

**URBAN TEMPLES AND RITUAL AFFECTS:  
COMMUNAL FESTIVALS, LOCAL GODS, AND DEVELOPMENT PLANS IN  
MODERN XIAMEN**

by

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation presents the first comprehensive study of communal religion in urban China based on fieldwork conducted in and around Xiamen city, a Special Economic Zone in Fujian province in the southeast of the country. The project analyzes the modern historic development in the city in relation to temples and urban infrastructure and considers the ways in which contemporary ritual events and temple organizing influence city life through different forms of spatial organization and bodily sensation. It shows the complex interaction between urban temple devotees, Daoist priests, Buddhist monastics, opera performers, and a variety of other religious performers who circulate throughout the region. Despite the destructive role urban development had on temples throughout the twentieth century, in the past thirty years the reconstruction of temples has allowed neighborhoods to organize development projects and charitable works throughout the city that would otherwise not have existed. These projects are closely connected to the perception of a god's spiritual efficacy and the experience of ritual events, which I analyze in terms of the collective affective atmospheres, individual emotional experiences, and conscious perceptions in order to present ritual as a productive social force. Rather than suggesting a decline in religious practice due to urban development and the increasing role of global capital in everyday life, I argue that rituals, as bodily and largely communal practices, hold affective capacities that have the potential to influence how people act, think, and live in the city.

Following the first introductory chapter, the second chapter presents the wider religious landscape of the city. Chapter three then gives a historical analysis of spatial development and infrastructure in modern Xiamen, focusing on the changing roles that temples have played in city life since the 1920s. Chapter four moves to the contemporary period to discuss different forms of neighborhoods and the relation between local organizing of charitable and infrastructure projects and the spiritual efficacy of their temple. Chapter five presents a model for conceiving of Chinese religions in terms of the circulation of ritual technologies as a way to consider the multiplicity of practices that arrange in the formation of ritual events. Chapter six analyzes the movements of urban temple devotees to the founding temples of cults in rural areas and the atmospheres of three major ritual celebrations. Finally, chapter seven addresses how people think religion more consciously and the changing language used to present local rituals, with an emphasis on the category of "intangible cultural heritage, to consider the relationship between such discourses and ritual practice.

## **Résumé**

Cette dissertation présente la première étude approfondie de la religion communale dans la Chine urbaine basée sur un travail sur le terrain effectué à l'intérieur et autour de la ville de Xiamen, une zone économique spéciale de la province du Fujian au sud-ouest du pays. Le projet analyse le développement historique moderne dans la ville en lien avec les temples et les infrastructures urbaines et considère de quelles manières les événements rituels contemporains et l'organisation des temples influencent la vie urbaine au travers de différentes formes d'organisation spatiales et de sensations corporelles. Au lieu de suggérer un déclin dans la pratique religieuse dû au développement planifié par l'état et au rôle grandissant des capitaux mondiaux dans la vie de tous les jours, je soutiens que les rituels, en tant que pratiques largement

communautaires et corporelles, contiennent des capacités affectives qui détiennent le potentiel d'influencer comment les gens agissent, pensent et vivent dans la ville.

Suivant l'introduction du premier chapitre, le deuxième chapitre présente le paysage religieux au sens large de la ville. Le troisième chapitre présente une analyse historique du développement spatial et des infrastructures dans le Xiamen moderne, plus précisément sur le rôle changeant que les temples ont joués dans la vie urbaine depuis les années 1920. Le quatrième chapitre se déplace vers la période contemporaine afin de discuter des différentes formes de quartiers et de la relation entre l'organisation locale de charités, des projets d'infrastructures et de l'efficacité spirituelle de leur temples. Le cinquième chapitre présente un modèle pour concevoir les religions chinoises en termes de circulation de technologies rituelles comme façon d'envisager la multiplicité des pratiques qui organisent la formation des événements rituels. Le chapitre six analyse le mouvement des dévots des temples urbains vers les temples fondateurs de cultes dans les régions rurales et l'atmosphère de trois célébrations rituelles majeures. Finalement, le septième chapitre aborde comment les gens pensent la religion de manière plus consciente et le langage utilisé pour présenter les rituels locaux, avec une emphase sur la catégorie de "l'intangible héritage culturel," afin de considérer la relation entre ces discours et la pratique rituelle.

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## List of Abbreviations

BJCJZGGLWYH	<i>Baijiao cijizugong guanli weiyuanhui</i> 白礁慈濟祖宮管理委員會
CXGGLWYH	<i>Changxing gong guanli weiyuanhui</i> 長興宮管理委員會
FHCZ	<i>Fanghu cun zhi</i> 枋湖村志
FJJS	<i>Fujian jiaotong shouce</i> 福建交通手冊
FJSNCDC	<i>Fujian sheng nongcun diaocha</i> 福建省農村調查
FJXQNJ	<i>Fujian xiqu nianjian</i> 福建戲曲年鑒
HCQZ	<i>Haicang quzhi</i> 海滄區志
HFQXDXM	<i>Haifang qianxian de xiamen</i> 海防前線的廈門
QJCJG	<i>Qingjiao ciji gong</i> 青礁慈濟宮
TAXMJWX	<i>Tongan xian minjian wenxue jicheng bianweihui</i> 同安縣民間文學集成編委會
UFWD	United Front Work Department of the CPC Central Committee
XCSB	Xiamen City Statistics Bureau and National Bureau of Statistics of China
XMCSJSZ	<i>Xiamen chengshi jianshezhi</i> 廈門城市建設志
XMFIJZ	<i>Xiamen Fojiao zhi</i> 廈門佛教志
XMJRZ	<i>Xiamen Jinrong zhi</i> 廈門金融志
XMSCSGHYJS	<i>Xiamen shi chengshi guihua yu jianshe</i> 廈門市城市規劃與建設
XMSHCQWHG	<i>Xiamen shi haicang qu wenhua guan</i> 廈門市海滄區文化館
XMSHCQZXWS	<i>Xiamen shi haicang qu zhengxie wenshi weiyuanhui</i> 廈門市海滄區政協文史委員會
XMSHLQWHG	<i>Xiamen shi huli qu wenhua guan</i> 廈門市湖里區文化館
XMSJJTQNJ	<i>Xiamen jingji tequ nianjian</i> 廈門經濟特區年鑒
XMSLYJ	<i>Xiamen shi lüyou ju</i> 廈門市旅遊局
XMSMJWX	<i>Xiamen shi minjian wenxue jicheng bianweihui</i> 廈門市民間文學集成編委會
XMSSMQ	<i>Xiamen shi siming qu weiyuanhui</i> 廈門市思明區委員會
XMSYLT	<i>Xiamen youlan tu</i> 廈門遊覽圖
XMJTZ	<i>Xiamen jiaotong zhi</i> 廈門交通志
XMSTDZ	<i>Xiamen tudi zhi</i> 廈門市土地誌
XMSWHJ	Xiamen shi wenhua ju 廈門市文化局
XMSXSYL	<i>Xiamen shi xingshi yuanliu yanjiu xueshi weiyuanhui</i> 廈門市姓氏源流研究薛氏委員會
XMZSGYJHS	<i>Xiamen zhongshan gongyuan jihua shu</i> 廈門中山公園計劃書

ZGXMSWDS	<i>Zhonggong Xiamen shi weidangshi yanjiushi</i> 中共廈門市委黨史研究室
ZGXMS	<i>Zhonggong Xiamen shi weidangshi</i> 中共廈門市委黨史
ZGZFMHWZ	<i>Zhongguo zhengfu menhu wangzhan</i> 中國政府門戶網站
ZXXMSSIMQ	<i>Zhengxie Xiamen shi siming qu weiyuan hui</i> 政協廈門市思明區委員會



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 General Overview of Project



**Figure 1: A procession exits an urban village to return to their temple on the other side of the road.**

To celebrate the birthdays of gods enshrined in communal temples in southeast China, the god's devotees in a neighborhood take it out to patrol its territory. The photograph above (figure 1) was taken during just such an event near the end of my fieldwork in Xiamen, a city built on an island off the coast of southeastern Fujian. The previous day, the group had taken a pilgrimage to their founding temple on the other side of the island and then upon return toured their own territory. The photo encapsulates much of what this project is about, former villages now engulfed by the city, construction projects and apartment blocks taking the place of older spatial orders, and the role of communal religious practice in urban life. The former village is now home to migrants from many other parts of China, who are often unfamiliar with the local gods and ritual practices of the area. Yet, they are still drawn in, the unexpected intensity of the event is hard for anyone to ignore. Traffic is stopped to allow time for the long procession to cross the road made up of a mix of ritual specialists, temple committee organizers, musicians, dance troupes, and devotees holding incense sticks to place in the incense burner upon return to the temple. The spectacle of noisemakers, music, firecrackers, and fireworks brings about a shift in the movements of city life; bodies affecting bodies, whether human or nonhuman, earthly or celestial. I rushed ahead to run up the steps of the overpass and take the photo. The overpass itself illustrating how the event participants will not passively accept the forms of movement in the city suggested by development plans, but instead take control of the streets themselves.

This dissertation is about communal temples and urbanization in China. Both are subjects that have been written about by numerous scholars before me, but by thinking the two together very different conclusions emerge. Ritual becomes an integral part of

urbanization, acting on the city, rather than only being suppressed by it. The communal temples and ritual events appear not as something of the past associated with the rural, pre-modern, or traditional. Instead, they are seen in constant dialogue and exchange with the space of the city, reshaping both how it is thought and how it is used. The city, in turn, is not the space of constant forward temporal momentum, instead, one that must exist and interact with both its past and its future.

In this introduction, I review studies of urbanization in China, giving specific focus to studies of religion in cities; next I overview the anthropology of religion and ritual in China, pointing to recent work in the field related to material religion and affect theory that this project builds on; following these literature reviews, I end with an overview of the dissertation's individual chapters and what I see as the significance of the project.

## 1.2 Urbanization and Infrastructure in China

### Scene One

*Lunch was served following a ritual event at a small communal temple in Xiamen. We sat on short plastic stools around fold-out tables to slurp up our small bowls of a thick savory noodle soup filled with small strips of pork, chunks of coagulated pig blood, cockles, and other delights with some ground white pepper on the side for those who desired a bit of spice. One bowl was never enough and a bowl was never filled until it was about to overflow as the temple committee and volunteers made sure to be energetic hosts to all in attendance and wouldn't take no for an answer.*

*I was sitting with two young men in their mid-20s and a woman in her forties, all of whom volunteered with the temple, though we had not met before. My friend Huang introduced us, saying that I was a doctoral student on exchange at Xiamen University and interested in local culture and temples. I added that I was interested in temples and urbanization in particular. The young man wearing a number of Buddhist prayer beads and sporting a trendy haircut started to question me, telling me that studying urbanization and temples in Xiamen was a bad idea. In his mind, I was too late as*

*urbanization had already happened, what was left to say? What I should be doing, he told me, was to focus on a single temple, “you should research Nanputuo [the major Buddhist monastery next to the university],” he said, “I was a volunteer there for three years, it is a very important temple, not like this place.” Assuming the woman at the table did not understand what I was doing there he tried to explain, but was quickly cut off as she had no time for his know-it-all attitude, “I know what he is doing,” she said, “those Xiamen University students are always coming around asking about local customs.”*

In 2011, the percentage of China’s population living in cities reached 51.27%. For the first time in China’s history, urbanites surpassed the number of people living in rural areas and the trend has continued. The populations of cities are expanding, as are the boundaries of the cities themselves and the size of spaces categorized as urban. As cities expanded, the Chinese government announced a new phase of urban planning known as city and countryside integration (*chengxiang yitihua* 城鄉一體化). The process involves converting residents’ household registration (*hukou* 戶口) from rural to urban, assigning services provided by village collectives to the municipal government, and spatial transformation through infrastructure projects that are seen as fitting with the norms of urban environments. This growth of cities and urban space is certainly not unique to China, urbanization has spread throughout the non-Western world in a process Neil Brenner (2011) suggests is part of an uneven and varied process of “planetary urbanization.” But this may cause many to ask what a city is? What constitutes a space as urban? It seems that whether one looks for a colloquial or dictionary definition, the results point to a city’s size and population density as larger in scale than a town or as a center of finance, governance, and culture. Both definitions explain the city in contrast to its other, the town, village, or periphery. Even Henri Lefebvre (1996) used the rural as a society of festivals in contrast to what he saw in new urban formations.

Chinese cities are also categorized by their own government, ranking them as first, new first, second, third, fourth, or fifth tier based on population size, GDP, and political administration.<sup>1</sup> They are divided further into county-level cities, prefecture-level cities, sub-provincial level cities, and provincial-level cities (*zhixia shi* 直轄市). However, even within each of these there is a mix of urban areas (*shiqu* 市區) and rural or peri-urban areas within the city limits (*jiaoqu* 郊區), as well as villages that are now surrounded by the city known as urban villages or, more literally translated, villages within the city (*chengzhongcun* 城中村). Additionally, cities are categorized as special economic zones, cultural centers, garden cities, overseas Chinese cities, and so on. Xiamen is classified as a second-tier city, a sub-provincial level city, a special economic zone, an important southeast coastal city (*dongnan yanhai zhongyaode zhongxin chengshi* 東南沿海重要的中心城市), and a harbor and scenic tourism city (*gangkou ji fengjing lvyou chengshi* 港口及風景旅遊城市) (ZGZFMHWZ 2013).

The urban and rural are by no means entirely separate autonomous entities, they are amorphous and hold shifting boundaries. In this sense, the Chinese word for city (*chengshi* 城市) is misleading, the first character meaning a wall and the second a market, yet walls no longer demarcate the ends of cities in China, nor are their boundaries so rigid to suggest ‘wall’ makes sense metaphorically. The city form always seems to be

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<sup>1</sup> The first-tier cities are Beijing 北京, Shanghai 上海, Guangzhou 廣州, and Shenzhen 深圳. In 2017, fifteen cities were reclassified as ‘first-level’ and in doing so generated the category of ‘new first-tier cities,’ these are Chengdu 成都, Hangzhou 杭州, Wuhan 武漢, Chongqing 重慶, Nanjing 南京, Tianjin 天津, Suzhou 蘇州, Xi’an 西安, Changsha 長沙, Shenyang 沈陽, Qingdao 青島, Zhengzhou 鄭州, Dalian 大連, Dongguan 東莞, and Ningbo 寧波. During my fieldwork, Xiamen was also reported to be among the cities to be included, but did not make the final list.

expanding, spreading out further into or out of rural spaces, surrounding and engulfing. So perhaps we should think the modern city and contemporary urbanization not just in terms of its difference in scale and position from the rural, but suggest there is something that defines it as an entity different from the wide variety of pre-modern cities as well.<sup>2</sup> Jennifer Robinson (2005) proposes that all cities should be understood to be ordinary, rather than categorizing them as Western, Third World, developed, global, and so on. She presents the framework of ordinary as a basis of a post-colonial framework for thinking about cities by moving away from ideas of linear stages of development, which emerged out of the colonial past. David Harvey (2008) connects the city and urbanization to the functioning of capitalism, as urbanization depends on the mobilization of the surplus essential to the workings of capitalism. The constant urban expansion absorbs the surplus product produced under capitalism in search of profit. Others focus on particular new forms of cities, such as Doreen Massey's (2007) "World Cities" linked to inflows and outflows, both urban and rural, throughout the world or Saskia Sassen's (2001, 2016) conception of the "Global City" as a production function that began to be inserted into cities during the 1980s that engaged globally directly bypassing the national level. More recently, urban planners and academics have become increasingly interested in 'green cities' and 'smart cities' as some kind of techno-sustainable future. All of these urbanists indirectly suggest the city is a secular space, even if connecting cities to local specificities. The same is true for much of the work on urbanization in China that tend to focus on issues of economy, politics, and development (Zhou 2013; He 2013; Zheng,

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<sup>2</sup> The longer history of the city in China is beyond the scope of this project; however, for the relation between temples, religious specialists, and cities in late imperial China see Skinner and Baker (1977), Goossaert (2007, 2015), Naquin (2000), and Lai (2007).

Zhao, and Tong 2016). I am not suggesting that religious practice is everything that defines a city or even the most important factor, only that its place in urbanization is often ignored. For my purposes, I approach the city in three key forms: the historic city, the colonial-modern city, and how a city is used by those who inhabit it.

By the historic city, I mean both the aspects of actual historic cities and historic rural areas that now make up parts of cities. These historic elements now exist in interaction with the colonial-modern city. Modern urban forms that largely emerged out of the Western world and its imperialist expansion continue to link these spaces to the legacy of the colonial past and the ongoing global capitalist market. These are infrastructures that are found throughout the world, such as highways, airports, office buildings, apartment blocks, subway stations, bus lanes, supermarkets, shopping malls, commerce, stock markets, and so on. They relate closely to what Marc Augé (2008) has termed ‘non-places,’ spaces of circulation, consumption, and communication, seen in opposition to ‘anthropological places’ that are inscribed with social bonds and collective histories. However, neither of these exist in absolute terms, rather there are varying degrees of place and non-place-ness. As Augé focused on European and, specifically, French societies, he perhaps overlooked how these kinds of spaces also connected to colonial histories. Such places exist alongside the historic city, and, as such, are shaped by these earlier space formations and their usages.<sup>3</sup>

How spaces are used by those who occupy them has been termed ‘cityness’ by AbdouMalik Simone (2010) and ‘the practice of everyday life’ by Michel de Certeau

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<sup>3</sup> Max Hirsh (2016) has shown how even global infrastructure forms like airports connect to parallel extremely localized infrastructure networks that often go unnoticed by outside observers.

(1984). Despite an increase in so-called “non-places” globally, residents have been able to maintain and create many place-based practices. In this sense, a city is always in the process of being made, not only by the continuing expansion of infrastructure but in the varied practices used to transform spaces, despite efforts to standardize these. As Simone writes, “No matter how hard analysts and policymakers might try, practices of inhabiting the city are so diverse and change so quickly that they cannot easily be channeled into clearly defined uses of spaces and resources or patterns of social interchange” (2010, 3). It is this interaction between the practices of “cityness” with the historic city and colonial-modern city that make cities as distinct entities that produce a locality.<sup>4</sup>

Many of the anthropological studies of urban China in the post-Mao period have moved away from issues of the historic city that relate to religion, ritual, or kinship to focus on how the local has come into contact with global forms of organizing domestic, work, and social lives. The city is by-and-large presented as secular and future-oriented, while religion is positioned towards the rural past. However, over the past ten years, efforts have increased in investigating the role that religion now plays in Chinese city life. In doing so, these studies consider how historic and localized elements of the city are now interacting with the colonial-modern side of the city. Four trends seem to appear in this work: 1) attempts by the state and patriotic religious associations to standardize the kinds of religious spaces permitted and training received; 2) the increasing dis-embedding of religious sites, bodies, and practices through digital or physical means; 3) the growth of lay Buddhism and Protestant Christianity among urbanites; and 4) the use

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<sup>4</sup> Certainly, this same kind of process also occurs in rural areas, so the combination does little to answer the question ‘what is a city?’



of existing religious structures to mobilize a neighborhood or former village in order to negotiate with the government.<sup>5</sup>

The Chinese government has been concerned with reshaping religious sites and professionals to fit with what they envision as the modern city. In turn, religious groups and professionals have become concerned with meeting their standards in order to avoid conflicts. Vincent Goossaert and Fang Ling (2009) noted an increase in temple rituals and hiring of Daoist priests in and around Suzhou. However, Huang Xinhua 黄新华 (2016) and Goossaert (2015) found that while some territorial temples were able to negotiate their reconstruction, many others were absorbed into a larger temple-complex controlled by the Daoist Association, who forbade spirit mediums, animal sacrifice, and “unorthodox scriptures.” Yang Der-Ruey (2012) points to another example of a Daoist Association’s efforts at standardization. He argues that the shift in Daoist education in Shanghai has fundamentally changed their training by fitting with a modern temporality that is more suited for urban life. Those religious groups that are not associated with one of the five authorized religions have taken up another kind of professionalization in order to protect themselves. Geng Li (2015) found that diviners have tried to legitimize their profession by purchasing professional certificates and forming academic associations.<sup>6</sup> Yet, as Wu Keping (2015b) has argued, less-standardized religious ideas have also

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<sup>5</sup> There have also been a number of studies of Chinese religious practice in urban areas outside of mainland China. However, due to the difference in historical and contemporary political circumstances, I have left them out of the discussion below. In Taiwan, Lin Weiping (2015) has analyzed the changing face of religion in urban areas with regards to spirit mediums and rural-urban migration and Richard Madsen (2007) has focused on a growing moral-ethical focus in Buddhism and popular religious temples. While in Hong Kong, Joseph Bosco (2015) has written on temple processions within the city.

<sup>6</sup> The rise of religio-tourist sites, whether in cities or as pilgrimage locations, can also be understood as part of the standardization of religious space as the government has a large influence in how they are run, (see Chan and Lang [2014], Oakes and Sutton [2010], Birnbaum [2003], and Yin [2006]).

emerged as the result of urbanization. She suggests that ghosts and other Chinese popular religious practices continue in urbanizing areas and reflect the rapid changes to these areas and the anxiety that can surround such transformations. There is an uncertainty for many people brought on by commercial and industrial developments, as well as the continued embodied attachment many people hold for rural spaces they once lived. Even major cities like Shanghai have a wealth of official and unofficial religious spaces. Benoît Vermader, Liz Hingley, and Liang Zhang (2018) mapped 430 officially recognized religious sites that are part of the five recognized religions, but also note that there are many other kinds of religious sites in the city that are not recognized by the state (such as underground churches and Buddhist worship outside of temples).

In other areas of China, efforts towards standardizing religious practice have been far stricter. This is the case in Tibet and Xinjiang, where Tibetan Buddhism and Islam are seen as potential threats to the state through links to separatist and terrorist groups. New regulations surrounding religion in China can be seen as largely a response to these, but will likely also impact the wider Han majority population.<sup>7</sup> During the National Conference on Religious Work (*Quanguo zongjiao gongzuo huiyi* 全國宗教工作會議) held on April 23 and 24, 2016, President Xi Jinping reasserted that religion must adapt to society, adding that religions in China should fulfill core socialist values and the importance of the Party in guiding them in this direction (Xinhua 2016). In September of that year, new revisions were made to the country's religious affairs regulations that were brought into effect in February 2018 (Li 2017). These included adding new clauses

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<sup>7</sup> On the transformation of city space in Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, see Harris (2013). On past conflicts between Muslim groups and the state see Gladney (2009) and on the ongoing spatial transformation in Xinjiang linked to the Belt and Road Initiative see Anwar (2018).

relating to religious sites in urban areas, stating that their location needed to “keep in accordance with the requirements of urban planning” 符合城鄉規劃要求 (Department of Politics, Labor and Social Security 2016, article 21.5), and that religious sites and statues “should conform to land use planning, urban planning, and construction engineering as well as other laws and regulations” (ibid, article 32). Furthermore, in October 2017, the People’s Daily reported that the vice minister of the United Front Work Department, Zhang Yijiong 张裔炯, stated that religions in China should follow a path towards ‘Sinicization’ (*Zhongguohua* 中國化) echoing what President Xi had said the year before (People’s Daily 2017). While the focus of these efforts is primarily on the aforementioned minority groups, it also points to a larger concern of the government in controlling how religious groups operate in China. Yet, as Chang Kuei-min notes, Sinicization fails “to go beyond the existing regulatory framework that caused many of the religious challenges [for the state] in the first place... [it] only increase[s] the rigidity of the regulatory framework as it extends the scope of bureaucratic discretion in dealing with the various sects” (2018, 38). Additionally, as the temples and rituals that I studied in Xiamen can point to ideas like ‘traditional Chinese culture’ or ‘local customs’ when speaking of their religious practices, it is more difficult for the state to deem them in need of ‘Sinicization.’<sup>8</sup>

As a result of both spatial transformation and state regulation, some religious practices and groups have become increasingly disembedded from the spaces they inhabit; it is a more deterritorialized vision of religion. Gareth Fisher’s (2016) study of a

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<sup>8</sup> On the earlier development of CCP policy on religion see Potter (2003), Leung (2005), and Tong (2010).

Beijing Buddhist temple shows the changing relationship between the temple and its surrounding area from the late Imperial period to the present, shifting from a more direct relationship with its own neighborhood to a much broader reach that is more utopian. Here, it is evident that infrastructure can be destructive to local communities but at the same time allows space for a less place-centric association. Weishan Huang (2017) suggests members of the Buddhist group Tzu Chi in China bring together lived religious practices and digital culture in what she refers to as a 'third space.' Like Fisher's example, there is a continued connection to the local group but their perspective is seen as more universally oriented.

Similar reasoning is often given for the growth of Protestantism in the city. This work suggests that Protestantism provides both a universal vision that allows anyone to enter and continue their practice regardless of location, but also allowing for the development of a sense of belonging in the city. Phil Entwistle (2016) presents young urban Protestants as seeing themselves as part of a group aimed at building stronger morality in China, while Hu Anning (2013) saw this as connecting to a sense of trust among urban Protestants. Huang Jianbo (2013), however, contrasts these urban Protestants with rural migrants, the former being focused on textual study and intellectual knowledge and the latter on inward emotional response and centered on religious practice. Additionally, Cao Nanlai (2011) demonstrates how rural migrants in Wenzhou use conversion to Protestantism as a form of upward aspiration and to develop a sense of belonging in the city. Here, there appear to be many comparisons to the modernized urban Buddhism focused on philanthropy (Wu 2015, McCarthy 2013, Laliberté 2012) while rural traditions are seen as focusing more on ritual practice (Tam 2012, Wang

2009). Yet, it should also be noted that Buddhist ritual practices have continued in urban areas as well (Heise 2012).

In other instances, emplacement and territory have returned to a place of importance for religious communities following decades of attacks on religion. In some cases, these have even opened space for negotiation with the government during redevelopment plans. Daniel Benjamin Abramson's (2011) research in Quanzhou city, located in southern Fujian, shows how the revival of communal temples has presented a challenge to urban planning and can come into conflict with and help to reshape processes of rapid urbanization. While Fujian is often taken as an outlier with regards to such local temples, comparable situations have been found in both the south and northwest of the country. Zhu Xiaoyang's (2011, 2012) ethnography of a village in Yunnan that has been incorporated into Kunming city shows how villagers were able to mobilize around temples and village halls. In doing so, they managed to protect their temples and in some instances their homes from demolition. As a result, they continue to hold a connection to the place they consider to be their 'homeland.' Qiangqiang Luo and Joel Andreas (2016) demonstrate how Hui Muslim villagers in Ningxia province were able to mobilize their community through the existing structures of their mosques. From this, the groups managed to renegotiate the terms of the redevelopment plans and preserve the locations of their mosques. While local circumstances are certainly diverse throughout China, as cities begin to expand further into the countryside where many local religious communities hold influence, the examples that are taken from Fujian, as well as those from Yunnan and Ningxia, may become more applicable elsewhere than previously imagined.

### 1.3 Chinese Communal Religion, Daoism, and Ritual Studies

#### Scene Two

*I was attending an event for one of the Royal Lords at a temple in an urban village. It was over six months into my fieldwork and I had yet to make a strong connection with any of the ritual masters I had met. I visited the temple the day before to ask the committee member who was present if they would mind having me in attendance as part of my research and he welcomed me to take part. They had hired a Daoist troupe from Tongan who I had not seen before to perform a three-day ritual.*

*During a break in the ritual sequence, I began to talk with the youngest Daoist apprentice in hopes he would be more open with me. This was not the case. Soon after I expressed my interest in Daoism, he told me “you shouldn’t study Daoism, it is too secretive, you’ll never get anywhere,” I wasn’t sure what to say, but he continued, “you should study Buddhism, they’re much more open, it is easier to understand.” Almost immediately after he had finished speaking, his master called out to me from the other side of the room holding up a Daoist robe, “Hey! Do you want to try this on?” he asked with a grin. I put on the robe and one of the musicians took photos of us with his smartphone, the master in a very serious stance and me looking awkward. Before I knew it, the master told me to turn around toward the altar, the committee members had returned and lined up behind us, “take this” he said handing me a bell, “follow my lead,” and as the drums started up again I took the place of the youngest Daoist for rest of the afternoon session and thankfully managed to do so without any major errors. As I had only met one person from the temple before, the committee members assumed I had come with the Daoists and performed with them regularly. As the Daoist master commented on our photo shared over his WeChat account, “The techniques of the Dao are without boundaries” (Daofa wu bian 道法無邊).*

Although I am focusing on urbanization and temples located within the city, it is important to also reflect on the development of the study of Chinese communal religion more broadly. As well as the field’s relation to anthropology, ritual theory, and religious studies. Some of the early accounts of religion and ritual among Han Chinese provide detailed descriptions and keen observation that remain influential in the field today, whether directly or indirectly. Unfortunately, many of these focused on an ahistorical and

unified view of China.<sup>9</sup> C.K. Yang's (1961) ethnography of a village in his native Guangdong province is perhaps the most influential of these early scholars. Yang argued that religion on the popular level is the diffused form of institutional religious practice. There is a tendency in these early studies to present Chinese religion as a unified system that developed through a top-down process of cultural integration. If ritual at the local level was diffused, then it is implied that there was a process of diffusion from some higher more concentrated level.

The relation between the state and ritual masters with the local temples has remained a contested issue concerning the degree of agency that local communities hold. As well as the possibility for multiple religious frameworks to co-exist within a single temple, ritual, community, or individual body. From the 1960s through the 1980s, many studies followed structural-functionalist approaches, often drawing heavily on concepts from ethnographies of colonized African societies and applying these ideas to Taiwan, Hong Kong, or Chinese groups in Southeast Asia, which each acted as stand-ins for "Chinese society" as a whole.<sup>10</sup> In this period, China was not only inaccessible to foreign fieldworkers but religion was harshly suppressed during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). In these studies based outside of mainland China, local religion was frequently

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<sup>9</sup> Henri Maspero's (1981) work showed the connections between Daoist priests and local society, while Marcel Granet (1975) described hierarchical principles in Chinese society that he saw as naturalized by religious ideas in order to develop social ties and to procreate. Early ethnographers also provided some accounts of rural religious life, such as Sidney Gamble (1963, 1968) in Dingxian, Hebei province based on fieldwork in the 1940s and Daniel H. Kulp (1925) in Guangdong province. Not to mention the wealth of material focused on religious practice by J.J.M. de Groot (1964) based on his time in Xiamen during the late 1800s. The recently published field notes of G.W. Skinner (2017) written in 1949-50 in Sichuan province also contains details of religious life and temple processions.

<sup>10</sup> Particularly influential anthropologists of Africa were E.E. Evans Prichard (1937), Meyer Fortes (1945), and Max Gluckman (1954).

presented as a mirroring of social life that was used to maintain control and stability over local society.<sup>11</sup>

Beginning in the 1970s, a self-critique developed within anthropology concerning anthropologists' complicity in Western colonialism and Orientalist representation (Asad 1973). This led to much debate concerning ethnographic writing, reflexivity, and the concept of 'culture;' questioning the authority of the anthropologist to represent 'the Other;' and considering the violence that could result from such representations (Clifford and Marcus 1986). This movement initially had little impact on those studying Chinese societies in terms of questioning scholarship's connection to colonialism and Orientalism. However, the fact that British scholars conducted research in colonial Hong Kong while Americans did so in Taiwan, which featured an American military presence, is clear evidence that this was the case. Yet, while the field largely remained focused on explaining the structure of a unified culture, identified in terms of unity in diversity, during the 1980s issues of power began to come to the forefront. Robert Weller (1987) presented religio-cultural processes as an ongoing tension between the pragmatic and the ideological that bring about unities and diversities through the experience of social constraints. Stephen Feuchtwang (2001) argued that popular religion, the state cult, and Daoist rites each provide alternative points of reference to a shared cosmological system.

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<sup>11</sup> Freedman (1974) understood Chinese religion as a unified system with a common base for both the elite and popular peoples that was enforced by the state. Jordan (1972) and Wolf (1974) influentially argued that the world of gods, ghosts, and ancestors functioned as a social mirroring of the imperial bureaucracy, family, and bandits. Ahern (1981) also saw religious life as mirroring the political, and, she argued, that in doing so it naturalized the state and prevented revolts. Although Watson (1985) did not follow these arguments, he also saw a unity of Chinese culture developing out of ritual. Based on research in Hong Kong's New Territories, he argued that this developed through the official promotion of approved deities by the imperial state and the orthopraxy of ritual practice. However, the various contributors to Sutton (2009) demonstrated numerous instances where this was not the case.



Yet, while there was space for local variation, it is part of a larger unifying force.

Catherine Bell (1989) suggested that the diversity of Chinese religions was the result of local appropriation of diffused common value. She understood the unity of Chinese religions as contested by the diversity within it. Prasenjit Duara (1988) demonstrated the wide variety of elements at play in local society in Shandong through the concept of the cultural nexus of power. Although he argues that it was not until the late Qing that the state began to increasingly penetrate the cultural nexus, the nexus appears to have immediately become reliant on the state as its center and then the nexus is assumed to be brought to an end by the modern state. P Steven Sangren (1987) analyzed the relationship between history and ritual through an examination of the symbolic relations of social institutions. He concluded that religious symbols reflect social relations attempts to create Chinese society as a unified system of ideology, philosophy, religion, and lived practice.

In this period, the study of Daoism as a religious tradition was also growing. Scholars in this field brought about important additions to the study of Chinese religious practices by focusing on Daoist textual traditions, in particular the recently accessible reprint of the Daoist Canon. Two figures from this period are particularly important to the study of Chinese ritual and the relation between Daoism and local society: Michael Saso (1978) and Kristofer Schipper (1978). These two scholars worked to combine the textual study of the Daoist Canon with fieldwork in Taiwan to show the ongoing lived Daoist tradition in relation to its long history.<sup>12</sup> Their work was followed by John Lagerwey

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<sup>12</sup> Earlier ethnographies of Taiwanese villages, such as Gallin (1966) and Diamond (1969), described the role of Daoist priests in local society. However, their focus was not on religion or ritual, nor did they have backgrounds in the history of Daoism or reading Daoist texts. Michel Strickmann (1980) would argue Saso also lacked these skills.

(1987) and Ofuchi Ninji's (1983) detailed documentation of the texts and ritual practices of Daoists in Taiwan. Although all based in Taiwan, the complex relations between Daoist ritual experts and local society were beginning to be analyzed more closely. What is more, Schipper's conception of a Daoist liturgical framework, in which the Daoist rites are the organizing principle of a larger community celebration, continues to influence the field (Lagerwey 2010, Meulenbeld 2014, Lai 2007). In many ways, however, this merely shifts the idea of 'unity' from one imposed by the state to one that stems from Daoists ritual masters.

