioned Tian 天 [Heaven] and *tianyi* 天意 [Heaven's will] in his teachings. Tian appoints kings and teachers to govern and educate the masses. The king is chosen by Tian as a *tianzi* 天子 [Son of Tian] and entrusted with the mandate of Heaven (*tianming* 天命), and he carries out Heaven's will or plan in his governance of society.

In traditional times, the specialists of Confucianism were officials who organized and performed many of the state rituals, such as heaven worship ceremonies (*jitian dadian* 祭天大典).³ Over the centuries, Confucius temples became conspicuous sites for imperial rituals, and the worship of Confucius was incorporated into the legitimation of imperial rule.⁴ Emperors took on the role of the highest priest, offering sacrifices to Tian. For Confucius, collective worship rather than supplication was the goal of these sacrifices. The worship of heaven and Confucius

ended together with the Qing Dynasty in 1911. In the early Republican period, President Yuan Shikai (1859–1916) attempted to restore both the rituals and monarchy, which backfired. Not only did the restoration of monarchy fail, but Chinese intellectuals also mounted fierce attacks on Confucianism, blaming it for holding China back from modernization. Nevertheless, Confucianism remained influential in Chinese society.

When the People's Republic of China was founded, the CCP made a great effort to put an end to the worship of Confucius. During the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), mobs of Red Guards (*hongweibing* 红卫兵) destroyed nearly all Confucian temples. In the 1980s, however, Confucian temples began to be restored. In the twenty-first century, Confucianism has revived in various guises, including the establishment of research and teaching institutes at universities, the formation of associations for Confucian rituals, and the introduction of Confucian classics into schools. Since 2005, the study of Confucianism has been subsumed into China's new national learning or national studies (*guoxue* 国学) institutes at institutions such as Tsinghua University, Xiamen University, and Wuhan University, which began recruiting undergraduate and graduate students to study Confucian culture as national learning majors.⁵ The debate over whether Confucianism and national learning should be recognized as an independent discipline has stirred heated discussion. A report in 2015 stated that the Ministry of Education had decided to institute national learning as a major in many more universities. The most recent education minister, Yuan Guiren 袁贵仁, urged Chinese universities to introduce more textbooks that focus on China's culture and history.⁶

Chinese professionals have begun enrolling in national learning courses.⁷ The craze for reading classical books has led to a rapid increase in the number of old-style private schools (*sishu* 私塾), summer camps (*xialingying* 夏令营), weekend classes (*zhoumoban* 周末班), and kindergarten programs for reciting classical Chinese books. Every province in China except Tibet has at least one such semi-private organization (see Map 12).⁸ Many organiza-

1 Jordan, “The Canonical Books of Confucianism.”

2 S. Li 李申, *Confucian Teaching and Confucianism as a Religion*, 90.

3 S. Li 李申, *Confucian Teaching and Confucianism as a Religion*, 100–103.

4 Sun, *Confucianism as a World Religion*, 134.

5 Chen, “The National Studies Craze.”

6 Florcruz, “China Introduces ‘National Studies’ Textbooks For Government Employees.”

7 Chen, “The National Studies Craze.”

8 See the map at <http://www.aidujing.com/map/>.



MAP 12 Location of Confucian sites.

tions host programs that encourage children and parents to read traditional Chinese books together. They assert that reading to children is critical if they are to internalize or memorize classics, and can be beneficial even when a child is still in the womb. Some Chinese parents believe that reading and reciting can help train the brain and advance the academic abilities of children. Moreover, reading the classics is viewed as a way to cultivating children's temperament and character, teaching them how to distinguish right from wrong. These organizations also offer a number of courses relating to various facets of traditional Chinese culture, including canonical books, calligraphy, traditional music, arts, and sports. Recently, the China Confucius Foundation established a Confucian institute in the Juvenile Detention Center in Shandong Province, aiming to teach morality and law to young prisoners through the reading of Confucian classics.⁹ The China Confucius

Foundation promotes the establishment of Confucian institutes nationwide to spread traditional Chinese culture and cultivate a moral sense among Chinese people.

One of the most common signs of the rising status of Confucianism is the reading of Confucian classics in Chinese elementary schools. Some elementary schools require students to recite from the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 论语) for 10 minutes in the morning, noon, and evening. This is referred to as "children reading classics." President Xi Jinping has repeatedly iterated the importance of traditional Chinese culture,¹⁰ encouraging schools and universities to teach traditional Chinese culture through debate contests, speech contests, and essay competitions.¹¹ Likewise, Chinese parents have encouraged their children to read books on traditional Chinese culture. The hope

9 Chinakongmiao, "Juvenile Prisoners Learning Confucian Classics."

10 Renminwang, "Giving Up Tradition Is a Spiritual Suicide."

11 Chinakongmiao, "The Final Match of the First Confucian Debate Competition for High School Students."

is that these children will benefit from being exposed to national studies at an early age.¹²

In China today, there is an increasing number of Confucian “academies” (*shuyuan* 书院), or colleges where Confucian scholars study scriptures, debate academic and social issues, criticize policy and administration, and teach students. The history of the Confucian academy can be traced back to early medieval times. The activities of Confucian academies were restricted during late imperial China as emperors and powerful officials tried to tighten control over spaces where scholars could freely discuss and criticize political affairs. In the late Ming era, a large number of academies were dissolved following the demise of the Donglindang 东林党, a political party of scholar-officials. In 1905, the imperial government abolished the traditional examination system for selecting officials (*keju zhidu* 科举制度) and ordered the remaining academies to emulate Western education systems.

Although Confucianism has been marginalized since the early twentieth century and attacked by several political movements, some contemporary scholars, and even top political officials, have tried to restore it to a position of importance. There has been an active effort to reestablish the Confucian academies. An example is the rebuilding of the Yangming Academy 阳明精舍, which was undertaken by Jiang Qing 蒋庆 in the 1990s. Jiang is a retired college professor who studied law, religion, and philosophy. He serves as a representative of Confucian scholars in contemporary China and is active in academic and social affairs. He has published a number of controversial books and articles calling for reform of the Chinese political system on the basis of Confucian principles. He calls this type of thinking “Political Confucianism.” Yangming Academy is located in Longchang Town 龙场镇, Guizhou Province, and occupies about 33 acres. This academy has become famous and attracted many visitors. In 2010, for example, 800 people visited the site, including government officials and scholars from China, Japan, and Canada. Most stayed for a short visit to participate in academic discussion or conduct research. The academy has also hosted several academic conferences on Confucianism.¹³

Another example of a contemporary Confucian academy is Yuandao Academy 原道书院, which was founded by Chen Ming 陈明, a philosophy professor at Capital Normal University in Beijing. Chen’s research focuses on the relationship between Confucianism and culture, civil society, and civil religion. He is the founding editor of a

journal titled *Yuandao* 原道, which is widely recognized in Chinese academic circles. Yuandao Academy was established in 2015 and has hosted a series of activities, such as the spring and fall memorial ceremonies for Confucius. In summer and winter the academy provides training courses for instructors teaching about traditional cultures. The academy sponsors quarterly academic conferences and offers monthly talks on Confucianism for the public.¹⁴

At present, two major official organizations have taken responsibility for the development of Confucianism and the protection of Confucius temples in mainland China. In 1984, the China Confucius Foundation (*Zhongguo kongzi jijinhui* 中国孔子基金会) was established. The foundation is registered as a nonprofit organization under the supervision of the Cultural Affairs Ministry (*Wenhua bu* 文化部). The goal of this foundation is to promote and spread Confucian thoughts and values at home and abroad by raising money from private sources as well as state funds. The Confucius Temple Protection Association of China (*Zhongguo kongmiao baohu xiehui* 中国孔庙保护协会) was formed in 1994 and registered with the Ministry of Civil Affairs of China (*Minzheng bu* 民政部). It is a national voluntary association that embraces scholarship on Confucianism as well as Confucius temples and Confucius academies and aims to preserve Confucius monumentary buildings, promote research on Confucianism, and build connections with Confucius temples and Confucian associations worldwide. The State Administration of Cultural Heritage (*Guojia wenwu ju* 国家文物局) supervises the activities of this association, which is in charge of 128 Confucius temples in mainland China (Map 12). Kong Deping 孔德平, the secretary of the Party Committee and director of the Qufu Tourism Administration, serves as the current president.¹⁵

There are also many nongovernment Confucian organizations. The Chinese Association of Confucius the Holy Sage (*Zhonghua kongshenghui* 中华孔圣会, hereafter HCCC) was established in 2015. Its primary aim is to spread and develop Confucianism as a religion. It was formed in Shenzhen by the Holy Confucian Hall (*Kongsheng tang* 孔圣堂) along with a number of other Confucian organizations. Its founding members include many well-known Confucian intellectuals in mainland China, such as Jiang Qing, Chen Ming, and Zhang Xianglong. The official doctrine of the HCCC regards Confucius as a holy sage. It explicitly claims that Confucius is not only a prominent scholar, but a source of holiness deserving of worship along with heaven and ancestors. HCCC has developed

12 Sohu, “Department of Education to Set a Discipline of Guoxue.”

13 X. Li, “The Struggle of a Confucian Intellectual in a Modern Society.”

14 M. Chen, “Yuandao Academy.”

15 Chinakongmiao, “About China Confucian Temple.”

an organizational structure. The Confucian Scholars Committee (*Rujia xuezhe weiyuanhui* 儒家学者委员会) is in charge of making important decisions and appointing personnel. The current president of this committee is Jiang Qing. The board of directors is responsible for daily administration and the director-general is Zhou Beichen. HCCC focuses on the construction of Confucian sites (*daochang* 道场) resembling Christian churches. These Confucian churches host weekly religious activities such as listening to a sermon, chanting Confucian scriptures, and singing religious songs. They also provide services for weddings and funerals and conduct ceremonies to worship heaven and Confucius and celebrate some traditional holidays. They also reach out to schools, communities, and companies to evangelize on behalf of Confucianism. An important ritual of this group is the quasi-baptismal rite called *guizong* 归宗 [Returning to one's own lineage]. After this ceremony, a practitioner officially becomes a member of the church.

There are two kinds of Confucian ritual practices that are most common in China today: personal devotions and formal ceremonies. Some formal ceremonies are held annually, such as the veneration on Confucius's birthday, September 28. This ceremony began as ancestor worship by the family of Confucius, but later expanded into a formal event involving government officials. Since 2005, the grand ceremony of the worship of Confucius in China has been a state event. The event commonly takes place in Qufu 曲阜, the birthplace of Confucius, and last about two weeks, from September 26 to October 10, and includes music, songs, dances, and rituals. Government officials, descendants of Confucius, Confucian scholars, Confucian followers, and students participate in the ceremony. In 2014, President Xi attended the International Conference in Commemoration of the 2,565th Anniversary of Confucius's Birth.¹⁶ The veneration of Confucius is primarily organized and conducted by the descendants of Confucius with the help of several associations related to Confucius's thought and Confucianism, including the World Federation of Confucius's Descendants (*Shijie kongzi houyi lianyi zonghui* 世界孔子后裔联谊总会), the Confucius Genealogy Compilation Committee (*Kongzishijiapu changtaihua xuxiu gongzuo xiehui* 孔子世家谱常态化续修工作协会), the Confucius Temple Protection Association of China (*Zhongguo kongmiao baohu xiehui* 中国孔庙保护协会), and the Qufu Federation of Confucius's Descendants (*Qufu kongzi houyi lianyihui* 曲阜孔子后裔联谊会).

