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The Impact of Cultural Globalization on the Quality of Life of Ethnic Minorities in China

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The Impact of Cultural Globalization on the Quality of Life of Ethnic Minorities in China

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Abstract

This article aims to explore the effects of increasing globalisation and integration on the economic, social, and cultural well-being of national minorities within the context of the heterogeneity of their lives and development in a particular country, using China as a case study. The research employs comprehensive sampling, comparison, juxtaposition, and subsequent analysis of data from open sources provided by the Chinese State Statistical Bureau. The data encompass changes in living standards from economic, social, and cultural perspectives, as well as a comparative assessment of the preservation of socio-cultural values within society, focusing on the Han majority and selected ethnic minority groups in China between 1990 and 2021. Our findings suggest that overall, economic and cultural globalization has had a largely positive impact on China's economic growth, including the prosperity of ethnic groups. Furthermore, it was observed that a high degree of ethnic heterogeneity does not impede the enhancement of citizens' economic well-being. However, a decline in socio-cultural development, the preservation of the way of life among national minorities, and their role both within their country and in the global community were identified. This decline is associated with the intensification of globalization through forced labour migration to regions dominated by the Han language and traditional customs, as well

as a growing trend in the adoption of languages, traditions, and models of cultural and domestic behaviour from Western countries.

1. Introduction

The conclusion of the Cold War and the subsequent era of globalization compelled the majority of nation-states to have no alternative but to conform to the rules of the global market. As a consequence, they were compelled to alter their way of life to meet the demands of this new market and to gain access to a substantial amount of financial resources, ensuring a sufficient profit [1,2].

This adjustment manifests in various aspects of life, impacting both the existence of the nation-forming people and the lives of national and ethnic minorities. To enhance international competitiveness in the global market, states find themselves compelled to alter not only economic models but also social structures, educational systems, and cultural and linguistic patterns. This, in turn, affects, to some extent, the quality of life for individuals [3]. The phenomenon of globalization is not confined solely to the economy; it encompasses all other facets of societal life. In particular, we refer to the concept of cultural globalization. Cultural globalization leads to the formation of a shared human space with unified norms, stereotypes, a scale of value orientations, rules, and prescriptions. The assessment of this process is far from unanimous: some recognize its positive aspects, new opportunities, and prospects for humanity, while others acknowledge the negatives [4].

For several decades now, sociology and related disciplines have sought to define the terms and concepts related to the accelerated process of cultural globalization in the post-World War II era. Some well-known concepts associated with this process include "cultural

imperialism," "Westernization," "Americanization," "McDonaldization," "global village," "hybridization," and others [5]. Most of these concepts ultimately converge on a common denominator, which is cosmopolitanism. It is primarily manifested in the construction of a universal infrastructure for life activities, both in the economic and socio-cultural spheres. The result of such a globalized and integrated infrastructure is the erasure of national self-awareness and identity among representatives of national states as a whole, not to mention the more subtle impacts on their minority counterparts. The assimilation of linguistic, religious, educational, and cultural-ethnic traditions by nation-forming peoples is increasingly complemented by more standardized models of existence and interaction in the global society. This development poses a risk to the very existence of long-established traditions, ways of life, cultural artefacts, and the habitats of small nations and national minorities [6]. Despite apparent contradictions in cultural globalization, the economic advantages of significantly enhancing income and the standard of living of the population outweigh the drawbacks of its dissemination. Some researchers, such as Thomas Chia, argue that ethnic minorities worldwide often possess fewer socio-economic opportunities than majority ethnic groups within a country. For these reasons, indigenous peoples or national minorities frequently face disparities in educational outcomes, assessments, test results, dropout rates, career opportunities, as well as social rankings and incomes [7].

In the context of China, before the formation of the People's Republic of China (PRC), ethnic minorities indeed experienced persecution and did not enjoy a high standard of living. Often, the small nations in this country were forced into a subsistence existence, effectively in a survival mode. However, in 1950, peasants of all ethnic groups gained ownership of land, leading to a noticeable improvement in their quality of life [8]. Nevertheless, the Cultural Revolution and the shift towards openness and reforms in 1978 resulted in a form of globalization and integration with Western countries, intensifying migration processes and,

consequently, disrupting the socio-cultural fabric of small nations and the destruction of their habitats [9]. Nevertheless, despite apparent contradictions in cultural globalization, economic benefits significantly improving the income and standard of living of the population, including representatives of national minorities predominantly residing in rural areas and/or on isolated ancestral territories within national regions, outweigh the drawbacks of its dissemination.

1.1 Literature review

Numerous studies have been devoted to the issue of cultural and economic globalization and its impact on the lives of people in nation-states, particularly in recent decades when this question began to raise concerns within the global community, especially regarding the preservation of culture, language, national identity, and the self-awareness of nations participating in the global integration referred to as the "global village." The majority of research extensively criticizes globalization for its negative influence on the cultures of nations. For instance, Solov'eva [10] draws parallels between the onset of shared processes of globalization and the identity of the people of the People's Republic of China (PRC), discussing a significant transformation in the ethnic culture of this country as cultural modernization in China continues to intensify. Additionally, the author attempts to present the specificity of the transformation processes of the ethnic culture of China's national minorities in contemporary conditions, although not directly linking these processes to China's policy of openness and its involvement in economic and cultural globalization. Nevertheless, the author acknowledges that on the international stage, China advocates the image of a multi-ethnic state that is loyal to cultural and national diversity. The leadership of the PRC popularizes the ethnic culture of national minorities such as Uighurs, Hui, Miao, and Zhuang through its transmission, both within the country and beyond its borders, to generate

interest in Chinese culture [11-13]. Concurrently, in domestic national policy, a tendency toward the strengthening of assimilation processes in favour of the Han Chinese is discernible. Nevertheless, recent research has specifically linked the competition between the Han Chinese and other small nations to China's cultural and economic policies, without directly associating them with the extent of the impact of globalization, especially cultural globalization, on issues of migration, self-identity, and the economic well-being of individuals.

On the one hand, we observe the formation of a cultural universe, the levelling of ethnic specificity, and on the other hand, local ethnic distinctiveness with an emphasis on regional characteristics. Computerization and the Internet contribute to communicative transparency, facilitating the free flow of information and expanding the capabilities of modern individuals. Simultaneously, globalization shapes a cultural space that is essentially monopolar, as the shared information network imposes uniform modes of thinking and behaviour [4]. A substantial body of research dedicated to cultural globalization worldwide and in China, as a specific country, has been conducted by numerous international scholars. For instance, Robinson [6], in his article "Global Capitalism and the Crisis of Humanity," argues that labour division within the context of global integration leads not only to a global financial crisis but also to a crisis in cultures. This is because it intensifies the risk of cultural erasure amid the dominance of transnational corporations, languages of global communication, and a cultural code for international interaction [6].