The 1990s saw a linguistic turn in the study of religion focused on a deconstruction of terms like 'religion' to expose their development from Protestantism and Western academia in ways that often privileged belief over ritual (or more generally mind over body). These demonstrated not only the problematic application of 'religion' onto groups outside the Western world (Smith 2004), but also how ritual mastery can operate as disciplinary bodily practices (Bell 1992, Asad 1993). Numerous others have since taken on this endeavor (Dubuisson 2003, Fitzgerald 1997, Masuzawa 2005, McCutcheon 1997) with some focusing on the development of the term *shūkyō* 宗教 in Japan as a translation of the European 'religion' (Josephson 2012) and its adoption in China as *zongjiao* (Tarocco and Barrett 2012, Feuchtwang, Shih and Tremlett 2006, Kuo 2017).<sup>13</sup> The issues associated with this categorization are still felt in China today through the states use of terms like religion, superstition (*mixin* 迷信), evil cult (*xiejiao* 邪教), folk belief (*minjian xinyang* 民間信仰), and local culture (*difang wenhua* 地方文化).

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<sup>13</sup> The Korean "*chonggyo*" 종교 and Vietnamese "*tông giáo*" are also translations of 'religion' derived from these two characters.

These have resulted in varying forms of regulation and prohibition depending on time and place, and point to how local ritual practices in China often present problems for the category of ‘religion.’

This was also the period of Reform and Opening Up (*Gaige kaifang* 改革開放) in China. Over the following decades, research on local religion and history grew not only with foreign scholars’ gaining the ability to access the country, but also in the further development of local history, folklore, and anthropology within China. A number of collections documenting local traditions throughout China have been published and many others have shown the rich diversity of Chinese religious practices, local organizing, and state influence through research in different regions of China.<sup>14</sup>

Others have attempted to reconceive religion, ritual, and culture, often in ways that relate to issues of practice, the body, and space. Adam Yuet Chau (2006) divided religious practice into five modalities that he describes as “doing” religion.<sup>15</sup> Mayfair Yang (2008) suggested the use of ‘religiosity’ instead of ‘religion’ in order to avoid “(1) the distinction between religion and superstition, and (2) the distinction between inner

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<sup>14</sup> Collections include *Kejia chuantong shehui congshu* 客家傳統社會叢書 (*Traditional Hakka Society Series*) edited by John Lagerwey et al. (1994-2009), which documents the lineage and local temples throughout Hakka regions in Fujian, Guangdong, and Jiangxi; and *Minsu quyi congshu* 民俗曲藝叢書 (*Studies in Chinese Ritual, Theatre and Folklore*), edited by Wang Ch’iu-kuei (1993-), covering theatrical and ritual traditions throughout China. Individual studies include community ritual in northern China (Overmyer 2009); ritual specialists in parts of northern China that characterize different forms of Daoism (S. Jones 2010, 2017); the local opera traditions and Yinyang Masters in Shanxi (Johnson 2010); the multiple liturgical rites performed within ritual events in Putian (Dean 1998); the performance of modified Daoist rituals by the Confucian Liumen tradition in Sichuan (Olles 2013); the cultural hybridity formed in the relation between lineage halls, community compacts, and temples in western Fujian (Liu 2013); and the revival of local Confucian rituals in Gansu (Jing 1996).

<sup>15</sup> The five modalities are: 1) discursive/scriptural (the composition and use of texts); 2) personal-cultivation (showing long-term interest in cultivating or transforming the self); 3) liturgical (elaborate ritual procedures conducted by ritual specialists); 4) immediate-practical (achieving quick results through simple ritual or magic, such as divination, using talismans, consulting spirit mediums, begging for rain, ritual cursing, and so forth); and 5) relational (practices based around relations between humans and deities, or humans and ancestors).

(individual) faith and collective religious institution” (2008, 18). In her other work, Yang (2011) considers the relations between space, bodies, and ritual techniques in order to argue that ritual techniques can be seen as ways to create a separate world than the one enforced by the state or global capitalism, yet one that is not restrained by stiff boundaries. Lin Weiping (2015) argues that deity statues and spirit mediums both work to materialize the magic power (*ling* 靈) in what she refers to as “personification” (ideas of body, soul, and social person emphasizing kinship) and “localization” (cosmological structuring of center and four directions seen in the five spirit camps). She sees these as “cultural mechanisms bestowing efficacy on deity statues and spirit mediums” (2015, 9). Kenneth Dean (2012) argues that Daoist and other ritual traditions in popular religion provide alternative notions of cosmological power as opposed to the view of the imperial state. These alternatives are not mutually exclusive; rather, multiple liturgical frameworks can exist simultaneously within a ritual-event. Dean agrees that the state attempted to impose order on local cultures but argues that local people gradually reformed these impositions in their own ways. Stephen Feuchtwang (2012) also suggests multiple types of power forming Chinese societies through bodily techniques. He contrasts what a civilization of *Li* 禮, based on morality through ritual, with a civilization of *Fa* 法, based on the territorial cults and ritual efficacy, in pre-modern China. More recently, he suggests, these two civilizations have encountered other techniques of “modern civilization.” These approaches have moved away from earlier scholarship that attempted to define a single Chinese culture, religion, or civilization, to show ways in which cultural transmission is complex, varied, hybrid, and ever-changing.

There has also been an interest in local vocabulary that ties specific individual feeling to the atmosphere of religious ritual in China. Two terms have been particularly of interest to scholars: the feeling of *kuanghuan* 狂歡 (merriment, joy) at temple fairs (Zhao 2002, Gao 2015) and the *renao* 熱鬧 (hot and tumultuous) atmosphere at ritual events (Weller 1994, Chau 2006, Hatfield 2010). These bring together a focus on space and the body with how people talk about the feelings or sensations of ritual practice. In this project, I add to research that has focused on the importance of spatial and embodied qualities in ritual practice by drawing on theories of affect and emotion. In doing so, I consider the relations between conscious and nonconscious and individual and collective experiences of ritual events.

#### 1.4 Affect, Emotion, and the Study of Religion

##### Scene Three

*I was attending another event for Sending off the Royal Lords held in a lineage hall at yet another urban village. The Daoist priest who I had met before invited me to attend and by the time I arrived early in the morning, the scene was already packed with people offering incense and setting off firecrackers. The ground had turned into a thick muddy mess due to the rainfall early in the morning mixing with the remains of firecrackers. During this event, the lineage hall was open to all, regardless of surname or place of origin and banners hung around the entrances from the main road declaring the celebration of their 'intangible cultural heritage.' Numerous attendees had set up expensive camcorders and SLR cameras inside the temple, some from local media and other enthusiasts and hobbyists, some even wore facemasks to avoid inhaling too much smoke over the course of the event.*

*A group of three anthropology graduate students from Xiamen University were also in attendance, sent on the insistence of their professor to document the local traditions in the city. One asked to interview the Daoist master during a break in the ritual performance, he asked her where she was a student, and then upon hearing her response pointed at me and said, "he is at Xiamen University too," after pausing to take out his phone, he continued, "he also knows how to perform Daoist rituals." Turning the phone toward the student to show the photo of us together in Daoist robes.*

*After a laugh, he answered the questions and wrote down the different stages of performing the Daoist sacrifice for her.*

Developments in the study of religion more broadly have become increasingly concerned with the materiality of religious practice, moving away from earlier scholars who took language as their primary object of study. Thomas Tweed (2006) describes his theory of religion in terms of crossing and dwelling in order to focus on the everyday objects in religious practice as artifacts and of singing and shouting as sounds and sensation. Manuel Vasquez (2011) expands on Tweed's theory by considering not only the role of movement and connectivity but also the exacerbation of socio-economic inequalities. He proposes the language of networks and social fields to view religion and culture as "embodied practices, artifacts, institutions and environments... [that may] also play a co-originating role crossing with organic procedures" (2011, 307) through the interplay of religion and ecology. The shift towards "material religion" has been described as beginning "with the assumption that things, their use, their valuation, and their appeal are not something added to a religion, but rather inextricable from it" (Meyer et al. 2010, 209).

In many ways, these trends point to a much earlier focus in the study of religion, that of experience. In the works of William James, individuality and individual experiences are important, but this is not an individual cut off from society or history.<sup>16</sup> Our experience is always tied up in wider goings-on and the interconnectivity of

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<sup>16</sup> Robert Sharf (2000) is critical of both James work and the use of the term 'experience' more generally in the study of religion. However, within religious groups in China past and present, many people do evoke terms similar to experience when speaking of religious practice. Additionally, Sharf's assertion that we should not apply outside terminology to a group under study is in itself ridiculous and implies a kind of impossibility of translation.

existence. While at times James would speak of the body as something owned by the individual, writing that

Its breathing is my ‘thinking,’ its sensorial adjustments are my ‘attention,’ its kinesthetic alterations are my ‘efforts,’ its visceral perturbations are my ‘emotions.’ The obstinate controversies that have arisen over such statements as these (which sound so paradoxical, and which can yet be made so seriously) prove how hard it is to decide by bare introspection what it is in experiences that shall make them either spiritual or material. (2010 [1912], 74)

However, he is quick to clarify that such individual experiences are always acting towards other experiences and exist within systems of relations.

In *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, James considers religious experience in biological and psychological terms. He spoke of religion as “*the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men [sic] in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine*” (2002 [1902], 29-30, italics in original). This was not meant as a totalizing definition, but simply to clarify what he meant by the term in this specific context. Yet, some would argue that this definition remains problematic, that its focus on solitude negates the social. However, James was clear that in studying any sort of experience, religious or otherwise, it is important to consider the object of study both in isolation and within its environment. In doing so, one begins to uncover its range of variations, rather than its elementary forms as in Durkheim (ibid, 22-23). For Durkheim (1995 [1912]), society is understood as a mental representation that is collectively reproduced by ritual. Religion is merely a symbolic representation forcing us together. In James, however, religion acts not to represent or copy reality but actually adds to it.

Thinking ritual practice as actually doing something that is more than symbolic is important to this project in order to think of rituals as an active force in society. I focus

on what religious experiences actually do to our bodies in terms of affect and emotion.<sup>17</sup> However, in doing so I am not making a claim of the existence or nonexistence of the gods being worshipped. Suggesting biological, neurological, or psychological affects of rituals on individuals and groups does not mean that there are no other aspects of the experience. The god's efficacy and power can be understood as existing (or not existing) without discounting the embodied conditions of the devotees.

When I speak of the affective qualities of ritual, I am drawing on the works of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and Brian Massumi (2002, 2011). To study ritual from this perspective is to see the ritual as an event in which bodies affect and are affected, augmenting the pre-personal activation and the personal feeling. There is a contagious element to these affects that are passed on and spread as bodies come together, and in doing so proliferate the continuously transforming event. Yet, affect is not simply here one instance and gone the next. We do not go in and out of a state of affecting and being affected, rather there is an ever-changing intensity of affect experienced. As we make sense of these intensities on a conscious level, we begin to categorize the affects, grounding the intensity in the more individual level of emotion. It is the body's movement through different experiential states that changes its ability to act. Affect, then,

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<sup>17</sup> The current interest in affect whether in religious studies or cultural studies more broadly is generally traced to two publications in 1995: Eve Sedgwick and Adam Frank's "Shame in the Cybernetic Fold" and Brian Massumi's "The Autonomy of Affect." Sedgwick and Frank's intellectual lineage is traced to Silvan Tomkins' psychobiology that placed affective forms within the realm of emotion. While Massumi's reading of Deleuze, differentiates pre-conscious affects from conscious emotion; affect is understood as immanent in the relations between things acting on each other. These early pieces were in many ways more polemical in their argument against those focusing on the linguistic than the authors' later work, and as the field developed, so too did the wide variety of ways that affect was defined, borrowing from the aforementioned authors and many others. For an overview of the field see Figlerowicz 2012, Siegworth and Gregg 2010; and Thrift 2004. For an overview of affect theory in relation to religious studies see Schaefer 2015, 19-35.



can be seen as primary in the development of feelings, motivations, and people's sense of themselves, which mediate a group's potential way of life.<sup>18</sup>

This approach to ritual or religion is not entirely novel, affect theory has been taken up by a wide variety of disciplines in different ways, including both religious studies and the anthropology of religion. Kevin O'Neill's (2015) ethnography of an ex-gang member in Guatemala analyzes Christian piety and aspiration in terms of pre-conscious affect. Donovan Schaefer's *Religious Affects* (2015) reframes religion in terms of animality to move away from a focus on language and consider the ways in which religion is caught up in flows of power through bodies.<sup>19</sup> The most well-developed theory of religion and affect, however, is Jon Bialecki's work on the American Pentecostal movement, *The Vineyard*. Bialecki makes a clear distinction between affect from emotion, writing,

Speaking about emotion as affect is a mistake. It is better to think of emotion as that which follows affect once the moment is gone, and the "affected" person finally becomes aware of the experience, framing it discursively. By the time that this has arrived, the contagious nature of affect is to a degree spent; rather than a force quickly moving from person to person, it is now arrested, "owned" by the person "feeling" the emotion. (2015, 98)

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<sup>18</sup> It is also important to take note of the critiques of this approach, particularly those coming from fields of neuroscience and social psychology. Numerous critiques dispute some of the major theorists' use of scientific evidence and argue that these works merely reassert the mind-body dualism that they claim to reject. Ruth Leys (2011) and Hemming (2005) both critique Massumi's influential reading of Deleuze as detaching body from mind, however, they neglect to account for what he describes as a 'trace' of the affect that repeats. The trace of past actions includes a trace of their contexts, there is a social element to them, and is conserved in both the body and the mind. Wetherell (2015) also discusses the relation between affects and their contexts, in a critique of other influential figures in affect studies, she suggests that we cannot only see social actors as being of embodied affect, but also ones "bathed in cultural practice" (Wetherell 2015, 152) as an attempt to consider the relational and selective manner by which our mimetic abilities and the spreading of affect may function. Emily Martin (2013) argues affects should be seen as social, not biological, as they occur within social contexts. However, I would argue that it is important to consider the biological and psychological in addition to the socio-cultural level when studying ritual events.

<sup>19</sup> Schaefer's work is more strongly influenced by those who see emotions as part of or synonymous with affects, such as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2003), Ann Cvetkovich (2012), Lauren Berlant (2011), and Sara Ahmed (2010).

Here, he points towards the interaction between the nonconscious and conscious, of the role of affect on both body and mind.

Perhaps the strongest critique of this kind of approach comes from social psychologist Margaret Wetherell (2012). Wetherell's notion of affect is often something that could be understood as emotion but her conception of emotion is not entirely on the level of the conscious mind. Rather, it relates to the back and forth between bodily sensation and conscious meaning-making. Affect-emotion simultaneously engages with biology and psychology as well as culture and history. She moves away from older psychobiological notions of 'basic emotions' to consider how neuroscientific research has understood the ways in which affect is registered on the body. The neurobiology that produces emotional reactions in the body are not disconnected from those that support thoughts and decision making; there is a dynamic and complex connection between the brain and body that is continuously composed and recomposed. Affect, then, is not disconnected from the level of language or discourse, there is a spiraling of loops back and forth without a clear-cut distinction between conscious and non-conscious, body and mind. She writes,

The picture that psychology and neuroscience typically now paints of affect is of a highly dynamic, interacting *composite* or *assemblage* of autonomic bodily responses (e.g. sweating, trembling, blushing), other body actions (approaching or avoiding), subjective feelings and other *qualia*, cognitive procession (e.g. perception, attention, memory, decision-making), the firing and projecting of neural circuits (e.g. from the thalamus to the cortex and the amygdala), verbal reports (from exclamations to narratives) and communicative signals such as facial expressions. An emotional episode, such as a burst of affect like rage or grief, integrates and brings together all of these things in the same general moment. (2012, 62)

There is, therefore, not a simple distinction between the visceral nonconscious and conscious meaning-making. How these interact relate to the history of an individual body

and its relational history with others. For Wetherell, the affects are then circulated through the work of affective practices that connect to both the history of individual and trans-individual states.

Wetherell, however, only makes reference to Massumi's earlier publications. I would suggest that 1) she misses an important point about the affective trace and 2) his more recent work is perhaps more in line with her own perspectives on affect, though not identical. Massumi (2002) does note that being affected causes a transition in the body as a quality of experience and this leaves an affective trace. The trace is a kind of bodily memory, but as Wetherell demonstrates, such bodily memories that connect to the almost instantaneous registration of the nervous system are not separate from the conscious mind or memory. Massumi's first publication on affect is more polemical in tone, it was a radical departure from much of the linguistically focused work of the time. Since then, he has connected the non-conscious affects to conscious emotion more clearly in what he refers to as 'vitality affects' and 'categorical affects.' He writes,

There are already beginnings of a translation of the affective dimension of the event, as it happens, into emotion... the vitality affects resonate *in* the event, ensuring a certain intensity. At the same time, it prepares the way for their conversion of vitality affects into 'categorical affects': identifiable, generally recognizable, narratively (or otherwise) codable, symbolically evocative, metaphorically redolent human emotions (2011, 153)

In the distinction between vitality and categorical affects, I find something that is more easily integrated with Wetherell's work, fusing together the biological and cultural. When I use the term affective I refer to the pre-personal and non-conscious intensities that come from bodies acting on bodies. However, while I describe these affects as non-conscious, the ways in which they come about and how they are then understood on an individual level rely on both the wider socio-historical context in which they emerge. This relates to

the individual and trans-individual history of bodily experiences, and individual conscious understanding of what has occurred. It is the looping back and forth between neurobiological responses and conscious decision.

A focus on affect and emotion gets at something that would otherwise be overlooked. It points to what ritual practice actually does to people and this is something people I met during my fieldwork talked about. How ritual events made them feel, the kinds of atmospheres they created, and that, even though they may be seeking a more direct material benefit, there was a more basic emotional reaction to ritual practice. This also avoids thinking in terms of an overarching totalizing structure connections and instead sees socio-cultural processes as ever-changing connections between bodies that are affected and affect others. These connections, however, are not disconnected from history, society, or culture, but fully immersed in them.

## **1.5 Summary of Individual Chapters**

Following this introductory chapter, chapter two presents a general overview of Xiamen, methodologies used in research and an overview of the wider religious landscape of the city. I outline the mapping of religious sites in the central city and my use of ethnographic fieldwork and historical sources. Then give brief descriptions of communal temples, lineage halls, Daoist temples, Earth God temples, Buddhist temples and monasteries, Protestant churches, domestic altars, and incense pilgrimage groups.

The third chapter presents a historical analysis of spatial development and infrastructure in modern Xiamen, focusing on the changing roles that temples have played in city life since the late 1800s. I show the ways in which plans for development or modernization have worked to transform the space of cities in China in ways that are

often antagonistic towards temple space and ritual practice. Yet, despite this, since the 1980s, temple organizers and donors have, to some extent, been able to influence the shape that development plans take.

Chapter four continues the focus on space and ritual practice, moving to the contemporary period. Here, I discuss temple finances and the different projects (religious and nonreligious) they organize. I connect these kinds of projects to the various reasons that people have for donating and making offerings to temples. I argue that there a connection between the spiritual efficacy (*ling* 靈) of temples and the collective local organization for infrastructure projects and against demolition campaigns. I show this connection by discussing examples from four different types of neighborhoods that I have categorized as 1) urban villages and residential complexes, 2) demolition sites, 3) the downtown and surrounding area, and 4) off-island urban and peri-urban areas.

Chapter five presents a model for conceiving of ritual events in terms of the circulation of ritual technologies. This refers to the multitude of actors within a single event who circulate at different scales and intensities through and beyond the region. In doing so, I attempt to consider the great variety of ritual and religious practices without presenting a specific element as the center or unity of the practices. Instead, I suggest there is no essential element. Yet, the presence of any is caught up in histories of local places and bodies, political regulation, and communication technologies.

Chapter six analyzes the movements of urban temple devotees to the founding temples of cults in rural areas and the atmospheres of three major ritual celebrations of the cult of Baosheng Dadi 保生大帝, one of the major deities in the region. I present three different ritual events and the kinds of affective atmospheres associated with them

to consider the events and cult on different levels: 1) the annual pilgrimage for the division of incense, 2) the government supported cultural festival, and 3) the leaping of the fire pit, often conducted at night with the aid of a spirit medium.

The seventh chapter focuses on the ritual of Sending off Royal Lords (*Song wangchuan* 送王船) in a variety of contexts. First using it as an example of the growing trend of categorizing rituals and local cults as Intangible Cultural Heritage and local Cultural Centers. Then in the use of ritual events as a means to promote cross-straits religions with Taiwan under the guise of ‘cultural exchange.’ And finally presenting instances where the event remains outside of either categorization. I analyze the changing categorization in terms of perception and affection, and the relation between the two.

## 1.6 Significance of Project

### Scene Four

*A musician for a Daoist troupe invited me out to his home in the outskirts of Tongan district to attend a large funeral he was performing at nearby. Public funerals have become increasingly rare in more urban areas where the use of public spaces is more strictly regulated, so I appreciated the invitation. His interest in me was trying to figure out what on earth his son, who was just a few years younger than me, was doing. His son, the first in his family to attend higher education, now lived in Gansu province and was pursuing a PhD in chemistry at a university there. Like many parents, my musician friend was puzzled as to why his son was still in school in his late twenties. He asked how long my program in Canada was supposed to last, when I said probably at least around six years he was aghast, his son's four-year program already seemed too extreme. Like many graduate students in China, his son only received minimal funding, but the musician said "it isn't about the money, it's about the time." He thought it was time for his son to grow up and settle down. The son didn't have to follow in his father's career path, but he had to at least produce some offspring, not just a dissertation.*

This project is the first major study of communal temples in a modern Chinese city and analyzes the complex interaction between urban temple devotees, Daoist priests,

Buddhist monastics, opera performers, and a variety of other religious performers in Xiamen. It demonstrates the massive scale of reconstruction of religious sites in the area since the 1980s, as well as the current role temples play in city life. I argue that despite the destructive role urban development had on temples throughout the twentieth century, in the past thirty years the reconstruction of temples throughout the city has allowed neighborhoods to organize charitable works and development projects. I understand these projects as closely connected to the perception of a god's spiritual efficacy and the experience of ritual events. I analyze these events in terms of the collective affective atmospheres, individual emotional experiences, and conscious perceptions in order to present ritual as a productive social force. I argue that ritual events give individual participants a power to act that would otherwise be unavailable. By demonstrating this relation between rituals and community organizing, I offer a new understanding of the role temples can play in modern urban society and an innovative conception of the body-mind experience in ritual events.

China is transforming so rapidly, it at times feels difficult to work through the much slower process of academic research and come out with something that continues to be relevant. Despite this, I think this project is a significant addition to the fields of urban studies in China and Chinese religious ritual, as well as future understandings of Xiamen and southern Fujian. In terms of urban studies, the focus on communal temples and ritual as an important part of city life brings a very different perspective than the dominant views in the field that largely present the city as a secular space. Particularly in the chapters four through seven, I consider the way temples have been shaped by the process of urban development but also how ritual practices can be thought of as reshaping

the space of the city. By theorizing rituals in terms of affect and emotion, I also shed light on how these practices can be a productive force in the shaping of contemporary societies, both in terms of collective experience and individual actions. Finally, I present an updated portrayal of Xiamen, both in terms of religious life and the shape of the city more generally.



## **Chapter 2**

### **Xiamen as Fieldsite and Research Methodologies**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter introduces the broader religious landscape in Xiamen today as well as the methodological approaches of the dissertation. I begin with a general description of the city in relation to previous scholarship on religion in the region and the growth of the local history movement and cultural industry. I then outline the key findings from my geographic survey of religious sites in the city's central districts and how this relates to my use of historical materials and ethnographic fieldwork. Finally, I give an overview of the different kinds of religious sites and practices found in the city: communal temples, lineage halls and associations, Daoist and Earth God temples, Buddhist temples, Protestant churches, domestic altars, and incense pilgrimage groups.

#### **2.2 Xiamen as Fieldsite**

Xiamen is located just north of the Tropic of Cancer in southeastern Fujian province on the western side of the Taiwan Strait. Its climate is characterized by long hot and humid summers and shorter fairly mild but rainy winters. Jinmen, two groups of islands that are part of Taiwan's territory, is located less than two kilometers from Xiamen. While these islands acted as a strategic base during the war between the Guomindang 國民黨 and Communists, it is now seen as a central location for improving Cross-Straits relations. The city covers a total of 1699 km<sup>2</sup> of which only 334.64 km<sup>2</sup> is classified as urban. It is divided into six districts: Siming 思明 and Huli 湖里 districts, which make up Xiamen

island itself and the much smaller Gulangyu island, comprising the central city, and the four off-island districts Haicang 海沧, Jimei 集美, Tongan 同安, and Xiang'an 翔安, which contain more rural areas but also have their own urban centers. The population of the city has steadily increased since the establishment of the special economic zone in 1980. In 1991, the population was only 1.1 million but by 2000, the population had grown to just over two million and almost doubling to 3.9 million by 2016. Slightly over two million of these residents live in the central two districts. (XMSJJTQNJ 1992, 35-36; XMSJJTQNJ 2017, 5.1.1, 5.1.5).

The city and surrounding region of Southern Fujian (known as Minnan 閩南) has been the focus of numerous other studies, this has included missionaries in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the highly influential work of J.J.M. de Groot (1866, 1964) on domestic and communal religious practice in the late nineteenth century, as well as numerous historians and social scientists since the 1980s.<sup>20</sup> The wealth of existing material may lead some to think there is little more to say about religion in Xiamen. However, I take these previous studies as an advantage, rather than a deterrent, as, unlike many other regions of China, the work of earlier scholars presents a window to view how

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<sup>20</sup> Such as Kenneth Dean's (1993) study of the history and revival of cults to local deities in the region; Huang Shumin's (1998) ethnography of a village on Xiamen island presenting the post-Mao transformation of society through the lens of a local cadre; Fan Zhengyi's (2008) analysis of the history, myths, and current practices of the cult of Baosheng Dadi 保生大帝; Tan Chee Beng's (2006) edited volume on the revival of popular traditions in the region; Wang Mingming's (2009) historical anthropological analysis of Quanzhou city; Ashiwa Yoshiko (2009), David Wank (2009), and André Laliberté's (2011) research on Nanputuo, the major Buddhist monastery in the city; Chang Wen-yu 張文玉 and Lin Wei-ping's 林瑋嬪 (2015) account of the reconstruction and popularity of the Xianyue Tudi Gong temple 仙樂土地公廟; Xu Wenbing 徐文彬 (2017) description of the revival of popular religion through the 1980s in Southern Fujian; Zhang Jiyu's 張繼禹 (1989) portrayal of Daoism in Fujian more generally; Lin Guoping 林國平 and Zhong Jianhua's 鍾建華 (2016) wealth of material on popular religion throughout Zhangzhou; and Zheng Zhenman's 鄭振滿 (2009) analysis of lineages and popular cults in Southern Fujian and Taiwan during the late imperial period.

religion was practiced and life in the region more generally at different points in time. This makes for a somewhat unique field site that can illustrate the history of religion in the city but also speak to the future of religion in China following processes of rapid urbanization. As Chinese cities expand into the countryside where communal ritual events continue and the countryside becomes increasingly city-like in terms of its urban infrastructure, leisure, education, and sociality, perhaps Xiamen can be seen as an example of how local institutions will develop more broadly in the future.

In addition to these studies, the religion and culture in the city have also been shaped by the local history movement among academics working in the city and the expansion of the culture industry through museums, cultural centers, and reports focusing on documenting local traditions as ‘Intangible Cultural Heritage’ and ‘Cultural Relics.’ The shift from national to local and regional histories of China was in many ways an attempt by scholars to retake their history from the existing nationalist narratives, or in Prasenjit Duara’s words to ‘rescue history from the nation’ (1995). These scholars have made important contributions to the study of Chinese history through the use of local historical documents and oral histories. The movement has been particularly strong in Fujian and Guangdong provinces centering around scholars at Xiamen University, Sun Yat-Sen University, and the Chinese University of Hong Kong as well as foreign scholars who have collaborated with them.<sup>21</sup> This includes both the supervisor of this dissertation, Kenneth Dean, and my hosts in the history department at Xiamen University, Liu Yonghua 劉永華 and Zheng Zhenman 鄭振滿. In addition to their own work, the

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<sup>21</sup> Such as David Faure, Liu Zhiwei 劉志偉, Zheng Zhenman 鄭振滿, and Helen Siu among others. See Dean (2010) for an overview of the movement.

professors at Xiamen University send their students out for large and small-scale studies of local history each semester. During a graduate seminar taught by Zheng Zhenman that I attended in the fall of 2015, he instructed students to go out and find some source of local history on the ground, rather than spending all their time in the library. So while the graduate students' larger projects are generally based in rural areas, during coursework each year, a new set of students is sent out to find local historical sources within the city.

What is more, the city has a growing cultural industry promoted by state institutions known as cultural centers (*wenhua guan* 文化館). There are seven of these centers within the city (one for each district and one for the entire city), each working to curate art and museum exhibitions, host lectures and discussions, and house libraries and archives. In addition to this, some of the employees are tasked with documenting local culture in text, photo, and video. These centers are connected to a larger nation-wide promotion of “intangible cultural heritage” (ICH; *feiwu wenhua yichan* 非物文化遺產, abbreviated to *feiyi* 非遺) that are recognized at local, provincial, and national levels within China as well as by UNESCO internationally. I describe this in more detail in chapter seven, but I bring it up now to point out how movements associated with academics and curators have had an impact on how local people view their own culture as well as how they view researchers. Now many people take much more pride in their local culture, but at the same time, it also has brought the state into much more direct involvement through talk of ‘cultural preservation’ that seeks a more standardized or sanitized version of local culture. While some local groups attempt to take advantage of these programs, others are increasingly frustrated by the academics, journalists, cultural workers, and bureaucrats asking them to explain ‘local customs’ to them. Li Li 李立

(2010) argues that the interaction between scholars, categories of intangible cultural heritage, and villagers in southwest China as a collaborative production of culture. Local culture is reshaped through its study and translation. Yet, this should not be seen as a neutral affair, much of this interaction comes from the state attempting to increase surveillance and control of local culture. In doing so, certain parts of local culture will be elevated to the status of ICH, while others will be ignored, maintained, or even condemned as feudal superstition. Despite potential negative repercussions, many local people continue to try to take advantage of these new categorizations for their own benefit (whether financially or for status).

In Xiamen, a number of academics have begun to collaborate with temples and former villagers to produce volumes of village history. Stacks of these can be found in temple offices for distribution. Other temples have taken it upon themselves to publish books that mimic scholarly styles. These are often described in terms of taking back their own culture and history after the government took it away from them in the Maoist era. One man in his fifties, whose lineage had recently produced such a volume, revealed in the fact that Zheng Zhenman had written something about his village but made a small error. He then tasked himself with correcting the professor about this point. The local village expert now claiming authority over the local academic. My project does not offer the kind of long history of a locality or region, instead, I focus largely on the contemporary period and how members of temples and their ritual events have been reshaped through urbanization, but also their continued role in also transforming the city. The continued relevance of these temples in city life is often overlooked by those

working on urbanization in China. But I found that temples are important local institutions that offer a different perspective on urban China.

### **2.3 Mapping Xiamen's Religious Sites**

The research for this project was conducted while I was a visiting doctoral student in Xiamen University's History department between 2015 and 2017. While much of the material presented in the following chapters comes out of the observation and participation in ritual events as well as interviews and discussions, I also conducted a larger survey of temples in the two central districts of the city: Siming and Huli.

The geographic survey of temples shows the massive scale of temple reconstruction in the city and that the examples I use from ethnographic fieldwork are not isolated cases. Rather, they can be seen as relating to urban development and urban-religious subjectivities in the city more broadly. I drew on previous surveys of areas of the city that collected data on temples (ZXXMSSIMQ 2010, Huang 2010, *Lujiang zhi* [1766] 1998, Su, Chen, & Xie 1931) and couplets (many of which were located in temples) (Ke 2011). Although each of these was helpful, none were comprehensive. In addition to this, I also utilized Baidu Maps but this also presented an incomplete picture as many of the temples are not included. As such, the survey developed out of visiting every neighborhood in Siming and Huli districts, asking people about temples in the areas, and wandering around in the hot sun. At the temples, I documented their stelae inscriptions, couplets, other posted information (rules of conduct, schedule of events, event announcements, and financial statements) and, when people were willing, conducted informal group or individual interviews.

In total, I mapped the locations of 142 communal temples, four communal temples rebuilt by Buddhists, three large Earth God temples, and two large Daoist temples. As well as 27 Buddhist monasteries and ten popular Buddhist temples (figure 3). The survey does not include small Tudi Gong 土地公 (earth god) and Stone Lion (*Shishi gong* 石獅公) shrines or lineage halls. While a complete survey of the city or even the whole of southern Fujian would be more comprehensive, the time it would have taken to do so would not allow me to conduct more intensive ethnographic accounts within the period of fieldwork. The categories used are not necessarily how the members of the temples self-identify (and there can be disagreement among members of a single temple about this) but are instead based on commonalities of institutional structure, types of deities worshipped, in addition to self-identification.