When the ceremony of the veneration of Confucius became a state event, the government started participating in hosting the activities. Party-state officials invite descendants of Confucius and Confucian scholars in China and abroad to the ceremony.¹⁷ During the ceremony, musicians and dancers dress in Song and Ming Dynasty style, wearing yellow silk robes with dark blue waistbands and black hats. The most iconic part of this ritual is the ceremony of the presentation of three gifts (*sanxian li* 三献礼). The first gift is yellow silk, the second is incense, and the last is wine. When the gates of the temple open, the gifts are offered as a sacrifice to Confucius. All participants are required to wash their hands before bowing down in front of the incense table to offer incense.¹⁸

In recent years, many Confucian temples have been restored. At these temples, people sometimes burn incense sticks and pray to a tablet, statue, or portrait of Confucius (bowing or kneeling). Commonly, they make wishes to Confucius. Some write prayers on prayer cards that are hung in the trees or placed on special shelves within the temple yard.¹⁹ The frequency of the performance of these rituals varies greatly from temple to temple, and also according to the time of year. The most popular period is right before the highly competitive national university entrance examinations in early June. Students and their parents go to temples seeking blessings.²⁰

Another ritual practice related to Confucius or Confucianism is ancestor worship—the ritualized commemoration of, communication with, and sacrifice to one's deceased relatives.²¹ This practice is sometimes considered to be part of Chinese folk religion. Ancestor worship is an activity practiced by many Chinese people in the home, at temples, and at the graves of relatives. Filial piety (*xiao* 孝) and reverence (*jing* 敬) for parents and ancestors are two chief concerns of Confucian thought. Ancestor worship shows reverence for the elders and is a means of cultivating the virtue of filial piety. People commonly visit the graves of relatives at least once a year to show their respect. The most important time to visit is on Qingming 清明, also known as Tomb Sweeping Day, when family members clean ancestors' tombs and make offerings of

16 Xinhuanet, "Xi Jinping Requires Improvement in the Party's Work on Religious Affairs in a New Situation."

17 L. Wang, "The First Official Confucius-veneration Ritual after the Establishment of the PRC."

18 For more detailed information about the ceremony, see Cultural China, "The Grand Ceremony of Worship of Confucius"; Mack, "Celebration of Confucius' Birthday"; China.com, "What Is the Veneration of Confucius Like?"

19 Sun, *Confucianism as a World Religion*, 136–137.

20 Sun, *Confucianism as a World Religion*, 143.

21 Richey, "Confucianism."

TABLE 6 *Demographic characteristics of Confucians and others (%)*

	Confucians	Others
Age group		
16–59	99.7	90.4
60 or above	0.3	9.6
Gender		
Male	50.9	47.6
Female	49.1	52.4
Educational attainment**		
Middle school or below	27.6	61.9
High/vocational school	54.9	27.3
College or above (including some college)	17.5	10.8
Residential area		
Urban	47.3	36.9
Rural	52.7	63.1
Political affiliation***		
CCP	2.1	5.6
CCYL	56.6	10.3
Others	41.3	84.1
Total number of cases	30	6,991

Notes: (1) CCP: Chinese Communist Party. CCYL: Chinese Communist Youth League; (2) Numbers do not always add up to 100 due to rounding; (3) two-tailed *t*-test ****p*<.001 ***p*<.01 **p*<.05.

food, fruits, and wine. Family members also burn incense and paper money while kneeling before the grave to show respect. During ancestor worship, in the home or at the grave, parents or grandparents lead the ceremony, holding the incense and presenting gifts during the ritual.²²

Ancestor worship and other Confucian rituals were banned during the Cultural Revolution. The CCP viewed these practices as part of feudal superstition. Since the Cultural Revolution, temples and tablets dedicated to ancestors have been restored and renovated. Although the Chinese government does not encourage ancestor worship or any kind of religious practice, Confucianism and its rituals and practices have revived in Chinese society as a manifestation of Chinese traditional culture.²³

The influence of Confucianism persists in contemporary China. However, very few people self-identify as Confucians when responding to surveys. Although quantitative data on Confucians in China is scarce, data from the 2007 Chinese Spiritual Life Survey allows us to

estimate their numbers and outline the general demographic characteristics of Confucians in China. Due to the small size of the Confucian sample in the survey (Table 6), the findings presented here offer only a rough sketch of this population.

According to the 2007 CSLS, only about 0.4 percent of respondents indicated that they were Confucians, which corresponded to about 4.5 million adults in China in 2010.²⁴ Because of the very small number of Confucians in the sample, no statistical significance can be assigned to differences between Confucians and other respondents. Nevertheless, some of the percentages may be indicative of special characteristics of self-identified Confucians. Unlike followers of most other religions, females do not outnumber males among Confucians. The proportion of college-educated persons seems to be higher among Confucians than among the other respondents, and Confucians are more likely to live in urban areas. It is also noteworthy that 56.6 percent of the self-identified Confucians in the sample were CCYL members, a much higher proportion than among other religions.

2. Folk Religion

Folk religion refers to beliefs and practices that lie outside the more organized or institutionalized religions. These supernatural beliefs and practices were often diffused or embedded in other social institutions such as the family, the clan, the village, the city, the state, and the guild.²⁵ Unlike institutionalized religions in China such as Daoism and Buddhism, folk religion does not require professional clergy or “orthodox” knowledge about its ritual practices; the beliefs and practices are shared and performed by ordinary people. Because folk religion is embedded in the life of ordinary people, most people usually do not consider it to be religion. In traditional China, ancestor worship and local deity worship provided opportunities for clansmen and villagers to gather and engage in collective activities. Beliefs in gods, ancestors, and ghosts help to attach a feeling of awe and of respect for social norms and regulations. The ritual practices and activities of folk religion serve the important function of fostering solidarity and group cohesion.

After the founding of the PRC, folk religion was suppressed as part of the legacy of feudal superstitions. It survived in such an unfavorable environment by reducing its ritual content to a minimum. People were able to

22 G. Gardner, “Confucianism Worship & Practices.”

23 Page, “Why China Is Turning Back to Confucius.”

24 National Bureau of Statistics of China, “Statistical Communiqué on the Major Data of the Sixth Census.”

25 C. K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society*.

secretly conduct rituals in their homes and practice covertly.²⁶ When the reform era began in the late 1970s, folk religion gradually emerged from hiding. People started to re-enact rituals, rebuild temples, and reorganize temple fairs around religiously meaningful festivals.

Folk religious beliefs typically involve three categories of supernatural beings: ghosts, ancestors, and gods. All three of these are invested with moral authority, and they model (and are modeled by) the social and political structure.²⁷ For example, these supernatural beings are understood in hierarchical terms that mirror the organization of society. At the top are the mandarins, representing the emperor and the empire; they became gods after they died. Next come the family and the lineage, whose deceased members became the revered ancestors. Finally, strangers and outsiders, bandits and beggars, are reflected in the dangerous and despised ghosts. People show varying levels of respect to these beings according to their status in the hierarchy. Gods and ancestors are worshipped by way of remembering them, while ghosts are worshipped as a way of warding them off and protecting oneself from them.

Ghosts are often viewed as the souls of people who died in the wrong way or at the wrong time, for example, people who died from accidents, suicide, or war. These souls are ranked very low in the underworld system, and are believed to suffer from the tortures of the underworld, such as fire and coldness. Ghosts can only avoid these sufferings with the aid of their living relatives, if they have any. Relatives can help ghosts by hiring priests, often Daoists or Buddhists, who know how to communicate with the underworld officials and assist the ghosts as they endure their trials. Those ghosts who do not receive such help are unfortunately trapped in the world of the living because they do not have money or food for the underworld. These ghosts are believed to be dangerous. For example, ghosts who died from drowning remain in the water, but they can regain their freedom by drowning another victim to replace them.²⁸ According to folk religious beliefs, Buddhist monks or Daoist priests may conduct a releasing ritual to send the spirit of the dead person off to the other world (*chaodu wangling* 超度亡灵), so that the spirit will not become a vagrant ghost remaining in this world to disturb or harm living people.

The most conspicuous event centering on ghosts in China is the Ghost Festival on the fifteenth day of the seventh lunar month. On this day, people throughout the country feed vagrant ghosts. The Ghost Festival is

also known as Yulapen Festival (*yulanpen jie* 盂兰盆节) by Buddhists and Zhongyuan Festival (*zhongyuan jie* 中元节) by Daoists.²⁹ Buddhists and Daoists utilize different techniques in the celebration of the ghost festival, but they have one common goal: the salvation of ghosts.³⁰ In Chinese culture, the seventh lunar month is believed to be a time when ghosts and spirits are released from their usual torments in the underworld and allowed to wander the earth. On the evening of the Ghost Festival, different rituals are conducted according to whether the spirit is that of a vagrant ghost or a relative. For relatives, people will make lanterns and float them on the river to help their relative's spirit back home in the other world. The lanterns are usually shaped like lotus flowers and illuminated by electric light or candles. As for vagrant ghosts, in Chinese culture they are believed to be malevolent bringers of trouble. Thus, on the evening of the Ghost Festival, people will use firecrackers to ward off them. They also offer ghosts food and money to bribe them away.³¹ There are two types of ghosts: pitiful ones like beggars, and malevolent ones like bandits. The former should be treated with sympathy, the later with caution. Thus, the purpose of worship is to show sympathy to pitiful ghosts while propitiating the malevolent ghosts. Note that ghosts are ranked low in the underworld system: the offerings for ghosts are usually placed on tables outside of a house; they are never served in a house. It is believed that it is dangerous to invite vagrant ghosts to a house or have any contact with them.³²

Part of the impetus to feed ghosts stems from beliefs about life in the underworld, where all souls must go after death. The chthonic realm is a penal world dedicated to punishing wrongdoers. The living must make offerings or perform rituals in order to improve the condition of their ancestors in the underworld by alleviating their punishment. Good and evil deeds in this life determine the punishment and reward a ghost receives in the underworld during the next life.³³ Belief in these spiritual authorities does not distance ordinary people from worldly authority. Instead, it enhances the effectiveness of worldly government, for it impresses on people the idea that the order of morality and justice govern not only this world but also the world beyond. The idea of reincarnation has been reinforced by the Buddhist concept of karma, namely, that

26 Chau, *Miraculous Response*, 7.

27 Weller, *Unities and Diversities in Chinese Religion*, 23.

28 Weller, *Unities and Diversities in Chinese Religion*, 23.

29 Your Chinese Astrology, "Chinese Ghost Festival."

30 For a detailed introduction to the origins of ghost festivals in Buddhism and Daoism, and their celebration by ordinary people, see Teiser, *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China*.

31 K. Yu, "Making a Malefactor a Benefactor."

32 Wolf, *Religion and Ritual in Chinese Society*.

33 Katz, *Divine Justice*, 27.

one's present happiness or suffering may result from the good or evil deeds performed by the same soul in a previous life.

In China, the worship or veneration of ancestors is often centered on their gravesites, the tablets (*paiwei* 牌位) inscribed with their names, and the lineage recording book (*jiapu* 家谱) that lists the names of people belonging to different generations and describes lineage ties. The activities associated with the tablets of ancestors often take place in the household, or in the temple of the ancestors (*citang* 祠堂). Some households set up an altar bearing tablets inscribed with the names of deceased family members and ancestors. Family members, often led by males, worship their ancestors at the altar. This ritual practice echoes the two important concepts in traditional Chinese culture: solidarity and filial piety. People commemorate their ancestors on several occasions throughout the year, including daily worship, the Ghost Festival, and the first and fifteenth days of every month. Incense is often offered for ancestors in the incense pot at the altar. Most of the time, people prepare full meals or the favorite dishes of ancestors and serve them with bowls and chopsticks and rice, noodles, and wine as if they were living kinsmen. These behaviors show filial piety and respect to the deceased. After the ritual, the whole family shares the meal after the ancestors have been allowed to finish.³⁴

Another type of ancestor worship or veneration is paying visits to their gravesites (*shangfen* 上坟). People show respect for their ancestors by offering food, burning incense and paper money, and sweeping the tombs.³⁵ Also, there are some differences in ancestor worship or veneration between mainland China and Taiwan. It is more frequently practiced and also treated with much more gravity in Taiwan. Taiwanese people are more likely to believe in the existence of ancestral spirits. Nearly 73 percent of Taiwanese believe they can get ancestral blessings if they worship their ancestors at certain times, and almost 88 percent of people pray to ancestral spirits, according to the 2009 Taiwan Social Change Survey. In contrast, only 2.9 percent of mainland Chinese said they prayed to ancestral spirits for protection or a blessing, although 72.4 percent of them had visited ancestors' graves during the previous 12 months.³⁶ Yet, we cannot tell for sure whether people in mainland China or Taiwan are honoring the real spirits of their ancestors or simply memorializing the dead by conducting the ritual practices. Very

often, people cannot articulate why they perform these rituals, or why they perform them in a certain way. They do it because it is a Chinese tradition: "our ancestors did it this way."³⁷