In turn, Giddens [14], in his book "Runaway World," summarizes the continually growing impact of globalization, which affects all national minorities today. Extending his arguments beyond purely economic considerations, Giddens [14] demonstrates how our increasing interdependence influences our everyday lives. He speaks of a world that is shrinking every day, noting that such changes impact traditions, cultural and family behaviour patterns, and

even political structures. Giddens defines globalization processes as a true cultural force, serving as a turning point for those genuinely concerned about our increasingly integrated world [14].

An important layer of literature on the explored issue comprises works by Chinese scholars, often in international collaboration. Many of these studies focus on aspects of the well-being of ethnic groups in China, cultural competition, and the issue of survival. For instance, Zhang [15] investigates the accessibility of education and career opportunities, diversification in education, and the cultural and ethnic legacy amid global changes. The author expresses concern that cultural globalization may lead to marginalization, inequality, and the displacement of cultures of national minorities. The marginalization of ethnic cultures may ultimately diminish overall knowledge of the traditional cultures of a nation, and ethnic cultures may sooner or later face their final disappearance due to such a cold and indifferent attitude. The lack of knowledge and understanding of ethnic cultures will ultimately result in an empty spirit, and a lack of identity, causing the current population to lose itself and struggle to find its place in contemporary realities. Simultaneously, due to the misunderstanding of ethnic cultures, more people will face challenges and complex situations, needing to overcome misunderstandings and obstacles in communication and navigate through discrimination, conflicts, and condescending attitudes [15].

The examined works in this study allow us to perceive the issue of cultural globalization in the context of its interaction with the lives of ethnic groups. In this regard, we find it necessary to investigate the extent to which this interaction has altered the level of well-being among representatives of national minorities, using China as a case study. Consequently, the primary goal of this research is to determine the level of well-being of national minorities in China today. This achievement is possible through addressing key objectives, including examining the demographic composition and lifestyle of China's ethnic groups, analyzing

changes in the standard of living among representatives of these small nations in terms of economics and culture from 1990 to 2021, and comparing the quality of life of these minority groups with the prosperity of the Han Chinese culture. Additionally, the study aims to provide constructive proposals based on the identified situation.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1 Materials

The materials for this study are sourced from the National Bureau of Statistics of China and publications from the Xinhua News Agency covering the period from 1990 to 2021. These sources reflect numerical changes in the economic well-being of citizens belonging to the Han ethnic group on the one hand and national minorities on the other hand, particularly the Zhuang, Hui, Manchu, Uyghur, and Miao ethnicities. Given the extensive history wherein each of China's nationalities has developed its customs and traditions influenced by natural, social, and economic conditions, relying solely on statistical data is insufficient to determine the degree of integration of the lifestyles, traditions, and cultures of national minorities into the global arena. In light of this, we examined materials from the Xinhua News Agency that presented cultural components and lifestyles of small ethnic groups from 1990 to 2021.

This specific time frame is of particular interest as it coincides with the initiation of a significant global integration process following the end of the Cold War. This period witnessed the intensification of China's policies towards openness, reforms, and globalization.

2.2 Study design

In this article, an analysis was conducted using a comprehensive sampling method, comparing and contrasting data on labour migration, the educational and career activities of

representatives of ethnic minorities, and the extent of their integration into the language and culture of the Han and Western peoples. Statistical data from the sections of the National Bureau of Statistics of China and materials from Xinhua News Agency related to the economic and cultural activities of individuals from various ethnic groups in China overall, particularly the nation-forming Han culture, and such national minorities as the Zhuang, Manchu, Hui, Mongol, Uyghur, Miao, Tibetans were selected. A quantitative and qualitative comparative analysis was conducted on the obtained data, followed by interpretation and visualization.

This analysis allowed for the derivation of results regarding the impact of cultural and economic globalization on the economic well-being of China's small ethnic groups and the level of preservation of their national, cultural, and regional integrity and identity. Thus, through the comparison and contrast of the description of cultural components and lifestyles of small ethnic groups from 1990 to 2021, conclusions were drawn about the preferences of national minorities and their changes in dietary habits, clothing, religion, education, language, and holidays. In the end, a comprehensive picture of the well-being of China's national minorities over the selected period was presented, and the prospects for economic and cultural development and the survival of ethnic groups in the People's Republic of China were assessed.

The research was conducted in four stages:

In the first stage, data on the ethnic, cultural, and linguistic composition of the population of the People's Republic of China (PRC) were collected for the period from 1974 to 1990 (pre-globalization era in China within the framework of new openness reforms) and then for the period from 1990 to 2021 (globalization era). Examining and compiling published data from the China Statistical Yearbook on tourism, regional employment, internal and external trade, and the standard of living of the population in different regions. The selected data from the

China Statistical Yearbook issues for the specified periods covered the following sections: general information, population, wages and income of the population (by regions), price indices (by regions), living conditions of the population, education, an overview of urban and rural life (by regions), tourism and migration, healthcare, and social security.

The second stage involved studying data on the changes in internal and external migration of the Han people and ethnic minorities in China for the period from 1990 to 2021. This period is particularly interesting as it coincides with the global integration of economies and cultures. Examining and compiling data from the China Statistical Yearbook on tourism, regional employment, internal and external trade, and the standard of living of the population in different regions.

The third stage included collecting data on the well-being of the Han people and small ethnic groups in the PRC for the respective periods, covering economic, cultural, linguistic, educational, and religious aspects. During the process, obtaining and tabulating data for the required periods, comparing the observed changes based on five-year periods, and then comparing this data with indicators from statistical documents on the state of Chinese society, subsequently presenting it visually in the form of tables and figures. The final stage of the research involved comparing and contrasting the quantitative and qualitative changes in all the aforementioned indicators to determine the impact of cultural and economic globalization on the ethnic minorities of the PRC in comparison to the Han people.

2.3 Methodological limitations

This study was constrained by the materials from official open sources of the National Bureau of Statistics of China and the Xinhua News Agency for the period from 1990 to 2021. The lack of direct access to survey representatives of the ethnic groups in the researched

country restricted the study, making it an initial stage of analysis with the potential for further in-depth and detailed examination.