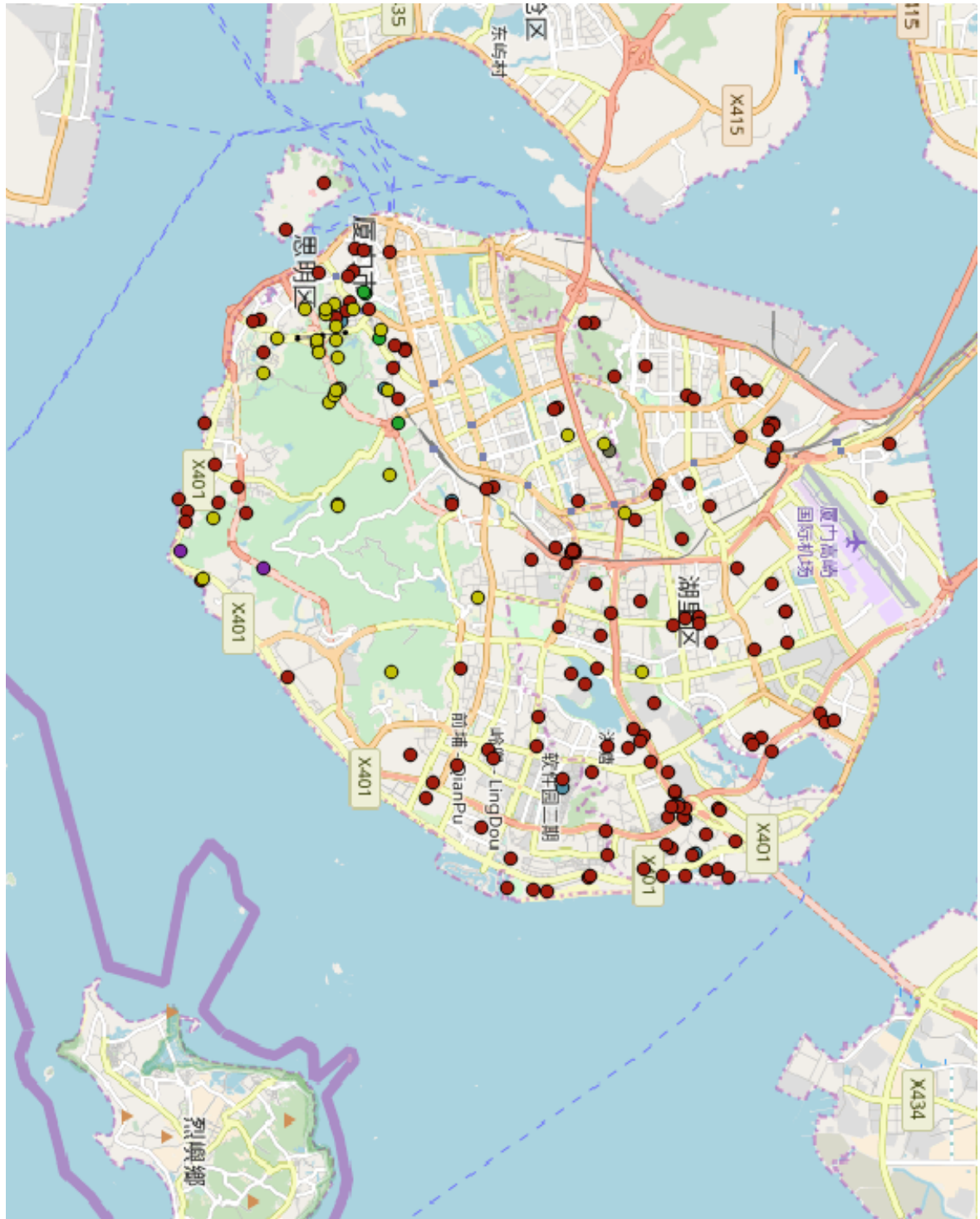
There are three areas of the island that do not have any or have a much lower density of temples than elsewhere. The largest of these is the mountainous region in the southcentral part of the island. I found no evidence that this area previously had a larger number of temples and the geographic reason for this seems obvious. The second is the area just north of the inlet on the west of the island. This area includes many of the municipal government's office buildings, several large international hotels, as well as the original site of the city's special economic zone. Much of this area is actually reclaimed land that was developed for its current uses, so it has no history of temples or villages. Finally, the area surrounding the airport in the north of the island has very few temples because the construction of the airport led to the demolition and relocation of numerous villages. I found only two instances of multiple temples being rebuilt in a single site on the island. In one case two temples that were part of the same neighborhood were rebuilt

as separate shrines with a single courtyard, while a third temple in the neighborhood remains separate. In the other instance, seven temples were rebuilt within a walled off area after the largescale redevelopment of multiple villages that caused the demolition of the existing housing and temples. This example is similar to united temples found in Singapore, but far from the norm in Xiamen. In the future, it is certainly possible that this kind of multi-temple site will increase, however, during my research it was far from the norm and was not it seen as a desirable solution for those involved.



**Figure 2: A small shrine to a stone lion.**





**Figure 3: Map of Siming and Huli Temples - Communal temples (red), Buddhist monasteries (yellow), communal temples rebuilt by Buddhists (green), popular Buddhist temples (blue), Daoist temples (purple), large Earth God temples (grey).**

## **2.4 Historical Materials and Ethnographic Fieldwork**

From the survey, I determined that while many neighborhoods and former villages in the city have faced demolition, redevelopment, and relocation of residents, the communal temples are still able to develop connections to both the former and current residents. These findings shaped my decision making in selecting the specific temples and neighborhoods to focus on more closely during fieldwork. The exploration of modern history in chapter three contextualizes the results of the survey, pointing to the destructive nature that many development campaigns had on temples. However, it also shows the role that temples have played in development. The aim of this history is not to deconstruct received notions of the past that local people hold or seek to describe the long history of religious practice in the area, but to bring together the history written by local groups in the form of stela inscriptions and gazetteers with official documents for urban development as well as newspaper articles and annual government reports. The focus is therefore not on the origins of specific deity cults or ritual practices, but on the modern transformations and recombinations of space in connection to temples as places of local organizing.

While the temple survey shows that religious sites remain commonplace throughout the central city districts, it in no way explains why this is, how they are important to local residents, what their ritual practices are, or what these do to people. In conducting a range of interviews and participating in ritual events, I intended to address these issues. I attended events at 23 communal temples (of which I attended every annual event at six), as well as seven off-island communal temples in urban or peri-urban areas, seven temples within neighboring Zhangzhou and Quanzhou, and three Buddhist temples

within Xiamen, as well as two trips with an incense pilgrimage group unaffiliated with any single temple and services at one Protestant church. I conducted a range of one-on-one interviews and group discussions with members of over 20 temples, two groups of Daoist priests and musicians, three opera troupes, and a variety of other performers at ritual events.

Initial discussions with participants at events developed out of the curiosity many of them had with me being there. This presented both an opportunity and a barrier, as a white male the kinds of people who would want to talk with me and the ways in which they did so differ from the kinds of experience Chinese or female fieldworkers would have. While, at first, people were open because of their own curiosity about me, it was also more difficult to develop close connections with certain demographics. As such, much of my earlier contact was with older men and younger men and women. While middle-aged and older women were open to chatting with me about my research topics, they were far less likely to invite me to non-temple related social activities or form closer bonds. The kinds of responses I received to questions were likely different from those a Chinese fieldworker would receive as well. This was not necessarily a negative because when interlocutors tried to think of how to explain the temple, its gods, rituals, and so on to me it often caused them to think about it differently than they normally would. They were faced with a need to represent to an outsider that which is commonplace and had to engage in the process of translating experiences. Often in group discussions this would cause people to disagree about whether a temple was Daoist or not, whether or not all gods can be called Buddhas (*fo* 佛), and the kinds of experiences they have at the events. By and large, these discussions focused on people explaining the history of their temple

and neighborhood, who their deities are and why they worshipped them, and the feelings associated with ritual practices. Generally speaking, I did not prompt people to talk about these topics but did ask them follow-up questions when I was not clear about what they meant or wanted more details.

The informal discussions and interviews took place in Mandarin as I am not fluent in Hokkien (*Minnanhua* 閩南話). At times people would tell me specific words that they thought I should know the Hokkien pronunciation for. Although the majority of those interviewed spoke Hokkien as their first language, even most elderly people with low levels of education that I met were able to converse in Mandarin without difficulty. In some social situations when other people were speaking Hokkien, someone else would explain what they were saying to me. While I understand the drawbacks of my linguistic limitations, I found I was still able to gather useful information from the temple participants.

In one-on-one interviews, I used a variety of methods in eliciting information. Most interviews were not recorded, particularly those with older temple participants as many did not seem to be as comfortable speaking when being recorded. Some younger people, however, did not seem bothered. Some of the questions were more direct, such as asking to explain a person's individual relation with a specific temple, their experiences at the temple, their understanding of the rituals and deities, and so on. At other times, I asked them to explain a number of terms associated with temples, religious practice and spaces in the city, these included offering incense (*jinxiang* 進香), procession (*xunjing* 巡境), avoiding disasters (*xiaozai* 消災), rescuing from hardship (*jiuku* 救苦), events for affairs of deities (*foshi huodong* 佛事活動), doing good deeds (*zuo haoshi* 做好事),

seeking good fortune (*qifu* 祈福), hot and tumultuous (*renao* 熱鬧), spiritual efficacy (*ling* 靈), new village (*xincun* 新村), urban village (*chengzhongcun* 城中村), and community (*shequ* 社區). I found this technique useful as most interviewees would explain these terms using examples from their own personal experience, rather than trying to give a more general or definitive answer. I also used photos taken in temples and at previous ritual events and asked the interviewees to explain them. At times this resulted in the person realizing they had no idea what was happening in certain parts of the event or second-guessing their understanding and calling someone else to ask. While both forms of prompts do push interviewees in certain directions, the discussion ended up being very open and varied. A number of photographers and videographers for temples also shared their own material with me, allowing me to see how they choose to frame the events.

In addition to this, many of the temple participants I had closer relationships with would invite me out not just to attend ritual events, but also for meals, tea, revolutionary songs in the park, trips to mountains and historic religious sites, funerals, or as a tool to show others they had a foreign friend at dinner or work. All of these involved a mix of discussions and observations about both living in urban China, the future of development in Xiamen, and the experiences at ritual events.

## 2.5 Communal Temples

Communal temples refer to temples registered as either Daoist or folk belief (*minjian xinyang* 民間信仰)<sup>22</sup> and contain a mix of local, regional, and nationally worshipped deities. Those who participate may identify themselves, the temple, or the deities as part of folk belief, Daoism, or (less commonly) Buddhism. They are governed by temple committees of varying forms (discussed further in chapter four) and participation was formerly based on residence in the temple's territory. They do not have any sort of religious expert living in the temple but will hire different sorts of ritual masters and other performers for their ritual events. A small number of these were rebuilt by Buddhists in the 1920s and continued to worship Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in addition to other deities, hire Buddhist monks or laity for rituals, and identify primarily as Buddhist (discussed in chapter three and seven). Communal temples are the focus of this project and by far the most prevalent religious institutions in the city. In the following sections of this chapter, however, I introduce the other religious sites and groups to present a fuller picture of the city's religious landscape.

Elderly Associations (*Laorenhui* 老人會) were often involved in the organizing and reconstruction of these temples and frequently exist within or adjacent to the temples. They share space used as kitchens, meeting rooms, offices, or mahjong rooms. These

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<sup>22</sup> Officially the Chinese government recognizes five religions (Daoism, Buddhism, Protestantism, Catholicism, and Islam), but this world religion approach to regulation leaves out much of what would be considered popular religion. Most often these practices (divination, spirit mediums, and so on) are deemed to be illegal and categorized as feudal superstition (*fengjian mixin* 封建迷信). However, over the past decade, the category of folk belief has been introduced to grant communal temples more legality. In Fujian, the increased acceptance of 'folk belief' temples came earlier than elsewhere in China. Local governments began conducting surveys of these temples as early as the mid-1990s, even though they had not gained legal status (see Wang 2018, 145-146).

associations that developed in the 1980s are civil organizations recognized by local officials and exist to provide services to the elderly and have also connected to local activism. The leadership of these groups will often mirror that of the temple or lineage hall, and it is often difficult to separate one from the other. While the opera stage or temple kitchen may be signposted as the Elderly Association, it is simultaneously part of the temple. In fewer instances, the two are more easily separated, such as one Elderly Association located on the second floor of a temple with a separate entrance that even had its own employees.

By far the most common gods enshrined in communal temples are Baosheng Dadi 保生大帝 and Mazu 媽祖. The cult of Mazu spreading south from Putian and Baosheng Dadi from Zhangzhou to the west. Mazu being connected with safety and sea, which was important for a port city, and Baosheng Dadi a divinized form of a virtuous doctor. In Xiamen, the two gods are most commonly enshrined together. Other common deities are less regional and are found throughout the country such as Prince Nezha 哪吒太子 and Guandi 關帝. However, these are generally not the central god in a temple. The gods located in the second and third rank at the temple, located to the left and right of the central shrine include the Earth God 土地公, also known as Fude zhengshen 福德正神, Zhusheng niangniang 注生娘娘, who is worshipped in hopes to getting pregnant or giving birth to a boy, and Prince Yanluo 閻羅太子, who acts as a judge deciding who is sent to hell and frequently bribed to absolve the sins of the deceased (see appendix A for a longer list of deities and the dates of their ritual celebrations). While the stories and practices surrounding the wide variety of gods worshipped in the region are fascinating in



their own right, this dissertation only includes detailed accounts of two: Baosheng Dadi (chapter six) and the Royal Lords 王爺 (chapter seven).



**Figure 4: Children play in front of a communal temple in an urban village.**

## 2.6 Lineages

My survey of religious sites in the city focused on communal temples and was complemented by the locations of Buddhist, Daoist, and large Earth God temples. I am not confident, however, that my survey of lineage halls was exhaustive.<sup>23</sup> In spite of the

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<sup>23</sup> The term ‘lineage hall’ is somewhat misleading as it suggests a secular space, unlike a temple. However, if I mentioned that I was interested in local temples, people tended to include lineage halls in this category as both were *miao* 廟 (temples) but dedicated to a different kind of being. Lineage halls are referred to using a variety of terms such as *zuci* 祖祠, *zongci* 宗祠, *citing* 祠堂, and *jiamiao* 家廟. Although *ci* tends to be associated with a place for ancestors, in some cases it is used in names of temples dedicated to humans who became gods. Furthermore, as I note below, temples may contain ancestors and lineage halls may contain gods.



survey's potential shortcomings, I was able to find details of 53 halls on the island based on my own fieldwork and Huang Guofu's (2010) survey of Huli district. The vast majority of these are located in the north of the island with a scattering around the southeast, one in the downtown and one on Gulangyu. By far the most dominant surname is Chen with eleven halls followed by Xue with eight, the remaining nineteen surname groups have between one and five halls each (see table 1).

The difficulty with doing research on lineage halls in the city stems from their infrequent use with the exception of a single annual celebration. Other than these days, the gates of the halls generally remain locked. This makes it difficult at times to even discern which surname a hall belongs to, let alone the dates of their celebrations or how to engage with its members. While the same is true for a number of communal temples, more often than not, they remain open on a daily basis and serve as a space of everyday social and religious life. I found only two instances in which lineage halls were used instead of temples for everyday socializing. In both cases, the use was due to the construction of a roadway that disconnected a temple from the rest of the neighborhood. At these two halls, the side door of the hall was opened and seniors gathered inside to play mahjong or chat and drink tea. In these instances, the Elderly Association was also located in the lineage hall. Those who used the halls for these purposes were not restricted by surname or gender, though the majority of the men belonged to the hall's surname group.

In late imperial China, lineage halls like communal temples were key to much of village life. Not only for their ritual practices but also because of their land holdings and positions of leadership. Often the two types of institutions are presented in opposition

with each other. Lagerwey (2010) contrasts the lineage associated with Confucian rites and the state with communal temples understood as connecting to exorcistic military rites and territory. David Faure's (1986) work in Hong Kong's New Territories demonstrated a shift from society centered on earth gods and temple deities to their later transformation in lineage institutions. While he did not suggest the two are mutually exclusive in a locality, he found that one was always subordinate to the other.

The changing role of family lineage and lineage halls is tied to the land reform movement of the 1950s, migration in and out of villages, and modern identification documents. Although Maurice Freedman's (1958) classic study of lineage organization in China argued that jointly owned property and common ritual worship were both necessary for lineage organization, David Faure (1986) illustrated that it was not always necessary for a lineage to share settlement rights. Indeed, He Xi (2016) found that boat people in Guangdong who had moved ashore also developed shared rituals to ancestors among surname groups without sharing property or developing lineage halls. Rather, they worship at makeshift altars and temples. Faure's (2007) later work emphasizes lineage organization as a process to bring local society into the imperial state, but he does not address its continuity in the post-imperial period as a form of local organization. Other historians understand the lineage as a changing structure for local people to cope with, subvert, and circumvent state policy (Szonyi 2002) or as a way to organize and control local society largely separate from the state (Zheng 2001). These studies point to reasons why lineage organizing has continued in the modern period, people continue to seek methods of group organization and negotiation with state policies. They also demonstrate the fluidity of the lineage as an organizing structure. Although land holdings were

previously of great importance to family lineage in the region, the land reform movement along with in and out-migration pushed lineages to re-assess their relation to territory.

The above studies of lineage in late imperial China have also shown the porous nature of membership in a lineage. The histories of one's ancestry could be re-written, and as Zheng (2001) has shown in some cases the family lineages become more akin to a joint stock cooperation in which individuals could buy shares. In modern times, however, the state has the ability to monitor and keep records on its population to a far greater extent than the imperial period. While fake identification documents certainly do exist, it seems unlikely they would be used as a way to gain access to a lineage today. Documents like birth certificates, national ID cards (*shenfenzheng* 身份證), and passports have turned the lineage into a far more exclusive organization than communal temples. There is no way for the new migrants in the city to gain connections through the lineage and this, along with the land reform which stripped lineages of their shared holdings, has created a more de-territorialized lineage structure.

Surname	Siming Lineage Halls	Huli Lineage Halls	Total Lineage Halls
Chen 陳	-	11	11
Lin 林	1	7	8
Li 李	1	3	4
Sun 孫	-	3	3
Xue 薛	-	2	2
Huang 黃	3	2	3
Wang 王	-	2	2
Wu 吳	1	2	3
Zhang 張	-	2	2
Ye 葉	-	1	1
Liu 劉	-	1	1
Lu 魯	-	1	1

Zhong 中	-	1	1
Ma 馬	-	1	1
Zhou 周	-	1	1
Xiao 肖	-	1	1
Zeng 曾	1	1	2
Yang 楊	-	1	1
Shi 石	-	1	1
He 何	1	-	1
Difang citing 地方 祠堂	-	1	1
Total	8	45	53

**Table 1: Lineage Halls in Siming and Huli**

While lineage halls tend not to be used on a daily basis, some have decided to profit off of the small amount of property they maintain control over. In a number of instances, lineages have rented out parking spaces either in the main courtyard of the hall or in the area surrounding it. As urban villages are known for their lack of space and cramped roadways, these lineage halls, generally located near the edge of the village, provide a much-needed service to car owners living in the area. In one instance, a lineage hall in a tourist area even converted its space into a cafe attracting much attention on social media but has since ended this venture. Another extreme situation was a Chen lineage hall that was converted into a KFC restaurant but maintains the traditional architecture of the hall. I imagine this was much to the dismay of their ancestors (because it no longer functions as an actual lineage hall, it is not included in my survey data). These examples point to the situations when the physical structure of the hall remains but is not essential for the functioning of the lineage.



**Figure 5: A stall selling blankets set up in front of a locked lineage hall in an urban village.**

Although lineages still organize annual rituals events to make offerings to their ancestors, the rites of passage that were once tied to the halls are now absent. These customs are still documented in genealogies and local gazetteers, but I did not find any instances when rituals of marriage and funerals involved a visit to the lineage hall. This is generally true for temples as well, with at least one exception in which those who married within the past year take part of a ritual held at the temple to welcome the new brides to the neighborhood through the worship of temple deities.

My survey of lineage halls found only one that is currently located in the main downtown area. However, this does not mean lineages are absent there. In one neighborhood that was historically dominated by the Chen surname, the group formed a

Chen Fellowship Association (*Chenshi lianyi hui* 陳氏聯誼會) rather than build a lineage hall. Their ancestors, however, are not entirely absent from the neighborhood, as one of the temples is dedicated to Kaizhang Shengwang 開漳聖王, the divinized title of Chen Yuanguang 陳元光 (657-711 CE) who is said to have founded Zhangzhou after migrating south from Henan province. The association along with a number of individuals surnamed Chen who contributed to the temple's reconstruction and also the multiple Chens who serve on the temple committee show the continued importance of the lineage in their neighborhood. The temple allows more flexibility in connections than the lineage alone would and dedicating the temple to a famous Chen also presents their surname group as key to the community's formation. The use of temples to expand the lineage's reach can also occur in neighborhoods with both temples and lineage halls, such as the relation between the Sun lineage and Zhenyi Dashi 真異大師, a divinized Song dynasty monk who was part of the Sun lineage before taking monastic vows.

In another instance, a temple with a large number of members from one surname group but no lineage hall made a pilgrimage to a lineage hall on nearby Jinmen Island. During the trip, the group brought their god statues, rather than ancestral tablets, along with them. The location of the ancestors themselves may also change if lineage members think that they are in need of more frequent offerings. One lineage in the northwest of the island decided to move a statue of their founding ancestor out of their lineage hall and into their temple where anybody could worship him. While it has been established that ancestors can become gods (or, as Szonyi [2017, 215-241] has shown, a god can also become an ancestor), it tends to be assumed that this occurs when an ancestor is of considerable power. In this case, it appears to be the opposite, it is because of a lack of

attention paid to the ancestor that it was moved into a position that would receive more open worship. Although the lineage halls go largely unused and are absent from some areas, this does not suggest that lineage membership lacks importance, rather than it continues to evolve with changing circumstances.

Da Wei David Wang's study of urban villages in Shenzhen found that lineages were becoming increasingly open in their events as a way to maintain status and develop connections despite the exclusivity of the lineage structure. He writes,

“[The Pengcai festival was formerly a single-surname] villager-exclusive event, but these days the village company uses this occasion to host the villagers and their friends in various positions of power in the city. It has essentially become a public relations event run by the village company. Of course, this also suggests that the original meaning of the Pengcai festival has changed slightly from an exclusive clan-based festival celebrating one's surname lineage to a general public relations event that is open to society in general. It has become a chance to showcase the power, prosperity, and even Guan Xi of the village by playing host to the rich and the powerful.” (2016, 97)

In Xiamen, I also attended a lineage hall's event that attracted many people from the neighborhood and beyond regardless of surname. However, in my case, the event was held for a Royal Lord who was enshrined within the hall and did not include a communal feast as in Wang's example. Regardless of the specificities, it seems likely that this trend will continue as lineages seek to maintain some sphere of influence in their communities.

Lineages remain important to many people in Xiamen not just because of its potential for community organizing and the power that comes along with that, but also because of a continued reverence for one's ancestors and the importance felt in the relations between lineage members. Although the lineage halls themselves tend to be infrequently used, annual events, often held in rural areas, bring together different generations of the lineage from different localities, reinforcing their shared bond in the

process. These bonds may be utilized in a variety of ways including general feelings of comradery, mutual aid networks, and trans-national business ties.

## **2.7 Daoist and Earth God Temples**

The three large Earth God temples are listed as a separate category because they are not connected to a particular neighborhood. As a result, they have become widely popular among city residents. The two Daoist temples identify themselves as a more orthodox form of Daoism compared to the more common hereditary lineage based tradition of Zhengyi 正一 priests. They contain only deities from the Daoist pantheon, rather than local gods. Their material describes them as orthodox” (*zhengzong* 正宗) though this could be an attempt to gain favor with the state. In reality, they are more heavily influenced by the Quanzhen 全真 tradition of monasticism and the official Daoist association, rather than local Daoist lineages.

Lineage based Daoist priests that I met did not even acknowledge these as Daoist temples. However, they have appealed to women who are excluded from such lineages. Both the temples, Taiqing Gong 太清宮 and Sanguan Daoyuan 三官道院, are comparable to Buddhist monasteries. They are located on mountains, house large and small shrines as well as living quarters and dining halls. The major difference, of course, is that they enshrine Daoist deities and chant Daoist sutras.

The major Earth God temples are also located on mountain tops but lack the presence of a religious clergy living there. By far the most popular of these is the Xianyue Tudi Gong Gong 仙樂土地公宮 located near the center of the island. It hosts an



annual Tudi Gong Culture Festival and has previously been studied by Chang Wen-yu and Lin Wei-ping (2015). They describe its development from a small shrine to a much larger temple based on the perceived spiritual efficacy of the woman who was pivotal in its reconstruction as well as investment from Taiwanese business people. Although not a monk or nun, her mediumistic abilities were seen as garnering impressive power. These two factors allowed the temple to develop without the traditional territorial or lineage-based organization and therefore was able to appeal to city residents more widely. During my research, the temple's popularity continued, especially for those seeking fortune tellers who line the staircases leading up the hill. In addition to these larger temples, small shrines to Tudi Gong can be found scattered throughout the city. One can also find people setting up tables to make offerings to Tudi Gong outside of their homes and shops.



**Figure 6: Crowds gather at the popular Xianyue Earth God Temple soon after the Lunar New Year.**

## 2.8 Buddhism

There are twenty-seven Buddhist monasteries within the two districts surveyed and are found primarily in the mountainous areas of the city. In addition to these, there are the ten popular Buddhist temples that operate in largely the same way as communal temples, except that they follow some Buddhist tenets in their practices (such as abstaining from animal offerings and chanting Buddhist sutras). The spatial distribution of the monasteries is noteworthy, as only six of them are located outside of the downtown and city center. If research was only focused on this particular area of the city, a rather skewed perspective would appear as to the dominance of Buddhism. Of these, four are located in mountain-park areas, one on a large roadway, and one on a small hill.

Although less connected to specific neighborhoods, like the large Earth God temples, the monasteries located in mountain-park areas are more easily able to appeal to residents from different parts of the city. In contrast, the popular Buddhist temples are spread out in different parts of the island and exist in addition to, rather than replacing, the communal temples. Buddhist groups are also found outside of official religious spaces in different areas of the city, such as non-profit groups, office spaces, apartment blocks, and other small unofficial religious spaces that are not included in the map.

The religious site that that visitors to Xiamen are most likely familiar with is the Buddhist monastery Nanputuo 南普陀, located within the downtown next to Xiamen University. The area attracts scores of tourists and the monastery itself exists simultaneously as a tourist attraction, space of religious worship, and center for monastic training and residence. Other major monasteries in the city include Fantian si 梵天寺 and

Meishan si 梅山寺 in Tongan district as well as Houshi Chanyuan 后室禪院 on Mount Lingjiu 靈鷲山 in Haicang district. Religious practices at these and other monasteries includes those making individual offerings, similar to that found at communal temples; ritual events celebrating the birth of the Buddha and various Bodhisattvas; sutra chanting sessions; Dharma talks by esteemed monastics; Buddhist education and children's summer camps; philanthropy groups that bring the lay Buddhists out of the temples to make a difference in society; releasing animals into the wild (*fangsheng* 放生); and funerary rites. The monasteries themselves can include a range of facilities in addition to the shrines to Buddhist deities including conference rooms, monastic residences, vegetarian restaurants, meditation halls, libraries, shops selling religious wares, exhibition halls, parking lots, farmland, and hiking trails. Thus, while considerably fewer in number than communal temples in the city, they can also be much larger in their scale.

The levels of commitment those involved with Buddhist monasteries have is extremely varied. There are those who officially converted to Buddhism taking the basic lay vows and donning brown robes during ritual events, those who are actively involved and consider themselves Buddhists but have yet to take Buddhist vows, those who were brought along by friends or relatives, those who have no involvement in the larger community and attend only for their own offerings and prayers, and all sorts of others who fit in between these categories. Participation in Buddhist temples does not prohibit individuals from also taking part in communal temples. Many people I met are involved with both kinds of institutions. Some monasteries will even have a small shrine to local gods outside its gates, while others will donate funds to nearby communal temples for their ritual events.



**Figure 7: A Buddhist shrine inside a communal temple rebuilt by Buddhists.**

The different kinds of Buddhist temples also have varied relations with their local community, residents of the wider city, overseas devotees, and government officials. David Wank (2009) found that the revival of Nanputuo in the 1980s depended on the cooperation of clergy, devotee associations, and overseas Chinese. But, from the mid-nineties onward, there was increased involvement of the central state. Similar examples have been found at major monasteries elsewhere in China, such as Wu Keping's (2015a) study of Hanshan Temple in Suzhou. At this temple, Buddhists participate in the government led disaster relief and development projects and members of the Religious Affairs Bureau participate in decision making. Yoshiko Ashiwa (2009) contrasts Nanputuo's shift towards the state with smaller Buddhist temples in the region. She demonstrates that while these temples form relations with local government officials by presenting their temples as good for the tourism industry and as a space for leisure, they

also develop closer ties to their local communities. Indeed, just as some communal temples will celebrate Buddhist deities such as Guan Yin, popular Buddhist temples may also enshrine non-Buddhist deities like Mazu within their main temple. In this sense, the smaller Buddhist temples are more comparable to communal temples that I focus on than the large monasteries.

## 2.9 Protestantism

Protestant churches are not included in my survey of religious sites, but Jifeng Liu (2017) suggests that there are approximately forty-four official churches and gathering points (*juhuidian* 聚會點) and dozens of unregistered churches<sup>24</sup> in the entirety of Xiamen with around 40,000 members.<sup>25</sup> Chris White (2018b, 21) adds that there is a total of 30 pastors and 47 preachers in the city. At least ten churches are located in the two central districts but there are possibly more. While this number is not insignificant, in comparison to the number of communal or Buddhist temples in the city, it is clear that Protestantism makes up only a small minority. Regardless of its minority status, in recent years there has been a wealth of scholarship on Protestant groups in Xiamen (White 2017a, 2017b, 2018a; Liu 2017, Colijn 2016) that might lead people unfamiliar with the area to assume the growth of Christianity is more extreme than it is in reality.

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<sup>24</sup> These are commonly referred to as 'house churches' but the groups meet in a variety of different locations such as hotels or rented office space.

<sup>25</sup> Although it should be noted that the numbers given by both government religious affairs bureaus and Christian communities tend to be inaccurate. The former attempting to downplay the growth of Christianity and the latter trying to emphasize increased numbers, while ignoring the number of converts who no longer practice or identify as Christian.





**Figure 8: A large Protestant church in an urban village.**

The major difference between Protestant churches and Buddhist or communal temples is that it is assumed that after conversion, members no longer participate in communal temples or other religious practices. Although they may attend both registered and unregistered churches. This is not to say that the religiosity of Protestants in this area has not adapted to its local context. White (2017b) describes Christian ancestral halls in Huian 惠安 County in southern Fujian, arguing that “the messages [in the Christian families’ ancestral halls] – the crosses, couplets, and overall Christian paraphernalia – are more aimed at instilling a Christian identity to members within the family than they are an evangelistic tactic targeting outsiders” (2018, 252). They are part of a process of simultaneously Christianizing the lineage and localizing Christianity. Indeed, a more general localization of Protestantism can be seen at a more basic level through the

incorporation of dance groups, musicians, firecrackers, and fireworks at festivities just like those found at ritual events organized by communal temples.

The diversity of the actual churches should also be noted. Some historic churches maintain strong ties to their local community, while others have become more focused on conversion and appeal to residents who have migrated from elsewhere in China. Liu Jifeng (2018) describes the members of the Trinity Church on Gulangyu that, despite a major decrease in attendance since the 1990s, remain disinterested in attracting the new migrants to the church. He writes that “the church members actually seem not so interested in preaching the word of God to the “outside” (*waidide*) laborers from poor inland provinces. In the former’s eyes, those tenants are not as ‘civilized’ as the Gulangyu residents and will never become real islanders with high quality” (2018, 91). Other churches, however, are focused on proselytizing, despite the practice being illegal in China. Bram Colijn explains that many “Protestants in Xiamen routinely encourage each other during worship services and small group meetings to proselytize or “evangelize” (*chuan fuyin*) by bringing friends, neighbors, colleagues, and household members to gatherings” (2018, 200).

My own limited experience with Protestantism in the city appears closer to what Colijn describes than Liu. I was invited to attend a small church by a friend who lived in an urban village in the northwest of the island. My friend, a migrant from western Fujian, did not identify as Christian, but her mother had converted after her divorce and brought my friend along with her as a child. Her attendance was based on reliving fond memories, rather than beliefs or morality. During her previous visits, the service consisted of sitting in rows of chairs, listening to sermons, and chanting hymns. On the evening that I joined

her, however, chairs were arranged in a circle for a Bible Study session, much to our surprise. Most people arrived alone with around twenty-five individuals showing up in total. This is similar to some Buddhist temples that try to appeal to new converts on an individual rather than familial level. The demographics were largely in their 20s and 30s with about half male and half female. The circle was divided by gender even though there were no explicitly stated assigned seating rules.

The meeting began with a brief talk by the group leader, a tall woman in her 30s, about the necessity of belief in God and aversion from sin in order to reach our psychological needs. She encouraged everyone to study and spread the Gospel as a method of improving our psychological well-being. Then there were a series of testimonials from people in attendance about recent problems in their life, all of which were explained by the group leader as stemming from their lack of faith in Jesus. Everyone who spoke was there seeking help for some sort of problem they had, whether relating to their work, love life, sickness of a family member, or an ill-feeling spirituality. After the testimonials, everyone was asked to introduce themselves and not a single person was a native of Xiamen. Finally, the session ended with a group prayer. Although I found it quite problematic to tell these people that the issues they face were due to a lack of faith (especially given that some, such as a young woman's difficult relationship with her mother, were directly the result of being Christian); however, as I did not have any continued contact with the members, I cannot speak to the positive results joining the church may have had for them. Personally, I found the meeting intensely uncomfortable, but it did highlight the kinds of services offered by the church, their appeal to young migrants, and the emphasis on faith in order to improve one's life. While Protestant



churches in the city are an important part of the wider religious landscape, it remains relatively minor and does not impact the majority of the population, whether local or migrant. So while scholars of Protestantism like Colijn note that “Christmas in China is an important religious festival” (2018, 206), for most people the festival exists only in displays at shopping plazas and commercial goods.

## **2.10 Domestic Altars**

In addition to these official religious sites, many households, shops, restaurants, and businesses have their own shrines set up inside. The most common gods found here are not the local deities that punctuate the city’s communal temples, but those found throughout China. The most common statues are of the Bodhisattva Guanyin 觀音菩薩, Guan Di 關帝, Tudi Gong 土地公, Shakyamuni Buddha 釋迦牟尼佛, and Prince Nezha 哪吒太子. Less frequently Taishang Laojun 太上老君 is enshrined in the home. In some instances, a framed copy of the Buddhist Heart Sutra hand-written by a monastic will be framed and placed next to the shrine for veneration. In a more traditional house, the shrine would be placed against the back wall of the living room, however, in apartment buildings, they may be facing other directions.

Many people, however, do not have an altar in their home. This is especially the case for those who rent apartments. While they do not practice the same kind of domestic offerings as those with shrines, they are still able to participate in certain rites that involve establishing a temporary altar in the home. The most prevalent is held on the ninth day of the first lunar month for the birthday of the Duke of Heaven (*Tiangong* 天公), a name

commonly used to refer to the Jade Emperor (Yü Di 玉帝, the deity with the highest position in popular religion as head of the celestial bureaucracy).<sup>26</sup> Although he is not commonly enshrined in temples in the region, on his birthday, many people in Xiamen make offerings to him at temples and, more commonly, in their home. The altar that is set up within the home traditionally would be placed just outside the front door, but now, due to spatial limitations and regulations at some apartment buildings, people will also set up their altar facing a large window or on a balcony. The offerings made depend on one's interpretation of the deity, particularly in regard to the offering of animal flesh and alcohol.

Many people will pray for peace and safety, not only in their own lives but also for their friends and family. For many, it also marks the real ending of the year, with the period of the beginning of the lunar year until the ninth being a kind of liminal period of celebration. Later in the morning, some people will also go to a temple to make similar offerings, a few temples such as Zhangzhou's Yüzun gong 玉尊宮 and Haicang district's Qingjiao Ciji gong 青礁慈濟宮 have massive group offerings with hundreds of tables of offerings early in the morning. These have attracted media attention due to their scale, but, by and large, the events at the temples themselves are rather small in scale. The ritual process of invitation, welcoming, offering, thanks, and sending off has been well established in the study of Chinese rituals, the god descending from Heaven to Earth and

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<sup>26</sup> Within Daoism, he is known as Yuanshi Tianzun 元始天尊, one of the Three Pure Ones (San Qing 三清) who are understood to be emanations of the primordial Dao. Chen Jianxian 陳建憲 (1994) gives an overview of the Jade Emperor and his cult. With reference to the God of Thunder (Lei Gong 雷公), Mark Meulenbeld has noted that in “colloquial Chinese, the word gong often denotes a more familiar status... [therefore] the word gong should not be exclusively understood as a noble rank” (2016, 37n2). Tiangong is viewed (often simultaneously) as connecting to both the bureaucratic and familiar.

mediating the human's relation between the two realms. The practice at temples follow the same order but, thanks to whatever variety of ritual experts are hired, take on more complexity.

