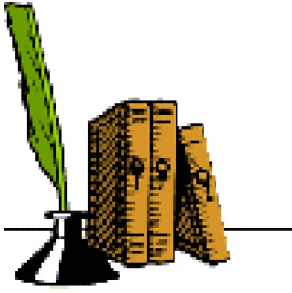


Religion in China 2015



By Yuen Yeuk-laam Source:Global Times Published: 2015-7-8 0:23:01

Islam has most number of young believers followed by Catholicism

A report released on Tuesday says religious worshippers in the Chinese mainland are becoming younger, with Islam having the largest number of followers under 30, while most religion leaders in the country feel that government regulations and policies are fair.

The China Religion Survey 2015, released by the National Survey Research Center (NSRC) at Renmin University of China, included interviews from 4,382 religious sites across 31 regions between 2013 and 2015.

Protestantism has the largest number of places of worship while Buddhism has the highest number of followers in China.

The survey found that among the five main religions in China - Buddhism, Taoism, Catholicism, Protestantism and Islam - Islam has the largest number of young believers, with 22.4 percent of them aged below 30. Catholicism ranks second with 22 percent. Buddhism and Taoism, however, have the highest number of followers older than 60, with 54.6 percent and 53.8 percent, respectively.

"Islam tends to have a younger demographic. Most believers of Islam belong to ethnic minority groups and it is common for a woman to give birth to several children. The children would also become Muslims while it is very rare to have an adult converting to Islam," Wei Dedong, a professor of Buddhist studies at the School of Philosophy at Renmin University of China, who participated in the research, told the Global Times Tuesday.

The survey found that the State Administration for Religious Affairs visited places of worship 3.8 times a year and the United Front Work Department (UFWD) visit the sites 1.8 times a year. On the other hand, worshippers visit these government agencies 3.5 and 1.3 times a year, respectively.

Wei said the figures show that the government is more willing to take the initiative to take care of the religions and to resolve conflicts.

He explained that both government agencies mainly visited religious sites when there is a festival, conflicts and national events and the visits are aimed at strengthening communication between the government and the religious groups.

Wang Meixiu, a research fellow at the Institute of World Religion Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said that the frequency of visits varies from poor areas to big cities. "In some counties, there are only two to three religion management personnel while nobody may be in charge in small towns," she said.

The survey found that about 60 percent of the people working at places of worship said they think that government regulations are fair.

Wei explained that the figure shows that the development of religions in China is healthy, though there is room for improvement such as the approval procedures of constructing new buildings and religious site registration.

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