The worship of local deities is another type of communal folk religion. In traditional Chinese folk religion, there are many gods. Different gods may affect different aspects of life, and they may have specialized areas of efficacious expertise.³⁸ For example, earth gods help to reinforce community boundaries and solidarity among villagers. Ferry gods and bridge gods are common in places where rivers, streams, and canals are numerous, and they protect people from dying by water. In general, gods are believed to uphold society's moral order.³⁹ Indeed, a whole judicial system can be derived from the belief that gods control all human affairs in this life and the next, including health and wealth. Some gods are believed to record the good and evil deeds of the living, some respond to prayers for intervention, and others administer justice in the underworld. These beliefs are reflected in sayings such as "the gods hover three feet above one's head" (*jutou san-chi you shenming* 举头三尺有神明) and "people do deeds under heaven's [watchful] eye" (*renzaizuo tianzaikan* 人在做天在看).⁴⁰ Building temples for gods is believed to be a way to please them. For each temple, there is always one principal god who has an established reputation for answering the prayers of worshippers. Sometimes people build a new temple for a newly recognized god, or associate the god with an existing temple. Very often, news of the miraculous ability of a god spreads quickly and attracts many people to worship that god.⁴¹ In this case, an individual form of folk religion drives the formation of a communal type of folk religion. For example, in a small village in Hebei Province, a spirit-medium was believed to be able to cure people in the name of the goddess Silkworm Mother (*Cangu nainai* 蚕姑奶奶). The believers then built a Silkworm Mother Temple as a way to express gratitude. The temple later on became a community temple that attracted visitors from nearby villages.⁴²

Some temples are built for deified historical figures or legendary heroes, such as individuals or groups who accomplished great deeds for the local community or even the nation. They may have helped in constructing dams,

34 Weller, *Unities and Diversities in Chinese Religion*.

35 China Highlights, "Qingming Festival."

36 Yang and Hu, "Mapping Chinese Folk Religion in Mainland China and Taiwan."

37 Weller, "Global Religious Changes and Civil Life In Two Chinese Societies."

38 Chau, *Miraculous Response*, 66.

39 Weller, *Unities and Diversities in Chinese Religion*.

40 Katz, *Divine Justice*.

41 C. K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society*.

42 L. Fan, "Popular Religion in Contemporary China."

defending the community against banditry and invaders, or bringing relief to a community plagued by a natural or man-made crisis. In a word, they have contributed greatly to the community good. The community builds them a temple or adds them into a pre-existing temple as a way of expressing gratitude. It is believed that a man of unusual virtue or ability would become, after death, a spirit of extraordinary prowess, capable of performing a variety of miracles. The deified hero can enter the daily life of ordinary people by responding to their prayers. The legends about how the deified hero has cured sickness, brought prosperity, or provided an heir in accord with people's requests are what keep the deified hero active in the life of ordinary people. Otherwise, the group memory of the magic of the hero would gradually fade away, and the hero would be forgotten.

Temple fairs (*miaohui* 庙会) are regular community gatherings to worship the principal god of that temple (Photo 10). They are particularly common in the countryside of north China. Villagers as a community hold a fair to express their gratitude to the god for his reputed efficaciousness in answering prayers or bringing miraculous benefits to the worshippers. A committee of local leaders is often in charge of holding the fair and raises funds from fellow villagers. Temple fairs are frequently held in winter, when farmers are not busy with farm work. They usually last for three to five days and attract thousands of visitors. The popularity of a temple is often closely related to the reputation of its principal god. During the fair, sacrificial rites are conducted in the temple and followed by several kinds of social activities inside and nearby the temple. The evening before the fair begins, the villagers worship the god in the temple by burning incense and offering a feast and lamp-oil money. A community play by a hired troupe is also part of the conventional worship, which is held on the stage inside the temple. Individual visitors burn incense and candles and kneel down in the temple as a way to express gratitude to the god. This kind of worship is better known as *huanyuan* 还愿. People make a wish before the god, vowing to come again to worship and offer sacrifice if the wish comes true. People can make various requests to the god, such as to cure an illness, illuminate a problem, bring good fortune to the family, or keep misfortune at bay.⁴³ Besides the religious worship, there are a number of temporary stalls where visitors can buy utensils, hardware, toys, food, farm tools, and other goods. There are also other forms of entertainment, such as peep shows, puppet shows, magic shows, acrobatic and

boxing performances, and also stalls for gambling and fortunetelling.

Apart from regular worship in the temple, religious observances are also held when the community is in crisis due to natural or human causes, such as droughts, floods, locust devastation, epidemics, looting, and destruction by civil war soldiers. For example, if the village suffers from a long drought, which is very common in northern China, villagers will offer sacrifices to gods that control rain, such as the dragon gods (*longwang* 龙王). The worship is often performed by villagers who carry the rain god through the streets to the accompaniment of religious music played by a group of Daoist and Buddhist musicians. Sometimes villagers may hire a troupe to give a play as a way to please the dragon gods in order to induce them to send some rain.

Folk religion is an all-encompassing category that includes many different locally varied beliefs and practices. Three major types of Chinese folk religion may be distinguished, namely, communal, sectarian, and individual folk religions.⁴⁴ Communal folk religion refers to beliefs and ritual activities based in the local community. It includes the worship of local deities such as the earth god (*tudi* 土地), the city god (*chenghuang* 城隍), the seafaring goddess Mazu 妈祖, ancestor worship, and some gods known only to the locals. Communal folk religion plays an important role in enhancing solidarity and collective cohesion.⁴⁵ Ancestor worship serves as an effective social bond for a kinship group. It creates a sense of the continuity in lineage that connects family or relatives beyond two or three generations. It is believed that those who had the same ancestors are trustworthy. Thus, people prefer to loan money to others with the same family name.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, worship of the local deity is an integral part of traditional community life (Photo 11). Temples serve as centers for communal religious life where people can gather for temple festivals, collective celebrations of other festival occasions, and mass religious observances during public crises.⁴⁷ In contemporary China, local temples can also provide a moral framework in which officials can be sanctioned for their performance.⁴⁸

43 Chau, *Miraculous Response*, 242.

44 Yang and Hu, "Mapping Chinese Folk Religion in Mainland China and Taiwan."

45 Yang and Hu, "Mapping Chinese Folk Religion in Mainland China and Taiwan."

46 Weller, "Global Religious Changes and Civil Life In Two Chinese Societies."

47 C. K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society*, 81.

48 Tsai, *Accountability without Democracy*.



PHOTO 10 Sending off the royal boat during a ceremony at Shuimei Temple in Zhongshan Village (Haicang District of Xiamen).
CREDIT: HENRY LIU.

Sectarian folk religion includes an organizational structure beyond local boundaries, such as Yiguandao 一贯道 (Way of pervading unity), Bailianjiao 白莲教 (White lotus teaching), and Tiandijiao 天帝教 (Heavenly thearch teaching). Upon the founding of the PRC, sectarian folk religions were suppressed as counterrevolutionary organizations (*fandong huidaomen* 反动会道门).⁴⁹ Beginning in the 1980s, some sectarian folk religions have re-emerged in the name of Qigong, especially those that claim lineages. Since 1999, the sectarian Qigong have been banned as “evil cults” (*xiejiao* 邪教). The following paragraphs mainly introduce the beliefs and practices of individual and communal types of folk religion; Yiguandao is discussed in the section on black-market religions.

Of the three varieties of folk religion, individual folk religion is the least developed in its organization and belief system. It comprises supernatural beliefs and practices that are independent of any collectivity, including fortune-telling, palm reading, *fengshui* 风水, wearing

a red waist belt in one’s zodiac year of birth, worshipping the God of Wealth (*Caishen* 财神), hanging mirrors (*aicao* 艾草) at home or in the workplace, and wearing jade or gold. For example, some people may hire geomancers to locate a good business site, or change the location of doors and windows in order to benefit from good *fengshui*.⁵⁰ Individual folk religion also includes practices that are often not considered religious by ordinary people.

It is hard to estimate the number of folk religion adherents due to its unorganized nature. According to the 2007 Chinese Spiritual Life Survey, only 11.8 percent of the respondents self-identified with folk religion. However, the percentage of people who actually practiced it was rather high. About 51.9 percent of people had engaged in at least one kind of folk religious practice in the previous 12 months. About 30 percent of people would wear a red garment, ribbon, or belt in the zodiac year of birth; 18.2 percent had engaged in *fengshui* practices, and 9.8

49 Yang and Hu, “Mapping Chinese Folk Religion in Mainland China and Taiwan,” 508–509.

50 Yang and Hu, “Mapping Chinese Folk Religion in Mainland China and Taiwan,” 509.



PHOTO 11 The nine challenges presented during the Khorchi shaman's ordination, Tongning City, Inner Mongolia.
CREDIT: BAIGULA DAI.

percent participated in fortune-telling. Also, 24.4 percent of people believed in the existence of at least one kind of supernatural being, either ancestral spirits, ghosts, or the God of Wealth. The proportion varied according to the type of supernatural being. Only 5 percent of respondents believed with certainty in the existence of ghosts. By contrast, 16 percent fully believed in the existence of ancestral spirits. As for gods, as many as 10 percent of respondents were certain of the existence of Laotianye 老天爷 [God of Heaven].

In mainland China, females are more actively engaged in practicing folk religion and more likely to believe in the existence of supernatural beings, including ghosts, the God of Heaven, ancestral spirits, and the God of Wealth. Approximately 60 percent of the folk religion adherents who responded to the 2007 CSLS were adult females. They were also more likely to practice some individual form of folk religion practices. For example, females are more active in paying visits to temples or placing folk-religious objects in workplaces. No gender difference is found in terms of practicing *fengshui*. However, males are more actively engaged in ancestor worship than females in mainland

China, which is consistent with the teaching of the five constant virtues in traditional Chinese culture.

Besides the gender difference, older people and less educated people tend to engage more in the communal variety of folk religion practices, such as paying visits to temples. According to the 2007 Chinese Spiritual Life Survey data, those who believe in ancestral spirits and practice ancestor worship (Table 7), and those who believe in the God of Wealth (Table 8) are the most prevalent. The God of Wealth may not be the most prominent god in traditional folk religion. However, this god has gained popularity during the market transition in the economic era. The worshippers of the God of Wealth believe that the worship of this god will bring prosperity. Meanwhile, this god will watch their economic behaviors, rewarding the good and punishing the bad. The embodied form of this god varies, including the armed marshal or the cultured Mandarin official. The former type is often worshipped by soldiers, police, or triad members; the latter is commonly worshipped by bureaucrats and office workers.

According to the 2007 CSLS, about 18 percent of respondents were ancestor worshippers, which corresponded

TABLE 7 *Demographic characteristics of Ancestor Worshipers and others (%)*

	Ancestor Worshippers	Others
Age group**		
16–59	88.1	90.9
60 or above	11.9	9.1
Gender***		
Male	41.5	49.0
Female	58.5	51.0
Educational attainment***		
Middle school or below	65.3	61.0
High/vocational school	28.1	27.3
College or above (including some college)	6.6	11.7
Residential area***		
Urban	30.0	38.5
Rural	70.0	61.6
Political affiliation***		
CCP	3.7	6.0
CCYL	7.7	11.2
Others	88.7	82.8
Total number of cases	1,278	5,743

Notes: (1) CCP: Chinese Communist Party. CCYL: Chinese Communist Youth League; (2) Numbers do not always add up to 100 due to rounding; (3) two-tailed *t*-test ****p*<.001 ***p*<.01 **p*<.05.

TABLE 8 *Demographic characteristics of God of wealth believers and others (%)*

	God of wealth believers	Others
Age group		
16–59	90.7	90.3
60 or above	9.3	9.7
Gender**		
Male	44.3	48.6
Female	55.8	51.4
Educational attainment		
Middle school or below	61.5	61.8
High/vocational school	29.3	26.9
College or above (including some college)	9.2	11.2
Residential area		
Urban	35.0	37.5
Rural	65.0	62.5
Political affiliation		
CCP	4.8	5.8
CCYL	11.0	10.4
Others	84.2	83.8
Total number of cases	1,552	5,469

Notes: (1) CCP: Chinese Communist Party. CCYL: Chinese Communist Youth League; (2) Numbers do not always add up to 100 due to rounding; (3) two-tailed *t*-test ****p*<.001 ***p*<.01 **p*<.05.

to roughly 200 million adults in 2010. Approximately 22 percent of respondents believed in the existence of the God of Wealth or had images or statues of the God of Wealth at home or in the workplace. This corresponded to roughly 245 million adults in China in 2010. About 88 percent of ancestor worshippers were below the age of 60, as were more than 90 percent of believers in the God of Wealth.