In recent years, not only have residents of many former villages been dispersed geographically but also, a new trend has emerged in the offerings. Now people take videos or photos of the altar, themselves kowtowing in front of it, or burning spirit money, then sharing these on WeChat. This has become more and more common among both the older and younger generations, especially for this particular set of offerings. One man in his fifties posted a video of his altar set up outside of his home, followed by a second video of him burning spirit money in a small canister outside. It is more common now, however, to live in apartment buildings. Numerous men and women I met at temples and elsewhere from their twenties to sixties shared photos and videos of their altar set up inside their home facing an open window, balcony, or doorway leading out to a hallway. These were often accompanied by some sort of greeting, blessing, or explanation for those who see the post. Those making the offerings are seeking to change fate (*qiqiu buyun* 祈求補運), not just for themselves, but also to mend potential calamities of others. A woman in her 30s from Suzhou who has lived in Xiamen for over ten years shares an image of her altar with a caption reading, “worship the Duke of Heaven, blessing everyone with peace, happiness for the whole family!” 拜天公，保佑眾生平安，全家幸福。 Others share similar blessings for their family and friends often including numerous emojis of hands pressed together in prayer and set phrases to bless others with ‘boundless longevity’ (*wanshou wujiang* 萬壽無疆), ‘peace and prosperity

for the whole world' (*tianxia taiping* 天下太平), 'the four seasons without disaster' (*sishi wuzai* 四時無災). Others made reference to the practice as a Hokkien custom (*Minnan xisu* 閩南習俗), even if it is not only those native to the region who practice it. While just a few days before on the fifth day of the first lunar month, the same people were sharing images of the God of Wealth (Caishen 財神) accompanied by comedic comments about getting rich, the worship of the Duke of Heaven is presented not only without humor, but with a focus on peace and wellbeing for all, rather than only concern for the self. Taking this focus into account, it is not surprising that Chen Jianxian 陳建憲 (1994, 95) referred to the day as 'Chinese Christmas' (*Zhongguo de shengdanjie* 中國的聖誕節).

The ritual performance is primarily a communication to the god himself invited into the home, if the offerings are acceptable to the god, then it is expected that one's prayers will be answered. If they are not, then there is fear that the god's power will turn against the devotee. This is mediated through the objects offered on the table, the lit incense placed in the burner and the paper offerings burnt that are transferred by the individual's ritual performance and fire. It is also a communication between the individual devotees and their friends, family, and co-workers. This form is mediated through a variety of objects, infrastructures, and people: the smartphone camera lens, digital filters, mobile broadband and Wi-Fi networks, WeChat servers, others' smartphone scenes, and the user's sensory inputs. This works to bring domestic offerings into view by the wider network of contacts.

Although not every apartment or home still has its own permanent domestic altar, this does not mean that domestic rites are entirely absent from people's lives. The

offerings to the Duke of Heaven presents the most widespread event involving establishing a temporary altar in the home, allowing most anyone to take part. Sharing images of your own offerings or images of the deities via smartphone apps adds another layer to the domestic ritual, which are now tied up in the digital realm.

### **2.11 Incense Pilgrimage Groups**

Incense groups (*jinxiang tuan* 進香團) are organized pilgrimage trips to major temples outside of the city that mix religious devotion and tourist leisure. They are organized in the same way as a regular tour group: one contacts the organizer, books tickets and pays a fee that is lower than the standard bus and entrance fee to the site. The participants then meet on the morning of the event to take the bus to the site. The groups are not organized around a single temple, but most participants will live in the same area in the city and be familiar with at least some of the other participants. I was invited to take part in two trips by an incense group by two older men I knew from a temple I had frequented, though neither had any sort of leadership role in the temples or incense group. The men were both in their 70s and would refer to themselves as ‘old workers’ 老工人 noting their working-class status. On the pilgrimages I attended, we traveled to Qingshui yan 清水岩 in Anxi 安溪, the founding temple of the cult of Qingshui Zushi 清水祖師, a local Buddhist monk born during the Song Dynasty who was divinized, and The Guandi 關帝 temple on Dongshan Island 東山島 in Zhangzhou, thought to be the founding Guandi temple in the region.

These pilgrimages are focused on one’s individual relation to a deity and are unrelated to the deity’s birthday. The attendees tend to arrange to join the incense groups

as small groups of friends, although they generally know many of the other people by name. After the bus journey and entrance to the temple scenic spot, the participants spent most of the time in their small friendship groups. Familial ties among participants are generally only those between mother and daughter. The group I traveled with had approximately 120 participants and was mostly made up of older people and women, but some younger men also attended. Although many of the participants were native to Xiamen, others were migrants from elsewhere in China, and both Mandarin and Hokkien were spoken on the bus and at the destination. The trips act as a social event (getting together with friends) and a leisure trip to a scenic area (taking photos by whatever landscapes or historic objects are there), but are primarily about offerings of incense and other paper items, as well as receiving divination and fortune telling. During the trips, all worship was done individually, people would offer incense at as many different shrines and incense burners as they please and some would hold the incense for far longer praying while they held it.

Both of my trips followed a similar structure, after disembarking from the bus and passing through the scenic spots entrance, the participants walked towards the main temple site, along the way most stopped to take photos or to look at certain historic objects (inscriptions, large stones or old trees placed according to fengshui). If they did not bring offerings, incense, or firecrackers with them, then these were purchased along the way. Arriving at the main temple, each participant makes offerings to the different shrines housed within, and many cast moon blocks to divine the future. After this has been completed there is a break for lunch, during one trip participants visited one of a number of different restaurants on site (the men who accompanied me decided to skip the

vegetarian option that many of the women chose) and at the other, a small vegetarian lunchbox was served. Although there are numerous temples at these sites, most participants only visited the major one, which was seen as most efficacious. Soon after lunch, the groups walked back to the bus and returned home. These groups allow for religious practice that is not tied to their local neighborhood but to the wider cultic networks of the gods. Allowing for both social and religious relations to form that are separate from communal temples.



**Figure 9: An incense group visiting the Guandi temple on Dongshan island.**

## **2.12 Conclusion**

The religious landscape in Xiamen is extremely diverse and widespread throughout the city. Institutions like communal temples and lineage halls that were previously based explicitly around one's place of residence are becoming increasingly detached from their territories. Large earth god temples and Daoist temples based in mountains are seen as more open to anyone but do not develop the same kind of community around them, and most of those visiting do not know each other. Protestant churches and Buddhist monasteries are more likely to proselytize and have people convert to their religion, creating a kind of community that is detached from geography and instead focused on religious identity. In addition to these institutional religious spaces there are also shrines established within homes, whether temporary or permanent, and groups that organized pilgrimages detached from any specific local temple. Not to mention the wealth of fortune tellers and fengshui experts in the city. All of these are worthy of further research, however, in the following chapters, my focus is on the communal temples and their associated ritual events. In the next chapter, I move back in time to the late nineteenth century in order to understand how the city took this particular shape over the past hundred and fifty years.



## **Chapter 3**

### **The Space of the City and Its Temples: A History of Xiamen from the Nineteenth Century to the Present**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter suggests that the largest change in the role of temples in the modern history of Xiamen is not the result of shifting ideology or belief, but rather in the restructuring of space in modern China. How changes in land ownership, roadways, housing and other forms of infrastructure have refigured the city, and how this is related to how local people organize temples and ritual events. Although I focus on the material changes to the city, I do not ignore politics and ideologies altogether. In fact, often these are closely tied to changing infrastructures and development plans. As such, I use a focus on infrastructure to suggest the importance in the spatial transformation of modern China and how this has impacted how bodies are formed and possible ways of movement in the city, regardless of one's individual ideologies, thoughts, or feelings. The material spaces of temples were repeatedly damaged or destroyed to make way for infrastructure projects that touted a coming modern wonderland, socialist utopia, or consumer paradise. However, many of the communities have also managed to rebuild their temples and other organizations adjusting to their new environments. I begin with religious life in the late nineteenth century before moving onto the first major modern infrastructure projects in Xiamen in the 1920s and continue up to the present day and on-going developments in the city.

### 3.2 Temples in Pre-Modern Xiamen

The social, political, and economic world of pre-modern China was thoroughly enmeshed in religious life; there was no clear separation of the religious and the secular.

Communities organized around temples and lineage halls, while the state itself was centered on the imperial cult and its associated ritual offerings. As Goossaert and Palmer write, “even though religious groups were often inseparable from secular social organization [in late imperial China], the former did not merely reflect the latter, and religious communities had their own logic and agency. In the imperial order, many socioeconomic groups, such as lineages, guilds, or village communities and alliances, were officially sanctioned as cult communities.” (2011, 23). This was true for both rural and urban society.

According to the *Lujiang zhi* 鹭江志, the city’s first gazetteer compiled by Xue Qifeng 薛起凤 and published in 1766, Xiamen was founded in 1387 which marked the construction of the city walls as well as the City God Temple (*Lujiang zhi* 1998, juan 2; see also Murray 2018). Villages throughout the island were founded at different periods but most tend to trace their origin to after 1500 when their ancestors are said to have migrated from nearby regions in Tongan, Quanzhou, or Zhangzhou. However, there are claims that the Xue 薛 lineage arrived as early as the early 700s with the Chen 陳 arriving the following century (Liu 2016, 68-70). The Quanzhou gazetteer 泉州府志 (1612), which refers to the island as Jiaheyu 嘉禾嶼, describes some earlier settlement by the Xue and Chen surname groups referring to the residents geographical division as “Chen in the south, Xue in the north” 南陳北薛. Villages around the coast tend to trace their origins to an earlier period, while many of the villages further inland were not

founded until the eighteenth or nineteenth century. The earliest foundation dates that I found were in Zengcuoan 曾厝垵, a village on the southern coast not far from the historic city walls. One of their temples, Yonghugong 擁湖宮, is said to have been built in the 1300s and another, Fuhai Gong 福海宮, has evidence of its reconstruction during the Kangxi period (1661-1722) as evidence (SMWSZL 2009, 106-108). By the 1600s, there was a clear division of two major lineages on the island. During the seventeenth century, the island became known as a base for piracy and trade. It even became the location for Zheng Chenggong 鄭成功, also known as Koxinga 國姓爺, and his army of pro-Ming rebels following the formation of the Qing dynasty (Andrade 2011).

The earliest survey of temples in Xiamen is found in the *Lujiang zhi*. It lists the Temple of the Eastern Peak, City God Temple, inner and outer Guandi temples, Highest Temple (*Shanggong* 上宮, dedicated to Mazu), and Guan Yin Pavilion as the six most important temples in the city and all were located around the city's wall. In addition to these, the gazetteer lists seventeen other temples located in the communities (*she* 社) that surrounded the walled city and made up the eighteen wards of the city, and twenty-one Buddhist temples largely located in the mountainous area nearby (*Lujiangzhi* 1998, 30-34, 46-67). This, however, does not account for temples spread throughout the rest of the island's villages, which was likely numbered well over a hundred.

During the First Opium War (1839-1842), British troops occupied nearby Gulangyu and remained there for three years following the Treaty of Nanjing in 1842 that established Xiamen as one of China's five treaty ports. As the British and other colonial powers established themselves in the region, they worked to acquire land around Xiamen's coast, but largely resided on Gulangyu, where they "rented land from

individual Chinese owners. Some of these properties were registered with the British Consulate in Xiamen through the application of title deeds” (Chen 2014, 188). The semi-colonial state of affairs in Xiamen also brought an increase of European missionaries to the region, who, as Chris White notes, had established themselves on Gulangyu with the British troops prior to the actual treaty agreement (White 2017, 29-30). And, in the 1870s, the island “would again become home to the headquarters for all three Minnan missions as well as the residences for all missionaries stationed in Xiamen” (ibid, 30).

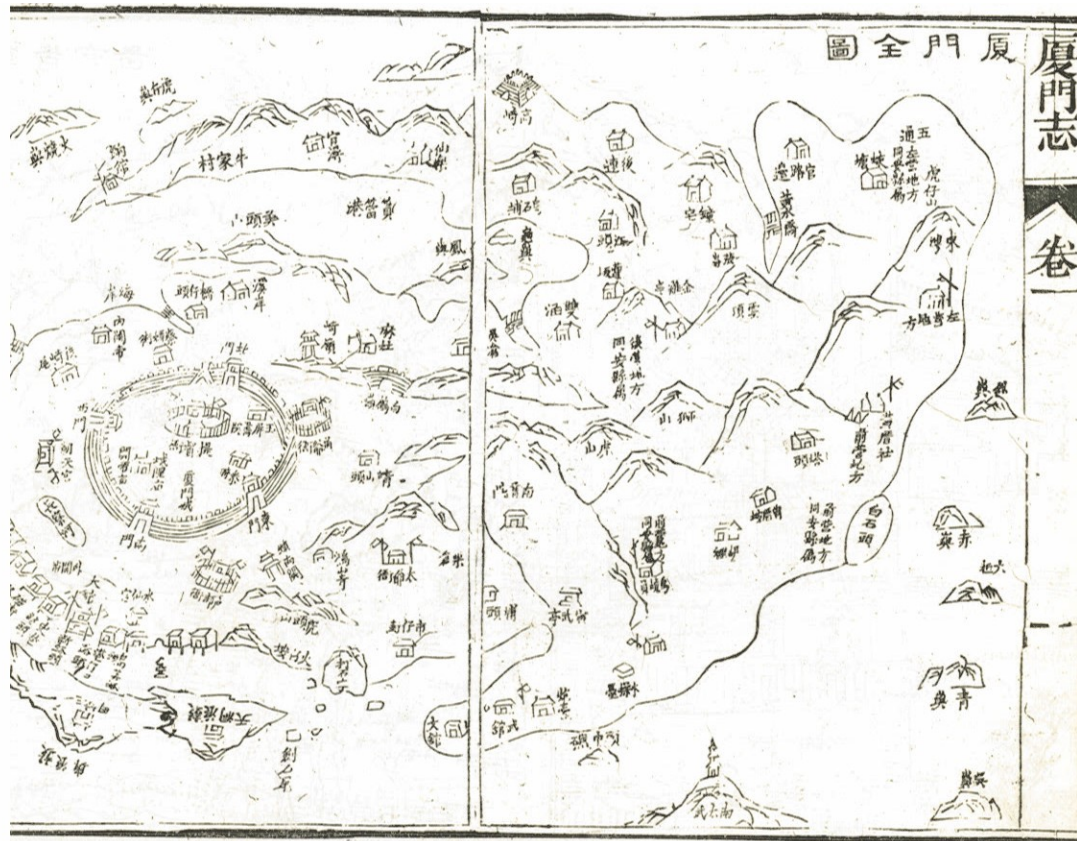


Figure 10: Map of Xiamen from the 1766 gazetteer *Lujiang zhi* 鷺江志.

The missionaries' attempts were largely unsuccessful in converting the majority of the population and those who arrived in the 1850s also had to cope with violent

rebellions from groups like the Long Hairs (*Changmao* 長毛) and Dagger Society (*Xiaodao hui* 小刀會). While these men held the local religious practices in contempt, in their writings, there are hints of everyday religious life in the city. Rev. Philip Wilson Pitcher, an American Methodist, complained of the noise from all the firecrackers, gongs, and musicians as well as the “temples [that] there are by the score, with their hideous looking idols, and where, not only worshipers congregate, but where 'all sorts and conditions of men' come, some with their burdens, some with their wares" (1912, 19). Indeed, elsewhere Pitcher goes on to describe not only how the temples acted as the center of social and commercial life, but that conceptions of the supernatural world shape how the space city itself is organized (1893, 28). The disdain found in missionary writings, however, give us little detail of the actual ritual events, deities worshipped, or important temples. For them, religious practice in China was nothing but a mish-mash of superstitious practices that were impossible to make any sense of.

Another foreign figure, however, tasked himself with understanding Chinese religion in a more systematic way. J.J.M. de Groot (1854–1921) understood religion as central to understanding Chinese society and conducted extensive fieldwork in Xiamen first in 1877 and then for another three years from 1886-1889.<sup>27</sup> De Groot's own opinion of religion in China was somewhat contradictory, having enough interest in the topic to document it in detail and seeing it as part of a great history of civilization, yet also

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<sup>27</sup> De Groot's research and publications were funded by the Dutch East Indies Administration and the Deli Company. While employed in Batavia, he managed to convince the Dutch colonial affairs that understanding Chinese religion was important in managing Chinese colonial subjects in Southeast Asia and therefore his research was presented as essential to colonial governance. His time in China was not disconnected from his role in colonialism either as during his second stint in China he was tasked at organizing the direct migration of coolie laborers from China to Sumatra (see Blussé 2014 and Werblowsky 2002).

holding it in disregard. He even suggested that those involved in religious practice were also unconvinced of its effectiveness, writing "imitation is a great agent of their conduct, for millions of Chinese, though skeptical and impious to the utmost, only worship because their fathers and their grandfathers did so" (de Groot 1878, 91). Unlike the missionaries, however, de Groot did not disdain the practice as being idolatrous, rather, as Raphael Jehudah Zwi Werblowsky notes (2002, 88), after leaving the Catholic church in which he was raised, de Groot came to hate religion and see it as synonymous with superstition. Despite this attitude, de Groot's work provides immense detail about ritual events in late nineteenth-century Xiamen.

In *The Annual Festivals Celebrated in Amoy* (*Les fêtes annuellement célébrées à Émoui*, 1886), de Groot details the different ritual events in chronological order (appendix A). Through this, he shows the importance of religion in connecting social, domestic, and political life in the city through ritual events. These events, which centered on local deities, the state cult, and Buddhism, worked to bring together city residents, government officials, Buddhist monks, Daoist priests, and spirit mediums to seek good fortune, rain, childbirth, and so on. Based on the deities he focuses on, much of his research was likely situated in and around the old city as well as on Gulangyu Island, rather than more remote villages as many of the deities worshipped elsewhere on the island are absent. Describing the rite of praying for rain at the City God temple during the Lunar New Year, he writes:

In order to receive rain, the top ranking god of the city is invoked, "The Father of Walls and Moats" (*Chenghuangye* 城隍爺) [also known as the City God]. In Xiamen, his temple is inside of the city walls, located in the center of the city. In villages and counties that do not have walls, and therefore are bereft of the urban god, elders and chiefs designate a local deity to be the top rank. On the eve of the day set for the ceremony proper or even several days before, the chief magistrate

goes to the temple accompanied by lower-ranking mandarins. As a sign of mourning and to show their humility before Heaven, they wear clothing made of hemp or cotton without any adornments or insignia of their dignity. It is true that they have their gala conical hats but their red fringes are removed because... red must be removed in times of mourning (1886, 115).

Here, de Groot demonstrates that ritual events were not just important for the common people, but also central to the political organization in the city and temporal order. He goes on to describe the procession of the god from the temple accompanied by Daoist priests and Buddhist monks as well as the different offerings made by the mandarin officials. Although at times de Groot appears to see these rituals as superstition, he also notes the preparedness for the ritual to fail. Explaining that:

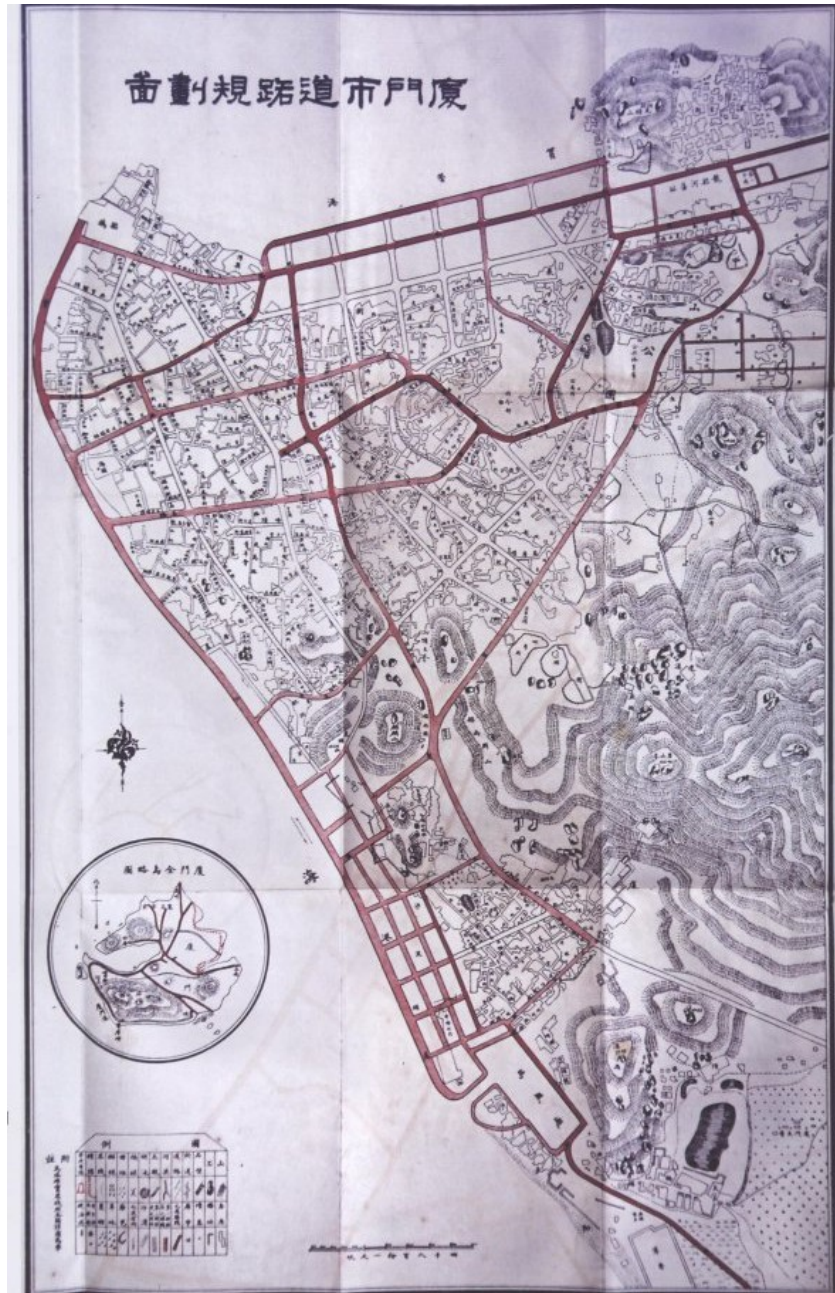
Naturally, often the rain still does not fall, despite all that has been done. [In these cases] it is necessary to resort to other means to get what one wants from the deities. The statue of the City God, or another god who the mandarins have addressed their prayers, is completely undressed. And [then] placed bareheaded outside of the temple in the sun so that he can feel the burning heat that one suffers, and thus he may be moved to pity [the people]. An iron chain is even hung around his neck as if to make him do penance for the harm he has caused the people (1886, 120).

De Groot shows the centrality of temples and ritual events to the organizing of life in late imperial Xiamen, later extending his ideas to present a system of religion in China more broadly. However, in the years to come, following the end of the Qing dynasty and establishment of a secular government, plans for modern development would drastically reshape the city and with it the role of temples and gods. These were not the efforts of the colonial forces but led largely by returning Overseas Chinese during the Republican period, who had lived in colonial Southeast Asia.

### 3.3 Roadways and Housing

The 1920s saw the beginning of modern urban development in Xiamen's port and the surrounding area. Following the destruction of the city walls in February 1922 came plans to transform the entire city that were spearheaded by returning overseas Chinese Lin Shuzhuang 林叔莊 and Huang Yizhu 黃奕住 along with Huang Zhuyou 黃竹友, a native of Fujian who had recently returned from engineering studies in England. The three men organized the Xiamen municipal council 廈門市政會, a group that went on to design an urban development plan for the city. The plan consisted of mapping out roadways, which still make up many of the main thoroughfares in the downtown, an expansion of the city further north of the Xiamen harbour to what was then known as the 'New City' (*xincheng* 新城), and a series of markets around the edges of the old boundaries of the city. In addition to this they also worked to organize new financial institutions, namely the China and South Sea Bank (*Zhongnan yinhang* 中南銀行), which Huang Yizhu acted as chairman of, and even went as far to print their own currency, distrusting the stability of official Republican Chinese legal tender (XMSTDZ 1995, 8; XMJRZ 1989, 78-79).





**Figure 11: Map of Xiamen from the 1931 Road Development Plan.**

These Overseas Chinese returned to China after profiting from the Western colonization in Southeast Asia in industries such as sugar, opium, and tobacco. However, they had been frustrated that, as colonial subjects, their financial gains could not be transformed into political power. Taking the central positions in development plans

allowed these men to take on important leadership roles during the modernization of the city. The process of building roadways came in three stages between 1920 and 1938 when construction was brought to a halt due to the Japanese invasion, and Huang, like many other Overseas Chinese in Xiamen, fled the city (XMSSMQ 2010, 23-24; XMJTZ 1989, 71-73). While the mark of these men is still felt in the spatial formation of the downtown and they are often touted in local histories as patriotic overseas Chinese (*aiguo huaqiao* 愛國華僑), their infrastructure works took little heed to the lives of the communities they were building through and around. As a result, numerous temples were demolished to make way for these construction projects. While many Overseas Chinese in the past and up to the present have contributed to the construction and reconstruction of temples and lineage halls, I have found only one instance of Huang Yizhu doing so. His donation was the sole contribution for the reconstruction of the eastern pagoda at Quanzhou's Kaiyuan si 開元寺, a major Buddhist monastery, in 1927. However, his charitable work largely focused on education, donating to nine separate middle schools and universities throughout China, and his tomb inscription merely refers to the pagoda donation as an act of "preserving a historic site" (*cu guji* 存古跡), rather than being religiously motivated (Ding and Zheng 2002, 517; He and Wu 2011, 348).

Outside of the downtown, other overseas Chinese had also begun to fund the construction of roadways between villages. In these cases, however, I found no details of the destruction of temples as a result. Zeng Guoban 曾國辦, who had sojourned in Malaysia, funded the construction of a road in the south of the island from Zengcuan 曾厝垵 to Daqiaotou 大橋頭, which would later be developed into the Huandao road 環島

路 that encircles the entire island. Upon returning from the Philippines and Malaysia, Lin Yunti 林云梯 and Chen Youcai 陳有才 funded a road northeast of the downtown from Lianban 蓮坂 to Hecuo 何厝 on the east coast of the island in 1928. In the same period, the Quanhe Automobile Company 全禾汽車公司 built two other roads in the north of the island connecting nine villages (XMJTZ 1989, 72). The company was founded by Chinese-Malaysian Huang Jinghui 黃晴輝 who expanded on the existing roadworks and also started the first bus routes around the island. Between 1928 and 1931, he worked with Chinese-Filipino Xue Yutian 薛煜添 to garner support among the overseas Chinese community and received 100,000 yuan in investments. They are said to have been motivated by the lack of vehicles on the roadways, and they managed to design five bus routes that connected villages throughout the island to the edges of the city (XMSXSYL 2016). Movement to and from the city could now be done with ease, shifting the relation between city and village.

The development of these roadworks and the destruction of the former city walls changed how people could move in the city and how spaces were defined bringing about a changing conception of cityness. The destruction of the city walls, and with them much of the City God Temple, shifted the material quality of space of the central city as well as how space was understood symbolically. The shift moved away from a city defined by the cosmological territory of the gods and towards a city as an entity driven by state control and commercial industries. Henri Lefebvre's (1991, 38-46) argued that spaces are produced both socially and materially, there is a process moving from systems of verbal signs, which define specific types of space (representations of space), to spatial practices,

and then to a process of defining spaces through visual and material qualities (representational space). Lefebvre understood this spatial production to be tightly related to modes of production, capitalist production needs capitalist spaces that are practiced in capitalist ways. Indeed, one can certainly see this as precisely what the Overseas Chinese investors were interested in producing. They defined these spaces in terms of modernization and expansion of trade, the spatial practices associated with them would bring Xiamen into a globalized mode of representational space. Roadways were for motorized vehicles that would connect the city to ports and networks of trade and also acted as a material reshaping of how the city was divided up. As Zhou Zifeng's 周子峰 (2005, 105) study of Xiamen in the early twentieth century suggests, in this period the city had three key functions: as a market connecting local and foreign goods, as a transportation hub for overseas Chinese, and as a financial center, particularly for wealthy overseas Chinese. Yet, there is something else at play here, a counter-narrative or counter-production that suggests these ways of thinking, seeing, and practicing space were never all-encompassing. This is seen not only in the repetition of the ritual rhythms at the temples spared from demolition but also their continuation in spite of demolition. People did not necessarily accept the new meanings ascribed to new material spaces, instead, people continued to define time-space in their own terms.

Prior to these new developments, missionaries, imperialists, and Overseas Chinese in the city were all found to complain of the dense crowds in narrow and windy streets. Rev. John McGowwan complained that "the crowd in this street is always dense; and were it not that it is usually good-natured, and careful in following the rule of the road, there would be fierce collisions and stoppage of the traffic" (1889, 28). Likewise,

P.W. Pitcher whined "A city. Banish from your minds the thought of wide avenues, clean streets, beautiful private residences, magnificent public buildings, and imposing mercantile houses. Amoy [Xiamen] is not built in that way. Her streets as crooked as ram's horns, ever winding and twisting, descending and ascending and finally ending in the great nowhere, and the wayfaring man, though wise, shall err therein" (1893, 28). The Overseas Chinese, who had grown accustomed to the layouts of colonial cities in Southeast Asia, shared similar sentiments. Just a few years prior to the road construction, Chen Bingzhang, who had returned to Fujian after sojourning in Southeast Asia, wrote, "at one time Xiamen was in a miserable state and it was known as the dirtiest port in the world. When our overseas brothers returned from Southeast Asia (*Nanyang*) they too were embarrassed. They had seen and heard many things while they were overseas and what they saw in their old home (*lao jia*) made them sad" (Chen 1924, 8, quoted in Cook 1998, 10). Infrastructure projects worked to divide up the new spaces that were connected to modernization, transnational trade, and individual wealth, from the remaining cramp and twisting alleyways that were more difficult to regulate.

It is no surprise that the Overseas Chinese were the ones behind these large-scale infrastructure projects, or that many of them choose to live among the imperialist settlers on Gulangyu, rather than Xiamen Island. With their new roadworks, they could now pass through wider streets, avoiding the dearth of laboring bodies in the twisting and narrow alleyways. Huang Zhuyi and the other Overseas Chinese who played pivotal roles in these transformations were concerned with infrastructure as a means of making the city into more of what they had grown accustomed to. These projects also worked to increase their own personal finances as it was key to improving trade, expanding the circulation of

people and capital, as well as earning them income from construction projects. Huang had made a fortune in the trade of sugar, rubber, tapioca, palm oil, and tea in Indonesia and Malaysia, only leaving for Xiamen when the Dutch colonial authorities attempted to collect a large amount of taxes from him. Despite his wealth, while living on Gulangyu he does not appear to have made any donations to the local temple, Xingxian gong 興賢宮, though it was patronized by many others sharing the Huang surname. Instead, his attention was focused on modernizing the infrastructure, transportation, and education sectors in the city. He founded a construction company building over 160 homes, invested in waterworks, telephone lines, and electricity companies, and helped to extend the Xiamen-Zhangzhou railway (Zhou 1997).<sup>28</sup>

Of all their projects, it is the road construction in particular that has left a lasting impact on the downtown and surrounding areas. Areas outside of the walls were already considered part of the city, but these roadways did allow the surrounding areas to be increasingly integrated into the city. In his study of the development of Xiamen's urban morphology, Bian Jingwei 邊經衛 (2013, 29) notes the importance of two roads in particular, Kaiyuan road 開元路 connecting a port through the number one market and to the area designated as the new city, where it intersects with the second road, Xiahe road 廈禾路, which expanded the north of the city eastward connecting many of the nearby villages. I would add two other important roads to this list: Siming south road 思明南路,

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<sup>28</sup> Lee Ou-fan's (1999) research on Shanghai, another treaty port, in this era also points to the importance of changing and modernizing public structures and places of leisure. However, in Shanghai, these were constructed by Euro-American foreigners, not Overseas Chinese. Indeed, Shanghai was seen as having a grandeur that Xiamen simply could not compete with. The Westernization or modernization in Xiamen was not seen as the alluring and exotic world that Lee describes in Shanghai, but of patriotic Overseas Chinese returning to their homeland and bettering it.

as it connected the area surrounding Xiamen harbor and Xiamen University with Xiahe road as well as intersecting with Zhongshan road 中山路, which had become a center for commerce and organizing among the Overseas Chinese elite. The streets in Xiamen connected the trade networks within the old city to the villages surrounding it and to the various ports, thus linking with the vast network of oceanic trade. These spaces became increasingly surveilled by private police forces, which were also founded by these Overseas Chinese businessmen. The streets were created in order to financialize the city, they were new material forms with their main purpose routed in commerce. As James Cook argues in his history of overseas Chinese and the modernization of Xiamen, the city's "development [was] based on the merchant experience of the Hokkien (South Fujianese) rather than that of the nation-state" (1998, 13).<sup>29</sup>

These returning sojourners also worked to re-define forms of dwelling in the city, building large villas strongly influenced by those in Southeast Asia's colonized cities and in stark contrast to the more cramp and dimly lit housing that most lived in. Bian Jingwei (2013, 29-31) writes that in the 1920s through early 1930s there were over twenty housing development companies owned by overseas Chinese in the city. These new housing developments created neighborhoods known as Overseas Chinese New Villages (Huaqiao xincun 華僑新村) were built in the 1930s, some of which still survive to the present day. Lee Chien Lang's (1978, 70-86) study of architecture on neighboring Jinmen

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<sup>29</sup> In his discussion of the eighteenth-century French town of Nantes, Michel Foucault brought attention to the relation between increased trade, increased circulation, and the increased need for streets. Like the streets built in Xiamen, these streets intended to increase hygiene compared to densely packed dwellings, to ensure trade within the town, and to connect the town's streets to external roads (Foucault 2007, 17-20). Yet, there is an important difference in the reshaping of space led by the state in Nantes compared to developments being led by businessmen in Xiamen.