3. Results

China today is home to fifty-six ethnic groups, with nearly 92 per cent being Han Chinese and only 8 per cent comprising various ethnic minorities, both numerous (such as Zhuang, Manchu, Hui, Mongol, Uighur, Miao, Tibetan) and less numerous (including Daur, Kazakh, Salar, Uzbek, Tatar, Russian, Bai, Yi, Tu, Jingpo, Pumi, Achang, Nu, Dulong, etc.). In this article, we attempt to identify which of China's numerous ethnic minorities have been most affected by globalization in economic and socio-cultural aspects. Additionally, we aim to trace and discern the average changes in their quality of life, whether positive or negative, concerning economic well-being and the preservation of cultural aspects of their lives.

As mentioned earlier, China is a multi-ethnic state with 56 ethnicities residing within its borders. However, amidst the global processes of recent years, there is no doubt that the socio-cultural and economic landscape of the country has undergone certain changes. Specifically, the standard of living for the Han Chinese, who traditionally occupy the majority of active socio-cultural and labour positions in the country's life, both at the local and global economic and cultural levels, has undoubtedly changed from 1990 to 2021. The question remains open as to how comparable these changes were for the other ethnic groups of the People's Republic of China, representing the country's national minorities.

According to the data from the selective census of the population in 1990, the Han Chinese numbered 1,099.32 million people or 91.02 per cent of the total population. Their number increased by approximately 56.84 million people compared to the previous period [8]. The remaining 55 nationalities amounted to 108.46 million people (an increase of 17.26 million people since 1990), constituting 8.98% of China's total population at that time. All

nationalities, except the Han Chinese, are commonly referred to as national minorities. These include Zhuang, Hui, Uighurs, and Miao, Manchu, Tibetans, Mongols, Tu, Buyi, Koreans, Dong, Yao, Bai, Hani, Kazakhs, Dai, Li, Lahu, Va, Shui, Dungan, Naxi, Tu, Kyrgyz, Qiang, Daur, Mulao, Gelao, Sibo, Jinpo, Salar, Bulang, Maonan, Tajiks, Pumi, Nu, Achang, Evenki, Jin, Uzbek, Jin, Deang, Yugur, Baoan, Menba, Dulong, Oroqen, Tatars, Russians, Gaoshan, Hezhe, and Lhoba. Among them, the largest ethnic group is the Zhuang, with 15.556 million people, while the smallest is the Lhoba (2,322 people). Han Chinese are distributed throughout the country, but their main areas of residence are the basins of the Huanghe, Yangtze, and Zhujiang rivers (mostly along the middle and lower reaches of these rivers), as well as the Northeastern Plain. National minorities predominantly inhabit the peripheral regions of Northeast, North, Northwest, and Southwest China (Fig. 1).

[Fig. 1 here]

It is crucial to understand that both the language and writing system in China, at the official level, belong to the dominant ethnic group, namely the Han people (Chinese). This is the language utilized in international practices, including interactions within international organizations such as the United Nations, IMF, WTO, and others. However, in everyday life, for domestic, professional, and cultural communication, the Chinese language is only commonly used at the same level by the Hui and Manchu ethnic groups alongside the Han Chinese. Regarding the remaining ethnic minorities, they have their languages and writing systems, often content with using them in both daily life and professional activities, especially if they rarely leave their regions. In the complex context of global economic and cultural conditions, such diversity in cultures and languages may pose a certain obstacle, hindering mutual understanding not only on a global scale but also at the national level.

Nevertheless, statistical data from China's National Bureau of Statistics indicate that a significant portion of China's minority populations actively participates in the integration of

cultural and economic activities, employing elements of both Han and Western lifestyles if it enhances the economic well-being of these citizens. Of interest is the fact that communist China, while maintaining a dominant socialist system, embarked on a course of global integration into capitalism as early as 1978. It was during this period that the first plan for openness and global reforms was adopted, authored by Deng Xiaoping. This marked the inception of "socialism with Chinese characteristics," which subsequently propelled China to the forefront of economic development while concurrently pursuing socialist societal development.

The theory underlying such development prioritized the economy, modernization, the need to implement a subcontracting and family responsibility system in rural areas, the formation of various forms of economic reporting in cities to eradicate equality in a "big pot" economy, and the establishment of a market and social equality system based on public ownership. Simultaneously, political institution reforms took place, reinforcing the construction of a new civilization based on socialist spirituality. Predictably, during the last three decades of implementing reformist policies geared towards increased openness and integration with the global community, the People's Republic of China has achieved notable progress across political, economic, and cultural dimensions of life.

Thus, the provided data on the new course helps us understand why, by the year 1990, Chinese society continued to increase the population of the Han ethnic group and strengthen their cultural dominance over the other minority populations in the country. In other words, we can discuss a kind of pre-globalization on both economic and cultural levels. Undoubtedly, in 1990, the continuation of the policy of openness and reforms coincided with the general economic and socio-cultural globalization. According to data from the China International Statistical Bureau, as a result of the course of openness and reforms from 1978 to 1990, the real per capita income of Chinese citizens increased from 171 yuan to an

incredible 10,977 yuan. The growth continued in the context of the overall trend of global processes but did not show such staggering results. By 2014, real per capita income had increased only twofold compared to the year 2000, and in 2021, it amounted to only 26,357 yuan for urban residents, among whom the Han people are traditionally predominant (Fig. 2).

[Fig. 2 here]

Simultaneously, representatives of ethnic minorities prefer to live and work in rural areas, and in 2021, their real per capita income amounted to only 10,551 yuan. However, as reported by Xinhua News Agency, compared to 1990, the growth of well-being among members of ethnic minorities has significantly accelerated, reaching about 70% of their real per capita income, predominantly in rural areas or on their ancestral national territories (Fig. 3).

[Fig. 3 here]

Despite the digitally expressed positive shifts in improving the economic quality of life for all people in China in the periods preceding the era of globalization and directly over the past 23 years, the question remains open as to how much integration into global capitalism through the economy and culture has been able to enhance the lives of small ethnic groups, preserve, and multiply their well-being from the perspective of the development of national self-identity. Regardless of the dominance of Han culture with its centuries-old structure, and social and state historical patterns of activity in China, there has been a noticeable strong preference towards Westernization among the population over the past thirty years, which, in turn, influences people's quality of life. Concurrently, the struggle for survival continues among the 55 national minorities, amidst the absolute dominance of Han culture.