In terms of educational attainment, around 65 percent of ancestor worshippers and believers in the God of Wealth had at most a middle school education, a proportion that is significantly higher than among other respondents. Among the ancestor worshippers, about 28 percent had a high school or vocational school education, and less than 7 percent went to college. Among those who believe in the God of Wealth, about 29 percent attended high school or vocational school, and 9.2 percent had a college education. A significantly higher proportion of ancestor worshippers and believers in the God of Wealth lived in

rural areas. Rural residents accounted for about 70 percent of ancestor worshippers and 65 percent of believers in the God of Wealth; these proportions are much higher than the proportion of rural residents in the general population. Among ancestor worshippers, about 4 percent were CCP members, and about 8 percent were members of the CCYL. Among believers in the God of Wealth, about 5 percent were members of the CCP, and about 11 percent were CCYL members.

3. House Churches

Protestant churches that are not affiliated with the Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee and the Christian Council are usually called *jiating jiaohui* 家庭教会, which literally means “home churches” or “family churches” but is usually translated as “house churches” in English. These churches used to be limited to small gatherings at people’s

homes, but since around the year 2000 some large congregations with hundreds or even thousands of people have emerged, yet they have continued to self-identify as house churches. The party-state cracked down on house churches severely in the 1980s and 1990s, including jailing their leaders, confiscating properties, and dispersing gatherings of believers. In the new century, however, most house churches have been able to operate with only occasional interference from the authorities. They are no longer in the underground per se, as the police and other government agencies know about these house churches. However, they are not legal either, as they are not registered with the government nor the TSPM/CCC. They operate in the gray market of religion.

The origins of the house churches lie in the 1950s. The TSPM National Committee, which was formally established in 1954, included various denominations and independent churches. Many Protestant leaders who refused to join the TSPM were jailed. One such leader was Wang Mingdao 王明道 (1900–1991), who was the founding pastor of the Peking Christian Tabernacle 基督徒会堂, formed in 1935. Wang openly spoke against joining the TSPM. In an article he published in June 1955 in the church's magazine *Spiritual Food Quarterly* 灵食季刊, entitled "We Are for the Faith" (*Women shi weilie xinyang* 我们是为了信仰), he accused leaders of the TSPM as theological liberals who were actually nonbelievers, and declared that true Christians who upheld the fundamental beliefs of Christianity could not join the organization of nonbelievers. This refusal to join the TSPM has become the common ground of the house church movement in contemporary China. Wang Mingdao was jailed in August 1955 and released a year later after making a forced confession, which he later recanted. He was rearrested in 1958 and jailed until 1980. Other well-known leaders who refused to join the TSPM include Yuan Xiangchen 袁相忱 (Allen Yuan, 1914–2005) in Beijing, who was jailed between 1958 and 1979, and Lin Xiangao 林献羔 (Samuel Lamb, 1924–2013) in Guangzhou, who was jailed between 1955 and 1978. After they were released, they still refused to join the TSPM and held gatherings at their homes for Bible study and worship services, which were among the first urban house churches in the reform era.

In 1958, all denominations were disbanded and all Christians were ordered to participate in the union worship service (*lianhe libai* 联合礼拜) under the TSPM. In response, many Christians stopped attending church. Some of those Christians who retained the faith began gathering for worship at private homes or in the wilderness. During the Cultural Revolution, all churches were closed down, but house churches continued to grow as an underground

movement. After 1979, many Christians resurfaced to attend the churches that were reopened under TSPM committees, but many more refused to join the TSPM-affiliated churches and carried on the house church movement. In the 1980s and 1990s, along with the independent house churches in Beijing, Guangzhou, Shanghai, Fuzhou, and other big cities, house churches flourished in the rural areas. Several house church networks or prototype denominations emerged in Henan, Anhui, and Zhejiang. Amid persecution, they actively evangelized in many parts of China, including Heilongjiang Province in the northeast and Yunnan Province in the southwest.⁵¹ For example, the China Gospel Fellowship (*Zhonghua fuyin tuanqi* 中华福音团契), a Pentecostal-like church network founded in Henan Province in the 1980s, is said to have about two million followers today.⁵² Another example, Fangcheng Fellowship (*Fangcheng tuanqi* 方城团契), which also originated in Henan, has an estimated 10 million members.⁵³ In the 1990s and 2000s, many new house churches emerged in the cities and attracted many college students and young professionals. Normally they rent an apartment or business office and transform it into a place of worship. In many cases there are few formal relationships between these churches. Within the churches, the organizational networks are horizontal and church governance is more democratic than in the other types of churches. A good example is the Beijing Shouwang Church (*Shouwang jiaohui* 守望教会), which drew up its own charter and held three consecutive elder elections and member assemblies.⁵⁴ A more recent example is the Chengdu Early Rain Blessings Reform Church (*Qiuyu zhi fu quizheng jiaohui* 秋雨之福归正教会). Under the leadership of Pastor Wang Yi 王怡, this church has developed into a Presbyterian denomination with several other churches in Chengdu and elsewhere.⁵⁵

Some house churches would like to become legal without joining the TSPM. For example, the Beijing Shouwang Church submitted an application in 2005 to the RAB of the Haidian District of Beijing Municipality. However, the authorities insisted that the church had to join the TSPM, or its ministers had to be certified by the TSPM. Following the position articulated by Wang Mingdao in 1955, the Shouwang Church refused to compromise on the principle of not joining the TSPM. Thereafter, the authorities made multiple attempts to disband the church, including

51 Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*.

52 Y. Liu, "Pentecostal-style Christians in the 'Galilee of China,'" 160.

53 Shaw, *Global Awakening*, 177.

54 Ying, Yuan, and Lau, "Striving to Build Civic Communities."

55 I. Johnson, *Souls of China*.

sending in police and other agents to stop worship services, evicting the congregation from its rented hall in an office building, and forcing the building's owner to forfeit the lease. In 2011, the church gathered donations and purchased halls in another office building, but the authorities ordered the real estate developer not to hand over the keys to the church. Having failed to secure a rental space or occupy the property they had purchased, church leaders called members to gather in a public plaza for Sunday worship services. The authorities responded by arresting house church leaders and sending hundreds of police to guard the plaza. The standoff started on April 10, 2011, and continues today. Senior pastor Jin Tianming 金天明 has been under *de facto* house arrest since then.

At present, most house churches continue to gather at people's houses or apartments. Many of the gatherings also move around to avoid harassment from the authorities or for the convenience of participants. When a house gathering grows too big for its physical facilities, it divides into two or more groups, just as living cells divide and grow. House churches thus have grown fast. For example, informed researchers and church leaders say that there are at least two to three thousand cell-like house churches in Beijing alone. Some of the small house churches have merged to form large congregations and subsequently moved into large halls in office buildings, such as the Beijing Shouwang Church and the Chengdu Early Rain Blessings Reformed Church.

There are many house church congregations as well as small-cell house churches in various cities throughout China. However, because of their semi-legal or illegal status, it is very difficult to know how many house churches exist and how many house church Christians are in China today. Thus we did not attempt to map house churches or profile the house church Christians in this atlas.

4. Underground Catholic Churches

Catholic churches outside the official system are often called "underground churches" (*dixia jiaohui* 地下教会). In the early 1950s, many Catholic clergy refused to collaborate with the Chinese Communist party-state and remained loyal to the Vatican. They operated secretly, even during the Cultural Revolution. In the era of "Reform and Opening Up" (*gaige kaifang* 改革开放), marked by an increase in economic and social exchanges with other countries, many Catholics resurfaced, but many others have refused to join the China Catholic Patriotic Association, as the Vatican disapproves of it. Meanwhile, in the beginning of the 1980s, Fan Xueyan 范学淹 (1907–1992),

an underground bishop, ordained new bishops without Vatican preapproval. After receiving a pardon from the Vatican, he organized the churches outside the CCPA and allowed them to establish clandestine seminaries and perform new ordinations without direct approval from the Holy See. In 1989, an underground Catholic Bishops Conference operated alongside the official CCPA/BCCCC. The party-state cracked down on the underground bishops and priests severely, including jailing, placing them under house arrest, or putting them in secret detention. Interestingly, it was reported that the underground bishops managed to hold a conference in a prison. Therefore, up until the end of the twentieth century, underground Catholics have remained in the black market of religion. However, in recent years, the suppression has become less severe and more sporadic, so that many underground clergy are able to conduct Mass and perform the sacraments with fewer disturbances by the authorities.

The underground churches' relations with the official churches are complicated and vary in different regions. In fact, most of the aboveground bishops have secretly sought and obtained the approval of the Holy See, even though the party-state disapproves of any organizational connection with the Vatican. Some bishops serve both the aboveground and underground churches. Therefore, significant segments of the red and black markets have turned gray, acquiring an ambiguous legal status.

In 2007, Pope Benedict XVI sent a letter to Catholics in the PRC urging reconciliation between the underground and aboveground churches.⁵⁶ One source of contention between the aboveground and underground churches is the demarcation of dioceses. In 1946, the Vatican established 137 dioceses in China, an arrangement that the underground churches continue to honor. However, the aboveground churches have redrawn diocese borders according to the administrative districts newly adjusted by the PRC. Since 1998, there have been 115 dioceses in the CCPA/BCCCC. The diocese boundaries of the underground and aboveground churches often overlap, and some regions are under the jurisdiction of two bishops. This has led to frequent chaos and constant conflict between the aboveground and underground churches.⁵⁷ Pope Benedict's letter was intended to reduce such conflicts. However, these territorial problems persist.

Since 2013, under the leadership of Pope Francis, the Vatican has made various efforts to improve its relationship with the PRC. The Vatican has expressed its

56 Benedict XVI, "Letter of the Holy Father."

57 S. Zhang, "The Challenges that China's Churches Face in a Changing Society."

willingness to transfer its diplomatic relations from the Republic of China in Taiwan to the People's Republic of China. The latest reports indicate that Beijing and the Vatican have moved closer in their negotiations over the procedure to select bishops. If this obstacle can be overcome, the PRC and the Vatican will establish a formal diplomatic relationship, which could mean the dissolution of the underground churches.

5. Mao Cult

The Mao cult refers to both the personality cult of Mao expressed in political form and the worship of Mao as a god in a form of Chinese traditional folk religion. Mao Zedong 毛泽东 (1893–1976) was the supreme leader of the CCP from 1935 until his death in 1976. He is popularly known as Chairman Mao (*Mao zhuxi* 毛主席) because he held the position of chairman (*zhuxi* 主席) of the CCP Center since the 1940s and became the first chairman of the PRC, an office that is usually mistranslated as “president” in English. In the 1940s and 1950s, Chairman Mao was depicted in Communist media as a wise statesman, an astute military leader, and a great teacher, in a fashion similar to the representations of Lenin in the early 1920s Soviet Union. After the founding of the PRC, Mao was popularly deified as the Great Savior of the People (*renmin de dajixing* 人民的大救星). In the 1960s, he was glorified as the Great Teacher (*weida de daoshi* 伟大的导师), the Great Leader (*weida de lingxiu* 伟大的领袖), the Great Supreme Commander (*weida de tongshuai* 伟大的统帅), and the Great Helmsman (*weida de duoshou* 伟大的舵手). Hundreds of millions of Chinese people appeared to be genuinely venerating Mao as a great teacher, statesman, strategist, philosopher, poet, national hero, and liberator of the people. Statues and paintings of Mao depicting him as a strong, healthy, ageless superman appeared in public places and private households throughout the country (Photo 12).