Island describes how this kind of Western-influenced housing or *yanglou* 洋樓 reflected the colonies from which overseas Chinese were returning. Hence, those who came from the Philippines drew on Spanish styles, those from Vietnam on the French, those from Singapore on English architecture and so forth. The older architecture that remains in downtown Xiamen is similar to the ‘zig-zag arcade-homes’ that Shan Deqi describes in towns of southern Guangzhou. He writes that “arcade dwellings are common commercial buildings in the southern regions of China, they usually have two or three floors, and the front part of the first floor is called pillar corridor” (2011, 96). Shan sees these new styles as mixing of European and Chinese designs. The spacious three-story gated-compounds were material and symbolic displays of the Overseas Chinese distance from the other residents in the city. They reflected the viewpoints of the sojourners to combine elements of European and Chinese style and showed off their lavish wealth.

### **3.4 Public Works**

While the housing and roadways brought about spatial transformations that largely appear to have benefited an elite minority, there were other grand-scale public or semi-public works being constructed in this era. These would envision a new city that went beyond commerce and market circulation to create a shift in the norms of leisure and education. These also attempted to combine elements of Western and colonial projects with what the designers had conceived of as Chinese culture.

In 1926, Sun Yat-Sen Park 中山公園 was built around the then north-east edge of the city, now the northeast of the downtown. The construction of the park took land from three Buddhist temples and two major city temples in the area: the Miaoshi Temple 妙釋



寺, Lotus Temple 荷庵, Merit Temple 功德寺, Wenchang Temple 文昌宮, and Temple of the Eastern Peak 東岳廟 (XMCSJSZ 1992, 245-6). I have found no records of the Merit Temple or Wenchang Temple after the park's construction and can only assume that they were demolished as part of the construction or were already in disrepair in this period. The only mentions of any of the temples in the park's development plan are the small Lotus Temple, which comes up in a description of the placement for the Chen Liesuo Museum 陳列所博物館 in relation to the temple's second lake and the placement of a theatre west of Miaoshi si (XMZSGYJHS 1929, 69, 75). The Xiamen Buddhism Annals (*Xiamen fojiao zhi* 廈門佛教志) suggests that a lay Buddhist named Feng Zhongxi 馮重熙 was in charge of the relocation of the Lotus Temple inside of the park, but provides no information for its destruction or any details following the park's construction (XMFJZ 2005, 91).

What I can say is that the park's construction was part of a wider project throughout China of taking land from temples in order to build public parks and other monuments. The Republican government used parks as one way to secularize and control spatial practices, by taking property from temples and redefining what they represented.<sup>30</sup> Parks were spaces dedicated to national identity, hence the widespread number of parks named after and containing statues of the Guomindang 國民黨 founder Sun Yat-sen. At

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<sup>30</sup> In Mingzheng Shi's (1998) study of parks in Republican Beijing, he argues that parks took the place of temples and temple fairs, both in the geographic spaces they occupied and in the practices found there. At temple fairs, he writes, "people would come to shop, barter, meet friends, watch variety shows or traditional operas, and taste various kinds of local snacks and specialty foods" (ibid, 223), while other areas for recreation were accessible only to the elite. He shows that the arrival of the public park (*gongyuan* 公園) in China, like many of the linguistic additions to Chinese at the time, came from Japan's translation of a European concept. A *gongyuan* changed from an earlier usage referring to an official private garden to a public space (ibid, 227).

least three temples remained within or nearby the park initially but their large properties were taken for development of theatres, museums, shops, and so on. According to the Xiamen Buddhism Annals, after being taken under the administration of Nanputuo in 1929, the Miaoshi Temple expanded in 1932 adding an additional sutra recitation hall behind the main shrine and a “life release” (*fangsheng* 放生) garden within the temple grounds, which later became the Sun Yat-Sen Park’s zoo. However, in 1951, the temple was converted into the Miaoguang primary school 秒光小學 and was not reconstructed in the post-Mao era (XMFJZ 2005, 55).

Today, the only active temple in the park is the Temple of the Eastern Peak, which was rebuilt by Nanputuo following the park’s construction. It is a small concrete building that can only be accessed from an alley outside of the park, and now serves as a place of worship for the surrounding neighborhood, not all eighteen city wards as it once did. A recent inscription at the temple explains the process in the Republican period:

In the 19th year of the Republic of China (1930), the Xiamen navy carried out the work of constructing Sun Yet-Sen Park, [the temple] was incorporated into the park, and following the regulations of Buddhist temples [the Temple of the Eastern Peak] was once again rebuilt. Three gates were opened, one to the left and right, their eaves like bird wings, the decoration of their ridges were elegant, three entrances and two halls, in proper formation, in front of the temple gate is a pond, and the lay Buddhist woman Wu Gangu administered the temple. Following the occupation of Xiamen [by the Japanese army], the Mahayana Buddhist Association appointed Nanputuo's deacon the Exalted Master Guangyin to administer the temple, changing the name to Ksitigarbha Temple (Dongyue miao shizhi 2010)

民國 19 年（1930 年）廈門海軍提工處建造中山公園，劃歸園內，遂依佛寺規制重新改造，正中山門三開間，左右各一間，飛檐翼翼，脊飾優美，三進兩庭，嚴嚴整整，山門前有池一泓，寺廟由菜姑吳甘姑住持，廈門淪陷后，由大乘佛教會委派南普陀寺執事廣印上人為住持，易名為“地藏寺”（東岳廟史誌 2010）

Nanputuo temple also funded the rebuilding of two other temples in the nearby vicinity, neither of which were formerly Buddhist and this shift nearly a hundred years ago continues to shape the current practices of the three temples.<sup>31</sup>

Although Nanputuo had finances to rebuild these temples, the monastery suffered its own losses due to another construction project. Tan Kah-Kee 陳嘉庚, the famed Overseas Chinese from Singapore, had petitioned the provincial government to take a track of land from the temple for the construction of Xiamen University in 1920. Reportedly this left the monastery with only enough grain rents to feed the monastic population for three months of the year. However, they still received financial support from performing rituals and sizable donations from overseas Chinese. It is also suspected that this seizure of land was what spurred the Abbot to build the monastic training school in 1925, famously taken over by the modernist reformer Taixu 太虛 two years later (Welch 1967, 241; Welch 1968, 110; Baigyo 1926, 20).<sup>32</sup>

Tan's investment in the city focused on the expansion of educational facilities, he invested huge amounts of money in Xiamen University, Jimei University, as well as a number of teacher training schools. He saw a shift in education as a key to modernizing Fujian province and China more broadly. As for the lands that surrounded the initial university campus, he wrote in his memoir:

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<sup>31</sup> Another nearby communal temple, Haoshi Temple 豪士宮, was also rebuilt as a Buddhist temple by local monk Shi Anjing 釋安京 not Nanputuo, and was renamed Wenzao Foguang Temple 文灶佛光寺. Although these Buddhist temples retain non-Buddhist names alongside their newer Buddhist ones, all now identify as Buddhist temples, have shrines to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, hire monks to recite sutras for rituals, and offer and eat vegetarian foods at the temples. However, this practice of Buddhists rebuilding non-Buddhist temples did not expand during the mass reconstruction of temples that followed the Cultural Revolution.

<sup>32</sup> On Taixu's planned reforms to Buddhism see Pittman (2001).

In the east the terrain was hilly and uneven, but not high, and the entire area could be used for construction. I estimated that from Xujia village in the west, to the fort on Huli hill in the east and from Wulao hill in the north to the sea, encompassed an area of over 300 acres most of which was barren public hill land and I considered that all of this should be part of Xiamen University grounds. Exception could be made only for the Nan Putuo Buddhist temple which should either be left separate as it then was or should become part of the university campus; as for the fields in front of the temple, they could be appraised and purchased, when Xiamen University needed them (Tan 1994, 28).

Although he didn't see the outright destruction of religion as a necessity, he was opposed to much what he saw as superstitious practices that could be prevented with education.

While he did not attempt to demolish the temple, he did succeed in taking away much of its farmland.

The presidency of Xiamen University was taken over by Lim Boon Keng 林文慶, a Singaporean-Chinese whose ancestral home was in nearby Longhai city. Lim's education had largely been conducted in English, first studying in Singapore before enrolling in the University of Edinburgh's medical program and, as a result, he lacked proficiency in Chinese language. The university's first president's tenure was short lived, Deng Cuiying 邓萃英 served for only a short period from the university's opening in December of 1920 to May in the following year due to an unwillingness to resign from his position in the Ministry of Education in Beijing. Lim then continued in the position until July of 1937 when he fled from the Japanese invasion. Like many of the other Overseas Chinese in this period, his vision was to integrate his conception of Chinese culture with the western institutions he experienced in colonial Southeast Asia. His Chinese culture was one grounded in a secularized Confucianism focused on filial piety and self-cultivation. Like the Overseas Chinese businessmen, what he wanted to draw on

from the west were styles of infrastructure, institutions, and global financial circulation in the capitalist market.<sup>33</sup> Despite Tan's best efforts, however, he was ultimately unsuccessful in raising enough funds from overseas Chinese and turned the university over to the Republican government in 1937 (Tan 1994, 29-38).<sup>34</sup> Yet, it has remained as a landmark of the early modernizing campaigns, though the education system never developed in the ways Tan envisioned, the university worked together with the roadways and other infrastructure projects of Overseas Chinese to reshape the city.

### **3.5 The Japanese Occupation and Gaoqi Airport**

In May of 1938, after efforts to fend off an invasion by the Japanese in the south of the island were unsuccessful, the Japanese began an occupation of Xiamen that lasted until 1945. While the details of the attack and occupation are beyond the scope of this chapter, the construction of the Gaoqi International Airport by the Japanese is important to note. Like roadways and large-scale public works, the construction of the airport largely reshaped the space of the city.

The invasion by the Japanese left much of the recently built infrastructure damaged and Zhongshan Park in ruins. The Japanese needed an airport for military purposes and the existing site in the south of the island's Zengcuoan 曾厝垵 village was deemed insufficient and likely also severely damaged during their attacks. They choose to build a new airport in the north of the island, which remains in use today, albeit after

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<sup>33</sup> On the lives and thought of Lim and Tan see Lee (1990) and Yong (2014).

<sup>34</sup> When Chen Yi 陳儀 became governor of Fujian in 1934, Tan was dismayed by his rule and particularly in regards to how he tore apart the existing education system that Tan and other overseas Chinese had spent years building and collecting donations for. Chen shut down the Normal Schools that would generally funnel into the universities, claiming it was in order to develop a standardized national education system (Tan 1994, 198-207).

numerous reconstructions and expansions. However, the north of the island was not unoccupied. While the city at this point only took up the southwest of the island, farming and fishing villages were found throughout, and so, the construction of the new airport led to the demolition of at least fourteen villages. Huang Guofu 黃國福 lists seven temples that belonged to this area (2015, 15-19), but there were likely more than that, as even a village of only seven households had its own temple. While there had been surveys of temples in Xiamen during the late imperial and early republican periods, they only covered the area in and around the actual walled-city, as well as a few other notable sites. As such, it is difficult to say how many were destroyed due to airport construction.

When the villagers dispersed they did not decide to rebuild their old temples in their new homes or to found new villages. Instead, they moved to the nearby villages in the north of the island. Some older residents in these areas will still refer to the residents whose families came from the demolished villages as ‘outsiders’ (*waidiren* 外地人), a term more commonly used for the migrants coming from elsewhere in China. However, within a generation, many of the new residents became integrated into their new homes and the existing institutions there. Thus, they saw no need to rebuild their temples in a new location.

Period	Event	Number of Temples Demolished
Late Qing	Unknown	2
Republican Era and Japanese Occupation	Road construction (1927-1931)	11
	Zhongshan Park (1926-1930)	1
	Market, factory, or waterworks construction	4

	Converted to school	3
	Public toilet	2
	Gaoqi airport (1940-1941)	7
	Unknown	6
Maoist Era	Abandoned	2
	Converted to school	1
	Cultural Revolution	4
	Unknown	1
Unknown	Unknown	4
		Total: 48
Sources: <i>Lujiang zhi</i> 1998; Li 1995; Su, Chen, and Xie 1931		

**Table 2: Communal temples demolished before 1976 that have not been rebuilt**

While most of the temples in Xiamen that I visited were damaged or completely destroyed during the Cultural Revolution, the vast majority demolished in that period were rebuilt. The communities they were located in were able to organize themselves once more and contribute to the temple's reconstruction. However, a larger number of temples that were destroyed during the infrastructure projects of the Republican period were not rebuilt. I have found records of 48 temples since the late Qing to the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976 that no longer exist, only seven of these were destroyed during the Maoist period, while two were destroyed during the late Qing and 34 during the Republican era. Of the 48 temples at least 21 were dedicated to Mazu, Baosheng Dadi, or both gods. These are by far the two most prominent gods within the region, so they could easily be worshipped at other nearby temples, and perhaps as a result of this, the reconstruction of the temples felt less urgent. 37 of the temples were located in and around the downtown of the city, which had earlier received investment in modern infrastructure, while another eight were in and around the vicinity of the airport in the north of the island. This leaves only three other temples (one in the north of the island, one in the south, and one on Gulangyu) that were not rebuilt, one was destroyed to build

a public toilet and the other two for unknown reasons (table 2). However, it is possible that the low number of temples located outside the downtown is also due to the limited records of these areas compared to the historic city. Regardless, in this period there was a clear reshaping of city space in ways that first destroyed numerous temples and with them a repertoire of spatial practices and types of space. For some communities, the projects took land away from other temples and the income that came from these properties, and, finally, created new representations of space connected to verbal signs of modern life and international trade.

Projects in the Republican era to build roadways, universities, airports, and other modern infrastructures were not explicitly anti-religious. However, when considering the resulting demolition of temples that came with their construction, they appear far from neutral in their relation to communal temples. They did not directly critique these temples as superstitious or backwards but brought about their destruction by placing an importance on new kinds of spaces deemed to be modern.

### **3.6 Political Campaigns and Modernizing Chinese Culture**

Since the late Qing, there had been attacks on religion as unmodern or the cause of China's failure to stand up to foreign imperial powers. Campaigns called to 'convert temples to schools' and more directly to 'smash superstition.' Yet, the spatial practices related to temples, such as incense offerings, processions, and setting off firecrackers continued despite temples being destroyed or converted into schools, factories, or for other functions. Rebecca Nedostup (2009) suggests that while the Republican government did manage to control, confiscate, or destroy many local temples, those



involved with these temples also managed to force local governments to reevaluate what it endorsed or tolerated as religion. Shuk-wah Poon (2008) shows how temples converted into secular venues continued to be used for religious purposes, despite their re-categorization. She demonstrates that although the Guangzhou City God Temple was converted into a Native Goods Exhibition Hall, it was still used as a place of worship and fortune tellers continued to congregate outside of it. In Xiamen, a similar process appears to have occurred, the continued attacks on, comments about, and support for fortune tellers, spirit mediums, superstitious worship, and opera performances found in newspapers and magazines suggests that, despite the demolition of temples and acquisition of temple property for infrastructure projects, all of these remained common aspects of city life, much to the frustration of the modernizer ideologues.

While elite overseas Chinese intellectuals, like Lim and Tan, hoped to create a culture that fused together elements of Chinese and Western cultures to develop some sort of modern Confucianism, the younger generation who attended Xiamen University had taken their views on modernization a step further denouncing Chinese culture in general. In the early 1920s, groups of students organized the Xiamen University Anti-Religion Movement and Xiamen University Marriage Reform Alliance. Drawing inspiration from the writers in the May Fourth Movement, the university student movements were highly critical of what they saw as ‘traditional China’ and embraced Western technology and intellectual thought (presumed to be secular) as the only way for China to stand up to Western imperial powers. The Anti-Religion Movement published two articles in the Beijing journal *Nongbao*’s 农报 issue published on April 17, 1922 as a call to action, a section of the first reads:

The circumstance is so extreme that religion has even snuck unexpectedly into our sacred academic world, there is a minority who are superstitious believers. In fact, they use the name of education to preach their religion. Ah! At the front line of a new era for China, we will again be submerged in the dark underworld.

Colleagues and others, this is a grievous sight, it is uneasy to sit and watch, 80 affectionate comrades have organized the Xiamen University Anti-Religion Comrade Society, following in the asynchronous footsteps of comrades at home and abroad, we vow to sweep clean this poison, for humanity's truth, we open a new opportunity and offer this news.

尤有進者，現宗教竟混入我神聖之教育界，少數迷徒，以教育其名，傳教其實。嗚呼！一線曙光之中國，將復沉於黑暗地獄矣。問【同】人等觸目傷心，不安坐視，愛合同志八十有餘人，組織廈門大學非宗教同志團，異步海內外同誌之後塵，誓掃此種毒害，為人類真理特開生機，敬此電聞。  
(ZGXMS 1989, 22)

Religion here is discussed generally as superstition but is tied to foreign invaders; to be against religion, in this case, was to be in support of the anti-colonial movement.

Although this is largely an attack on Christianity, given the group's name it is clear that they define themselves as against religion in a more general sense. For China to embrace its "new era," its population had to move away from religion. This more general opposition to religion and traditional culture comes out clearly in their second article, it begins:

In our support of science and truth, we cannot help but launch an attack on un-science and non-truths; we want to seek advancements in society, and, as such, we have no choice but to smash the idols of "Heaven's Law and Earth's Principle" and "As Things Were since Ancient Times." We believe that all religions are un-scientific, restrictive, conservative, class-based, war-like, and bring good fortune to only a minority, but our ideal new era, our new society, is scientific, free, progressive, equal, peaceful, and will bring happiness for all of humanity. Because of these reasons, we have no choice but to attack and eradicate all religions, as to reach its annihilation.

我們為擁護“科學”和“真理”，就不得不向“非科學”“非真理”上攻擊；我們想求社會的進步，就不得不打破“天經地義”“自古如斯”的偶像。我們相信一切宗教都是非科學的，束縛的，保守的，階級的，戰爭的，少數人幸福的，但是我們理想的新時代，新社會，是科學的，自由的，進步的，平等的，和平的，全人類幸福的。因為這幾條理由，我們就不得不攻擊、剷除一切宗教，而至於消滅。(ibid, 23)

These attacks are a shift from the desires to merge elements of Western and Chinese culture supported by Overseas Chinese like Lim and Tan. Just a year after Lim had taken office as university president, many students were already more extreme than him in their rejection of Chinese culture and aspirations for modernization.

Others, however, were less vehement and suggested particular aspects of the local culture were in need of reform. An article in the Heshan xunbao 禾山旬報 (February 21, 1935) directly connects opera to spirit mediums. The author called on six specific villages not to hire either during the 17th and 24th days of the first lunar month.<sup>35</sup> It suggests that stopping these practices is what the best people (*zui kejianzhe* 最可嘉者) do and that it will make things better (*gaishan* 改善) as part of a new life. Here a connection is made between ending old traditions in order to embrace the Republican government's New Life Movement. An article in the Jiangsheng Bao 江声报 (July 7, 1935), called for the outright banning of Gezaixi opera performances. It makes no mention of temples or superstition but the author saw their content as not fitting with the ethos of the time and in need of reform in order to promote 'public morals' (*fenghua* 風化). The author takes their personal view as widespread public opinion, claiming that "most people, after watching Gezaixi, say that it was a sickening performance, that it is a play promoting licentiousness, regarding the songs that they sing, they all say it is the sorrowful sigh of a vanquished nation" 一般人看了歌仔戲之後，都說那是肉麻的表演，是誨淫的把戲，對於他所唱的歌曲，又都說覺得大有亡國哀音之慨。 They argue that opera is not mere

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<sup>35</sup> I did not encounter any festivals held on the 17<sup>th</sup> day of the first lunar month, but the 24<sup>th</sup> likely refers to Wufu Wangye 吴府王爺.

entertainment but also functions as social education, writing "opera is one of society's educational tools. It is not only entertainment, [actors] perform roles of loyal servants and righteous scholars, causing people to feel deeply respectful, performing as wicked officials who mess with authority, this causes people to seethe with anger" 戲劇是社會教育之一。不只娛樂而已，他扮演忠臣義士，便令人肅然起敬，演奸臣弄權，又是叫人怒髮衝冠。 This article was also tied to the New Life Movement (*Xinsheng huodong* 新生活動) and placed great importance on reforms to local culture, though the article does not explicitly state that such performing arts needed to be removed from the religious culture they were closely tied to. Instead, it stresses that the content needed to be changed, implying a push for the secularization and sanitization of culture. These efforts, however, seemed to be in vain, as another article in the *Jiangsheng Bao* (September 10, 1948) describes the “superstition” of opera performers at the Xiamen Art Theatre 廈門藝術劇院 in 1948. The author describes actors performing divination (*bu* 卜) at the beginning of the performance at a new theatre. Though it does not specify the practice, it was likely throwing moon blocks to ask the gods if it is auspicious for them to perform.

Temples and particular celebrations also received criticism. In 1936, the *Xiamen dabao* 廈門大報 reported on a prohibition of the annual Universal Salvation (*pudu* 普度) ritual held at the City God Temple and Temple of the Eastern Peak, warning readers that police would be sent to seal off the temples (*Xiamen dabao*, August 17, 1936). This was after much of the City God Temple had been demolished as a result of the road construction and suggests that despite the new modern infrastructure's destruction of

religious sites, many people continued to worship in these spaces, leading to a need for the continued ideological attacks on these practices. There was resistance to the transformation of bodies and space.

Others were less critical but still categorized religious practice as ‘superstition’ 迷信. An article in the newspaper *Luzhou* 鷺洲 (October 27, 1929) entitled “Science and Superstition” 科學與迷信 describes the author visiting a temple festival to look at the hot and tumultuous (*renao* 熱鬧) atmosphere. Although the author is surprised by the event, the article is not actually critical, nor does he mention science or superstition. Similarly, an article from 1948 entitled "Festivals of Superstitious People" 迷信者的節日 gives a generally uncritical description of Buddhist festivals while using a pejorative term to describe the participants (Xiamen dabao, July 25, 1948). In these instances ‘superstitious’ was used to describe religious practice but was not doing so as an attack on religion.

Other writers came out in support of the traditions, despite the attacks on them from the state and intellectual elite, and the naturalization of terms like ‘superstition’ to refer to local religious life. An article in the Daily Commerce Weekly Supplement (Shangxue ribao xingqi zengkan, November 28, 1932), describes the Sending Royal Boats (*song wangchuan* 送王船) ritual event in Tongan’s Lücuo 呂厝 village. The event brought numerous branch temples together in the village. The author tells readers that the event is worth attending as it is very hot and tumultuous (*renao* 熱鬧) and had good opera performances. They are aware that this kind of event fits under the banner of superstition, noting that despite anti-superstition campaigns, all of the surrounding villages still attend this event. The annual pilgrimage to founding temples of the

Baosheng Dadi cult also received support. A writer for the Xingguang Ribao 星光日报 (April 25, 1948) not only describes the event as the quintessence of Chinese culture (*guocui* 國粹), they also use the foreigners who had joined the group to take photos of the event as an example of how there is nothing superstitious or unmodern about the practices at all and notes that people from all over Xiamen take part. They write that some call these gods superstitious, but suggest that it is the same thing as worshipping the Christian god or reading the bible. This shifts the typical Christian distinction between belief and superstition, such as that found in an article by a Christian author ten years earlier in the Jiangsheng bao 江聲報 (April 24, 1938). The author argues that belief only applies to Christianity and superstition applies to every other kind of religious practice. The article about the Baosheng dadi pilgrimage turns this around to defend local religious practices by suggesting that the practices of foreigners are similar to so-called superstition and that these events even draw foreigners' interest.

Although these are only a small number of examples, from them it appears that there was a large variety of opinions on what the role of religious practice should be in a modernizing Xiamen even among the newspaper contributors, who would likely be more educated than most of the population. There is a range of opinions on how society should change in order to adopt a reformed Confucianism, secularism, or Christianity. Perspectives on local religious practices were also diverse, some wanted to put an end to it altogether, others found it to be a curiosity, and promoted it as an important part of Chinese culture. Regardless of their view, all had to face the changes in city space through the on-going infrastructure projects of the period. These projects did what ideological campaigns could not by changing the physical spaces people lived in and

around. In doing so, they changed the way bodies could move through the city, rather than any attempt at changing how they thought.

### **3.7 Liberated Xiamen: Land Reform, Workers' Villages, and Communes**

Soon after the Japanese relinquished control of the island, the People's Republic of China was formed with Xiamen officially coming under the control of the Communist Party on October 17, 1949. With this came what was perhaps the greatest transformation of space in modern China, the land reform movement during the early nineteen fifties. A survey of land ownership in the province during the 1940s found that lineages controlled the 20-30% of land in coastal areas and over 50% in mountainous regions (FJSNCDC 1951, 110). The redistribution of ownership in the following decade brought a change so dramatic it still yields tensions among those whose land was taken from them, when looking at a map or discussing a neighborhood, some interviewees would remark that such-and-such a place is on the land formerly owned by such-and-such a family member, all reiterating that it was stolen from their family by the government. Those who received land in this time did not have long to enjoy the new autonomy forced upon them, due to the emergence of the *hukou* 户口 system in 1958 that restricted the mobility of rural residents and the development of collectives and then large communes further restricted any sense of individual decision making. Indeed, land reform remains a sensitive issue in China and many of the relevant documents in official archives are still difficult to gain access to.

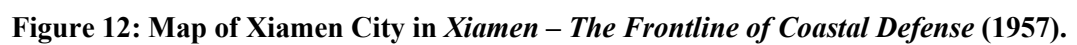
Huang Shu-min's study of one of Xiamen's villages in the 1980s recounts the memories of the local cadre, who was only a young child at the time of the revolution. He

suggests that the two men appointed to power in the village following liberation were not communist ideologues, but mere opportunists. Huang quotes the cadre as saying that land reform and revolution were seen as “opportunities [for the two men] to legitimize their revenge against those who had looked down on them before” (1998, 44). Those classified as ‘rich peasants’ and ‘landlords’ were punished as ‘bad elements’ for their perceived exploitation of the masses. The Fanghu village gazetteer 枋湖村志, which describes an area in the central north of the island made up of seven natural villages (*zirancun* 自然村), states that there were five landlords and eleven rich peasants in their territory who suffered this fate (FHCZ 2011, 7).

In their study of a village in Guangzhou, Anita Chan, Jonathan Unger, and Richard Madsen (2009, 20-26) describe the dismantling of the lineage organization and redistribution of land owned by the lineage to poor peasants, then being consolidated into people’s communes with public canteens during the Great Leap Forward (1958-1962). This was the campaign in which people were tasked at smelting crude steel leading, those who continued agricultural work did not think they would get back what they produced and many fields were left uncultivated. This, in turn, led to mass food shortages and starvation. Gregory A. Ruf (1998, 62-121) details the same period for a village in Sichuan. Like the farmers in Guangzhou, these villagers were expected to deliver food to urban residents reaching government-mandated quotas that would only allow them whatever was left over in addition to these amounts. During the Great Leap Forward, these statistics were inflated in official reports, even though they were actually in decline since the collectivization of labor. In Fujian, the reforms saw a shift from a time when land was largely controlled by lineages, temples, and monasteries to one when it was



Leading to the same disastrous results as elsewhere in the country.



Prior to the Great Leap Forward, however, the party was hard at work promoting a vision of the coming utopian society, largely based on new infrastructure projects and new forms of organizing in spaces of home and work. Official publications during the era emphasized construction works and their superiority to those of the Republican era. The Communist Party too sought to promote modernization through infrastructure, and this is exemplified in the booklet *Xiamen – The Frontline of Coastal Defense* 海防前線的廈門 (HFQXDXM 1957). The booklet emphasizes the importance of Xiamen as both a historic port of foreign entry and return point to China for Overseas Chinese, as well as its new role as the frontline of defense against the Republicans on Jinmen and Taiwan. Indeed, the artillery war with Jinmen occurred just the year after the booklet was published (Szonyi 2008, 64-78). Yet, the majority of the booklet’s content focuses on various infrastructure projects and how these have helped to put an end to ‘feudal society.’ The booklet lists four factories said to be constructed as part of the new industrial district to the north of the old city; an additional four factories built in unspecified locations;<sup>36</sup> roadways, marinas, docks, and sewers are said to have been greatly improved; and the bridge to Jimei, which they say was supposed to have been completed under the Republican government, was built (1957, 13-23). With historical distance it is easy to read such documents as mere propaganda, exaggerating the work of the communist party, but it still manages to highlight the aspirations and changes in life hoped for during the 1950s. Namely, as the booklet says, to move from being a ‘consumption city’ 消費的城

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<sup>36</sup> These manufactured canned goods, chemical products, batteries, alcohol, cod liver oil, products derived from the century plant (*longshelan* 龍舌蘭), cardboard boxes, and glass. However, as Jude Howell writes, the industrial zone “never fully thrived. An ammonia fertilizer plant and oxygen plant constructed there were later abandoned” (1999, 143).

市 to a ‘production city’ 生產的城市. The new factories also brought a change in everyday life for those worked there, moving employees into the ‘workers’ new villages’ 工人新村 made up of new two-story walk-ups with dormitory-style residences as well as shared common areas, kitchens, showers, laundry rooms, and toilets. The booklet remarks that they also had electric lighting and running water (ibid, 21-29). Yet, the actual arrangement of the city remained largely the same as in the 1930s development plans. The map attached to the booklet shows roadways in largely the same order as in 1931 developments (figure 12).

Although these changes in land ownership presented dramatic large-scale upheavals to how people lived in China more broadly, when most of the older residents I interviewed spoke of this era they did so at a more personal level. They described it in terms of pains of starvation, having nothing but sweet potatoes to eat, having no choice of clothing, or in connection with the destruction of temples and smashing of god statues, and what they see as the government taking their culture and history away from them. The mention of the temples and government taking their culture away from them is obviously connected to how I met these interlocutors and their knowledge of my projects focus. Although there was optimism for the new factories and railway lines in the 1950s, the goals of these projects never fully materialized. By the end of the decade, China had ended ties with the Soviet Union and attempted to develop a form of Marxism thought to be more suited to agrarian East Asia. However, Mao push for rural industrialization through the creation of backyard steel furnaces was a failure and resulted was mass famine throughout the country.

### 3.8 Attacks on Religion and Reforming Local Culture

Land reform throughout China caused many temples to lose their property, which had provided both sources of income and food supplies. As Goossaert and Palmer note “Han Buddhism and Taoism bore the brunt of land reform and anti-feudal campaigns. Whereas these campaigns did not directly target Buddhism and Taoism per se, the result was the complete evisceration of both religions as social entities” (2011, 159). In Xiamen, many communal temples were converted for other uses. A number of temples in what was then the north of the city were transformed into factories, some of which still retain parts of the outside factory facade today. The shifts in both the material design of space and the new representational spaces they brought about also resulted in changes to spatial practices. Roadways, factories, new residential areas, and land reform had all reshaped the city and surrounding villages. These changes that had already shown to be destructive to the existing local organizing around neighborhood temples were then intensified through political rhetoric from the late 1950s onward. An inscription from Fuhui gong 浮惠宮, a temple north of the downtown, written in 2006 describes the modern developments of the temple:

Around the years of liberation [the temple] was rebuilt twice. The first repair was in the autumn of 1946 CE. The second time was after liberation when Fuhui gong was borrowed by the People's Liberation Army to use as an ammunition dump, during the attack on Jinmen there was a large explosion, and in the summer of 1954, it was repaired again. Following this, there were many campaigns leading to the ten year catastrophe [the Cultural Revolution] and the government needed to borrow [the temple space], the Great Life Protecting Emperor and the other deities rented land elsewhere, then after Reform and Opening Up, Xiamen Special Administrative Zone's economy was extremely prosperous, and we came upon the turn of the century—a most outstanding year, the situation was great. (Xiamen fuhui gong chongxiu 2006)

解放前後有兩次修葺。第一次於公元一九四六年秋重修。第二次，解放後《孚惠宮》借讓人民解放軍做彈藥庫，攻打金門時不甚爆炸，於一九五四年夏，再次重修。緊接歷次運動至十年浩劫，政府需要借用，大道公且另租地棲身，改革開放以來，廈門特區經濟繁榮昌盛，正逢世紀元年形勢大好。(廈門《孚惠宮》重修 2006)

In contrast to events occurring in the city, some temples in rural areas were actually being rebuilt in the 1960s by those who understood the famines during the Great Leap Forward as the result of turning away from the gods and sought to appease their anger (Goossaert and Palmer 2011, 164). Wang Xiaoxuan (2015) found that in Zhejiang province there was a surge of religious activity following the famine despite continued efforts by the state to suppress such practices. In Xiamen's Haicang district I found two examples of village temples being rebuilt in this period. Fenglin gong 鳳林宮 in Maolin village 茂林社 was rebuilt in 1962 and Cisheng gong 慈聖宮 in Xiachen village 下陳社 was rebuilt in 1969. The former was later demolished to make room for a railway in 2010, but it was rebuilt once again soon after. The latter, however, was demolished along with the entire village in recent years for the construction of new industrial developments.

As the attacks on religion and traditional society intensified with the Cultural Revolution and the campaign to 'Smash the Four Olds' (*po siji* 破四舊), the state of affairs for temples and private religious practice looked bleak. The *Xiamen Chinese Communist Party History (1949-1978)*, estimates that during the Cultural Revolution 21,990 Bodhisattva statues, 43,858 deity statues, 21,222 'superstitious' objects, 11,366 old books, and 195 small temples were destroyed in just three communities in Tongan by the Red Guard Houtian Brigade 后天大队, as well as 571 Bodhisattvas, 870 deities, 473 'superstitious' objects, and over 90 old books by the Pengcui Brigade 彭厝大队

(ZGXMSWDS 2013, 362-363). As the red guards proudly made notes of the temples, statues, and other historic relics destroyed, it seems likely that these figures are fairly accurate. This history only lists attacks on rural areas and it should be noted that the campaigns against religion were more sustained in cities.