Undoubtedly, China places a high value on issues of ethnic identity, as it is a multi-ethnic and multicultural country. In 1950, almost immediately after the proclamation of the country as a republic belonging to the people, China initiated the Minzu Shibie or Ethnic Identification

Project, within which 56 nationalities were recognized. Such a project was crucial, as it essentially laid the foundation for the national policy that China has been pursuing for several years up to the present day [16].

In the realm of education, the policy of Gaokao Jiafen, or "bonus points," has been in place since the 1950s. The essence of this policy lies in providing bonus points to all students who are representatives of ethnic minorities and apply for admission to vocational or higher education institutions. Initially, this system was implemented to ensure equal access to education for people from the country's minority populations. However, it eventually led to significant criticism because the heterogeneity within ethnic groups was not considered, and students would change their ethnicity for the sake of admission benefits to the university. This posed a threat to even greater linguistic, cultural, and economic disparities among people in society. Thus, thanks to further reforms in this field by the government, certain rules were enacted, stipulating that the ethnic identity of every Chinese citizen can be identified based on the ethnic group to which one of the student's parents belongs, and it cannot be changed without the approval of the authorities [17].

Statistical data from China's National Bureau of Statistics and materials from Xinhua News Agency for the period from 1990 to 2021 indicate an acceleration of cultural integration of national minorities into the general Han culture, especially over the past 30 years. This is manifested in the increasing number of students from the category of national minorities studying in colleges and universities in China using Chinese, English, or other languages. Additionally, there are higher rates of migration and education in universities in English-speaking countries, contrasting with the education received in the native languages of their ethnic groups. A snapshot of the language choices of students from different ethnic groups as of 2021 is reflected in Table 1.

[Table 1 here]

Moreover, with the increase in labour migration within China from regions of national minorities to large cities, there is significant integration with the culture of the Han people, expressed through changes in dietary preferences, participation in festive and partly religious events, as well as the choice of everyday clothing and language for work and life.

The major centres attracting labour migrants in China remain cities like Beijing and Shenzhen, where representatives of national minorities currently reside, mainly including the Zhuang - 2.2 million, Hui - 1.5 million, Manchu - 0.4 million, Uighur - 0.2 million, and Miao - 0.1 million. Undoubtedly, the influx of people from small nations into major Chinese cities leads to ethnic diversity, as people do not suddenly cease to embrace their culture or radically change their way of life. For instance, when it comes to food, southerners prefer rice, while those in northern regions favour wheat products. The favourite dishes of Uighurs, Kazakhs, and Uzbeks include lamb kebabs, pilaf, and fried nan bread, while Mongols enjoy fried rice, fried mutton, and milk tea. Koreans highly regard Dacao pudding, cold noodles, and pickled cabbage. Tibetans consume dzambu, a barley flour dough fried in butter, and drink tea with melted butter. Regarding clothing, Mongols wear traditional robes and boots, Tibetans wear "chuba" robes with long skirts and sashes, embroidered caps are popular among Uighurs, and Koreans wear shoes with upturned toes resembling old boats. Women from Miao and Tibetan ethnicities have a strong passion for gold and silver jewellery. Undoubtedly, within the confines of their diaspora, small nations continue to adhere to these habits and traditions, and it's not uncommon to see the traditional clothing of Tibetans, Miao, or Uighurs on the streets of Beijing, Shenzhen, or Guangzhou, hear their languages, or find their traditional dishes. However, the prevalence of Han cultural norms imposes obligations on migrant workers, and for a more successful academic and professional career, they are forced to adopt a new way of life. Often, they also have to regularly resort to using the English language for communication at work and in daily life since, for the past 30 years, most major cities in

China have been centres of international activity where communication in English or Russian languages is often required. As a result, there is not only the Sinicization of representatives of national minorities but also their Westernization/Russification without necessarily leaving their country's borders. In connection with this, over the past 30 years, the number of people in China who prefer to dress in a Westernized style, consume non-Chinese cultural foods (Han or other cuisines of national minorities), watch TV shows, read books, and converse with people on the street, in stores, or at the workplace in European languages or Chinese, rather than in the native languages of the small nations migrating to major economic centres, has significantly increased.

Integration trends with elements of cultural substitution for the native culture with Han or globally connected culture are becoming increasingly noticeable in such an essential part of everyday life as the celebration of significant dates and participation in related events. Undoubtedly, all citizens of China understand and possibly participate in the celebration of official holidays, such as New Year (celebrated nationwide on January 1st), Spring Festival (Lunar New Year, celebrated nationwide for three days), International Women's Day, International Labor Day (May 1st), China Youth Day (May 4th), International Children's Day (June 1st), People's Liberation Army Day (August 1st), Teachers' Day (September 10th), and the National Day of the People's Republic of China (October 1st), celebrated by people across the country for two days. Naturally, it is not necessary to move from one's region to major cities and economic centres for this. Uighurs or Tibetans can simultaneously celebrate the most important and widely observed traditional holidays along with all the country's inhabitants.

The Spring Festival, traditionally attended by the population annually at the end of winter and the beginning of spring corresponds to the custom where representatives of all ethnic groups joyously celebrate the first traditional holiday of the year—the Spring Festival or Lunar New

Year. The Spring Festival goes hand in hand with hanging several pairs of posters on both sides of the entrance door of homes, conveying well-wishes, while room walls are adorned with images in honour of the New Year. On the night before the Spring Festival, known as "Chuxi," the entire family gathers. A lavish festive dinner is arranged, followed by discussions and games on various topics. Many families stay awake the entire night, a practice known as "Shousui"—waiting for the New Year. On the following day, it is customary to visit the homes of relatives and friends, exchanging mutual congratulations and well wishes. During the Spring Festival, people participate in large-scale performances, depicting dancing lions, and dragons, and performing circle dances symbolizing sailing ships and boats. They also attend lantern festivals, with one notable example being the Yuanxiao Festival. Falling on the 15th day of the first lunar month, it is often referred to as the "Lantern Festival." On this day, people indulge in a dish called "Yuanxiao" and enjoy the sight of festive lanterns. "Yuanxiao" is made from very sticky rice flour with a sweet spherical filling, symbolizing the happiness of a united family. The tradition of enjoying lanterns, originating in the 1st century, is still preserved in many parts of the country. On the evening of the Yuanxiao Festival, lantern fairs open in many cities, showcasing the most colourful works of skilled craftsmen. These exhibits impress with their diverse shapes and narratives. In villages, customary activities include fireworks, stilt parades, dragon dances, Yangge circle dances, swings, and other festivities.