Beginning in 1964, *Quotations from Chairman Mao* (*Mao zhuxi yulu* 毛主席语录), popularly known as the “Little Red Book” because of its size and red cover, was widely distributed. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) increasingly used the book in meetings to bolster Mao's personality cult. The army became the driving force behind the campaign to study Mao's *Quotations*. During the 1960s, soldiers, workers, and farmers were required to gather and study Mao's sayings frequently. Schools began the day by chanting in unison “Long live Chairman Mao” (*Mao zhuxi wansui* 毛主席万岁). With such intense, ritualized attention to Mao's words, the little red books became magical

tokens, fetishized objects of power.⁵⁸ Soldiers, workers, farmers, teachers, students, and people of all walks of life often gathered to study Mao's quotations, danced to express loyalty toward Mao, and even made daily morning invocations and evening confessions in front of Mao's statue or portrait. There were two repeated propaganda campaigns during Mao's time: the “Three Loyalties” (*sanzhongyu* 三忠于) and the “Four Boundlesses” (*siwuxian* 四无限), namely boundless worship of, boundless love for, boundless belief in, and boundless loyalty to Chairman Mao, Mao Zedong Thought, and Mao's proletarian revolution route. During the Cultural Revolution, many school-age youths became Red Guards (*hongweibing* 红卫兵), who were zealots of the Mao personality cult. After Mao's death in 1976, a mausoleum was built in the middle of the Tiananmen Square and his embalmed body was placed in a crystal sarcophagus. Tiananmen Square has thus replaced the adjacent Imperial Palace of the Forbidden City as the metaphorical center of China, a shrine to the great leader of the new China and his ideas and authority.⁵⁹

In the era of reform that began in the late 1970s, the CCP abolished many of the practices of the personality cult, but continues to uphold Mao's thought as part of the official ideology. Meanwhile, the political personality cult has evolved into folk religious beliefs and practices among the masses of people.⁶⁰ Nowadays, the popular worship of Mao can be categorized into two types: collective rituals and individual devotions. The objects, rituals, rhetorics, and spaces used in Mao's time have been reappropriated by ordinary people for obtaining personal blessings or curing diseases. Many rural families follow the custom of posting portraits of Chairman Mao on the wall in the house as a way to position him above other deities.⁶¹

A folk religious temple in Mianyang, Sichuan Province, was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. In 1995, the Hong'en Temple 红恩寺 [Red benevolence temple] was constructed on the site of the old temple. Initially the temple builders, an elderly couple, simply wanted to provide a temple for the traditional deities. Then, the wife told people, she had a dream in 2006, in which Mao appeared and told her that he was in need of a shelter. Hence she began to raise money to build a statue of Mao. This temple houses not only statues of traditional Chinese folk deities such as bodhisattvas and the God of Wealth, but also statues of Chairman Mao, Premier Zhou Enlai

58 Zuo, “Political Religion.”

59 Calhoun, “Tiananmen, Television and the Public Sphere.”

60 Chau, “Modalities of Doing Religion and Ritual Polytypy”; Frolic, *Mao's People*, 80.

61 Ministry of Tofu, “World Press Photo Winner.”



PHOTO 12
A statue of Mao Zedong at Taiqing
Temple (Lanzhou, Gansu).
CREDIT: NAILA ALTHAGAFI.

周恩来, and Marshal Zhu De 朱德, who were the top three leaders of the CCP from the founding of the PRC until their death in the 1970s. The temple also has poster portraits of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin hanging on the wall, along with other deities. On the door frame of the main hall dedicated to Chairman Mao, an inscription reads, “The true dragon heaven’s son, fight for common wealth for all under heaven, long live Chairman Mao.”⁶² The golden statue of Mao was covered in red cloth, with a red sun rising above his head to symbolize the cosmic

power that legitimizes Mao’s superior being and leadership. The pilgrims who come to visit this temple include locals as well as travelers from other provinces, old and young people, businessmen as well as farmers.

Mao worshippers express their devotion in various ways. Besides Mao temples and commemoration rituals, many also worship Mao’s statue or portrait or wear Mao badges and charms. According to the 2007 Chinese Spiritual Life Survey, about 11 percent of respondents had a statue or portrait of Mao at home, and more than 3 percent of respondents had worn Mao badges or charms in the past year, corresponding to 127 million and 37 million

62 M. Zhu, ““Is It Respectful to Build Such a Statue for Mao?”.

TABLE 9 *Demographic characteristics of people keeping a statue or portrait of Mao at home and others (%)*

	Statue/portrait of Mao at home	Others
Age group***		
16–59	84.0	91.2
60 or above	16.0	8.8
Gender		
Male	46.9	47.7
Female	53.1	52.3
Educational attainment**		
Middle school or below	65.9	61.2
High/vocational school	26.3	27.6
College or above (including some college)	7.8	11.2
Residential area***		
Urban	22.0	38.9
Rural	78.0	61.2
Political affiliation***		
CCP	7.1	5.4
CCYL	18.7	9.5
Others	74.3	85.1
<i>Total number of cases</i>	<i>804</i>	<i>6,217</i>

Notes: (1) CCP: Chinese Communist Party. CCYL: Chinese Communist Youth League; (2) Numbers do not always add up to 100 due to rounding; (3) two-tailed *t*-test ****p*<.001 ***p*<.01 **p*<.05.

TABLE 10 *Demographic characteristics of people wearing Mao-related accessories and others (%)*

	Wearing Mao-related accessories	Others
Age group***		
16–59	72.4	91.0
60 or above	27.6	9.0
Gender		
Male	45.9	47.7
Female	54.1	52.3
Educational attainment**		
Middle school or below	68.3	61.5
High/vocational school	28.4	27.4
College or above (including some college)	3.3	11.0
Residential area***		
Urban	7.2	37.9
Rural	92.8	62.1
Political affiliation***		
CCP	13.0	5.3
CCYL	20.1	10.2
Others	66.9	84.5
<i>Total number of cases</i>	<i>233</i>	<i>6,788</i>

Notes: (1) CCP: Chinese Communist Party. CCYL: Chinese Communist Youth League; (2) Numbers do not always add up to 100 due to rounding; (3) two-tailed *t*-test ****p*<.001 ***p*<.01 **p*<.05.

Chinese adults, respectively.⁶³ The demographic characteristics of Mao worshippers are summarized in Tables 9 and 10.

Among persons who kept a Mao image at home, 16 percent were age 60 or older; the proportion of elderly persons was even higher among those who wore a Mao-related accessory, at 27.6 percent; by contrast, only 9 percent of other

respondents were age 60 or older. Persons who engaged in these Mao-related practices were also more likely to be less educated than the other respondents, and more likely to live in rural areas. The gender difference between Mao worshippers and the other respondents is not statistically significant. Not surprisingly, there are significantly more CCP and CCYL members among the Mao worshippers.

63 National Bureau of Statistics of China, "Statistical Communiqué on the Major Data of the Sixth Census."

The Black Market: Illegal Religions

In the 1950s, the PRC banned religious groups outside the five recognized religions as reactionary organizations (*fandong huidaomen* 反动会道门). Some religious groups that formed later were labeled as counterrevolutionary organizations (*fangeming zuzhi* 反革命组织). Although all religions outside the associations of the five officially recognized religions are considered illegal, most of them have actually existed and operated in the gray market of legally ambiguous religions. Since the 1990s, however, the Ministry of Public Security has maintained a list of a select number of illegal religious groups that have been designated as “evil cults” (*xiejiao* 邪教). These groups have been targets of systematic and severe crackdowns.

The so-called evil cults operate under conditions of explicit illegality and are therefore regarded as comprising the black market of religion in China. This section contains brief descriptions of many religious groups on the official list of evil cults. In our presentation, we strive to overcome three limitations. The first is a lack of scholarship on these groups, many of whom are documented only in media coverage or in informal, anecdotal accounts in magazines or on the internet. Where possible, we reference scholarly sources in our descriptions. In some cases, however, little or no information is available in the scholarly record, and even informal descriptions may be unavailable in English. In those cases, we draw from internet sources, including those written in Chinese from Baidu and Baike. In the following account, we risk describing the religious groups imperfectly in the hope that presenting these descriptions in an academic outlet will stimulate more scholarly research as well as ongoing critical discussion.

The second limitation relates to the risks inherent in categorizing and describing politically and socially marginalized groups. We sometimes use names of religious groups that were coined not by the groups themselves but by their antagonists. For instance, the so-called Shouters (*Huhan pai* 呼喊派) are a diffuse array of practitioners who have been lumped together by government officials who speak publicly about their actions. The term “Shouters” is, in fact, regarded as pejorative by many to whom the label is applied. Here we use “Shouters” not to reify their existence as a homogenous religious group or network but to identify a political category of people who are collectively affected by statements and regulations directed at “Shouters.” As such, we recognize the political implications of these terms, yet hope to divorce them from pejorative value judgements leveled at the people from

the outside. Moreover, given the social scientific nature of this atlas, we do not assess the theological orthodoxy or heresy of black-market sects related to Christianity. Other Christians inside and outside China may regard some groups as heretical and some as orthodox. Because the “Shouters” were the first group designated as a counter-revolutionary group or an evil cult since the end of the Cultural Revolution, and also because several later groups were splinter groups from the early “Shouters,” they will be described first below, followed by the other groups in alphabetical order.

A third limitation is the necessarily incomplete nature of this account. There are more religious groups that operate illegally than those listed here, and the religious groups that we do describe are, in reality, often divided into multiple networks with differences that are meaningful and important to insiders. It is for this reason that we use the political category of *xiejiao* as a starting point. We intend the following descriptions to be exploratory and phenomenological rather than exhaustive or conclusive.

1. The Shouters (*Huhan pai* 呼喊派)

The Shouters have a complicated and contested history. The term has been associated with the Local Church (*Difang Jiaohui* 地方教会 or *zhaohui* 召会) movement led by Watchman Nee (Ni Tuosheng 倪柝声, 1903–1972) and Witness Lee (Li Changshou 李常受, 1905–1997), which follows what they understand to be the New Testament practice of having one church per city. However, the Local Church congregations have actively distanced themselves from the Shouters and the actions attributed to them. Witness Lee advocated “calling on the name of the Lord Jesus” during the worship gathering, which the followers believe is following the Bible (e.g., Romans 10:13).¹ “Shouters” is actually a pejorative term derived by changing “callers” (*huqiu* 呼求) to “shouters” (*huhan* 呼喊) to create an impression of being disruptive to social order. The pejorative label has been applied by the party-state with the support of the TSPM to various groups that may or may not be closely following the teachings of Witness Lee.

As soon as churches began to reopen for worship services in 1979, the TSPM was restored and began to establish local committees. However, as described above in the

1 Lee, *The Subjective Truths in the Holy Scriptures*, 58.

section on the house churches, many Christians viewed TSPM as compromised in faith and no more than a tool of party-state control, and thus resisted it. When two representatives of the Zhejiang Province TSPM committee went to Dongyang County 东阳县 to set up a local TSPM committee, several hundred local Christians staged a peaceful demonstration, in fact a three-day outdoor prayer meeting near the place of the TSPM meeting, on February 14–16, 1982. Soon after the clash between TSPM officials and those Christians, the police raided their meeting places and detained many people in Dongyang and the neighboring Yiwu County 义乌市.² Thereafter, the provincial and national TSPM committees reported to the authorities that it was the “Shouters Sect” (*Huhan pai* 呼喊派) that instigated the mass confrontation in Dongyang and Yiwu and that the sect followed heretical teachings of Witness Lee.³

Witness Lee, a close coworker with Watchman Nee in China in the 1930s and 1940s, was sent by Nee and other coworkers to Taiwan in 1949 to continue the ministry there; he migrated to the United States in 1962, founded the Living Stream Ministry in 1965 to publish Watchman Nee’s books and Witness Lee’s expositions of the Bible, and established a number of Local Churches in various places in the United States. Since the late 1970s, however, amid the anti-cult frenzy in the United States, Witness Lee and the Local Church have been criticized by anti-cult organizations for heretical teachings, authoritarian rule, and deviant practices.⁴ Even though these wrongful criticisms were refuted immediately by Lee and his followers, and later denounced by evangelical institutions such as Fuller Theological Seminary and *Christianity Today* magazine in 2006,⁵ the stigmatizing accusation of cultic heresy was adopted by the TSPM officials to justify the suppression of uncompliant Christians in Dongyang and Yiwu.

In 1983, the party-state officially labeled the “Shouters Sect” as a counterrevolutionary and heretical sect and began to crack down on the uncompliant Christians in Zhejiang and elsewhere who refused to join the TSPM. Many people were arrested and sentenced to prison terms. Two young men of the Local Churches in Dongyang and Yiwu were even sentenced to death or life imprisonment; they were released after serving more than 10 years in prison.

In 1995, the authorities adopted a new term, *xiejiao* 邪教 [evil cult], for the Shouters and other unruly religious sects.⁶ Some other black-market religious groups, such as the All Scope Church and the Established King movement, have adopted some of the teaching materials of Witness Lee but deviated in some aspects of beliefs and practices. However, the Shouters Sect label has been loosely applied to various groups throughout China. On the other hand, many Local Church congregations that deliberately follow Witness Lee’s teachings and practices⁷ have been operating in the gray market with only occasional harassment from the police.