Meiren gong 美仁宮, a temple nearby the aforementioned Fuhui gong, was first converted into a school and then factory, and other parts of its land used as a park. The inscription written following its reconstruction in 2003 describes the modern history as a shift from great misfortune to prosperity:

In the past hundred years [the temple] met with repeated misfortune, to such an extent that there was nothing left of the temple, the statues of gods were taken to the people's homes. Today we are met with a period of prosperity, folk beliefs are honored, and thus two rooms from the building built on the foundation of the temple were given to continue temple worship (Chongxiu meiren gong beiji 2003)

百年來，累遭厄運。以至廟宇蕩然，神像移於民家。今逢盛世，尊重民間信仰，乃得舊宮址所建樓房分給兩間延續廟祀 (重修美仁宮碑記 2003)

While the devotees of Meiren gong managed to hide their deity statues, more often than not they were destroyed by brigades of red guards. Changxing gong 長興宮, another temple in the area, had their deity statues destroyed and temple converted into a cotton factory. The temple gazetteer describes the events:

In the 43<sup>rd</sup> year of the 60 year cycle (1966 CE), the Eastern side of the world was abruptly [transformed into] a dark and gloomy place: "an ill wind raised" whoosh whoosh, "it rained blood" drip drip; yin and yang were in disorder, Heaven and Earth turned upside down; the fox grasped the tiger's might, and we mingled with the demonic. Speculators fished in troubled waters,<sup>37</sup> the "revolutionary clique" broke, smashed, and stole; there wasn't a crime they did not commit: they used their massive underhanded advantage to burn the deity statues, destroy the ancient temple, and wreck the historic relics. This was an unprecedented historic event, the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution." It was during this "great revolution"

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<sup>37</sup> "To fish in troubled waters" 混水摸魚 (also written as 渾水摸魚) means to take advantage of a situation for one's own benefit.

that Changxing gong's deity statues were "reformed." The deity statues were burnt, the temple was seized by the Red Guard Commune's (the period of the Cultural Revolution is considered [the era of] the Red Guard Commune, including present-day Wucun sub-district office) "Revolutionary Power Holder's" nephew and used as a cotton factory. (CXGGLWYH 2002, 8-9)

丙午年（公元一九六六年），地球上的東方突然天烏地暗：「陰風」陣陣、「血雨」瀝瀝；陰陽錯亂、乾坤顛倒；抓假虎威、入妖混雜。投機者混水摸魚，「革命派」打、砸、搶無惡不作：燒神佛、除古廟、破壞文物古迹從中大撈一把。這就是史無前例的「無產階級文化大革命」。長興宮的神像就是在這「偉大革命」中被「革」的。神像被燒了，宮廟却被紅衛公社（文革期間屬紅衛公社，即如今的梧村街道辦事處）的「革命當權者」的侄子霸占用作彈棉工場。

The takeover of temples, their demolition or conversion into schools, factories, and storehouses reshaped the space of the city. These spaces had to be repurposed and the residents of neighborhoods had to be separated, put to work in factories and later further detached from their homes in the Down to the Countryside Movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Reforming local culture was seen as key to the process of reforming society and working towards a socialist utopia, while temple organization was broken apart, groups of performers, such as opera troupes and song and dance bands, who traditionally played a large role in temple ritual events and festivals were tasked with re-educating the masses through newly produced forms of song and drama. Playwrights who had previously written stories of gods or imperial history were now tasked with writing revolutionary narratives or converting already accepted communist scripts into the regional theatre styles. This shift back and forth can be seen in the works of celebrated local playwright Wei Naicong 魏乃聰 (1937-1997) who first learned the styles of traditional Hokkien opera (Xiangju 鄉劇 or Gezaixi 歌仔戲), then wrote during and after the Maoist period

working in Xiamen and nearby Longhai. He won awards for his modern operas in 1958 and 1965 promoting accepted revolutionary themes, before returning to writing traditional opera and converting scripts from other regions into the style of the local performers in the post-Mao era (FJXJNJ 1982, 78).

For both performers and writers, it was often the same groups who performed revolutionary and traditional opera. Many new song and dance routines were also created and circulated throughout the country to spread the ideals of the new society. *Xiamen – The Frontline of Coastal Defense* lists five theatres in the city that would perform Beijing, Hunanese, Gaojia, Pear Garden, Cantonese, and Hokkien Puppet operas in both modern and traditional styles (1957, 52). In 1958 a song entitled *Heaven within the Human World* (*Tiantang zai renjian* 天堂在人間) was published in the Beijing journal *Red Flag* (*Hongqi* 紅旗) and was performed at the Xiamen City Workers' Amateur Arts and Culture Concert (*Xiamen shi zhigong yeyu wenyi hui* 廈門市職工業餘文藝會) that same year. The song reshapes religious terminology to take the power away from divinities and spread it amongst the masses:

People change, earth changes, heaven changes too,  
There are roads to walk atop the sea, marvels are innumerable:  
Rivers can flow backward, satellites fly to heaven.  
The sweet potatoes and pumpkins are large, deserts become fertile land.  
The cordyline will bloom,<sup>38</sup> sugarcane waste can make cotton.  
The creativity of the people, manure can make electricity.

人變，地變，天也變，  
海上有路走，奇事數萬千：  
河水能倒流，衛星飛上天。  
番薯南瓜大，沙漠變良田。  
鐵樹會開花，蔗渣能造棉。  
人民的創造，糞便能發電。  
改造大自然，智慧賽神仙。  
乾坤要倒轉，人力勝過天。

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<sup>38</sup> The cordyline blooms is an idiom used to describe something that is highly unlikely to occur.



Transform nature, our wisdom competes with  
the gods.  
Yin and yang will turn upside down,  
manpower has surpassed heaven. (Wu 1995, 7)

Here religious life is posed in direct opposition to societal advancements, the great technological achievements that awaited the people would be obtained when they take the power they naturally possess and conquer heaven. Though in this chapter I focus on the spatial changes brought about by modernization and urbanization, these are also tied to the political and ideological campaigns of the periods. In particular, song and dance from the Maoist period, which promoted revolutionary violence, are thought of by some who lived through this period with positive memories, unlike any other aspect of life at that time, which are usually described in terms of hardship and suffering. However, this is not the case for everyone and explicitly stated that they do not enjoy the revival events like singing Maoist era songs in parks.

Although the state of temples and ritual traditions seemed particularly bleak in this period, circumstances quickly changed once again. When Mao died in 1976 and the Cultural Revolution was brought to an end with the denunciations of the Gang of Four, the resurgence of many forms of local traditions and reconstruction of temple spaces began.

### **3.9 The Formation of the Special Economic Zone: Reforms and Foreign Investment**

Following the death of Mao and the rise to power of Deng Xiaoping, the CCP began the process of “Reform and Opening Up” (*gaige kaifang* 改革開放) in 1978 that constituted a series of reforms that would bring China into the global capitalist market while

continuing single-party rule. The party refers to this as ‘Socialism with Chinese Characteristics’ (*Zhongguo tese shehuizhuyi* 中國特色社會主義). As part of this process, four cities in southeast China were designated as Special Economic Zones (SEZs) that offered tax exemptions and other incentives to encourage investment by foreign companies. In 1980, Xiamen was selected as an SEZ due to its history as a port city, but more importantly due to its ties to Overseas Chinese communities in Taiwan and Southeast Asia.

The city’s original SEZ was a 2.5km<sup>2</sup> piece of land in Huli district but was quickly expanded to all of Xiamen Island and Gulangyu in 1984. The state-run transportation infrastructure projects also returned after years of stagnation. From the late 1980s to early 1990s roads were repaired, rail routes increased, transport of goods and people nationally and internationally returned, and the airport was expanded. Expansions were also made to other industries such as waterworks, electrical grids, and telephone lines (Chen and Zhang 1992, 45-71). For urbanites, the post-Mao period was characterized by the dismantling of the work unit (*danwei* 單位) system or the entrance of commercial space into the work unit. Consumer choices began to open up and so to did physical and social mobility (Davis 1995). In 1995, the streets in and around the villages of Fanghu were also repaved, the redevelopment of the city was expanding out integrating the villages into the city, but also taking agricultural land from residents. In 1992, the Fanghu Industrial Zone 枋湖工業區 was built taking 4000 *mu* of farm-land and 1000 *mu* of shoreline. Then, in 1995, Jinshang road 金尚路 was built running south from the area took over 44,000 m<sup>2</sup> of land and resulted in the demolition of 24 houses in

Linhou village 林后社 and the construction of Fanghu road 枋湖路 resulted in the demolition of 14 homes in Wutong village 梧桐社. With these demolitions, there was a need for new housing developments resulting in “New Villages” 新村, largely residential spaces for newly arriving migrant workers. They were made up of 3-5 story walkup apartment blocks located next to villages that were increasingly becoming engulfed by the city (FHCZ 2011, 10-12). Other new forms of housing would take villagers further from their former places of residence as large residential units (*xiaoqu* 小區) and smaller apartment complexes known as ‘flower gardens’ (*huayuan* 花園) began to appear in the city throughout the 1990s.

In 1998, Jinshang Residential Unit (*Jinshang xiaoqu* 金尚小區) was constructed in the center of the eastern side of the island formerly made up of villages and farmland. It remains the largest unit in terms of square meters, taking up over 290,000 m<sup>2</sup>. It constitutes its own community (*shequ* 社區), the administrative unit below sub-district (*jiedao* 街道) and is home to people who originated from many different parts of the city and beyond. These large-scale residential units include restaurants, markets, banks, health clinics, schools, and so on. Though most residents work outside of them, one could easily remain within the complex for days on end. Their general clean and orderly designs are often contrasted to the messiness of remaining village areas within the city, now categorized as ‘urban villages’ (*chengzhongcun* 城中村). The convenience of these new housing developments is described in the 1991 book *Xiamen City Planning and Construction*, stating that “residents don't need to leave the residential unit, [because] they can buy all the products they need [in the unit]” 居民足不出小區即可選購所需商

品 (XMSCSGHYJS 1991, 109). The shift from villages to apartment complexes suggests an acceleration of the changes that had begun earlier in the century, a shift from one based on agricultural or fishery labor to one of factory and service labor, from communal village organizing to organizing by corporate investors. While this is partially the case, there also remains many who continue their own personal plots of garden land or space for livestock within the complexes, other residents still work in the fisheries, and, as I will discuss in the next chapter, local structures of organizing centered around temples can still wield a degree of power.

The architecture of the urban villages was also changing in this period. Large numbers of migrant workers began leaving rural areas to find employment in the new SEZs and villagers on the edges of cities were quick to find ways of profiting from them. Apartment blocks were built in these areas but often very close together without following proper zoning or construction laws. While these may not have been ideal living situations, they did provide affordable housing for migrant workers that were less restrictive than factory dormitories. Shi Yilong (1997, 144-145) found that by 1993 one urban village in Xiamen had at least 1200 migrants living there, already outnumbering the number of native villagers. The villagers had begun to move away from agricultural work and, at this time, only 25.8% of households were primarily focused on farming.

Development first moved north along the west coast of the island, then spread through the central region and finally to the far northeast and southeast. The plan for the city was to concentrate on the west side of the Yingtian-Xiamen railroad and only develop the eastern side of the railroad after 1993. At the same time, they began to develop satellite towns in the off-island districts creating multiple urban centers throughout the

city (Shi 1997, 147-150). In addition to the existing bridge to Jimei district, more bridges were constructed to the three other off-island districts in the late 1990s and into the 2000s. Significant reclamation of land from the ocean on the north of the island began in 2003 used for both the expansion of residential space and the airport, as well as the construction of parks, bridges, and highways. New roadworks cut through mountains, most prominently Success Avenue (*Chenggong dadao* 成功大道) a 14.3km road shaped in a semicircle from the Jimei Bridge in the northwest through the center of the island and into the downtown core in the southwest. The Bus Rapid Transit system (BRT), a series of elevated roadways and dedicated lanes, opened in 2008 further easing transport on and off the island. The BRT is also planned to be integrated into the metro system, which opened its first line in September 2017. Since the early 2000s, a large number of shopping centers have opened in the city as well, offering an escape from the muggy heat into a clean air-conditioned space during summer months. The earliest of these was the SM Center opened by a Filipino company in 2001 later expanding to open a second building in 2011. Combined the total area of the shopping center now takes up over 230,000m<sup>2</sup>. There are now at least 26 shopping centers on Xiamen Island and at least five off-island. While much of infrastructure stagnated during the Maoist period, the era of Reform and Opening Up pointed towards a return to the development plans of the 1920s and 1930s, only now development is planned through cooperation between the state and private investors, and production has occurred with highly accelerated speeds and widening scope.

Alongside these changes in ways of living in terms of residential spaces and infrastructure projects, came the revival of temples and lineage halls. These earlier forms

of social organization returned after the Maoist period to become relevant to city residents, as well as the Overseas Chinese who had come to invest in the city and made large donations to many temples in their ancestral villages. Rebuilding temples and organizing their associated ritual practices was no easy task as hostility towards religious activity by police and party officials continued following the death of Mao. In the 1980s, Ann Anagnost (1994) found that policing of popular culture was still widely apparent, particularly concerning religion and ritual, noting a newspaper from 1983 that reported on the successful suppressing of 308 temples in Zhangzhou County, bordering the west of Xiamen's Haicang district, as part of the continued anti-superstition campaign. This continued pressure to halt religious practice was found elsewhere in the province. Kenneth Dean wrote that during the 1987 celebration of the birth of Qingshui zushi 清水祖師 in Anxi 安溪, a county in Quanzhou municipal region north of Xiamen, a local cadre ordered police to put an end to the event, and police arrested a man who forcefully resisted. However, when the cadre realized the connection to overseas investors his tone changed, pleading with an overseas Chinese visitor not to spread the word of what he had done (Dean 1993, 113-114).<sup>39</sup>

Fanjiao Gong 帆礁宮 was originally rebuilt in 1994, and although inscriptions from that period do not exist, the historical account dated from 2009 and posted on the

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<sup>39</sup> David Wank found that, in the 1980s, private and public businesses in Xiamen were interconnected, private business depended on *guanxi* with local officials, and "commercial rationality therefore also entails the social process of cultivating personal ties with government" (1999, 4). Entrepreneurs drew on pre-existing ties and networks and created new ones in an effort to influence the local state. The investment from overseas groups that came in these years would also need to draw on such networks, as it was the locals who understood how the relations between business and local officials operated. These networks appear to have emerged out of existing ties to temples, ancestral village, and lineage. The same Overseas Chinese who began investing heavily in the reconstruction of temples were also investing in business opportunities.

temple's wall directly links its reconstruction to overseas Chinese and the needs of developing real estate (開發房地之需), stating the 'special support' received from the government (政府支持) following this. Hefeng gong's 和鳳宮 1986 inscription lists eight Singaporean donors as important in their efforts for reconstruction. Their more recent inscriptions from 1992 and 2015 elaborate explaining they received 5000RMB in donations in 1979 from two overseas Chinese in the Philippines and Singapore, Mr. Yang Shuixi 楊水溪 and Mr. Yang Genwang 楊根旺. Xianyue Gong's 仙樂宮 2005 inscription notes the importance of the donation of 5000RMB from Mr. Ye Jinsu 葉金速, an Indonesian Chinese, in 1985. Many other temples' inscriptions in the city from the 1980s and early 1990s have already been demolished but the members of numerous temples noted the importance of donations from overseas Chinese in this era. This is not to suggest all temples relied on overseas donations, some received funding solely from people in southern Fujian and others reestablished ties with overseas groups following their temple's reconstruction. However, it is important to note the relation between the government's tolerance in regards to rebuilding temples in this period compared to elsewhere in China as a result of their desire to please potential overseas investors.

Through the 1990s, government officials increasingly realized the ties many of individual temples and regional deities had to overseas Chinese and their wealth. The government sought to take advantage of Xiamen's historic links to overseas groups for economic gain, and as the interest in and influence on temples in the region by Taiwanese and overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia became apparent, the officials took notice. While officially communist party members are not allowed to take part in religious activities, it is now common to see local officials take part in the opening ceremonies for events

dedicated to local deities that they describe as promoting local culture (*difang wenhua* 地方文化) or Fujian-Taiwan cultural exchange (*Min-tai wenhua jiaoliu* 閩臺文化交流).

These events usually precede or are separate to the large ritual celebrations, however, the appearance of government officials at these events at all speaks to the large shift in the relations between temples and the state. As a result of both the connections to overseas money and the more relaxed political relation to religion that resulted from this, temples in cities and the countryside were able to revive at a much more rapid speed than elsewhere in China.

The shape of the city quickly changed from the 1980s onward, urban spaces began to engulf the villages and the off-island districts also began to urbanize forming their own central districts filled with high-rise apartment blocks and shopping centers. As Robert Visser (2010) notes, there was a shift from the Maoist mandate for the countryside to surround the city, to cities that surround the countryside. The changing shape of residential dynamics points to a shift in the organization of communities, moving away from stricter definitions based on place of residence or ancestral home. Despite this, temples in the city have worked to reassert themselves as important players in the neighborhood development plans.

### **3.10 Beautiful Xiamen: Environment, Tourism, and Redevelopment Plans**

Following the designation of Xiamen as a Special Economic Zone, the city not only worked towards developing as a space of industrial production and investment but also as a tourist destination. Tourism has and continues to center around the historic downtown, its nearby beaches, and the colonial architecture and seaside on Gulangyu. While tourism



has only exploded in recent years, plans for the industry began as early as 1988. The *Xiamen City Land Record* (*Xiamen shi tudi zhi* 廈門市土地志) states that in August of 1988 a ‘scenic spot’ (*fengjing mingsheng qu* 風景名勝區) was designated on Gulangyu and The Wanshi 萬石 Botanical Garden. The project was approved by the state council and said to focus on the seaside, beaches, and natural beauty of the environment (XMSTDZ 1995, 40). I see the expansion of tourism as connected to two government campaigns that have brought about a more general transformation of the city, the “Go Green” (*lühua* 綠化) campaign of the 1990s and the recent re-branding of the city as ‘Beautiful Xiamen’ (*Meili Xiamen* 美麗廈門).

The term “go green” or, more literally translated, “green-ize” is used to refer to practices like planting grass and trees, and has often been part of city plans for revitalization or developing tourist industries. In Xiamen, these plans began in the early 1990s in an effort to create parks and tourist attractions throughout the city with an aim to increase green space in residential areas by 25-30% with parks considered part of the “life service areas” 生活服務區 for city residents (XMSTDZ 1995, 40). While “go green” may lead one to think the campaign was linked to environmental protection, it was primarily focused on aesthetics and quality of life. Thus areas like golf courses, which are green in color but notably bad for the environment, are also included as part of the project. Parks were seen as the main component of the campaign and were described as a composite of science, technology, and art. Planning documents tied parks to both scientific modernity and the history of gardens in China. Parks were described by city planners as spaces that residents and tourists could both use for sightseeing, rest,

appreciation of nature, exercise, and entertainment. By 1990, there were eighteen public parks in Xiamen and since then the number has grown to 44 parks on Xiamen Island alone (XMCSJSZ 1992, 243-246; Lin 2014, 1-5). These public spaces are used for leisure activities similar to those found on temple grounds, such as dance practice, performing music, or drinking tea. However, they differ in that the parks are managed by the local government, not the community that uses them.



**Figure 13: Xiamen Tourism Map (廈門市旅遊圖) 1984.**

The development of tourism in the city was connected to the “Go Green” campaign with plans to expand existing scenic areas of Gulangyu, Nanputuo Temple, Jimei, and Wanshi Botanical Gardens. The Nanputuo area comprised a number of locations in the vicinity: Xiamen University’s Anthropology Museum, Lu Xun Memorial, and the Huli Mountain Cannon Platform. The intention of this area was to combine historic and cultural sites with the existing scenery (XMSTDZ 1995, 40). Although these locations already appeared in a 1981 provincial transport pocketbook (FJJTSC 1981) and 1984 tourism map (XMSYLT 1984, figure 13), it was not until recent years that the tourist industry has surged, and continues to expand. The China National Tourism Administration’s statistics state that in 2016 over 67.7 million tourists visited the city, of which 94.71% were domestic, compared to 53.38 million in 2014 (XMSLYJ 2017). These visitors largely come seeking the natural environment, beaches, and air quality, which is comparatively cleaner than most major Chinese cities, as well as the colonial architecture on Gulangyu. Aside from a small number of sites such as Nanputuo Buddhist Monastery, Xiamen University, Gulangyu’s architecture, and the artist village turned tourist village Zengcuan 曾厝垵,<sup>40</sup> the tourism is not largely geared as cultural and most large religious sites do not attract tourists as they do in other Chinese cities.

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<sup>40</sup> Beginning in 2003, the Zengcuan village committee began to remodel their village in hopes of attracting young artistic people to visit or open studios and also opened a number of guest houses. This was initially successful, but in more recent years the vast numbers of tourists visiting the village have caused many of the artists to leave. While still considered an artsy or hipster area by many young people, others find the shops, restaurants, and cafes there to be increasingly generic. The village’s transformation is now touted as a part of the larger beautiful Xiamen campaign and points to an alternative to the complete demolition of villages to make room for apartment blocks.

With the growing tourist industry came a re-branding of the city as “Beautiful Xiamen” (*Meili Xiamen* 美麗廈門), a campaign that connects to broader plans for future development. The campaign is part of the 2013-2030 city plan and is inspired by President Xi Jinping’s slogan of the “Beautiful China,” which is one of four elements of the “China Dream of the Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation.” In Xiamen, the plan calls on citizens to join in the process of beautification through its slogan “Beautiful Xiamen, Create it Together” (*Meili Xiamen – Gongtong dizao* 美丽厦门·共同缔造) found plastered on billboards and walls around construction sites throughout the city. The focus of the campaign is said to be to turn Xiamen into an “internationally renowned flower city, beautiful China’s model city, a window of cross-straits relations city, the cultural city of the south Fujian region, and a comforting and inclusive happy city” 國際知名的花園城市、美麗中國的典範城市、兩岸交流的窗口城市、閩南地區的中心城市、溫馨包容的幸福城市 (Xiamen xinwen 2014, 1). It is tied to plans for further urban development and infrastructure that intends to bring the further integration of Xiamen Island with the off-island districts and connection to nearby Zhangzhou and Quanzhou cities to create a southern Fujian mega-city region.

These mega-regions are different from the kind of cities earlier urban theorists like Lefebvre had encountered. The more recent work of Edward Soja (2003), based on Los Angeles and the American city, points to ideas like the city-region and the inescapability of the city that is tied to the rural through transport and communication infrastructures. Yet, even an analysis of these new American megacities does not get to the intensity of urbanization in China. Although cities in China do not contain the same

kind of suburban sprawl as America, the notion of tying places together through infrastructure seems to be even more apparent there. The sheer density of populations in China coupled with the Party-State's ability to form development plans without concern for public elections or individual rights has allowed for the rapid transformation of land and appearance of such mega-city regions. These cities continue to expand by developing satellite cities to create new urban areas that the central city will connect to (Shao 2015, 41).

Much like the previous "Go Green" campaign, the idea of beauty in "Beautiful Xiamen" is not defined by environmental protection and has become even more expansive in what can be included under its banner compared with the previous campaign. The five beautiful characteristics are listed as 1) the structure of the mountains and sea; 2) quality of development with a focus on the GDP; 3) 'multi-culturalism,' defined in terms of exchange with Western countries and Taiwan, not internal diversity; 4) the regional culture; and 5) building a harmonious society (MLXMZLGH 2014, 4). Much of the jargon from national propaganda campaigns can be found echoed here, ideas of the harmonious society that are closely tied to economic development and 'cities leading villages' (*yi cheng dai cun* 以城帶村) to bring about urban expansion. Culture in the Beautiful Xiamen campaign is described as cultural heritage (*wenhua yichan* 文化遺產), implying that local culture is something to be preserved and put on display, not lived. The campaign then seems to point to a state-sanctioned degree of local-difference. Recent development plans through Chinese cities have had the impact of an increasing homogenizing of space, however, campaigns like 'Beautiful Xiamen' suggest plans for

also controlling how difference (of culture, of environment, and so on) is expressed in acceptable ways.

### **3.11 Conclusion**

Beyond their material or technical qualities, infrastructures also operate in the realm of fantasy and desire, Brian Larkin points out that “they form us as subjects not just on a technopolitical level, but also through their mobilization of affect and the senses of desire, pride, and frustration, feelings which can be deeply political” (2013, 333). The transformation of space in modern China through the development of urban infrastructure is key to understanding the shift over the past hundred years, from pre-modern cities that were dominantly linked to both the imperial state and wider cosmos through representational space to massive city-regions tied to both the party-state and global capitalism. The space of temples act as one of the few continued spaces between these two periods, but they are not merely relics of a bygone era as in them multiple time-spaces are practiced. Within a temple, there exist co-existing realms of the celestial bureaucracy, the communist party, and global capitalist markets.

The construction of new roadways and re-development of areas for new apartment blocks, technology parks, or commercial buildings continue to result in the destruction of temples. I have found details of 30 temples throughout Xiamen Island that were rebuilt since the 1980s, but have since been demolished. Many of these may soon be rebuilt and plans for reconstructions can be found posted around new apartment blocks listing donations for the coming projects (figure 14). However, the cost of land and even finding land that can be built on has become a growing issue. Yet, as local incomes rise

and ties with Overseas Chinese communities increase, the speed at which donations accumulate and construction projects are finalized also accelerates. Development by the local government and private companies also continued as the city prepared for the opening of a metro system in late 2017 and made repairs to roadways, building exteriors, and increasing police presence in preparation for the 2017 BRICS conference. While elsewhere in the city, cranes and bulldozers gathered to demolish urban villages and old neighborhoods.

So far I have presented what is likely the expected relationship between temples and urban infrastructure: that urban development is primarily a destructive force to temples and traditional culture more broadly. This has frequently been the case, developers tend to have little interest in preserving historic sites or spaces of local organizing. Yet, throughout the past century, there are also examples of the continuity of pervasive practices associated with temples, whether in terms of individual or collective rituals, despite the numerous ideological campaigns against them and rapid commercial developments. As I will discuss in the following chapter, since the 1980s, temples have been able to revive not just religious practices but also the ability to mobilize groups of people to work collectively for the good of their community. This is at times in opposition to new developments and at other times working to produce developments they see as beneficial for themselves.



**Figure 14: A poster listing donations for the reconstruction of a temple in an apartment block.**



## Chapter 4

### The Infrastructure of Spiritual Efficacy: Neighborhoods and Communal Temple Organizing

#### 4.1 Introduction

In the midst of an urban village in Huli district, people began to gather at the local temple in the early afternoon on a late September day. It was the birthday of Liufu yuanshuai 劉府元帥, one of the seven gods known locally as the Marshal Elders (*Yuanshuai ye* 元帥爺), and his devotees were preparing to welcome the god for their ritual celebrations. The Master of the Whip (*fasheng shi* 法繩師), an elderly man dressed in an unbuttoned red shirt, white undershirt, black pants, and black dress shoes, took the lead role in the ritual, as the members of the temple committee began to bang loudly on drums and gongs to scare away unwanted spirits, he burnt three rolled up strips of yellow spirit money, bowed to the god three times with one hand over the other in the fashion of a Daoist, dropping a single bill with each bow, he then cracked the whip three times frightening away any malevolent spirits as the god descended into the statue. With the aid of some younger men, the Master of the Whip removed the statue from the temple and placed it inside a palanquin to carry their god through its territory in a procession.

Firecrackers were set off and the whip cracked again clearing the demonic spirits out of the way of the god's route, male and female flagbearers and a women's drum group accompanied the procession as it exited the temple courtyard to enter the nearby alleyways. Two young men ran in front of the rest of the participants to set off huge rolls of firecrackers along the way causing passersby and the spirits of the unseen world to

rush out of the way in order to avoid the discharge from the explosions in the cramped alleys. The procession stopped throughout the urban village at open spaces in front of a cellphone shop, restaurant, small manufacturing plant, kindergarten, house with a large property, and so forth. Each space had an altar set out in front with devotees waiting to burn piles of spirit money, offer incense, and pray to the god along the route. Everywhere is a potential shrine to the god, there is no divide in its territory between a place of devotion, place of residence, and place of commerce.

Nor is the god's territory restrained by the concrete walls marking the edges of the urban village. The procession exited the village area to march down the main roadway where three police officers stopped traffic for them, allowing the group to cross over the four lanes to enter their former farmlands now taken up by a large shopping plaza. At the plaza, similar altars were set up and crowds of consumers were taken into the ritual space, many unsure of exactly what it was all about but drawn to the spectacle (figure 15). As the group reached the back of the plaza a group of employees from an expensive seafood restaurant stood by an altar holding incense and waiting for the god to arrive, setting off firecrackers as the procession left.

The village and the city, the gods and the people, worlds of global commerce and local ritual are all brought together through the event. This is not the relationship between a community temple and new urban development that appeared throughout much of twentieth century. Here the two are closely intertwined in support of each other. In the previous chapter, I focused on the largely destructive role of infrastructure projects to temples since the 1920s and the presumed continuation of this through the further construction of transportation infrastructure projects like the metro system and political

campaigns to civilize or beautify the city, which are tied to spatial transformations and changing spatial practices. While it seems likely that the speed of the demolition of older neighborhoods will accelerate and property prices will rise even higher, there is another side to the relation between temples and infrastructure.

In this chapter, I aim to look at the ways that temples in different neighborhoods have attempted to use infrastructure for their own gain to varying degrees of success based on a conception of the relation between a temple's spiritual efficacy (*ling* 靈) and a community's wellbeing and stability that I refer to as *the infrastructure of spiritual efficacy*. I trace the changing, contrasting, and multifaceted relations communal temples in Xiamen face in relation to urban planning and infrastructure, the ways in which development has caused mass destruction for some while others have co-opted infrastructures for their own gain and the expansion of their temple's spiritual efficacy. While the state remains focused on developing its own plans for new infrastructure projects, local temples are revitalizing their festivities and with them come other projects for developing needed community services.

I begin with an overview of current urbanization trends in China followed by a discussion of temple finances for religious and nonreligious events and projects. I then consider the different reasons that people donate and make offerings to gods, and how these at times are linked to the kinds of projects organized by the temple committee. From this, I consider how a temple's efficacy is thought of in similar ways as these community projects. Next, I describe four key types of neighborhoods: urban villages, demolition sites of former villages, the downtown and surrounding area, and the off-island district centers and their surrounding peri-urban areas. I present each in relation to

construction and destruction, and movement to and from new residential complexes.

Each of these neighborhood-types has interacted with infrastructure projects in different ways that have shaped the role of the temples and deities in their communities today.



**Figure 15: Young men swing a palanquin in a procession outside a shopping plaza.**

#### **4.2 The Changing Face of Urban Development in China**

Since coming to power in 2012, President Xi Jinping has attempted to modify the form urbanization takes in China, to move away from the expansion of massive cities that act as regional centers towards a more evenly divided urbanization from town and county levels. The official language concerning urbanization in China has changed to correspond to the shift in development plans, from a focus on the city (*chengshihua* 城市化 or

*dushihua* 都市化) to both cities and towns (*chengzhenhua* 城镇化) or multi-centered (*duozhongxin* 多中心) and pluralized (*duojihua* 多極化) urban development. In Xi's terms, it means abandoning the "rolling out the dough" model from center to periphery that produces enormous cities with dense populations (Xi 2016). In an article republished on the National Development and Reform Committee's website, the economist Ding Shouhai 丁守海 (2016)<sup>41</sup> describes this as a "new model of town-city urbanization" (*xinxing chengzhenhua* 新型城镇化) that equally distributes economic and social development, not limited to the development of certain spaces. Expanding urbanization to towns attempts to stop mass migration from rural areas into major cities. While large cities continue to expand, this new phase of urban planning that intends to integrate rural and urban (*chengxiang yitihua* 城乡一体化) is an expansion of the earlier plans to integrate the peri-urban villages at the city limits through legal means: converting residents household registration from rural to urban, assigning services provided by village collectives to municipal governments, and a spatial transformation to fit with the norms of urban environments (Ministry of Construction 2007; Li, Chen, and Hu 2016). Villagers will become urbanites, and villages will become neighborhoods (*shequ* 社区) through a gradual transformation of legal status, spatial arrangement, and bodily practice. Though, as Andrew Kipnis (2013) has shown, the lived experience of these former villages is a mix of continuity with their rural past and current urban conditions.

Urbanization now stems not only from city centers, but also from towns and counties, which in their scale, population, and infrastructure rival many cities elsewhere

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<sup>41</sup> [http://ghs.ndrc.gov.cn/zftp/xxczhjs/ghzc/201608/t20160824\\_815572.html](http://ghs.ndrc.gov.cn/zftp/xxczhjs/ghzc/201608/t20160824_815572.html)

in the world. In Fujian, many people I met who live in towns, counties, and smaller cities talk about this in terms of the ‘standardization’ (*biaozhunhua* 标准化) of space. While residents in and around these urban areas may enjoy the convenience and luxuries the new developments afford, they also see them as nothing special and not worth visiting for an outsider. This kind of environment is contrasted with the rural areas around them that are seen as full of historic sites, scenic views, and local delicacies. The new urban areas are akin to Marc Auge’s (2008) non-places, albeit, with Chinese characteristics. They are not local places defined by some unique culture, customs, or geography, but rather replications of spaces that are found elsewhere sharing the same material qualities in their roads, shopping centers, and apartment blocks.

The infrastructure that defines urban space is now intimately tied to rural life. Increasingly those who live in one space will work, travel to, and engage in practices of the other. The expansion of cities has created urban-regions with pockets of rural areas within, while the expansion of urban development to towns and counties has dispersed the urban forms even more widely. Describing the city of Quanzhou, also in southern Fujian, Tan Chee-Beng and Ding Yuling write that “improvements in transportation and information technology have made the rural and the urban mutually more accessible. People in Quanzhou and towns in the region can attend a rural function and return on the same day” (2008, 219). As Neferti X.M. Tadiar (2016) has shown, infrastructures like toll expressways work to gather together the surrounding areas into a super region, bringing them into the global urban economy of ‘city everywhere.’ Indeed, as mentioned in the previous chapter, there are plans in the works to create a massive urban-region combining the three cities of southern Fujian: Xiamen, Zhangzhou, and Quanzhou. This project is

part of the process of rural-urban integration in order to form multiple urban centers within a single region.

The urban development of Xiamen city occurred unevenly as a result of its physical geography, investment from overseas Chinese, and its status as a Special Economic Zone. The location of the old city in the southwest of the small island meant that it could not expand in all directions as many Chinese cities have done through a series of ring roads. Instead, it expanded gradually north and east from the old city by flattening hills, filling in lakes, and constructing roadways, tunnels, and bridges. Some villages around the island began developing on their own through investment from overseas Chinese and the increased need for cheap rental housing by migrant workers who moved to the area following the establishment of the Special Economic Zone in 1978. These two separate forms of development met as new roadways and bus routes reached the villages and the government accelerated the process of converting the villagers' farmlands into residential and commercial properties. The city's population has gradually increased with each year but Siming and Huli districts, which make up Xiamen island, remain far more densely populated and urbanized than the four off-island districts, which have much smaller populations, larger areas, and far more rural land.<sup>42</sup> According to official statistics, in 2015 Xiamen Island made up less than 10% of the city's landmass, but contains just under 50% of its residents (table 2). As I explained in the overview of my survey of temples, there are a total of 142 communal temples in these two districts, and while I think this number is significant, in 2015 it would only total one temple per

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<sup>42</sup> In 2015, Siming district's population decreased for the first time in recent years. All of the other districts' populations, however, continued to increase in that year.

13,380 residents. The less populated, off-island districts, however, contain even larger numbers of temples. For example, in 2004 Haicang district's population was only 89,635 and had 287 registered communal temples and five Buddhist monasteries covering both urban and rural areas (HCQZ 2011, 221-223). So while communal temples and their ritual events are an important part of city life, they are not something that all city residents take part in.