Equally popular among the people of China is the Qingming Festival, occurring on one of the days from April 4th to April 6th. Since ancient times, people have used this day to honour their ancestors. In contemporary times, special events are organized during the Qingming Festival to pay homage to those who fell in battle and, of course, to tidy up their graves. As the weather is already warm these days, nature is in full bloom, prompting many people to embark on countryside excursions, fly paper kites, and enjoy the spring scenery. Therefore,

the Qingming Festival is also known as "Tacinze," the day when people first step on fresh greenery with their feet.

These are just three of the numerous festivals described here, and they are genuinely positioned as national celebrations. Individuals from national minorities who integrate into the common cultural tradition of the Han people undoubtedly perceive them as part of their lives, either voluntarily or out of necessity. However, many national minorities have retained the traditions of their specific festivals. These include the "Water Festival" among the Mongols, the "Wangguo" harvest festival among the Tibetans, Nowruz among the Uighurs, and many others. Unfortunately, these are not officially recognized and have a local character. The intensification of globalization, economic and cultural migration of national minorities within China and beyond its borders, and the subsequent reduction in the number of people participating in the celebration of their traditional festivals on their ancestral territories lead to the inevitable degradation of the ethnicity's culture. This situation raises valid concerns and requires further careful study and analysis to find ways to implement measures to preserve the cultural, linguistic, and identification heritage of small nations and national minorities, ensuring their right to self-determination and further development while preserving their historical legacy and mode of self-expression. From an economic perspective, the cessation or at least reduction of the migration pace of representatives of ethnic groups is of great importance, as it leads to the draining of the most labour-intensive population and ultimately threatens the economic degradation of regions. In the case under consideration, where the majority of China's national minorities reside in northern or western territories lacking sufficient resources for successful economic activities, the issue of population outflow poses a threat not only to the disappearance of cultures through excessive integration with Han culture and the external cultures of Western and Eastern peoples but also to the effective abandonment of the land. If student and labor migrations for the sake of

improving the economic standard of living of China's national minorities continue at the same level as in 2021 or increase in the subsequent period, we can speak about entire regions of the PRC being on the verge of extinction. This pertains not only to economic, linguistic, or cultural aspects but also to the physical aspect.

The only aspect of the cultural and economic activities of China's ethnic groups and national minorities that has managed to remain unaffected by globalization, both economically and culturally, is religion. China is a country where different religions coexist successfully: Daoism, Buddhism, Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, and Orthodoxy (Fig. 4).

[Fig. 4 here]

The only aspect of the cultural and economic activities of China's ethnic groups and national minorities that has managed to escape the influence of globalization, both economically and culturally, is religion. China is a country where various religions coexist successfully: Daoism, Buddhism, Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, and Orthodoxy (Fig. 4).

The number of believers exceeds 100 million people. Different ethnicities and individuals adhere to different religions. Ten ethnic groups in the country, namely Hui, Uighurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Tatars, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Dongxiang, Salar, and Baoan, follow Islam. Tibetans, Mongols, Lhoba, Menba, Tujia, and Uighurs prefer Lamaism. Dai, Bulang, and Diny adhere to Hinayana (the orthodox branch of Buddhism). Among the Miao and Yao peoples, there are also many followers of Catholicism and Protestantism. Among the Han Chinese, there are adherents of various religions: Buddhism, Protestantism, Catholicism, Daoism, and Orthodoxy. It is known that Buddhism entered China as early as the 1st century BCE, and its widespread dissemination began in the 4th century. Gradually, Buddhism became the most influential religion in the country. Lamaism emerged as one of the branches of Buddhism, gaining wide popularity in Tibet and Inner Mongolia. The most famous Buddhist temples include Baimasi (Luoyang), Daciensi (Xi'an), Lingyinsi (Hangzhou), and

Shaolinsi (Henan). The largest Lamaist monasteries are the Tibetan monasteries of Jokhang, Dashilumpo, and Sakya, as well as the monasteries of Ta'er (Qinghai), Uta (Inner Mongolia), and Yunhegun (Beijing).

Islam penetrated China around the middle of the 7th century. There are well-known Muslim mosques in Yangzhou, Xi'an, Beijing, Yinchuan, and Kashgar. Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and Protestantism entered China much later, and their influence was weaker compared to Buddhism and Islam. Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant communities are mainly concentrated in Shanghai, Beijing, and some other major cities. Among the peasants, there is also a small number of followers of these three religions. Daoism originated directly in China in the 2nd century. Well-known Daoist temples include Baiyunguan (Beijing), Qingyanggong (Chengdu), and Taichungun (Shenyang). In China, citizens can practice any religion or be atheists, and any normal religious activity is protected by the Constitution. All major religions—Buddhism, Islam, Protestantism, Orthodoxy, Catholicism, and Daoism—have their own national and local organizations and autonomously manage the affairs of their communities. Chinese religious organizations and their activities are beyond the control of foreign clerical forces. This fact gives hope for the revival and subsequent historical, cultural, and economic development of the regions of the original residence and economic activity of China's national minorities in the coming years, regardless of the country's chosen course, whether it opts for further openness and integration with the world or prefers to focus on the development of the potential of its peoples, relying on each of the 56 ethnicities declared to date. Such a development scenario seems favourable to us in any case. Even in the conditions of continuing the course towards globalization, there is a high probability of preserving the cultural and economic identity of ethnic minorities. In the event of economic regionalization in China, such a scenario is irreversible, although the figures indicating the advantage of the Han people over the other 55 national minorities still raise concerns. In any case, the process

requires constant monitoring and measurements because a significant improvement in the economic well-being of citizens of China from national minorities should not occur at the expense of a drastic reduction in the level of development of the national-cultural and social components of their lives, provoked by excessive integration into Han culture and the lifestyle of other countries. The only additional and long-term positive aspect of labour migration and significant integration into Han culture, aside from increasing real per capita income, for representatives of China's ethnic groups is the high level of participation in the pension insurance and welfare program, which has grown eightfold by this year (Fig. 5).

[Fig. 5 here]

The comparison of all the data we have gathered demonstrates the fact that the years during which China has implemented reforms focused on openness and integration into global economic and cultural processes have unequivocally and predictably led to a situation where the standard of living for the country's population has significantly improved. Furthermore, the outcomes of these reforms have benefitted all aspects of citizens' lives. Moreover, China has risen to the second position globally in overall economic indicators, leading to a substantial reduction in inequality concerning the level of prosperity between the Han majority and the ethnic minorities.