2. All Scope Church (*Quanfanwei jiaohui* 全范围教会)

The All Scope Church has been categorized as a splinter sect originating from the Shouters.⁸ It was founded by Peter Xu Yongze 徐永泽 in the 1980s and has been reported under many English names: the All Range Church, the Total Scope Church, or the Born Again Movement;⁹ the Criers or the Word of Life Church;¹⁰ and the Crying Faction or the Holistic Church.¹¹

Xu began preaching in Henan Province in 1968, during the heyday of the Cultural Revolution when all religions were banned.¹² By the early 1980s, his group of followers was experiencing rapid growth. Their influence was expanding into other provinces including Sichuan, which became a major hub of the group. Xu was arrested and sentenced to forced labor camp in 1982, but he escaped and continued preaching. By 1988, the All Scope Church comprised over 3,000 churches, and Peter Xu had gained such popularity that he met with Billy Graham when the American evangelist visited China. Xu was imprisoned again between 1988 and 1991 and between 1997 and 2000. After his release in 2000, Xu left China for his own safety and settled in the United States. The church declined over the following years, but Xu himself continued to receive international attention from evangelicals. For instance, the American evangelical magazine *Christianity Today* ran

2 Chinese Christian Research Centre, *China Prayer Letter*, June 1982; Y. Huang, “The Clash Between Religious Freedom and Political Persecution.”

3 Jiang, “An Investigative Report on the Shouters.”

4 Spiritual Counterfeits Project, *The God-Men*.

5 Christianity Today, “Loose Cult Talk.”

6 Goossaert and Palmer, *The Religious Question in Modern China*.

7 For a brief introduction to the major beliefs and distinct practices of the Local Church, see J. Hu, “Spirituality and Spiritual Practice: Is the Local Church Pentecostal?”

8 Irons, “Chinese New Religions.”

9 Ma, “Police Crack Down on Underground ‘Religion.’”

10 Wesley, “Is the Chinese Church Predominantly Pentecostal?”

11 Amnesty International, *People’s Republic of China*.

12 Wesley, “Is the Chinese Church Predominantly Pentecostal?”

a story on the All Scope Church in 1998 in which they dismissed claims that the group was heretical.¹³

Followers of the All Scope Church emphasize that repentance and rebirth through Jesus Christ is the only means of obtaining eternal life.¹⁴ Believers have been labeled as charismatic due to their demonstrative worship services and have come under scrutiny for encouraging followers to cry frequently during worship (earning the nickname “the criers”). However, the group has also been characterized as noncharismatic on the basis of conversations with sect members.¹⁵ Although the All Scope Church emphasizes healing and the power of the Holy Spirit, they only rarely speak in tongues and do not practice prophecy. The church has a seven-point mission strategy that stresses evangelism, fellowship, perseverance in suffering, and the worldliness and illegitimacy of the TSPM.¹⁶

This church also has an intimate relationship with the South China Church (*Huanan jiaohui* 华南教会), which was established in 1990 by Gong Shengliang 龚胜亮, one of the core leaders of the All Scope Church.¹⁷ The mission of the South China Church was to establish a new kingdom of God. Followers believe in Christianizing the entire nation and culture. Part of that vision includes the controversial goal of overthrowing the party-state.

3. Church of the Almighty God (*Quannengshen jiaohui* 全能神教会)

The Church of the Almighty God is a Christianity-inspired sect that originated in the 1980s in northern China. It is also known as Eastern Lightning (*Dongfang shandian* 东方闪电), a name taken from Matthew 24:27: “For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.”¹⁸ Followers believe that Jesus’s most recent earthly incarnation was in the form of a Chinese woman with the surname Deng. The Church of the Almighty God has generated political tension by equating the Chinese government with the “dragon” in the New Testament book of Revelation. Its members have also been implicated in

a number of violent crimes, including kidnapping and murder. The Church of the Almighty God maintains a website where users can watch videos, purchase books, and chat online with a practitioner.¹⁹

The Church of the Almighty God includes the Bible in its canon along with its own sacred text, *The Word Appeared in Flesh* (*Hua zai roushen xianxian* 话在肉身显现). Followers believe this text records words uttered by the female Christ, and they regard it as authoritative.

The church’s texts present history as a series of epochs, “God’s six-thousand-year management plan,” in which God was revealed to humans in different ways.²⁰ In the first epoch, the Age of the Law, God (Jehovah) guided the children of Israel through the prophet Moses. In the second epoch, the Age of Grace, God (incarnated as Jesus Christ) died for the sins of humanity. Nevertheless, humankind remained sinful. In the final epoch, the Age of the Kingdom, God (now known as Almighty God and revealed through the female Christ) has returned to earth to help humans attain perfection. The sect’s three-era cosmology—as well as its equation of the Chinese Communist Party with the great red dragon of Revelation—is not new, but resembles that of some other heretical sects.²¹

The Church of the Almighty God has a hierarchical structure in which local leaders report to subregional and regional leaders, who in turn report to an inspector.²² At all levels and among the laity, followers are strongly encouraged to proselytize, a fact that has led to the rapid growth of the sect throughout China’s rural north. The founder of the Church of the Almighty God is reported to have moved to the United States.²³ A small group of followers in New York State manages the sect’s finances.²⁴

4. Cold Water Sect (*Lengshui jiao* 冷水教)

The group known as the Cold Water Sect was founded in 1988 by Huang Huanting 黄焕听 in Reshui Township 热水镇, Heping County 和平县, in northern Guangdong Province.²⁵ Huang was 70 years old when the movement was founded. It is said that she suffered from schizophrenia and came to believe in God while ill. After her

13 Morgan, “A Tale of China’s Two Churches.”

14 Wesley, “Is the Chinese Church Predominantly Pentecostal?”

15 Wesley, “Is the Chinese Church Predominantly Pentecostal?” 238.

16 Wesley, “Is the Chinese Church Predominantly Pentecostal?” 237.

17 Information for this section was obtained from Cnhubei.com, “Churches in South China.”

18 Xi, *Redeemed by Fire*, 226–227.

19 <http://www.holyspiritspeaks.org>.

20 Church of the Almighty God, “About Us.”

21 Dunn, “‘Cult,’ Church, and the CCP,” 101.

22 Dunn, “‘Cult,’ Church, and the CCP,” 101–102.

23 Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, 243.

24 Dunn, “‘Cult,’ Church, and the CCP,” 102.

25 Information for this description was obtained from Baidu Baike, “Cold Water Sect.”

recovery, she started preaching to others in Heping County. From there, the movement gained traction and spread to Lianping County 连平县 and other regions near Jiangxi Province until the movement had grown to more than 1,000 followers, with three churches and more than 10 gathering places. In 1991, however, the movement's growth was halted after a police crackdown in Daping Township 大坪镇 in Lianping County.

Followers of the Cold Water Sect believe that cold water is the blood of Father God (*Tian'aba* 天阿爸) and therefore has supernatural power. Cold water, they believe, has the potential to heal physical illness. The sick person needs no medication; simply drinking cold water is enough to cure disease. Furthermore, crops need no pesticides. An application of cold water is believed to keep pests at bay.

Worship is held on Sundays. Upon first meeting, believers consume a bowl of cold water. Followers are then reported to open the Bible and begin reading an arbitrarily selected page. They scan the pages until coming to the word "water," at which point they stop and read the entire page, believing they have been directed to do so by the Holy Spirit.

5. Dami Evangelism Association (*Dami xuanjiaohui* 达米宣教会)

The Dami Evangelism Association is a South Korean religious movement founded in the late 1980s by Li Changlin 李长林 (Korean: Lee Jang Rim 이장림). The movement first spread to mainland China in the early 1990s. Li prophesied that Christ would return on October 28, 1992, taking true believers into heaven and ushering in seven years of calamities for those left on earth. Christ would return again in 1999, issue a final judgment on the world, and bring about the end of human history in the year 2000.²⁶ Missionaries recruited thousands of followers among ethnic Koreans living in China, and the movement had gained an estimated 100,000 followers worldwide by 1992.²⁷ New recruits participated in midnight worship services and training sessions designed to prepare them for the coming apocalypse. Many followers engaged in self-destructive behavior leading up to October 28; one man fasted until he died from malnutrition, and four other followers committed suicide in anticipation of the rapture.²⁸ On October 28, 1992, as followers turned up outside of a Dami Mission church in Seoul, they were met by riot

police, emergency vehicles, and journalists. A few minutes after midnight, a boy shouted from a nearby window, "Nothing's happening!"²⁹

After the prophecies failed, many members felt cheated. Li Changlin had already been arrested and imprisoned for defrauding followers before October 28, 1992, and he eventually disbanded the group. Nevertheless, the Chinese government has maintained a ban against the group, presumably to ward off any future mass suicides. In the aftermath of the failed prophecies, Han Wan Sang, a professor of social policy at Seoul National University, tried to make sense of the fact that so many Koreans—even well-educated people—had joined the sect. He ventured that Koreans were "troubled by a lack of progress in improving ties with North Korea and uncertainty over the domestic political situation."³⁰

6. Disciples Sect (*Mentu hui* 门徒会)

The Disciples Sect, also known as the Narrow Gate in the Wilderness *Kuangye Zhaimen* 旷野窄门, is an apocalyptic sect founded by Ji Sanbao 季三保 (1940–1997), a farmer from Shaanxi Province.³¹ After the Shouters began to attract persecution in 1982, Ji Sanbao established his own religious movement. In 1989, he appointed 12 disciples and proclaimed that he had been appointed as a prophet embodiment (*tishen* 替身) by God.³² His group grew rapidly and by 1995 claimed more than a quarter million followers across 14 provinces.³³ However, the sect began to attract attention from the authorities, and many followers were jailed or assigned to labor camps. In September 2016, several Mentu Hui members were jailed on charges of illegally collecting money, organizing an illegal group, and causing the death of followers.³⁴

The activities of Mentu Hui are well organized, and it spreads its doctrines and attracts followers through effective management. For the country as a whole, Mentu Hui set up seven levels of agencies, including the federation, general assemblies, big branches, small branches, big points, small points, and gathering points. The levels recall the organization of the country's civil administration.

²⁶ Watanabe, "No Doomsday Rapture for S. Korea Sect."

²⁷ Irons, "Chinese New Religions."

²⁸ Watanabe, "No Doomsday Rapture for S. Korea Sect."

²⁹ Watanabe, "No Doomsday Rapture for S. Korea Sect."

³⁰ Watanabe, "Apocalyptic Movement Stirs Social Crisis in South Korea."

³¹ Xi, *Redeemed by Fire*, 223.

³² Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China*, 195–196.

³³ Chang, *Falun Gong*, 148.

³⁴ Carsten, "China Jails Members of Banned 'Cult' Amid Religion Crackdown."

Every level has corresponding leaders and an activity stronghold.

Mentu Hui associates itself with the legal religion of Christianity and claims that its followers are Christians. It connects Western Christians with local prophets as a means of interpreting the Bible. However, Mentu Hui forbids its followers from entering any churches.³⁵ Its meetings are held out in the open. Like many similar groups, Mentu Hui was founded with an “extremely tight internal organization,”³⁶ centered around Ji Sanbao and the 12 disciples whom he appointed. Followers would cite the words of the Bible to emphasize that the achievement of Christianity’s redemption via the Chinese people was inevitable. In the Chinese version of the Bible, for instance, “Sinim” is translated as Qin 秦, an ancient name for a Chinese state in the northwestern part of China. By 221 BCE, Qin had emerged as the dominant power in the region and unified China. Ji Sanbao is said to have been born in Shaanxi Province, the initial location of Qin. This local saint seems to have appealed to people who have little knowledge of Christianity.

7. Established King (Beili Wang 被立王)

Established King was founded by Wu Yangming 吴扬明, who was born in Anhui Province in 1945. Wu Yangming’s involvement with the Shouters led to an early arrest and imprisonment.³⁷ After his release, Wu began gathering materials from the Shouters in Henan Province and soon founded his own sect in Anhui Province. Wu focused on the Gospel of Luke and its references to anointing, declaring himself to be the Established King. The name “Established King” or “Anointed King” was inspired by the second chapter of the Gospel of Luke, in which Jesus is depicted as the anointed king.³⁸ Wu’s leadership was strict, forbidding members to enter other churches, sing hymns, or leave meetings early. Wu was arrested in 1995 on charges including rape and fraud and was later convicted and executed.

When joining Established King, followers receive “soul names” and their birth names are discarded. Followers are asked to obey strict rules, including waking at 5:30 a.m. to pray, limiting their diet to two meals a day with at most two dishes per meal, rejecting fruits and snacks, and

avoiding personal luxuries such as makeup and television. Followers also attend secret meetings every five to seven days. They also contribute money to the leaders for organizational purposes. Wu was later accused of embezzling this money.