	Year	Total City	Siming	Huli	Haicang	Jimei	Tongan	Xiang'an
Population by Million	2010	3.56	0.933	0.942	0.294	0.587	0.499	0.305
	2011	3.61	0.948	0.956	0.200	0.595	0.504	0.308
	2012	3.67	0.959	0.971	0.305	0.607	0.514	0.314
	2013	3.73	0.970	0.989	0.312	0.617	0.523	0.319
	2014	3.81	0.983	1.006	0.325	0.633	0.536	0.327
	2015	3.86	0.911	1.014	0.332	0.644	0.544	0.335
	Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	1574	75.3	65.8	170.4	225.9	650.0	356.1
Source: Xiamen City Statistics Bureau and National Bureau of Statistics of China (XCSB). 2016. <i>Yearbook of Xiamen special economic zone in 2016</i> . Beijing: China Statistics Press. <a href="http://www.stats-xm.gov.cn/2016/">http://www.stats-xm.gov.cn/2016/</a>								

**Table 3: Xiamen City and District Populations and Areas**

The downtown area still contains historic architecture, seaside views, and other attractions consumed by the hordes of tourists that visit. Yet, outside of this area, Xiamen Island is in many ways comparable to urban areas in the off-island districts or even county and town levels. There are almost identical roadways, shopping centers, residential complexes, and small parks. But it differs in that they have far denser populations, leading to increased traffic congestion, construction works, and pollution. The large numbers of communal temples found throughout the city are local institutions that frequently offer alternatives to the standardized government development plans, creating other ways of living and moving in the city. Temples are able to influence urban



development from the ground up, whether in opposition to or partnership with official models of development.

#### **4.3 Temple Finances and Local Organizing**

The expenses for ritual events vary greatly from temple to temple and depending on the specific event. Hiring a Daoist troupe to perform for example will cost between 2000 and 3500RMB per day and are most commonly hired for three days. Opera troupes charge 3000-5000RMB per performance but if the temple does not have facilities for them to sleep in they will need to also pay for this as well. Furthermore, if a temple does not have a permanent opera stage, they will need to pay for a temporary stage to be set up. The women's ritual drum groups are less expensive charging between 1000 and 1500RMB per day. These fees do not include the cost of offerings to the gods, hats or costumes for some of the temple members to wear, or packets of cigarettes to give out. If there is a communal meal following the event then food and drinks also have to be purchased. During pilgrimages to founding temples, buses have to be rented as well as paying for gas and highway fees for the other cars and trucks.

In addition to ritual events, the temples also require finances for the everyday functioning and maintenance of the temple and whatever adjacent buildings are also part of the temple property, such as office spaces, kitchens, and opera stages. This includes electricity and water bills in addition to cleaning and maintenance work. The range of fees depends on the scale of the temple and the amount of income it is receiving. As a temple's donations and other income increase, so too will their spending and services. Some will also hire one or multiple people to act as a temple lookout (*kanmiaozhe* 看廟)

者) who sit at the temple and do some basic custodial work. In some cases, these people will also live in properties owned by the temple and receive a salary of between 2000 and 3000RMB per month. Temples will also give donations to other temples they are allied with, including communal temples, founding temples (*zumiao* 祖廟),<sup>43</sup> and Buddhist monasteries. Other fees include meals for committee member dinners, incense, tea, bottled water, office supplies, and so on. The cost of all of these are included in the monthly or yearly expense reports and occasionally at the bottom of expense reports for ritual events.<sup>44</sup> These statements are either handwritten with a brush on large red sheets of paper or spreadsheets printed out from a computer with an official stamp from the temple at the bottom. Separate statements may also be posted for funding of opera performances or movie screenings that are not tied to a ritual event.

Larger amounts of money are required for the construction (or expansion) of temples and other facilities on their property. The scale of temples varies dramatically from a single small shrine to larger temples with courtyards, opera stages, office buildings, walls, and so on. The cost of one small shrine (appendix B, figure 10) in 2016 was 47,686RMB for materials, labor, and water and electricity bills during the construction. In addition to this, the committee spent 1532RMB for chairs, a notice board, fireworks, flowers, and other standard offerings. This does not include, however, the cost of god statues and chairs or hiring someone to paint murals on the temple's

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<sup>43</sup> Founding temples are the first temples dedicated to a particular deity or the first in that region. Their branch temples will make annual or semi-annual pilgrimages to them. This is described in more detail in chapter six.

<sup>44</sup> A collection of expense and income reports can be found in appendix B. I have tried to include reports from a wide variety of temples. These show not only the cost of ritual events, but also everyday expenses, forms of income, and charitable works.

indoor walls. In addition to the temple itself, the committee also spent 3560RMB for the construction of an outdoor exercise park next to the shrine. Finally, they spent 2691RMB on logistical fees, a ritual thanking the earth, and cigarettes, tea, lanterns, and other items used for the opening ceremony. The most common fee not included in this project is the cost of carving a stone inscription, which costs around 2000RMB for a fairly standard short description of the temple followed by a list of donors' names.



**Figure 16: A committee member writes down the names of donors.**

Other temples will cost significantly more money and include a wide variety of other facilities. This includes the construction of office buildings, libraries, indoor performance spaces, and so on. After initial construction, if a temple's income is sufficient, they will begin to upgrade both the temple space itself and other facilities.

These include improvements to the temple's inner and outer facade, building an outdoor furnace for burning spirit money, mahjong tables, additional tables and chairs, fridges and cooking equipment, air conditioners, and office supplies. Larger items may require further fundraising while smaller ones will be purchased with the surplus from donations and other income.

The most common form of temple income comes from donations given by devotees. An active temple can receive 15,000 to 25,000RMB per month from the anonymous donation box, while less affluent temples only receive a few thousand. Within the temple, additional income can be earned by selling candles, lanterns, firecrackers, and other items. Occasionally these are sold through a small retail outlet, but more often than not the payment is based on the honor system. However, a temple income is not limited to what occurs within the temple itself and committees have developed a wide range of strategies to gain revenue outside those explicitly related to worshipping gods.

In late imperial China, communal temples and lineage halls were central to local organizing. They were more than spaces of religious worship and ritual celebration, but key to developing major infrastructure projects, the most predominant being the creation and maintenance of irrigation networks, bridges, and roads. Such networks were found to be tied to ritual alliances in Putian, Fujian (Dean and Zheng 2010), Hong Kong's New Territories (Brim 1974) and throughout northern China (Duara 1988), and were key to the livelihoods of rural communities. In modern China, particularly over the past thirty years, the party-state and private investors have taken control of the majority of infrastructure projects, developing massive works of sewage systems, electrical grids, highways,

telecom systems, satellite feeds, and so on. Yet communal temples in Xiamen remain important in the implementation of much smaller scale projects. Many temples have retained small landholdings that are rented out for housing, retail space, restaurants, and outdoor markets. It is also common for the temples to run kindergartens that are usually located very close to the temple and may even be named after the temple. The tables and chairs used during banquets and opera performances are also rented out to other groups in the area. One neighborhood had even continued to run a village credit union (*nongcun xinyong she* 農村信用社, appendix B figure 7), in which their temple deposits much of its savings each year. This functions as a kind of mutual aid and gives other local institutions access to borrowing the funds of the temple when needed.

The income of temples is not only spent on ritual events and temple maintenance. The committees also engage in a range of charitable work and projects for neighborhood improvement. Frequently funds are available for those seeking medical services who could otherwise not afford it and at times basic medical checks are provided for elderly residents. Bereavement payments are also given to those who have recently lost a spouse. The younger generation has opportunities to benefit from the temple's income as well, in the form of scholarships awarded to local university students. Other temples committees work for the more basic upkeep of the neighborhood, organizing tree clearing services or basic sanitation. They also provide entertainment for the public, not only hiring opera troupes to perform, but also arranging movie screenings, performances by local song and dance groups, and other cultural events for anyone to come and enjoy. Between the temple and the opera stage, there is often a basketball court, some even have a separate building next to their temple to house a basketball court or other sports facilities. The

young men who play have organized intermural basketball competitions between different neighborhoods in the city, creating a new form of temple competition in the process. Lily Lee Tsai (2002, 11-22) found similar projects during the late 1990s in rural Fujian, ranging from road construction to basketball tournaments.

The spaces of temples are even utilized by the local governments, during the 2016 local elections in Huli District, temples were almost always used as one of the voting stations within a neighborhood. These services are the most common and widespread throughout temples in Xiamen, whether in the city center or peri-urban areas, and as a temple's ritual events grow in scale, reflecting the increased wealth of a community and donations to a temple, in turn, the services offered by a temple frequently increase as well. Temples taking part in public services is not something limited to Fujian. In Adam Yuet Chau's (2004) work on the Black Dragon King Temple in rural Shaanbei, he included planting trees and building schools in his list of ways people 'do' religion. In one instance, the temple boss co-organized a tree planting event with a non-governmental environmentalist group from Beijing. However, Chau did not investigate this matter further, but the temple was surely understood to have some power or efficacy if it was seen as worthwhile to collaborate with. This is what I see as the connection between the ritual events focused on devotion to deities and the public services and material development projects organized by temples.

<b>Temple</b>	<b>Urban village</b>	<b>Urban village</b>	<b>Urban village</b>	<b>Urban village</b>	<b>Former</b>	<b>Former</b>	<b>Former</b>	<b>Down town 1</b>	<b>Down town 2</b>	<b>Down town 3</b>	<b>Peri-urban</b>	<b>Off-island</b>
Honorary president 名譽會長	--	--	--	--	4	2	1	2	5	--	--	--
President 會長 / 理事長	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Vice-President 副	2	--	1	2	1	1	2	2	1	--	1	17
Director General 理	--	--	--	--	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Vice Director	--	--	--	--	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Secretary 秘書長 / 秘書	--	--	--	--	1	--	--	1	1	--	--	--
Vice Secretary 副秘書長	--	--	--	--	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Accountant 會計 / 財務	1	--	1	1	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	1
Cashier 出納	1	--	--	1	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	1
Advisor 顧問 / 監事	--	1	--	--	--	--	--	1	5	12	--	--
Daily operations members	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	7	--	--
Committee member 理	4	4	8	6	5	45	15	--	20	9	10	--

Table 4: Structure of Twelve Temple Committees

In addition to these activities, there are also facilities that are not always apparent from the monthly or yearly finances. These include exercise equipment, basketball courts, lending libraries, and small-scale road construction. The funding of these will be shown for their initial construction, but will not be listed on later financial statements. These facilities are open for anyone to use and are not limited to those who participate in the temple's events. Even those who have no interest in the temples or their gods may take advantage of the temple's projects without even being aware.

There is an economy that surrounds temples and it expands far beyond that which may be considered religious. Yet, at the same time, it is dependent on devotion to the gods and their spiritual efficacy. Detailing ritual expenditures in Fuzhou, Julie Chu (2010a) notes something very similar about the relation between a display of donations and the perceived efficacy of the temple. She writes that “the *ling* [spiritual efficacy] of specific deities could be discerned not only by the visible displays of temple contributions but also by the frequency of religious festivities financed through these very contributions and staged for a god in the form of processions, banquets, opera performances and movie screenings” (ibid, 136). Likewise, Valerie Hansen (1990) argued that in the Song dynasty the inscription of donations pointed to the efficacy of the gods.

Communal temples are seen as trustworthy in their accounting by displaying their finances. This kind of accountability also positions the temple as an important institution for gaining social status or influence in the neighborhood. As such, some will attempt to use their donations as a way of building or securing relations. While donations and participation in temple activities come from a wide range of people, the organizing of



events and finances is conducted by a smaller temple committee. The makeup and size of these committees vary greatly, but generally speaking are made up of a president<sup>45</sup> and one or more vice presidents who take lead in the general logistics of events and will take a role near the front of processions. These groups are also in charge of the everyday maintenance of temples, using funds for cigarettes, snacks, lamp oil, incense, spirit money, and so forth. Some will officially assign titles to members of their committee such as accountant or cashier, as well as have advisors (*guwen* 顧問) to aid them, particularly for their connections (*guanxi* 關係) with local government officials or ritual experts (though in other instances this is merely an honorary title). Those who played a key role in the reestablishment of a temple or are respected community elders may be given the title of Honorary President (*mingyu huizhang* 名譽會長) or even Eternal Honorary President (*yongyuan mingyu huizhang* 永遠名譽會長). At times these are also given to Taiwanese and overseas Chinese donors who do not take part in the daily operations of the temple. A breakdown of the member titles of twelve committees listed in table 3 gives some perspective on the range of official titles (from two to nine) and size (from seven to fifty members) of the committees.

The public statements listing donations during events and the income and expense reports following them are read by many of the attendees to make sure of the inclusion of their own donations and check the amounts that others gave. Tsai (2002, 9) similarly noted the relation between inscriptions for temple construction and social status,

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<sup>45</sup> Officially titled a president (*huizhang* 會長), chairman (*lishizhang* 理事長), or group leader (*zuzhang* 組長), but in everyday discussions may be referred to as a boss 老闆, leader 領導, or temple leader 廟長 among other terms.

explaining that “a sizeable donation increases a villager's status and position of leadership in the community. On the flip side, this permanent public record also makes it possible for everyone in the village to judge whether the donation was adequate.” These public lists are important to the donors both providing an acknowledgment of their donation for others to see and also showing the accountability of the temple committee to be transparent with their finances. In one instance, a woman who was not well known by the men collecting donations could not find her name on the list and complained to them. As the number of donors grew they had to move the boards listing donations and so her name was not where she had expected it. But one of the two men managed to track down her name after a few minutes. Everyone is made aware to some extent of the amount of money being collected at the event and will have certain expectations of the temple. Yet, the experiences at temples cannot be reduced to only social networking or community organizing, the functioning of temples also relies on the hopes, desires, and emotions that people have when making offerings as well as what these later produce.

#### **4.4 Donations to Temples and Offerings to the Gods**

The dramatic spatial transformation of the city through the construction of airports, technology parks, and the newly opened metro system among other infrastructure projects have led to continuous demolition campaigns of former villages and the conversion of agriculture land into urban land to be leased out to commercial developers. Temples, as collectively owned property, have often given residents a way to bargain with the government and developers. This has allowed them to gain the right for the temple to remain in its location, even as the residents are relocated elsewhere. Due to the

relocation of temple participants to other parts of the city and the arrival of new residents, it is no longer possible to collect financial donations from every household in the area. The obligation to the temple has shifted from being dependent on place of residence to participation in ritual events. The basis of this participation varies and may be based on individual or familial historic ties to the temple, the proximity of the temple to one's place of residence, or the perceived spiritual efficacy of the temple. Regardless of their reasoning, all of the temple participants make financial donations to the temple, offer incense and other items to the gods, and take part in the communal celebrations for the birth of gods and their ascension to the heavens.

Donations made to temples can be divided into three main categories: those made anonymously when a person visits a temple on their own, those made for the construction or redevelopment of the temple, and those made at ritual events. The latter two are not only listed in the temples accounting books but also posted publically at the event for all to see. These donations are now completed by individuals, not individuals representing a household (previously assumed to be the male head). As such, both men and women's names are added to paper donation lists and stone inscriptions for the funding of temple events, construction, and restoration. Some temples will even specify the gender of the contributors making separate lists for men and women.

While senior men from the community are the most commonly found in these leadership roles, younger members and women increasingly take part in the committees. Women have also acted as presidents of temples, one of whom claimed that her temple had always been run by women, though this seems unlikely prior to its reconstruction in the 1990s. At other temples, women may not hold the official leadership roles but have

still been able to take more active roles in temple and community organizing, with some becoming more central to ritual events than the men involved. Although the majority of temple leaders I met were elderly men, even those who were part of all-male committees did not dismiss the legitimacy of women who led other temples. Because married couples commonly come from different neighborhoods, after marriage it is common to either patronize temples from both areas or participate in different temples separately. This points to a more general social shift for women, not only showing control over their own finances, but also maintaining strong connections to their family and native community after marriage. This also demonstrates an important development in the organization and practice of communal temples connected to the increased status of women, but also the temple organizers' ability to innovate.

Robert Weller et al. (2018) suggest that there is a new understanding of goodness in Chinese societies brought about by recent changes in forms of governance, economy, mobility, and communication. They write that "this new goodness rests on a conception of selfhood as universal, cosmopolitan, and fundamentally individual, and on an industrialized social organization of philanthropy mediated by the state" (2018, 127). For this new conception to develop, however, they suggest there is a need for weak social ties, as strong social ties tend to limit innovation and reinforce the status quo (often in connection to unequal power relations). These are the kinds of ties often associated with communal temples at the village level, which are generally managed by senior men in the community. As I showed in the survey of temples in Xiamen, these are by far the most common type of religious site in the city and despite the reconfiguration of space and residence, they do still focus on the territories of earlier village or neighborhood. Yet,

numerous temples have also connected to what Weller et al. speak of in terms of innovation, both in the growing influence of women at temples as committee members and ritual performers, as well as the openness to changing practices alongside changes in lifestyles and technologies.

This innovation is also seen in who participates in temple events because the obligation to temples is not tied to one's place of residence. Yet, the processions of the gods, by and large, continue to mark off the boundaries of what devotees understand to be the temple's historic territory. The migration in and out of neighborhoods in the city has created an environment of weaker social ties. Even though the members of the organizing committee and frequent volunteers maintain strong ties with each other, this is not the case for many of the people who make donations to the temple. When people give donations during ritual events it is clear that many have little if any connection to the committee members who keep track of the finances. The committee members ask each person's name (often repeatedly in order to make sure they are writing the correct characters), write it down first in a notebook, give the donor a bag containing a set of offerings, and then another committee member writes the name and donation amount on the publically displayed paper.

Describing the kinds of donations and offerings to deities in Fuzhou, Julie Chu (2010b, 192-198) explains that the exchange is not purely economic but a mix of morality and rational utility as well as a recognition of both divine and human agency in their fortune. Explanations that I received from devotees about what ritual practice varied greatly. This is tied to both the different ways in which a ritual is experienced on an individual level, but also shaped in how those I talked to aimed to translate their

experiences to me. Many young people brought up the psychological benefits of prayers, wishes, and offerings to gods, but these explanations did not necessitate a denial of the god's power or ability to bring changes in fortune. One man in his mid-twenties who volunteered at a local temple was very focused on the psychological benefits of seeking good fortune (*qifu* 祈福). Whether people sought money, a good job, or a love life, he said, they will receive good feelings and a sense of calm or relaxation that is good psychologically. But he would also talk about the material benefits that could result. Others explained rituals by focusing on a particular deity as representing certain moral ideals and this was seen as what ties a devotee into a closer relationship with the god. Some focused on what the gods are capable of doing. A woman in her fifties who was a committee member at a temple that installed a Guan Yin pond in addition to their shrine to local gods contrasted the local deities, seen as being able to bring good fortune in this life, with bodhisattvas who have vowed to end all suffering. Another group of people, however, did not see these kinds of experiences as worth discussing (or at least not worth discussing with me) and simply say it is tradition, it is what they do (whether as an individual or collectively as a people).

The individual practices also create an obligation to the gods, this relation is developed through their offerings, oaths, and returns to the deity's shrine. The relation between humans and gods creates an expectation, if the human's wish is delivered then they will fulfill the vow made to the god. One's feeling of indebtedness is two-fold, it is a desire to give thanks, but also stems from a fear of the gods' power. Although some gods may be worshipped for specific reasons, or even a specific god at a single temple may have a special significance for devotees, there are also more general reasons given for

worshipping gods and what people hope will be the result of their wishes, vows, and offerings. Traditionally, most people in Xiamen and in China more generally were either farmers or fisher people, and what they asked the gods reflected this lifestyle, relating to environmental concerns or the hardship of life more generally. While some of these issues remain important to people, most often what people seek is now more focused on the hope of a more general “good life,” this includes a sense of peace and safety (*pingan* 平安), preventing disaster, financial and educational accomplishments, fertility, romantic or marital success, safety in cars or other transport, and good health. When requesting (*qi* 祈) or seeking (*qiu* 求) any of these, the devotee will make a specific vow of what they will do if their request is granted such as making financial contributions to the temple. Upon return to the temple, they will also show thanks by making more offerings to the deity, and, in doing so, securing the connection.

Yet, there is also a more immediate condition that the individual experiences in the act of making offerings. These are the affective intensities and emotional reactions that people associate with offerings at temples, whether or not their wishes are fulfilled in the future. Peace and safety and good fortune (*xingfu* 幸福) are the most general descriptions of the feelings associated with offerings, requests, and wishes to gods. Others used more specific kinds of feeling to explain their experiences such as feeling that the god is observing (*zai guanzhu* 在關注) them, but also how the act of recognizing a power or force much larger than them makes them feel humbled (*qianbei* 謙卑), relieved (*kuanhuai* 寬懷), or bring about respectful feelings (*chongjing* 崇敬). These are associated not only with the bodily movements involved, but also the sensation from the

scent of incense itself. The repetition of specific kinds of movements, smells, and spaces are all linked to bodily memories and made sense of in terms of the self in connection to something much grander.

These kinds of individual experiences are not entirely disconnected from the goings-on of the larger ritual event. As in the work of William James, individual experience does not exist in isolation but is interconnected and social. As David Lapoujade notes in his study of James, "the individual could not be made if she were not at the same time caught up in the tremendous flows of the world" (forthcoming, 3). Consciousness emerges through the relations between two or more individuals, so too does the readiness of an individual to act. Although James used terms like 'belief' and 'faith' that many of us may see as Euro- or Protestant-centric, what he meant by these was very different than their conventional use. Belief, for James, was a readiness to act in uncertain situations and faith was what gave the confidence needed to act; neither are bound exclusively to the realm of 'religion,' rather, they apply to all aspects of life that are not habitual (James 1912, 16-38). When we consider this in terms of ritual practice, rituals are seen not as a representation of reality ala Durkheim, but a productive force adding to reality. The feelings associated with ritual practice are not about feeling passive and accepting things as they are. This is particularly evident in the connection between requests to gods and the vows made; actions from the heavens result in actions among the people



#### 4.5 Temple Organizing and the Infrastructure of Spiritual Efficacy

When I asked a group of women from one temple about the purpose of their ritual events, they explained them not only as giving thanks to the gods and gaining a good fortune for themselves and their community but, more surprisingly, also employed the kinds of vocabulary used to describe charitable work and public infrastructure. Their events also aimed “to establish a public welfare foundation” (*jianyi gongyu jijinhui* 建立公寓基金會) and “promote proper social energy” (*hongyang shehui zhengnengliang* 弘揚社會正能量). From this perspective, it makes sense that this group also referred to their rituals as “doing good deeds” (*zuo haoshi* 做好事). In some ways, this sense of tying rituals and morality together is similar to Buddhist conceptions of merit (*gongde* 功德) that can be gained for both good deeds in society and proper ritual offerings in the temple (though this is also understood as spreading the Dharma and potentially converting people to Buddhism). But I also understand the connection in relation to the conception of a temple’s spiritual efficacy, that the efficacy or power of a temple is attached to the wellbeing of its devotees and development of its territory. The improvements to living standards are seen as both the work of the local residents and also the power of the temple’s deities. If the temple is efficacious then there is a fertile climate for the devotees to work towards projects for community development, and the temple’s efficacy must be maintained through the organization of ritual events, inviting the gods into the territory and thanking them for their blessings.

The logic of spiritual efficacy is circular: as a temple’s god grows in power or efficacy, the more devotees it will attract; the more devotees a temple’s god attracts, the more efficacious it is seen to be. People seek more than personal gain from the gods, also

seeking wider benefits for those they know and the area in which they live. As such, if their community is seen as improving, it must be related to the gods' efficacy. This runs counter to the assumption that devotees' interest in efficacy is primarily or only related to their own personal benefits. I do not deny that people go to temples deemed to be efficacious in order to seek money, babies, and good health for themselves and their loved ones; there is still room for being self-interested. However, I am suggesting that there is more to it than that, and this is seen especially in communal events held at the temples.

The ritual events act to make the infrastructure of spiritual efficacy visible to all those in the area, just as maintenance to waterworks, roadways, or sewer systems make infrastructures suddenly present and disruptive to everyday life. The processions and offerings to the gods are understood as maintaining its efficacy, and this efficacy is understood as benefitting all who live there. Conceivably, the greater the spiritual efficacy, the greater the crowds attending events and donations given to the temple, resulting in the further elaboration of the event's contents and the expansion of its affective contagion. This is not an unstructured disorder necessary for the maintenance of the everyday structure, but rather an overlaying of multiple seemingly contradictory orders on top of the everyday. In many ways a temple's ritual events seem to do the opposite of the community development programs: they disorganize the streets, disobey the proper conduct on roadways, and are unconcerned about disinterested eardrums. In the countryside, the remains of processions can be found on streets days after the event has ended, while in the city it is quickly cleared up by public employees, putting on display, not just the god's power, but also the efficiency of the local waste collection.

Discussions of spiritual efficacy in the study of Chinese religion are nothing new, in fact, it has been central to Steven Sangren's (1987, 2000) work on the Mazu cult's pilgrimages in Taiwan. For Sangren, spiritual efficacy (magical power in his translation) works to mediate between order and disorder. In the context of his research, he suggests this is the order of the insiders (Han Taiwanese) and disorder of the outside world (anyone else) (2000, 56). Yet, this does a disservice to spiritual efficacy as a concept that grows with the more people exposed to the god's power, regardless of which group they belong to. Sangren is aware of this and states that many will say the deity who is most spiritual efficacy is the one who attracts the most worshipers and whose worshippers have the best financial situation (2000, 56-57). For Sangren, however, society and individual subjects are seen in terms of Marxist inspired alienation, The deity statues are understood as symbolic representations that invert the relation between producer and product. The individual is deluded into thinking that the product produces the producer. Deity statues and images, from this perspective, are alienating fetishes of the self-producing power of both individuals and collectives. Sangren argues that people are really what make this efficacy, not the images of gods, and the power of this people-produced efficacy is what makes the gods. My argument runs counter to this, I suggest that something more is produced by the god's efficacy as a force outside of the individual devotees. Yet, Sangren is still correct to point to the circular logic of this efficacy: if people are wealthy then their prayers are answered and therefore their god is efficacious, and therefore they are wealthy.

Others have highlighted that there is more to a god's efficacy than what Sangren suggests. Lin Weiping (2015), also working on religion in Taiwan, critiques Sangren's

conception directly, arguing that through statues and spirit mediums, spiritual efficacy is materialized and therefore is a productive social force. Furthermore, Stephan Feuchtwang (2010, 55-57) points out that rituals are often thought to have a consequence, they are not merely symbolic or performative; the power of the god's efficacy goes beyond the emotional responses of catharsis and joy.

As I already stated, Sangren is right in noting the circular logic of spiritual efficacy, there is certainly a human element to its expansion, but Lin and Feuchtwang's focus on the material quality of this power and the expectation that it will bring results point to something else beyond individual human agency. I find the metaphor of spiritual efficacy as an infrastructure useful here. Infrastructures do certainly need the work of individuals for their construction and maintenance but also operate without them. Electricity surges through wires, water flows through pipes, and spiritual efficacy pervades a god's territory. So while the human actors did labor to create the god statue, the temple, the incense and offerings, and procession, something more than these seems to have been produced. The collective celebrations of the gods work to decenter the individual through first the abstraction of forces related to moral ideals and good fortune and then their re-materialization in the form of the deity statues.

This is not the typical way one thinks about infrastructure. Spiritual efficacy is not something one can point to in material terms like a pipe, a wire, or a concrete block. But I am thinking infrastructure in terms of what regulates how bodies can act. As in AbdouMaliq Simone's (2004) work on people as infrastructure, here infrastructure is more than physical structures of development, but also bodily action, sensation, and experience that strengthens the deity's spiritual efficacy. Infrastructure, then, is the basis

of how people can move, sense, and experience the city, which, I suggest, are all intensified within a temple's procession and ritual event. Thinking people as infrastructure shows how everyday actions can work against the official regulations of spaces as tied to specific identities, functions, or lifestyles intended by urban planners. The city is remade through the people using it, their circulations through and around spatial organizing, which in turn leave traces with the actors, the actions become tied to a bodily memory bringing about the increased willingness for their action to be repeated. The processions through a temple's territory work as a mass transformation of official spatial regulation transforming the uses of main roadways, shopping plazas, demolition sites, and so on. Although this generally occurs with the permission of the local government. While the events do break through any sort of perceived division of secular and religious space, more often than not, they do so after submitting the proper paperwork and even with police officers aiding them in blocking traffic. There is a dual process of working towards and reinforcing some forms of official infrastructure and working against others. It is not a simplistic opposition between the tactics of the procession and the strategies of corporate investors, urban planners, and government officials.

In this sense, processions and other large scale ritual events complicate what Michel de Certeau described as the *tactics* of everyday actions that unconsciously work to subvert *strategies* of institutions. These tactics are seen as producing situated and temporal places in opposition to how spaces are taken and defined by those in positions of power (1984, 31-38). Here, however, it is a multi-layered set of relations between individuals and institutions of varying degrees of power that does not neatly map onto de

Certeau's distinction. The temples themselves are institutions, although not to the scale of the state apparatus or large corporation. Still, they do have a subversive quality that distinguishes them from the workings of these larger institutions. In the event, alleys, roads, and public squares are exposed as places filled with invisible demonic threats that must be cleansed; spaces of mass-transport, commerce, and leisure are transformed into places of praise and devotion. This is all heightened by the spectacle of noise, smell, and movements that bind those already in these spaces together through the contagious nature of the event.

So what exactly is produced, what does a procession for a god's birthday have to do with community development? To some extent, these events allow for a variety of affective states and emotional releases that may otherwise be unavailable, feelings of hope, being at peace, joy, excitement, or cathartic release. This is not a new idea, Max Gluckman (1954) wrote about rituals among the Zulu, Swazi, and Thonga in Southeast Africa as mere catharsis needed to be acted out in order to maintain social structure. He saw it as a kind of symbolic-emotional trickery, to think you have given yourself increased power to act, while in reality only putting up with the status quo. A process of repetition that leaves the established societal norms only to reinforce them. From this perspective, the processions around a territory would be taken as asserting a claim to an area that formerly belonged to the temple devotees, but may currently be controlled by the government or outside corporate investors. The act would symbolize the territory being the temple's land, and by allowing for an expression of this claim, in fact, relieve the frustrations of the devotees and accept the current state of ownership. As Emily Ahern (1981) argued in her study of religion in a Taiwanese village during the 1970s, the

rituals would be what prevent, not allow, the possibility of revolt. This is not what I am suggesting, instead, I see these affective and emotional responses to the event as what pushes people to organize, moved by the force of the god's efficacy.

Yet, I do not intend to completely dismiss the earlier structural-functionalist work like Ahern and Gluckman, there is an extent to which they are correct, and it is important to note this. The local organizing of temples and their ritual events, while attracting huge audiences and massive financial donations, do not attempt to challenge the overall structure of state or society. Many temple committee members are even retired Party members, some of whom will praise the party for their giving them generous retirement pensions and for the government-funded infrastructure projects in the city. This certainly does not describe the viewpoints of all those involved in communal temples, there are many others (or in some instances the same individuals) who will decry the corruption of government officials and the unfairness of the uneven development the city has gone through. While there is frustration among some regarding government policies and corporate development, as well as active organizing against these, the people involved in these actions see themselves as working for the betterment of the community, city, or country, not for some kind of revolutionary ideals. Indeed, as I described in the previous chapter, the local government has gradually learned to accept communal temples and local religious practice as aids to economic development through their ties to temples and religious groups in Taiwan and Southeast Asia.

Temple events and organizing do appear to be doing more than symbolic acts and emotional reliefs. As described earlier in this chapter, there are many clear material results from temple organizing in their local communities. Temple organization points to

the potential for an actualization of community organization at the grassroots level, despite whatever role the state takes in society. This is what the above structural-functional views of ritual do not account for, and in relating the material and spiritual I find the conception of a temple's spiritual efficacy as infrastructure to be productive; it is what connects the everyday organization by temple devotees to the ritual events.

The spiritual efficacy is an invisible infrastructure and the processions to the gods work to maintain the smooth running of its operations. Urban infrastructures work to control how and where we move, they are a planning of our bodies. Movement across highways, on public transport, through airports and seaports, across bridges and through tunnels; communication through smartphones, cellular networks, and wifi connections. Bodies that are sanitized or unsanitized by waste disposal, water purification, and sewer systems.<sup>46</sup> The infrastructure of spiritual efficacy provides alternative forms of movement and bodily affects. Bringing bodies through roadways designed for cars, unsanitizing public spaces with the toxic fumes of burning spirit money, the fragrance of incense, and the noise of firecrackers (or their noisemaker replacements). They connect to memories of former homes and neighbors since relocated, there is a mix of joyous celebration with hope, melancholy, dread, nostalgia and a range of other feelings connected to the places the procession moves through in the unfolding of an event. In the procession the god is the exalted guest, he or she has descended into the statue for the event and the crowds flock to welcome him or her to their neighborhood. A political metaphor for the god is useful, it is the sovereign or ruler of the territory, yet it does not permanently reside in the domain it rules over. As Feuchtwang has argued, the "ritual enacts... an invitation to

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<sup>46</sup> This definition of infrastructure is drawing on Simone (2004), Elyachar (2011), and Tadiar (2016).



another to take the place of the position of the inviting host” (2007, 61), not a common guest, but a guest-host hybrid. Like a visit from the Emperor or Mandarin Official, the safety of the guest-host and making good appearances are of top importance, bad spirits that pollute the area must be cast away before the god passes by through the use of cracking whips, burning spirit money, setting off explosive firecrackers, banging on drums, and blowing on horns. The bands and dance groups that follow announce the presence of their guest-host to the community, and then perform to thank the gods for gracing the community with their presence.

While the infrastructure of spiritual efficacy can be seen as an alternative to the ordering of spaces and bodies by official infrastructures, it also makes use of these infrastructures for their own benefit: the increased ease of transport to pilgrimage locations and founding temples, the ability to communicate with temple members across large distances using cellular networks, the wealth of donations stemming from involvement in global capitalist markets, and the spreading of the god’s spiritual efficacy beyond the locality through photographs and video on social media. These existing infrastructures are utilized to strengthen the infrastructure of spiritual efficacy, though other infrastructures may harm it through development projects bringing about the demolition of neighborhoods.

The neighborhoods these temples are found in vary widely. Many of them are located in urban villages or areas planned for demolition, while others are located on main roadways with remains of an older neighborhood hidden behind large apartment blocks that tower above. Some neighborhoods have already been completely redesigned since the 1980s with no trace of the past remaining in any material form. For those who

are lucky, the new developments they live in are close to their former residences and may include their local temple within the space of new apartment blocks, while others have moved further away to other parts of the city, at times starting new temples while remaining connected to the original one. In the following sections, I divide the neighborhoods into four main types: urban villages, demolition sites, the downtown and surrounding area, and off-island peri-urban areas. Each of these types is considered in relation to the newer residential complexes located in their vicinities.