4. Discussion

The current theme addresses the extent of the impact of cultural and economic globalization on the well-being and living standards of China's national minorities. The conducted research relied on numerous theoretical studies and conclusions of both domestic and foreign scholars. It was based on the materials of China's National Bureau of Statistics and publications of the Xinhua news agency from 1990 to 2021, available in the public domain [1,16,18]. The inability to conduct surveys of target groups undoubtedly imposed some limitations on the

research methods, reducing them to a comprehensive sampling, comparison, juxtaposition of data, and their subsequent systematization and analysis [19].

Nevertheless, such a comprehensive study has not been conducted before. Most previous research focused on describing trends in specific areas such as education or healthcare services without undertaking a comprehensive collection of official data in digital form and their comparative analysis, specifically linked to globalization and integration, both culturally and economically [20]. This article successfully unified the data and provided a comprehensive and more eclectic picture of the current situation regarding the living standards of China's national minorities up to 2021.

The primary results of the research demonstrate significant changes in the living standards of representatives of China's ethnic minorities, even in comparison with the more numerous Han population. It is essential to commend the fact that despite some segmentation of Chinese society, the issue of economic equality has been addressed since 1950, gaining particular attention in 1978 due to a new state reform course aimed at the country's openness and more intensive capitalist development [21].

Despite worrisome facts about the blurring of geographical and cultural boundaries associated with the globalization process as a whole, and the Chinese model in particular, when discussing the population's living standards, especially those of ethnic minority groups, the economic aspect of prosperity undoubtedly takes precedence. It is crucial to emphasize that only economically active and well-established populations can ultimately influence the transformation of their country's future and global processes.

Recently, an increasing number of scholars have criticised globalization as a phenomenon, particularly concerning the preservation of culture and national identity. However, our research has revealed that the Chinese model of globalization and integration demonstrated the possibility of using moderate forms of interaction with leading cultures even within its

multiethnic society as a significant factor in shaping and coexisting with cultures simultaneously attracting a more considerable number of active citizens into the economy.

It is essential to note that we primarily examined two aspects of globalization affecting the living standards of national minorities, namely the economic and cultural. The obtained results of the analysis uncovered two facets of the situation – the rise in material prosperity and the decline in cultural-ethnic manifestations in daily life activities.

Objective data on the improvement of the well-being of China's national minorities expressed not only in the growth of their income but also in more active participation in social programs, including pension insurance, unequivocally neutralizes the situation of declining cultural identification. The ambiguity of the question of the necessity of labour migration from compact areas of residence of national minorities to the inland southeastern regions of the country to improve economic living conditions raises questions [22]. In the current phase of the study, the prevailing scenario is predominantly supported by factual evidence and numerical data illustrating the rise in the economic well-being of migrants. This occurs concurrently with a decline in their engagement in traditional ethnic activities linked to the customary cultural, linguistic, and domestic aspects of their communities. This question appears important to us because many researchers overlook it, focusing only on the issue of the cultural and economic "openness" of China's national minorities to the external world, forgetting about their integration into their society.

For instance, Solov'eva [23] argues that the commercialization of Chinese culture essentially contributes to the emergence of the ethnic culture of national minorities on the world stage by transmitting once "closed cultures" to the external space. Campos et al. [24] have attempted to analyze differences in the living standards of Han people and ethnic minorities, but their interest primarily concerned students. Some Chinese scholars, such as Lu and Guo [8], Zhang [15] attempted to examine the impact of internal migration of ethnic minorities on the living

standards of their representatives, but their focus is mostly shifted to the issue of education and does not address labour migrants.

Cleveland and Bartikowski [25] in their studies mainly focused on examining the behaviour of representatives of national minorities born in China who moved to Canada and France for education and work, noting their high degree of integration into the language and economic habits system. In contrast, our research aspires to paint a broader picture, including the analysis of data on changes in cultural and domestic preferences of representatives of national minorities in the conditions of resettlement within the country to areas dominated by Han culture, both for education and work and for earning a living. Our results vividly demonstrate the improvement of the well-being of national minorities through internal labour migration and intensified integration into the mainstream culture of China and other countries, even compared to the urban population, simultaneously decreasing their immersion in their accustomed cultural and domestic life, except for religious aspects.

For a more profound understanding of the issue, an expansion of the research is certainly necessary, involving focus groups of representatives from both Han Chinese and China's ethnic minorities, such as Zhuang, Hui, Uighurs, Miao, and others. By obtaining descriptions and more comprehensive information on all cultural consequences of globalization in the context of forced labour migration and cultural globalization of China's ethnic minority groups, a future study could conduct a more thorough and detailed investigation [26,27]. This would be essential for an enhanced comprehension of the problem. Currently, we are constrained by the limitations of a concise article, available materials, and corresponding methods. Therefore, we only highlight the primary and most noticeable trends of the impact of cultural and economic globalization on the living standards of China's ethnic minorities. This also extends to the preservation of their own culture amid integration, not only on a global scale but also within the necessity of assimilation within their own country.

The question of the standard of living appears to us as more complex than mere material well-being, although we consider it significant for the citizens of the People's Republic of China in this specific case. Undoubtedly, the intensification of internal migration within areas predominantly inhabited by Han Chinese leaves little choice for Uighurs or Tibetans. They indeed begin, whether compelled or voluntarily, to prefer speaking in a non-native language, consuming atypical food, studying in Chinese or English, and even dressing in attire not native to their own culture, forsaking their native celebrations and traditions [28,29].

The absence of people in the traditional living areas of ethnic minorities poses a crisis to these regions, both culturally and to some extent economically. Certainly, the latter remains questionable, as labour migrants will undoubtedly continue providing economic support to their families. Hence, we are compelled to acknowledge the benefits, rather than the drawbacks, of the phenomenon of internal labour migration for the living standards of China's ethnic minorities in the conditions of cultural and economic globalization.

The positive aspect of preserving religious affiliation also gives hope for the conservation and development of the national-cultural identity of the ethnic groups in the western and northwestern parts of China. The high degree of freedom in this sphere and the independence of religious preferences from the process of globalization can serve as the foundation for the overall revival of these peoples. Certainly, it can be argued that the statistics of the percentage ratio between citizens without religion and those practising various religious denominational practices in China currently demonstrate a numerical prevalence of atheists over the number of believers. However, despite the normalcy of the established secularization of society, which is generally typical for many countries worldwide today, religions still play a significant role in shaping national and cultural self-awareness.

