



able number of believers among the ethnic minority groups of China. A few minorities have their unique ethnic or folk beliefs. The condition of religious belief is also very complicated. Different ethnic groups follow the same religion and there are some who are different. Each of them have members following different religions.

2. Many members of China's minorities hold strong religious beliefs. Statistics suggest that more than half of the population among the 55 ethnic minority groups can be regarded as religious. In comparison with the Han ethnic group, the ethnic minority groups have stricter religious beliefs with more forms of presentation and greater devotional content. Such a situation is a distinctive part of Tibetan Buddhism and in the Islamic practices of the Hui and Uygur ethnic groups. Tibetan Buddhism originates from Indian Buddhism, but it is full of distinctive Tibetan characteristics resulting from the fusion of the mainstream Buddhism typically followed by the Han ethnic group and the traditional Bon Religion of Tibet. All Tibetans retain some degree of religious belief and many are extremely devout. Since the spreading of Islam into China, it has been characterized with different ethnic features when blended with the beliefs of minority nationalities. Due to different characteristics of the Hui, Uygur and Kazak ethnic groups, Muslims from these groups have adopted different styles in the building of mosques and in forming their religious education, though they all share the same basic belief of Islam.

3. The original religious beliefs mostly survive among minority nationalities. The ethnic characteristics of religious belief are distinctive. Besides Buddhism, Taoism, Islam and Christianity, there are various traditional religions that remain popular in different areas with varying influence. The most typical example is Shamanism among ethnic minority groups in Northeast and Northwest China, which is known as wizardry among minority nationalities in Southwest and Southeast China. For some ethnic groups there are also some particular names such as the Dongba Religion of Naxi ethnic group and the Bimo Religion of the Yi ethnic group. These are what we call original religions that emerged from the primitive worship of ancient races. They generally retain the concepts of worshiping nature, totems, ancestors, ghosts and vari-