Foundational texts of the Established King sect are often sourced from the Local Church movement, including writings of Witness Lee. In Wu’s own contribution to this literature, he argues that only by joining Established King could someone be saved from the impending apocalypse. He also claims that the CCP itself is evil, and that Wu himself will overthrow the CCP and establish a kingdom of God on earth.

Followers of Established King consider Wu Yangming as their Father King. In 1993, Wu established 16 power authorities under him: Lord Mother (*zhumu* 主母), Fine Gold (*jingjin* 精金), Pearl (*zhenzhu* 珍珠), Sincerity (*zhencheng* 真诚), Devotion (*fengxian* 奉献), Rose (*meigui* 玫瑰), Anticipation (*panwang* 盼望), Happiness (*kaixin* 开心), New Heart (*xinxin* 新心), Kindness (*liangshan* 良善), Sapphire (*lanbao shi* 蓝宝石), Sacrifice (*xianshen* 献身), Dedication (*zhuanxin* 专心), Marvel (*qiaomiao* 巧妙), Praise (*songyang* 颂扬), and Evergreen (*changing* 长青). Under each leader, two people called *fengchai* 奉差 are assigned to assist recruitment efforts. These two individuals wear uniforms and go out to preach to new believers.

8. Falun Gong (法轮功)

Falun Gong (Practices of the dharma wheel) is a meditative practice and a set of moral and spiritual teachings that emerged in China in the early 1990s. Although Falun Gong initially enjoyed favorable recognition from the authorities, the practice was officially banned shortly after a protest demonstration in 1999. A subsequent campaign against Falun Gong resulted in thousands of arrests that attracted international attention from human rights organizations. Today, Falun Gong practitioners can be found worldwide. The founder, Li Hongzhi 李洪志 (b. 1951), now resides in the United States.

Falun Gong’s origins lie in China’s Qigong movement, which emerged in the late 1980s and the 1990s along with numerous meditative practices based on the discovery and manipulation of *qi* 气 energy. In May 1992, Li Hongzhi declared himself to be a Qigong master and delivered a series of public lectures at a middle school in Changchun.³⁹ These initial lectures precipitated a remarkably rapid ascent into public life as Li traveled to dozens of cities

35 Irons, “Chinese New Religions.”

36 Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China*, 195.

37 Irons, “Chinese New Religions.” Except where otherwise noted, information for this section was obtained from Baidu Baike, “Established King.”

38 Kupfer, “Saints, Secrets, and Salvation.”

39 Penny, *The Religion of Falun Gong*, 37.

across China—most of them provincial capitals.⁴⁰ The movement’s success, however, would attract suspicion from the authorities in the ensuing years. Tensions between Falun Gong and the authorities grew until the movement staged a protest in 1999 demanding legal recognition. The same year, Chinese authorities launched a nationwide crackdown, arresting thousands of practitioners and blocking access to Falun Gong–related websites hosted outside China. Media reports estimated that as many as 2,000 deaths were attributed to the government’s actions against Falun Gong.⁴¹ The crackdown decimated the movement, reducing the number of followers from perhaps as many as 40 million to less than 1 million.⁴² The U.S. Department of State reported that half of all inmates in China’s labor re-education camps may have been Falun Gong practitioners.⁴³

Like other Qigong movements, Falun Gong teachings emphasize health and spiritual enlightenment. Many practitioners consider Li to be a Buddha or a divine being superior to the Buddha and Jesus, and followers expect to attain a higher state of being through practicing Falun Gong. In pamphlets made available by the movement, meditation techniques emphasize the wheel (*lun*) of the dharma (*fa*), which “is expected to bring about a positive personal development but also to renew society, in particular current society in mainland China.”⁴⁴ Li’s own writings, *Zhuan Falun* 转法轮 and *China Falun Gong* 中国法轮功, are regarded as sacred scriptures by some followers.

J. Tong’s organizational analysis of Falun Gong focuses on a key paradox: official Chinese accounts characterize the movement as highly organized, with a hierarchical authority structure and efficient communication networks.⁴⁵

On the other hand, Falun Gong’s own sources depict the movement as loosely organized, spontaneously maintained, and disinterested in financial profit. The divergence arises from each group’s motivation: the central government’s interest in suppressing Falun Gong relies on the legal position that the organization operates in a politically subversive manner. Conversely, the movement’s ability to deflect political attacks rests on its self-presentation as a band of volunteers whose protests are spontaneous acts by sincere practitioners rather than centrally planned acts of defiance. Tong’s analysis reveals that although the movement may not have been as organizationally sophisticated as the central government claimed, it did have an organizational structure, as shown below.⁴⁶

9. Guanyin Method (*Guanyin famen* 观音法门)

The Guanyin Method, also known as the Immeasurable Light Meditation Center and the Way of Sound Contemplation, was founded in 1986 in Taiwan.⁴⁷ In 1992, the Guanyin Method was introduced to mainland China and spread freely for several years until 1995, when Chinese authorities labeled it a “cult organization.” The Guanyin Method claims that its membership had reached 500,000 followers by 1999.⁴⁸ Ching Hai 青海, the founder and spiritual teacher of the Guanyin Method, claims that the practice is “an eternal universal law” that is the “best, easiest, and quickest” way to reach enlightenment.⁴⁹ Her teachings borrow concepts and ideas from other major world religions. According to Ching Hai, the Guanyin Method is “like the way of the universe,” which “has existed since the

Administrative level	Falun Gong organization	Officer's title
National capital	Falun Dafa Research Society (Beijing)	President, Vice-president
Province/region/municipality	Main stations (39)	Main station chief
City/district	Branch stations	Branch station chief
County, urban district	Guidance stations (19,000)	Guidance station chief
Village clusters/ housing blocks/ work units	Practice sites (28,000)	
Groups of individuals	Study groups	
Individual	Practitioners	

40 Penny, *The Religion of Falun Gong*, 38.

41 For example, see Jacobs, “China Still Presses Crusade against Falun Gong.”

42 Irons, “Chinese New Religions.”

43 U.S. Department of State, “International Religious Freedom Report 2008.”

44 Pye, “Religions in East Asia,” 498.

45 Tong, “An Organizational Analysis of the Falun Gong.”

46 Adapted from Tong, “An Organizational Analysis of the Falun Gong,” 643.

47 Thornton, “Manufacturing Dissent in Transnational China.”

48 Thornton, “Manufacturing Dissent in Transnational China.”

49 Ching Hai, *Master's Words*; idem, *Quan Yin Method Is the Easiest Way to God*.

beginning of time when the universe was first formed.”⁵⁰ She regards it as “a universal law that people must follow if we want to get back to the Origin, back to our true Self, back to the Kingdom of God or our Buddha nature.”

The Guanyin Method accepts people from diverse religious backgrounds and does not require an official change of one's religious affiliation. Its method mainly involves meditation. It also advocates a vegetarian lifestyle: new followers are taught to stop eating animal products for ten days per month and to meditate for half an hour per day.⁵¹ Ching Hai also borrowed the Five Precepts from Buddhism, requiring followers refrain from taking the life of sentient beings, speaking what is not true, taking what is not offered, sexual misconduct, and the use of alcohol.⁵² Apart from incorporating teachings from other religious traditions, Ching Hai lays claim to her own spiritual authority within the Guanyin Method. In her book *The Key of Immediate Enlightenment*, she writes that followers will be elevated if they recite her name.⁵³

Ching Hai is regarded as the Supreme Master of the Guanyin Method. Behind this organization, there is a corporate entity named Supreme Master Ching Hai International. According to Thornton, Supreme Master Ching Hai International started as a business enterprise that has now expanded its operations to include a global network. Ching Hai has been portrayed as a “tireless publicity seeker.”⁵⁴ However, several financial scandals were exposed when the Supreme Master Ching Hai made great attempts to garner transnational support for herself.⁵⁵

10. Lingling Sect (*Lingling jiao* 灵灵教)

Lingling Sect was established in 1985 by Hua Xuehe 华雪和 in Muyaang County 沭阳县, Jiangsu Province and the followers refer to Huaiyin in Jiangsu as “Eastern Jerusalem.”⁵⁶ Hua was born in 1940. In 1979, he joined the True Jesus Church 真耶稣教会, an indigenous Chinese Pentecostal sect that originated in the 1910s. In the same year he started to preach in Jiangsu, then went to Henan Province to continue his preaching. In 1985, he established

the Lingling Sect. By 1990, the sect had spread into 13 provinces including Henan, Shandong, Anhui, and Hubei, with 29 communication locations and followers reportedly totaling near 15,000. In 1990, Hua was arrested and sent to labor camp for three years. Hua Xuehe died in 2000. However, the movement survived his death. In 2013 and 2014 there were reported cases in Shangdong where core leaders of the Lingling Sect were sentenced to jail.

The Lingling Sect has adopted certain teachings from the True Jesus Church. It emphasizes speaking in tongues, miraculous healing of illnesses, and exorcising demons. Hua Xuehe differed from the True Jesus Church in that he claimed to be enlightened by God and directly received messages from the Holy Spirit. He also claimed that his name was only one character different from Jehovah (*Yehehua* 耶和华), and he preferred to be called “Jesus the second” or Father Hua. The core teaching of Lingling is that only by completely following Hua and becoming detached from worldly attractions such as material wealth and romantic or familial love can one be saved. Followers of the Lingling Sect believe that the end of the world is nigh, and that the only way to be saved from the apocalypse is to join the group.

At worship meetings, followers sing songs and practice holy dances. In fact, one speculation about the origin of the group's name is that when praying, followers would visibly shake and shout “Ling 灵! Ling! Ling!” to indicate that they were becoming filled with the spirit. These meetings take place in secret, with times and locations frequently changed to avoid government detection. When not engaged in worship, followers spread the message about the coming end of the world.

Hua Xuehe claimed that he was the reincarnation of Jesus and was the chief leader of the Lingling Sect. Below him were major priests (*da jisi* 大祭司), minor priests (*xiao jisi* 小祭司), two olives (*er langan* 二橄榄), four living beings (*si huowu* 四活物), 12 followers (*shier mentu* 十二门徒), 24 elders (*ershisi zhanglao* 二十四长老), a chief commander (*zuozhen zongzhizhui* 坐镇总指挥), and a general (*lingbing dayuanshuai* 领兵大元帅). It is said that Hua Xuehe grouped his followers into geographically defined dioceses called *fang* 方, with every *fang* containing some *dian* 点 (places). Each *fang* includes several thousand people with regional leaders who are rewarded or punished according to their performance.

11. Lord God Sect (*Zhushen jiao* 主神教)

The founder of the Lord God Sect is Liu Jiaguo 刘家国 (b. 1964), who was one of the core members of the

⁵⁰ Ching Hai, *Master's Words*.

⁵¹ G. Young, “God Inc.”

⁵² Ching Hai, *Quan Yin—The Five Precepts*.

⁵³ Chan, “Cult Branches Spread Worldwide.”

⁵⁴ Guzmán, “Immaterial Girl.”

⁵⁵ Thornton, “Manufacturing Dissent in Transnational China.”

⁵⁶ Except where otherwise noted, information for this section was obtained from Baidu Baike, “Lingling Sect.”

Established King Sect. The beliefs and structure of the Lord God Sect are similar to those of the Established King Sect.⁵⁷ After joining Established King in 1989, Liu Jiaguo was assigned to preach in Hunan Province in 1991. He was arrested by the police. After his release, Liu continued his religious activity using different names to avoid detection. In 1993 Liu had a conflict with Wu Yangming, the founder of the Established King Sect. After Wu shouted at him in public, Liu took materials from the Established King Sect and started the Lord God Sect in Hunan, claiming that he was the Lord God. After Wu's death, Liu claimed that the Established King was the Father and the Lord God was the Son. Since the Father had died, followers must believe in the Son, i.e., they must join the Lord God Sect. Starting in 1995, the Lord God Sect trained leaders in Xiangxiang 湘乡, Hunan Province, and used the locale as a base as it spread across the nation. By 1998, the sect was believed to have more than 10,000 followers in 23 provinces.

The basic principle of the Lord God Sect is that the Lord God is the reincarnation of Jesus whose mission is to save the world and judge the people. His relationship to the people should resemble an emperor's relationship to his subjects. Followers must obey rules and regulations in front of the Lord God. To signify their complete devotion to their leader, believers are given new names (soul names) upon joining the sect. They hope to establish a kingdom of God on earth, claiming that the government is corrupt and will be replaced.