It is interesting to note that the ethnic minorities of China tend to adhere to religious traditions. Therefore, we cannot underestimate this factor as a driving force for cultural self-

preservation amid ongoing globalization in general and the vital need for the cultural-economic integration of ethnic minorities into the lifestyle of the Han people in particular. Furthermore, the data we have obtained allows us to look optimistically towards the future, as there is hope that the improvement of the living standards of China's ethnic minorities, at the cost of some reduction in their ethnocultural identification in the integrated society, may enrich Chinese society by diversifying cultures, merging individual elements, and forming new forms of cultural hybrids. We propose that specific cultural phenomena in diverse regions of the country could, with time, attain global significance and contribute to the integration of world culture. Nonetheless, the current issue of preserving ethno-cultural diversity and self-identification among China's ethnic minorities is pressing and necessitates additional examination. This is because, within the framework of the ongoing globalization of the economy and culture, the quality of life of China's populace encompasses both economic and national-cultural dimensions.

5. Conclusions

In this article, a comparative analysis of statistical data spanning the period of globalization from 1990 to 2021 was conducted, focusing on the quality of life among the Han majority and ethnic minorities in China. Based on the research findings, it is asserted that the impact of the globalization paradigm, both economic and cultural, on the quality of life and well-being of Chinese citizens is predominantly positive. Irrespective of the ethnic group to which a resident belongs, China's continued post-1990 policies of reform and openness, its integration into global economic and cultural processes, and the multifaceted engagement of its citizens have consistently contributed to an elevation in their quality of life and the overall economic growth of the country.

The article underscores labour migration as one of the tools of globalization that leads to an improvement in the quality of life for representatives of China's ethnic minorities. This phenomenon intensified notably after 1990, contributing to the densification and greater cultural diversification of major Chinese cities, such as Beijing, Shenzhen, and others. Positive aspects of labour migration, according to statistical data, include a significant enhancement of the material well-being of Chinese citizens as a whole, as evidenced by the analysis of the increase in real per capita income in the current study. While these indicators for the urban population, predominantly composed of Han Chinese, experienced a sharp rise from 1978 to 1990 due to the implementation of government-led reform policies aimed at increasing the country's openness and economic interaction with other nations, remaining relatively stable from 1990 to 2014 and experiencing a substantial increase only by 2021, the real per capita income of individuals from small ethnic groups residing mainly in rural areas and primarily in the north, northwest, and southwest regions of the country exhibited steady and continuous growth throughout the extended period from 1978, the pre-globalization era, to 2021.

As a result of labour migration, increased employment, and income growth, the number of representatives of ethnic minorities participating in pension insurance programs has also risen, thereby positively influencing the quality of life and well-being of elderly individuals belonging to ethnic minorities. Such favourable changes have become possible through the active integration of ethnic minorities into the cultural paradigm of the Han majority and other nations, particularly Western culture, as evidenced by the data on the growing number of students studying in a non-native language. Despite the apparent benefits of cultural and economic globalization for small ethnic groups in the current context, the article highlights the danger of intensifying depopulation in ethnic regions, primarily rural areas, and the risk

of forgetting the language, traditions, holidays, and festivals of ethnic minorities, including religious ones.

Although religion in China remains unaffected by globalization and any international organizations, the increasing migration of the young, working-age population to major cities dominated by the culture and lifestyle of the Han majority, many of whom live without religion, leaves open the question of preserving not only the linguistic and national self-identification of integrated ethnic minorities but also their religious identity. A more probable scenario entails these issues being addressed at the state level in China, leading to a more thorough examination of the institutional mechanisms governing the existence of ethnic minorities in the country to preserve their high quality of life, encompassing economic, religious, and cultural-ethnic aspects.

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Data availability

Data will be available on request.

Author Contributions

All research processes was conducted by Xiaoying An: conceptualization, methodology, software, validation, formal analysis, investigation, resources, writing—original draft preparation, writing—review and editing, visualization, etc.

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Table 1. Snapshot of Language Choices in Education by Students in 2021.

Ethnic Group	Learning in Chinese	Learning in English	Other
Han	32 million people	12 million people	2 million people
Zhuang	0.9 million people	0.2 million people	0.1 million people
Hui	0.6 million people	0.1 million people	0.1 million people
Uighurs	0.5 million people	0.2 million people	0.1 million people

Figure Captions

Fig. 1. Ethno-linguistic groups of China

Fig. 2. Real per capita income of Han Chinese in China in yuan from 1978 to 2021

Fig. 3. Real per capita income of representatives of ethnic minorities in China in yuan from 1978 to 2021
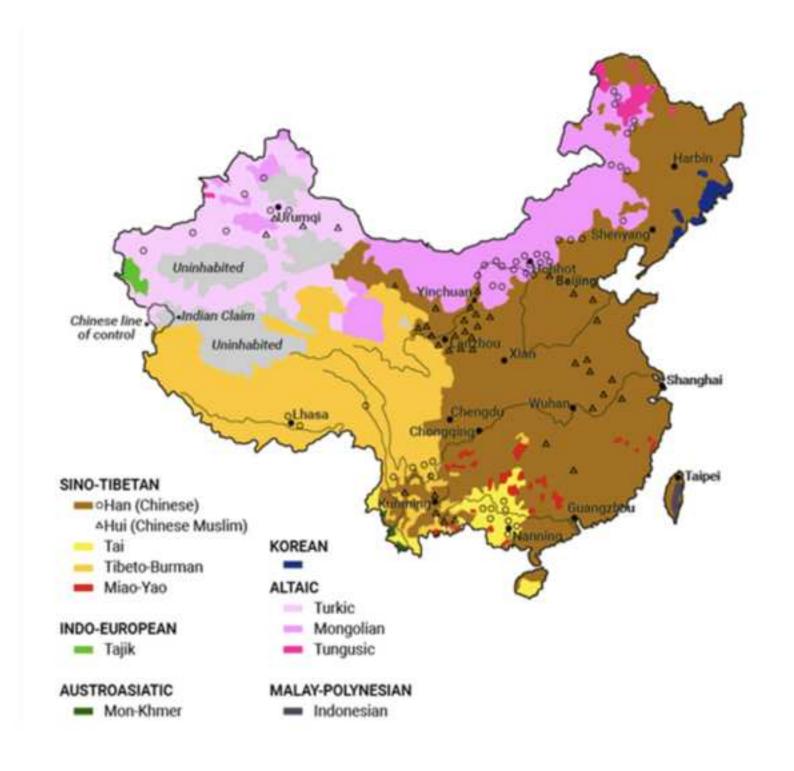
Fig. 4. Religious Preferences of Chinese Residents

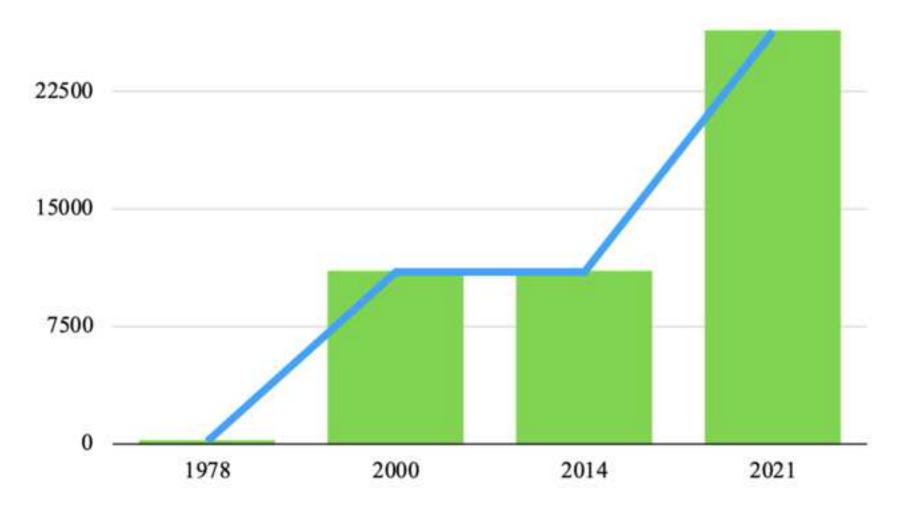Source: Compiled by the authors based on China Statistical Yearbook 2021.

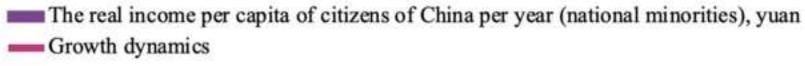**Fig. 5.** Workers participating in the pension insurance program

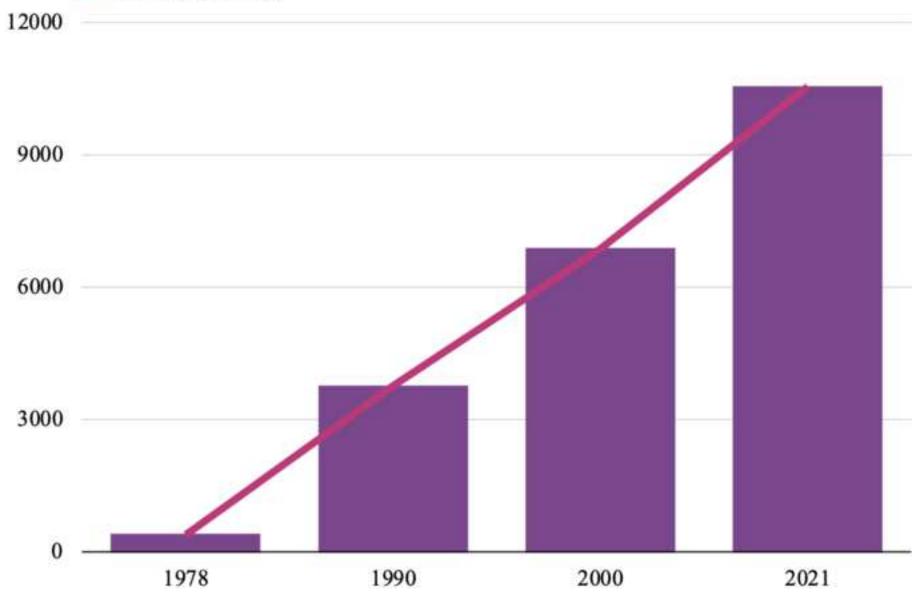Source: Constructed by the authors based on the National Bureau of Statistics of China, China Statistical Yearbooks 1989-2021.
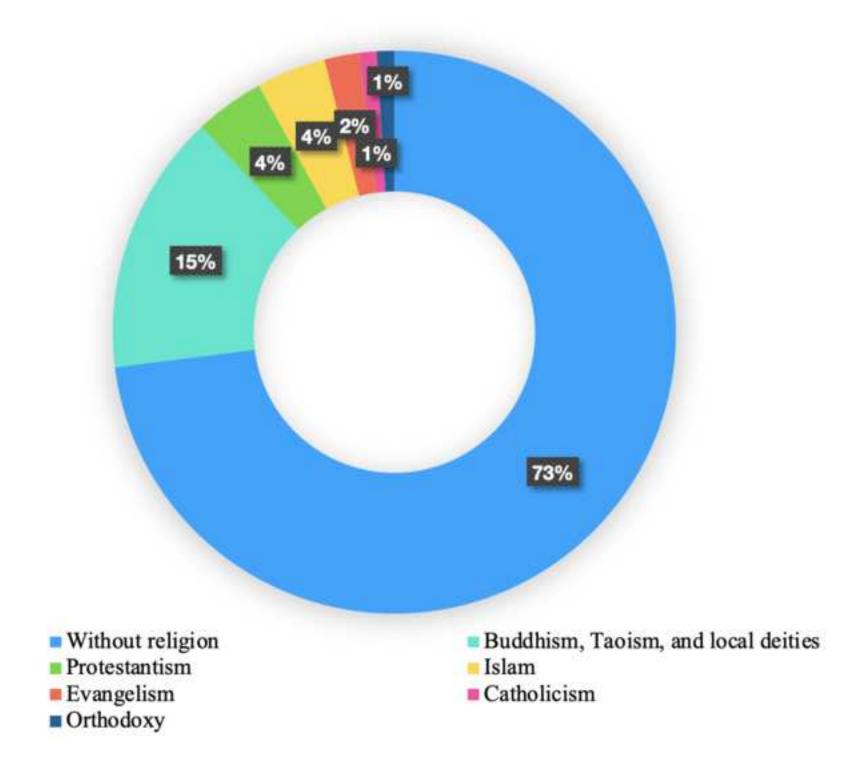
SINO-TIBETAN
- ○ Han (Chinese)
- △ Hui (Chinese Muslim)
- Tai
- Tibeto-Burman
- Miao-Yao

INDO-EUROPEAN
- Tajik

AUSTROASIATIC
- Mon-Khmer

KOREAN

ALTAIC
- Turkic
- Mongolian
- Tungusic

MALAY-POLYNESIAN
- Indonesian

- Without religion
- Protestantism
- Evangelism
- Orthodoxy
- Buddhism, Taoism, and local deities
- Islam
- Catholicism