The organizational structure of the Lord God Sect is strict and hierarchical, with eight levels in total. At the top is Lord God Liu Jiaguo. On the second level is *zaishang zhu* 在上主 [Lord on high], a group comprised of six people selected by Liu. The third level contains the Four Living Beings (*sihuo wu* 四活物). The fourth level is known as the Seven Angels, each of whom is in charge of a specific geographical region. The fifth level is the *quanbing* 杈柄 [Authority], who serve at the local level. The Lord God has identified 22 provincial *quanbing*. In the sect's materials, the Lord God states that the *quanbing* represent the power of the military, and each has the prestige and authority of a general. On the sixth level are the *tonggong* 同工 (coworkers), who serve in specific areas of development. The seventh level is comprised of the Host Families (*jiedai jiating* 接待家庭) who accommodate preachers when they travel out of town and host religious gatherings. The eighth level constitutes the rank-and-file followers.

12. New Testament Church (*Xinyue jiaohui* 新约教会)

The New Testament Church (NTC) is a Taiwan-based religious group founded by Hong Kong actress Jiang Duanyi 江端仪 in the 1960s.⁵⁸ The actress, known to her followers as Sister Kong, starred in a string of films in the 1950s before retiring for health reasons. In the late 1950s, Kong converted to Protestant Christianity, after which she embarked on a missionary journey throughout Southeast Asia.⁵⁹ In 1965, Kong met Elijah Hong in Taiwan. Hong, along with a group of his followers, had left the Assemblies of God and set out on a journey into south Taiwan. They encountered a mountain—later known to the group as Mount Zion 锡安山—and decided to wait at that particular site until God would reveal a prophet to them. Elijah Hong has declared that God has forsaken the original Mount Zion in Israel and has chosen the new Mount Zion in Taiwan as his home.⁶⁰ NTC theology, which emphasizes the actualization of God's judgment through natural disasters, believes that Mount Zion will be the site of God's eventual tribulation judgment on the world.⁶¹ The NTC tends to attract the attention of authorities, as their teachings cause followers to distrust all secular authorities and give total allegiance to the sect.

Sister Kong arrived two years later and was accepted by the group as God's prophet. Kong, however, died shortly after arriving at Mount Zion. She bequeathed the ministry to her daughter Ruth, but after a protracted leadership struggle, Elijah Hong seized control of the group, which he continues to lead.⁶²

Today, the movement is headquartered on the holy Mount Zion in Taiwan, God's new chosen home and the site of his future tribulation judgment. Since its founding, the group has inspired some offshoots, such as the Complete Gospel Propagation Group of Jesus Christ's Blood and Water under an NTC recruit named Zo Kun 左坤.⁶³

The New Testament Church has over 29 separate branches in Taiwan. Although the group is banned in mainland China, there are followers in over 20 cities

57 Except where otherwise noted, information for this section was obtained from Baidu Baike, "Lord God Sect."

58 Irons, "Chinese New Religions"; Farrelly, "Taiwan: Mount Zion and Typhoon Morakot."

59 Or returned to Southeast Asia; see Farrelly, "Taiwan: Mount Zion and Typhoon Morakot."

60 Farrelly, "The New Testament Church and Mount Zion in Taiwan."

61 Farrelly, "The New Testament Church and Mount Zion in Taiwan," 183.

62 Also Zhang Lidu; see Irons, "Chinese New Religions."

63 Irons, "Chinese New Religions."

and provinces.⁶⁴ Elsewhere NTC members reside in the Offshoots of Zion, which have been described as “a modest international network of consecrated lands, primarily in Asia and the Pacific, which, like Mount Zion, are regarded as sacred.”⁶⁵

13. Three Ranks of Servants (*Sanban puren pai* 三班仆人派)

The Three Ranks of Servants is an apocalyptic sect that originated in the 1980s. Followers originally believed that the world would end in a series of disasters. Most sources list the founder as Xu Shuangfu 徐双富 (1946–2006),⁶⁶ who converted to Christianity as a child and joined a group of wandering evangelists at the end of the Cultural Revolution. In the late 1970s, Xu was arrested at least six times on charges of beguiling his believers with false ideas. In 1980, Xu took part in a coalition of anti-TSPM preachers in Henan Province but fled into rural Shaanxi Province after the suppression of the Shouters in 1982.⁶⁷ By the mid-1990s, Xu had established a network that spread across many provinces. His trademark, according to his critics, was “the remission of sins through lashes”: believers were subjected to 40 lashes for sins against the community. Such practices echoed older practices of the Catholic Confraternity of the Passion (Kuhui 苦会), as well as the Daoist practice of *zibo* 自搏 (self-slapping) and the Buddhist practice of *zipu* 自撲 (self-beating).⁶⁸ Xu predicted that Christ would return to the world and eliminate nonbelievers in 1989 and later in 1993, but he did not predict Christ’s return a third time.⁶⁹ Huo Congguang 霍从光 was another important leader in this movement; he apparently made several predictions about the apocalypse, saying that the end of the world would occur in 2000, and that it would be preceded by seven disasters.⁷⁰

Practitioners of the Three Ranks sect are literally divided into three ranks of servants, with the sect’s leader serving as God’s chief servant. Xu Shuangfu governed his followers harshly, controlling all aspects of members’ lives through lashings imposed on the disobedient.⁷¹ During

the sect’s peak, it attracted more than a million followers and competed with Eastern Lightning for followers. Some members of the Three Ranks of Servants were implicated in the murders of several Eastern Lightning followers. As a result, dozens of members were jailed and many of them were sentenced to death. The sect’s numbers seem to have declined since a nationwide crackdown on cults in 2004 and 2005 and the execution of Xu Shuangfu himself in November 2006.⁷² However, followers of the Three Ranks sect remain active in some places. For example, in late 2017, there was a court case against some members of the sect in Yunnan.

14. True Buddha Sect (*Zhen fo zong* 真佛宗)

The True Buddha Sect was founded by Sheng-Yen Lu 卢胜彦 in 1975 in Taiwan and spread to the United States in 1982. Lu was once a Christian and active at a Presbyterian church in Gaoxiong 高雄 and taught Sunday school.⁷³ In 1969, accompanied by his mother, who was a believer in traditional folk religion, Lu had an extraordinary experience at a folk religious temple where he had a vision of seeing three *pusa* (boddhisattva) and receiving a gift from the Jade Emperor, the supreme God in Daoism and folk religion. Thereafter, he began to publish articles and books about religions and his personal extraordinary experiences, which attracted many followers. In 1975, he formally established Lingxian zong 灵仙宗 [Immortal Sect], integrating beliefs and practices of folk religion, Buddhism, and Daoism. After he migrated to the United States and settled in Seattle in 1982, following intense interactions with Tibetan Buddhist leaders, he rebranded Lingxian zong as the True Buddha Sect (*zhen fo zong* 真佛宗). In numerous books he has published, Lu claims himself to be a “fully enlightened Buddha,” and he is known by his followers as “Living Buddha Lian-sheng.” Today, the True Buddha Sect has established chapters of various sizes across the globe, and its head temple is located in Redmond, Washington.⁷⁴

Purposefully syncretizing elements from different major religions, Sheng-Yen Lu argues that his teaching amalgamates different “paths to achieve control over one’s birth and death in the most efficient way possible.” While taking concepts and ideas from other religious traditions,

64 Irons, “Chinese New Religions.”

65 Farrelly, “The New Testament Church and Mount Zion in Taiwan,” 183.

66 Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China*, 201.

67 Xi, *Redeemed by Fire*, 224–225.

68 Mungello, *Spirit and Flesh in Shandong*, 80–81.

69 Kahn, “Violence Taints Religion’s Solace for China’s Poor.”

70 J. T. Lee, “Christianity in Contemporary China.”

71 Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China*.

72 Kahn, “China Executes at Least 12 Members of a Secret Christian Sect.”

73 Melton, “The Affirmation of Charismatic Authority.”

74 Ng, *Lotus Blossoms: A Collection of Studies of the True Buddha Sect*.

the True Buddha Sect teaches its followers to “take refuge in the Living Buddha Grand Master Lian-Sheng” and “accept Master Lu as the incarnation of Padmakumara.” Only then can its followers proceed to the next steps for self-cultivation though body and mind cultivation practices.⁷⁵ In 1995, the True Buddha School was labeled a “cult organization” by the Chinese authorities.

15. World Elijah Association (*Shijie yiliya fuyin xuanjiaohui* 世界以利亚福音宣教会)

Established by a Korean named Piao Minghu 朴鸣呼 in 1980, the World Elijah Association entered China in 1993 and has followers in 11 provinces. The group was founded when its leader, Piao Minghu, proclaimed himself to be the last prophet, Elijah. He prophesied that the world would end in the year 2000, after which Piao would reign on earth as God. When the movement spread to northeast China in the early 1990s, followers were known to sequester themselves in villages without modern conveniences such as television and radio. Piao’s villages were united in what seemed like a distinct political organization, known as the “Stone Nation,” complete with a flag, a constitution, and a national anthem. The group attracted attention from the Chinese authorities and was declared an illegal “cult” in 1996.⁷⁶

16. Yiguandao (一贯道)

Yiguandao, variously translated as “the way of pervading unity” or “the persistent way,” is a Chinese sect whose religious roots stretch back to antiquity, but the group only acquired its current name in 1905.⁷⁷ The sect remained marginal during its first decades, then grew to include a few thousand followers in Shandong Province by 1930. By the late 1940s, Yiguandao had become the largest sect in China apart from the world religions, claiming millions of followers and spreading across the Chinese mainland. After extreme state suppression on the mainland, Yiguandao spread to Taiwan. It was suppressed in Taiwan for decades but was legalized in the late 1980s and remains popular today.⁷⁸ The ascendancy of Yiguandao has been

called “one of the greatest sectarian success stories in China’s history.”⁷⁹

As a movement, Yiguandao traces its history back to the Xiantiandao 先天道 movement, emerging as its own unique tradition in the late nineteenth century. In the 1930s, Yiguandao was a local sect with a relatively small number of followers. However, under the leadership of Zhang Guangbi 张光壁 (1889–1947)—a leader who proclaimed himself the eighteenth patriarch of the movement after a brief succession crisis—Yiguandao spread across the Chinese mainland. After the Communist revolution, Yiguandao was banned as an illegal sect. The Communist party-state created an exhibition condemning Yiguandao in Beijing in 1951, and in 1952 the party released a film with the sarcastic title, *The Way of Persistently Harming People* (*Yiguan hairen dao*). During those years, the movement spread to Taiwan where it was initially treated with suspicion but later flourished as important businesspeople joined its ranks.⁸⁰ Today, Yiguandao is an international religious movement with over a dozen lineages and global headquarters in both Taiwan and Los Angeles.⁸¹ Interestingly, the movement has spread back to mainland China through international channels. Although it was the target of widespread government repression in the 1970s, recent years have seen a cooling of tensions between the Chinese government and Yiguandao, whose leaders now seek to cooperate with Chinese government officials and nongovernmental organizations.⁸²

Although Yiguandao exists today in multiple lineages on multiple continents, its common core of teachings focuses on the existence of the universe as a cyclical pattern of creation and destruction. The heavens and earth are born and reborn during epochs that last thousands of years. Only one being—the Eternal Mother 无生老母, who is the only deity in the Yiguandao tradition—survives the destructive cycles. The Eternal Mother is said to have 1.6 billion Buddha children (*fozi* 佛子) or “origin children” (*yuanzi* 原子) who, at some point during each epoch, leave the Eternal Mother’s side and descend to earth, forgetting their divine origin. The evangelistic urgency in Yiguandao is the need to awaken the Eternal Mother’s Buddha children before the coming apocalypse.

75 Tam, “A Study of the True Buddha Sect’s Religious Experience.”

76 Information for this section was obtained from Baidu Baiken, “World Elijah Association.”

77 Lu, *The Transformation of Yiguan Dao in Taiwan*.

78 Lu and Lang, “Impact of the State on the Evolution of a Sect.”

79 Lu, *The Transformation of Yiguan Dao in Taiwan*, 21.

80 Lu, *The Transformation of Yiguan Dao in Taiwan*, 58–59.

81 Lu, *The Transformation of Yiguan Dao in Taiwan*, 5.

82 Munro and Spiegel, *Detained in China and Tibet*; Zhuo, “Relationship Between Religion and State in the People’s Republic of China”; Billioud and Thoraval, *The Sage and the People*.