#### **4.6 From Urban Villages to Residential Complexes and Back**

In urban villages, the temple committees and volunteers have become key to improving local infrastructure. These neighborhoods are former natural villages (*zirancun* 自然村)<sup>47</sup> that since the 1980s have become the destination of choice for migrant workers when low-rise and low-rent walk-up apartment blocks were squeezed in and the populations of the areas surged. They are found throughout large cities in China, though in many other parts of the country those within the central urban areas have already been demolished.<sup>48</sup> In the central districts of Xiamen urban villages are surrounded by the city, often walled off like islands onto themselves, they are organized around a small number of single lane

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<sup>47</sup> The term natural village refers to villages founded before the 1950s that were surrounded by agricultural land or orchards, the term is used in contrast to ‘administrative villages’ (*xingzhengcun* 行政村), which were created in the 1950s as a way to integrate villages or neighborhoods together as administrative units. The agricultural land of these villages has since been re-designated as land for urban development with the exception of some small personal plots, and the villages have been re-categorized as urban villages or residential communities (*shequ* 社區).

<sup>48</sup> Since their formation in the 1980s there have been a number of studies and representations of urban villages in China, including academic research, journalism, and fiction. The earliest major study being Norman A. Chance’s (1991) study of the changes that came with expanding mechanization and industrialization in rural areas. Since then numerous scholars have focused on the migrant workers from rural or poor regions of China and their work in small-scale factories and service work in and around the villages (for examples see Wu, Zhang, and Webster 2013).

roads filled with small shops and restaurants (both chains and independent businesses), jutting off to either side are mazes of narrow alleyways that a motorcycle can barely fit through and take their own spatial practices to adjust to. Bundles of wires hang above strewn from building to building, and while they may cause concern during the high winds and rain of typhoons, they also provide some shade from the burning sun during the summer heat. Most live in cramped apartments giving the residents a tendency to live more publically, although a minority live in large villas first built by wealthy overseas Chinese returning to their ancestral villages and styling their new homes after colonial architecture. These areas are not seen as desirable places to live by most of the residents, people complain about problems of sanitation, accessibility, and electricity; issues relating to infrastructures failing. They are described as having “fallen behind in development” (*fazhan luohou* 發展落後) or being a “chaotic mess” (*zaluán* 雜亂) due to problems with pipes, cables, drains, and waste collection. They are seen as dangerous, not only due to stereotypes of poor migrants being thieves, but because of the condemned old buildings falling apart, these are spray painted by state-employed demolition teams with warnings ‘do not enter’ (*jinzhi jinqu* 禁止進去 or *wujin* 勿進) and the encircled *chai* 拆 mark denoting plans for demolition. In addition to these, there are also notices pasted on walls and banners strung up detailing the demolition schedule of particular buildings. Even the few that are noted by the government as “model urban villages” (*dianxingde chengzhongcun* 典型的城中村) are not considered to be as good as living in a new residential complex or apartment block. While these widely held notions do draw on rumors and hearsay about villages, they are not entirely disconnected from lived experience. Due to the lack of regulation around construction during the redevelopment

of many of these villages there are dangers involved with living there. As Li Zhou et al.'s (2014) study of an urban village in Shenzhen shows, there is often a lack of space for the residents and issues with accessibility to many apartments.

Migrants in Xiamen are extremely diverse making it difficult to speak of a generic 'migrant worker.' When analyzing specific neighborhood forms, however, a typology begins to emerge. Those living in urban villages are likely the closest to the stereotypical imagining of the rural migrant worker (*nongmingong* 農民工) hired in a variety of low-income jobs. Even this group, however, is not homogenous in background, career, or motivation. Indeed, Helen Siu's (2007) depiction of the suffering migrant worker living in Guangzhou's urban villages surrounded by crime and disease now seems like an exaggeration at best. China's urban villages are not the slums of Mumbai nor the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. While there are certainly problems with infrastructure and sanitation in these areas, they are far from unlivable. Da Wei David Wang (2016) rightly critiques earlier comparisons of urban villages with slums and shanty towns elsewhere in the world. He writes that "'slum' is not exactly the right word to describe the urban village, for the simple reason that, although the urban villages are sites of large amounts of informal and semi-illegal housing, the land deeds are held by the urban villagers as collectives... Some of the urban villages in Shenzhen might look like shacks on the outside but they are complete with running water, electricity, and toilets. There are no invasive squatters. Most migrants have to pay rent to stay" (ibid, 9). Wu Fulong and Zhang Fangzhu (2014) point to the benefits of urban villages for migrants, they suggest that the villages offer a way for them to break out of factory dormitory housing and develop more agency in their lives. This is consistent with my research in Xiamen, many

young workers lived in urban villages because they were both affordable and because they did not require a year-long contract or three-month deposit, which is the standard for other apartments. They appeal not only due to low rents but also because they are suitable for the often transient and uncertain lives of migrants.

The kinds of work that these migrants engage in has also shifted, C. Cindy Fan and Chen Chen (2014) contrast the new generation (*xinshengdai* 新生代) and older generation (*laoyidai* 老一代) of migrants. They found that the older generation was more likely to work in agriculture, wholesale, retail, catering, construction, or manufacturing. While the younger generation born since the 1980s are more selective about jobs and are more likely to seek equal pay as urban residents as well as insurance, education for their children, and vacation time. These more recent waves of migrants are also more likely to plan to stay permanently in the city and are more interested in integrating with local people. In Xiamen, most of the large factories have moved to off-island districts, areas that now also have similar housing in nearby villages for workers seeking to escape factory dormitory life. On the island, I met migrants from both villages in poorer provinces, rural Fujian, as well as cities elsewhere in China. Often they lived in other cities such as Shanghai or Shenzhen before or after moving to Xiamen. Many worked in the service industry at restaurants, gyms, bars, and so on, but there is also a growing population of migrants working in the tech industry as programmers and graphic designers. The investment in the technology industry through building technology parks and offering incentives to corporations does not put an end to the precarious situations that many workers live with.

The migrants living in urban villages that I met, however, had little, if any, interest in participating in temple events. A few told me they had made offerings individually at a local temple, but, by and large, were more likely to visit Nanputuo or the Xianyu Earth God temple, which are not seen as connected to any single neighborhood and contain more familiar deities. Others found the local temples to be thoroughly frustrating, one woman from Chengdu in her mid-twenties who had worked office jobs in Xiamen for a number of years before opening a small dessert shop in an urban village was confused at my interest in such temples. She told me how annoying the old women at the temple were because they would wake her up early in the morning by chanting Buddhist sutras. However, this disinterest does not mean that the migrant workers do not benefit from the temple's resources, even if they are not aware. Many will take advantage of facilities like basketball courts, libraries, and exercise equipment. They will also attend public events such as dance performances and movie screenings without necessarily realizing the connection between these and the temples.

Beyond the organization of community facilities and events, some of those involved with the temple committees in urban villages also task themselves with improving living standards in the local neighborhood, at times in conjunction with the neighborhood committees and local police. Some of their enthusiasm for improving the area is greatly appreciated, such as organizing clean-ups following Typhoon Meranti in September 2016, which left many urban villages without electricity or running water for days. While other times residents are less inspired by their efforts, such as making sure display tables from commercial shops are not placed too far into the street or that motorcycles are parked uniformly. Frustration with such efforts shows that despite the

fact that people complain about living in urban villages, many also enjoy the individual freedom that the messiness affords them to do things as they please. In these cases, the do-gooders of the neighborhood and their efforts to ‘normalize’ (*zhenghua* 正化) the area are seen as an annoyance. Some temple members also work in petitioning the government to receive support for community projects or the construction of parks and other public spaces in the neighborhood. One man in his fifties who was a member of a temple and lineage association even received support for the construction of a mausoleum park to notable local residents after years of petitioning. But he remained skeptical of how the project would actually turn out. While these activities do not often make explicit mention of the temple or gods, they emerge out of the temple organizing structures and are linked to a temple’s spiritual efficacy.

The residential complexes (*xiaoqu* 小区), walled off and gated spaces filled with apartment blocks large or small, shops, markets, and so on, in many ways function like a new form of village. Instead of giving fees to the temple committee it goes to the administration board, providing the maintenance and improvement of the complex. The public space of the temple courtyard is replaced by a small park, plaza, or public square. In the afternoons, seniors gather in these spaces to ‘clap their hands and chant Buddha’ (*paishou nianfo* 拍手念佛), a series of simple physical exercises accompanied by recordings of Amitabha Buddhist chants promoted by a number of Buddhist masters in China to improve both the health and merit of the elderly. Groups of middle-aged women meet to practice dance routines in the afternoon and evening, sometimes these are even the same groups who perform as part of temple processions. Children roller-skate around and even a few teenagers are spotted skateboarding or drinking bubble tea. The gods are

not absent here either, though more marginalized than in a typical village. One sees Earth Gods and Gods of Wealth throughout the shops, some residents still maintain shrines in their homes, and nearby temples still make claims to the territory through processions.



**Figure 17: A stop along the procession route through an urban village.**

A temple procession from one urban village marched through the center of the large residential complex that had once been their farmland. While some of the residents moved from the village area to the apartment blocks, others come from elsewhere in the city and beyond. Regardless of their origin, the sights and sounds of the procession catch their attention and this reminds resident that the god's territory is above whatever new administrative demarcations are drawn. Elsewhere a "new village" (*xincun* 新村) is



officially unveiled to one side of another urban village, these are residential complexes on former village land and often occupied by the villagers. It is heralded as a new chapter in the village's history and the gods are taken out of the temple, still located in the urban village, in palanquins and sedan chairs for the opening ceremonies. The devotees want to show off the majesty of the new buildings in their territory to the god. The statues are brought around the center of the apartment complexes and then thanked for gracing the residents with their presence through the performance of lion dances. A procession through a large urban village makes a stop in the outside courtyard of an elementary school, the god's palanquins are placed down and the performers repeat their chants, dances, and other displays of thanks, as they do so the children had already exited their classrooms, crowding around the outdoor banisters and entranceways on the first floor to catch a glimpse of the event and bow in reverence. Another village is long demolished, having been replaced by apartment blocks in the early 1990s that leave no trace of the earlier geographies or architectures. Rather than develop along the lines of an urban village, the former villagers, now urbanites, managed to secure space for themselves and their temple in another 'new village' after a series of negotiations with the government during redevelopment. The temple is housed within the walls of the residential complex. With each celebration, not only do the complex's residents gather together at the temple but so too do many of the workers and visitors to the large mixed retail and office building located next to it, the event draws in the office workers and cafe-goers who become caught up in the surprisingly raucous morning. In each of these examples, the procession event works to take the city into the ritual. Bruce Kapferer (2004) describes rituals in terms of virtuality as a way to move beyond concepts of symbolic meaning to

see ritual as creating a reality of its own that is connected to ordinary realities. The time-space of the ritual event, as a virtual space, suspends ordinary realities and this disjunction is what allows ritual not to only reflect reality, but to affect it. There is a suspension of some qualities of reality, yet, at the same time, this virtuality is still thoroughly real, and as such can impact ordinary reality. As the event spreads out through the force of spiritual efficacy, the surrounding world that has been produced as spaces of secularism, of global capital, of party-state indoctrination are all temporarily folded into and affected by the event. Lin Meirong (1988) wrote in relation to her concept of ritual spheres (*jisituan* 祭祀團) and belief spheres (*xinyangtuan* 信仰團) in Taiwan that the pilgrimages, processions, and worship of gods expand the limits of the gods' power and influence.<sup>49</sup> The folding into the event by individuals and spaces outside of the temple is a bolstering of the capacity of spiritual efficacy. In the repurposing of spaces (public, private, and corporate) through practices that work to affect the urban environment and those who inhabit it. The ability to organize such large-scale events in public is important, even if generally done so following the proper legal regulations. They facilitate a movement of people through spaces they otherwise would not occupy, infusing it with their sensations and intensities, and leaving their trace behind in the wake of the event.

Returning to the gods at the shopping plaza this chapter opened with. Like the other temples described above, the procession maintains that the shopping plaza located on the villagers' former farmlands is still part of their territory, but this is not merely

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<sup>49</sup> However, I should note that unlike work on ritual spheres, I am not suggesting that as a particular deity expands its power regionally, it necessitates the decline of other deities, as multiple deities are found within the city and southern Fujian more broadly.

symbolic. In fact, the villagers still hold ownership of this land and have leased it to the company that built the plaza. After a large area of land was taken by the government for demolition and relocation in 2006, many of the village residents were concerned about what would happen to their own land. Through the existing institutions of local organizing, namely the temple and lineage hall, and their relation to the local neighborhood committee, the residents petitioned the government to collectively gain 40 *mu* of the land for re-development. Eventually, they received the land on a twenty-year contract and leased it out for the shopping plaza's construction. The villagers and local government tout this as a new model for development, to turn villagers into investors (*cunmin bian gumin* 村民變股民). Like other financial records of the temple, the allocation of funds listing the household representative, household members, total number of shares, amount per share, money received over two months, cardholder (invariably the household representative), and three-digit bank serial number. Most hold one share per household member, although a smaller number of individuals have three to six to themselves. While this model of development has benefited the original village residents, it does nothing to prevent the further demolition of the area, and likely even increases the speed of nearby developments, a process that will be more damaging to the lives of the migrant workers than most of the original villagers.

Erik Harms (2016) suggests that any use of land always presents both inclusions and exclusion; there is no space that is accessible to all in the city. Where land is seen as useful it is desired for use by competing groups, and in all likelihood, not all groups will get their way. Urban villages are seen as useful for those who own property for the income received from rents and also useful for the low-wage earners who cannot afford

to live elsewhere in the city. The processions through and outside of the villages present another use, a connection to the virtual space of ritual worlds, imbuing the space with different meanings and sensations, connecting together the past, present, and future. It also presents the god's devotees with a sense of purpose, to maintain and improve the quality of life in the temple's territory, to organize through the infrastructure of spiritual efficacy.

Urban villages are where the official infrastructure most often fails or is simply absent, placing a greater need for people to organize from the bottom up. Yet, there is an uncomfortable relationship between the process of gentrification and the infrastructure of spiritual efficacy. In one sense, this efficacy is what is thought to bring fortune to the god's devotees, whatever that may entail, and is also related to the improvements to the general standard of living in a neighborhood. However, these improvements and good fortune also connect to the growing interest in developing these areas by the local government and corporate investors who work to force out homeowners and migrant renters. The original villages have managed to gain some degree of agency by acting as landlords and attempting to negotiate with developers. However, such luxuries are not held by the many migrant workers living in their properties.

#### **4.7 Demolition Campaigns**

Elsewhere, residents have used their temples to band together against campaigns for demolition and redevelopment. Some have even successfully prevented the process or, at least, delayed it for a number of years. One day Ah-Wei, a man I knew from a local temple, shared a video of himself entering a new apartment on WeChat with the text

“what do you think of my new apartment?” I was surprised. Ah-Wei was a loud abrasive man in his fifties who lived in a three-story house with his elderly mother located in a semi-demolished neighborhood not far from the downtown. He was proud to have previously been part of an effort to stop the demolition from continuing and I had not heard any news of the process restarting since I had last seen him. The next time that we met, the house was still there, so I asked what was going on with the new apartment. He first looked confused and then laughed at my naivete, “that was my friend’s place” he told me. He went on to explain that over half of the residents in that apartment block had moved from his neighborhood when they agreed to relocate. When I asked if he had any interest in moving there, he said he did not, explaining that it was much better to have a house and that those new apartments lacked any feeling. He still seemed confident that those who remained would stand strong against re-development.

Such demolition campaigns have been an issue facing landowners, generally in poorer areas, throughout China for years. These campaigns are not met with compliance or cooperation, quite the opposite, groups who oppose the demolition band together and find whatever means necessary to prevent the continuation of the project.<sup>50</sup> Li Zhang

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<sup>50</sup> At times these demolition campaigns have tragic ends. On November 11, 2016, a group of nine villagers from Longyan in Western Fujian committed suicide outside of the municipal government offices by drinking pesticides. The event was not reported by official state media but spread quickly over social networking platform WeChat by many residents of the city. Images of the bodies strewn over the sidewalk while a large group of uniformed police officers gathered around. Mingjing News reported that their suicides were the result of problems over compensation for housing demolition, but they do not give specifics of the problem. Instead, they write that due to the unresolved issue the villages sought to defend their legal rights in Beijing. In the morning of the eleventh, they arrived to meet with the Longyan government officials and then at 3:30 pm committed suicide outside the offices (see [http://www.mingjingnews.com/MIB/blog/blog\\_contents.aspx?ID=0000690000003928](http://www.mingjingnews.com/MIB/blog/blog_contents.aspx?ID=0000690000003928)). The event speaks to the intense feelings of hopelessness many Chinese, especially those from poor rural areas, feel concerning plans for urban development. These plans to forcibly move villagers into towns not only give unsatisfactory compensation to the farmers but also destroy their livelihood by developing over agricultural land. While protests are organized through local community institutions, this often only seems to prolong the inevitable arrival of land re-development.

(2004) demonstrated that it is most commonly economically deprived people whose rights are violated by such development projects in China, but this has also worked to bring about activist movements among them. Residents seek out tactics to resist the demolition of their homes, whether by attempting to work through the legal process or organizing protests. While not focusing directly on the demolition of neighborhoods, Luigi Tomba's (2014) work in Beijing, Shenyang, and Chengdu saw that in poorer former industrial areas the government is more integrated into community life through neighborhood committees. At the most local level, he found some connection between the government officials and local residents. Considering Tomba and Zhang's work together, it seems that while there is an increased possibility of organizing local resistance in lower income areas, there is also an increased control and micromanagement by the state promoting ways to be civil (*wenming* 文明).

In Xiamen, these two factors have worked for the protection of certain neighborhoods and the destruction of others, and I found that the organizing of resistance against demolition campaigns was formed around local temples. This organizing is not something that is overtly religious, rather, the temples serve as both the physical space for discussing local issues and planning demonstrations or legal action. These networks between people in the community also exist largely in part through the temple, as it offers a site of connection between the residents. A similar situation occurred among Hui Muslims in Ningxia province. Luo and Andreas (2016) argued that these communities organized around local Mosques in order to build solidarity and organize protests to delay demolition, gain better compensation, and maintain the space for their religious

institution, even after village demolition. The process occurring in Xiamen is strikingly similar, despite the difference in religion and ethnicity.

Ah-Wei's neighborhood, an area where nearby real estate prices have skyrocketed in recent years and few older neighborhoods fully remain intact, was planned for redevelopment in 2011, a number of years prior to my fieldwork. It was explained to me that initially a number of the residents agreed to the plans and signed away their lands; others, however, were less willing to go along with the developments and refused to sign. Thugs, described by the locals as gangsters (*heishehui* 黑社會) who infiltrated the demolition and relocation department, were sent to intimidate those unwilling to go along with the redevelopment. These tactics reached their apex when one man was violently assaulted by the group resulting in his arm being broken. It was at this point that both the residents who signed over their land and those who refused organized together in protest of the intimidation and redevelopment plan, successfully stopping the process. The temple served as the space for the group to organize together, writing banners, sharing thoughts about the corrupt and unfair development plans, and seeking the gods' aid to bring them good fortune. Although the protests themselves were not seen as temple events, since these institutions are central to local organizing there remains some connection between the two.

The group took to the streets with banners painted on large sheets, many of which still hang inside the temple's multi-purpose room. Some of these made sarcastic cries to the party and wider society. One simply calls out the entire CPC for what has happened in the area, "Dearest Communist Party! Where are you?" 親愛的共產黨啊，您在哪裡？ while another mocks attempts of officials to stop their demonstrating by claiming it

was not appropriate to stage such a protest during the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of Xiamen's special economic zone:

Each and every respected elder, brother, and sister:  
In order to avoid [negatively] influencing the image of the people of Xiamen, during the celebrations of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Special Economic Zone, we are working for the benefit of all the people, have self-control, don't promptly tell everyone about the astonishingly vile events of December 23<sup>rd</sup>, please understand!

尊敬的各位父老兄弟姐妹們：為了不影響廈門人民的形象，在慶祝特區 30 週年期間，我們顧全大局、強忍克制、沒有把 12.23 日起震驚的惡劣事件及時告訴大局、敬請理解！

Though their resistance was successful in ending the intimidating visits, the process of demolition had already started after the first residents agreed to the compensation package offered. As such, the area is now filled with semi-demolished buildings, boarded up windows and spray painted notices warning passersby not to go inside. An alleyway leading into one side of the neighborhood even declares it a 'dangerous area' 危險區. Those who remain in the area are surrounded by the ruins of the community they fought to protect. Some of those who still live in the old area claim to be confident that their homes will not be destroyed, even though employees of the demolition and relocation office had started to visit them again, once more trying to convince them to sign over their land.

Since these events, the local temple has received increasing support, despite many residents now living elsewhere. Their temple, located close to a number of high-rise office buildings next to the area, continues to receive further renovations and many of the former residents continue to visit in order to make donations and take part in their ritual events. They can be seen stopping by the temple in the morning before work, chatting



with their old neighbors, and making offerings to the gods. During my research, the building, which was formerly a fairly dilapidated three-story concrete structure, received numerous renovations thanks to the donations made. The two stories above the temple were removed in order to build a traditionally-styled temple roof, a new furnace was built for burning spirit money, and a new entrance way was constructed with elaborate carvings all showing the continued support and increasing wealth of the temple patrons. A new notice board was also installed on the main roadway just outside of the neighborhood, in addition to the board next to the temple, allowing for the further promotion of the temple and its events to those living outside of the direct neighborhood. This suggests that even if the demolition plans go forward, there is hope that the temple will remain, giving the devotees a continued connection with their former neighborhood.

Indeed, some members of this particular temple emphasized its openness and universality, rather than it being defined solely by locality and place of residence. One committee member suggested that anyone can take part. In one conversation during an opera performance outside the temple, he said: “the practices at this temple are as you please (*suiyi* 随意), it doesn’t matter if you also worship Buddha or the Christian God, you can still come here.” He continued by pointing out that a man in his thirties sitting with us was not from the area or even the province, but from Chongqing, though he had lived in Xiamen for ten years. He then joked, “There are no communist party members here now, but they can come too. Even Xi Jinping is welcome to come.” Although this may simply be the rantings of one individual after a few too many drinks, there was certainly a mix of intense localness (regional gods, use of Hokkien dialect in rituals, participation largely from people who at some point lived in the neighborhood) alongside

a sense that with the changes to issues of residence and mobility there will also be changes in who will take part in the temple's future.

While to me it often felt like there was a melancholy atmosphere walking through the neighborhood, the sense of being surrounded by condemned buildings, many of those remaining appeared sanguine. Not only proud of their own perseverance but of the collective power demonstrated in the enhancements to their temple and the increased scale of their ritual events. While most donations for the events ranged from 20 to 500RMB, a small number demonstrated their wealth and devotion offering 1000 to 3000RMB or funded nights of opera performances in the courtyard. The temple devotees managed to secure the temple's physical location and prevent the demolition of the housing nearby. It has also widened its scope, its territory now both concretely tied to the original neighborhood boundaries and unbounded by space, open to anyone regardless of residence. The workings of the infrastructure of spiritual efficacy connect to the material neighborhood but now extends beyond these borders.

Other neighborhoods have been less successful in their fight against demolition. In these instances, residents eventually accept demolition and relocation as an inevitable part of development and agree to the compensation offered, while attempting to find other ways to maintain their place in the neighborhood through the preservation of temples and historic artifacts. It is not that the structures of temple organization necessitate communities of resistance, only that they allow an opportunity for it, and whether or not the residents take advantage of this depends on the individuals. As plans to transform the industrial areas of Huli district into Hi-Tech zones continue, moving the heavy industrial areas to the off-island peri-urban areas in the process, it is becoming

more and more likely that urban villages on the island will be the targets of demolition in order to make room for an ever-expanding number of high-rise apartment blocks inside residential complexes and technology parks. Indeed, 2018 was even dubbed the year of demolition and relocation (*chaiqian nian* 拆遷年) in local media. Xiamen Island will become increasingly unlivable for low-income workers and jobs of those who work in factories have already begun to move to remote areas off of the island. At the same time, those in low-wage service industry careers will need to take advantage of the newly constructed metro system or the existing Bus Rapid Transit in order to make their commutes to work.

A village in Huli district that was scheduled for demolition and relocation in 2008 attempted to organize against the redevelopment plan for a number of years. Before this, most villagers agreed to sign over their land. During the process, the local cadre and other officials attempted to convince residents to sign over their land in exchange for a compensation package that included both financial compensation and relocation. The compensation was based on the original use of land (generally average agricultural output in the previous three years) but the landowners, quite rightly, perceived the original amount to be unfair as it does not accord to the increased value of land following redevelopment. However, given the shift in recent years in how demolition and relocation projects deal with compensation for residents, it is now more likely that they can negotiate a deal to live nearby and receive substantial financial compensation (Ren 2018). The initial attempts at redevelopment were met with conflicts from the residents, both staging protests and filing lawsuits; however, none of this appeared to bring much success in the end, and only prolonged the process. Like the previous example, the

temple served as both the space in which organizing took place and also as the node through which connections between villagers were made. It was also taken as a space that was more important to all members than the individual households.

When I visited the neighborhood in early 2016 the demolition was still in its early stages, but many residents had already agreed to the compensation package after long negotiations. Most of the three to six-story gray concrete buildings remained, though a number had already been hollowed out in preparation for demolishing the exterior in the near future. A red banner on one of the walls entering the village read “Demolition and relocation sets up a place for [your] offspring's fortune - Construct a new city and many households will flourish”<sup>51</sup> 拆遷安置子孫福 建設新城百家興. Advertisements from the new residential complex were also posted within the village remarking on the great standard of living that residents of the new housing will have, seeming to taunt those who had yet to sign over their land as the compensation villagers. The success of the Special Economic Zone has relied on migrant workers but this success has also brought about rising land prices and speculation about future prosperity that bring about demolition, redevelopment, and the displacement of the residents from these areas. Taking what I have put forward about the infrastructure of spiritual efficacy into account, it would presume that this village’s temples are lacking in efficacy. Indeed, in these sorts of villages, the ritual events do not appear to attract the large numbers of participants as elsewhere, and while some former residents continue to return to the area, they tend to be of the older generation. Yet, from another perspective the temple could be seen as quite

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<sup>51</sup> The final character of the first clause and first character of the second also spell out the province’s name ‘Fujian.’

efficacious or at least hold potential for future efficacy, being the organizing structure around which residents were able to negotiate that the temple will remain in the area and that they receive better compensation than initially offered.

In the final months of 2016, the demolition process was said to be 80% complete, most residents had followed the orders of the government and large demolition equipment worked throughout the day to tear down hollowed out buildings and storeowners advertised their demolition blow out sales. By December, the area was sectioned off by a small wall advertising the new life to come “divide [the spaces for] people and cars, [so that] children can play safely” 人車分流了 小孩玩耍安全. The new apartment complexes are promoted as bringing the safety of modern housing in contrast to the messiness of village life. The three village temples remained and seniors continued to meet in the Elderly Association located next to one of the temples. The building also acted as the office of the temple committee but was used daily for seniors to meet and chat, drink tea, and play cards or mahjong. Processions through the neighborhood became more difficult to organize, in some situations it was decided to perform only in the temple courtyard, instead of facing the precarious situations of climbing over the large piles of rock and debris fashioned into walkways that are now the only access point to certain areas of the village. In other areas, a procession would also or face the possibility of being hit by falling metal window caging or other building materials being thrown down to the ground by the demolition crews.



**Figure 18: A temple located in an area under demolition.**

The concern has shifted from the demolition of the entire village to attempts to preserve their temple sites specifically. How the temple and its ritual events will function after the new apartments are built is uncertain, it remains difficult to know if the devotees' fates and the god's power will improve with time and if the temples' territory may shift elsewhere as people relocate. Migrants living in demolition sites seem to be the group that benefits the least. While landowners in the area receive compensation, this is not the case for those renting housing. These are the same kinds of migrants as those living in urban villages (as these are the primary sites of demolition campaigns) and will likely move to another urban village or even peri-urban village once they are required to vacate. Like those living in urban villages, I did not find that these migrants were

particularly interested in forging alliances with the temple members, even if they planned to live in the city long term.

By March 2017, the signs were gone and replaced by a concrete and brick wall that surrounds the demolition site. Some entrance ways and trails remained but often led to dead ends or huge piles of rock and debris that had been refashioned into walkways. Throughout the demolition process, the temples remained active in organizing ritual events, opera performances, movies screenings, and acting as a space for seniors to gather. This also led to their promotion and petitioning of the preservation of historic artifacts from the village as well as preserving the spaces for the temples. Although they deemed the demolition unavoidable, they would not be completely exiled from their former village, many found accommodation in nearby apartments, and the campaign to preserve historic artifacts led to a planned park to house the objects within the area, similar to some other neighborhoods on the island.

The infrastructure of spiritual efficacy brings about the mobilization of bodies as a community in different ways. Grassroots organizing under an authoritarian state that promotes a utopian vision of modern living through urban development is never easy, and often unsuccessful, whether this organizing is conducted through temples or by other means. The temples, however, manage to tie people to a space in a way that goes beyond the desires of an individual by attempting to fight for proper compensation for all.

#### **4.8 Downtown Temples and Revitalization Projects**

As discussed in the previous chapter, the infrastructure projects in the downtown and surrounding area in the early twentieth century were largely damaging to local temples,

but many temples do still remain in these neighborhoods. Since the 1980s, however, these areas faced continued redevelopment through government plans for revitalization and private corporation's investment and construction. Now walking from main roadways into the alleys of the back streets has become something of an archaeological dig, passing through different historical layers as one enters deeper inside. High-rise apartments around the exterior, concrete two and three-story walkup housing built prior to the 1980s, and even some traditional Hokkien architecture, though often uninhabited and in decay. Unlike the urban villages, the residents of these inner areas are largely the original inhabitants who have spent most of their lives in the neighborhood, although many of their former neighbors have since relocated elsewhere in the city. Here, it is often the temple events that reconnect the former neighbors, while also attracting some new residents into the changing community.

One neighborhood north of the downtown that was partially redeveloped in the early 2000s still contains three communal temples. The original residents are now divided into those who remained, those who moved to walk-up apartment buildings nearby, and those who moved as a large group to a gated apartment complex in the west of the island. All of these groups, however, continued to attend the temple's ritual events and make offerings to the gods because they felt an attachment to both the area and their gods. Some of the new residents from elsewhere in the city and other parts of China have also started to connect with the temple, at times attempting to forge connections and influence among the committee members, while others remain largely anonymous. Three temples in this neighborhood, one in the downtown, and one in an apartment block in the west of the island form a network of exchange and collaboration. The five temples share many of



the same participants and committee members who are now able to travel to far more temple events than would have previously been possible thanks to the new transportation infrastructure: roadways, buses, bus rapid transport, and, increasingly, car ownership, as well as increased leisure time, allow for increased participation. Generally speaking, most will use the temple in closest proximity to them the most frequently for making individual offerings, but many also travel between the temples for the different ritual events held at the temple or to make offerings and prayers to the specific deities enshrined there.

The ritual events bring many former residents back to the old neighborhoods to donate money to the temple's operations and participate in the ritual events or watch evening opera performances. The processions move around an approximation of the old neighborhood's territory, which now includes a 'new village,' and variety of high-rise apartment complexes and commercial real estate. Some of the new residents have accepted the god's claim to these spaces, outside migrants (largely from elsewhere in Fujian) have begun to donate to the temples, seeing them as key in local power dynamics while also expressing their own respect to the deities. The commercial world has also begun to welcome them, as business owners in the area make donations so the gods will visit their establishments along the procession route such as restaurants and tea shops and bring prosperity and fortune their way (figure 19). Through the movement of the processions, different historical periods are brought to life, this is expressed in the performers hired within the procession as Daoist ritual, military-style marching bands, women's drum groups wearing outfits inspired by traditional fisher peoples clothing, and pop music can be brought together within a single event.

Migrants living in and around the downtown area were significantly different from those in urban villages. In these neighborhoods, I found two main types of migrants, the first are those from other parts of southern Fujian that have lived in the city for an extended period of time and have more or less integrated. The second type comes from other parts of China, generally from cities, and are more educated. An example of the first category is Old Huang, a retired man in his early sixties. He moved to Xiamen from nearby Jinjiang and worked in a soy sauce factory before retirement. Through his work connections, he eventually ended up taking part in a local temple's events and later even became a committee member. Old Huang also introduced me to another migrant in his 30s from Hebei province who lived in a peri-urban area of Tongan district. This man had also managed to integrate into the local neighborhood and temple through connections made through his marriage to a local woman. While cases like Old Huang seem like a more common form of integration, the man from Hebei suggests that those from much further away are also able to adapt to local institutions. In both cases, however, there is a longer process of forming close relations with the existing temple community not only through developing workplace, friendship, or marital ties but also through the continued donations to and presence at temple events.

The second category of people tends to plan to live in the city permanently and some have now tried to take part in temple events. Their involvement stems from connections made with the earlier residents as well as sincere religious practice. In one instance, a woman who had moved to the area and befriended some of the other women at the temple was rather unsuccessful in trying to gain any status with the elderly men. After the repeated refusal of her offer of cigarettes from them, she ended up just throwing

the individual cigarettes on the table. This is by no means unheard of behavior, when people want to give cigarettes or food to others at these events there is really no stopping them. But in this instance the men did not seem very impressed with her attempts to establish *guanxi* 關係 relations and likely would have preferred she make larger donations instead. Most of these migrants I encountered, however, did not explicitly try to gain influence at the temples and after giving their donations and offerings socialized with whatever small group of people they know or left the temple event having minimal contact with committee members. However, this may change in the future, especially after they reach retirement age. Like migrants in urban villages, it is also common for people in the area to make use of resources and entertainment provided by the temple, whether or not they are aware of who was responsible.

These areas were redeveloped earlier than the north and east of the island, bringing waves of demolition and relocation in their wake. Discussing the rising cost of property and changes in the demographics of one neighborhood, a retired cadre now involved in the temple told me when speaking about a large apartment block next to the temple, “when those first opened they cost 3000RMB a month and nobody would rent them. Now they are 7000RMB and people rent them out.” While this may have been an exaggeration, the price of real estate in the area has risen significantly in recent years. Although a large number of older residents live in cheaper walkup flats nearby, these too will likely be demolished in the further redevelopment of the area.



**Figure 19: A god exits a restaurant along the procession route**

Yet, despite this, people remain positive about the changes in recent years. As the older generation faced many years of hardship and food shortage, the abundance and choice currently available to them make them more willing to accept having to give up their homes, as they see life as being satisfying (*hen manyi* 很滿意) now. Indeed, they will frequently point to the transportation infrastructure as what is most impressive, traveling along bus routes and the above road bus rapid transit system allowing for easy connections between once seemingly distant neighborhoods. The senior transit pass keeps them even more satisfied with their free access to such facilities. This movement between temples increases the number of participants in each of the temples' events and with them

increases their efficacy as well. Like those still living in demolition sites, the past may have seemed like a period of misfortune when their god's lacked the power to help them, but now their fates have changed and with them so has the temple's efficacy.

Old Huang invited me to an event at a temple in the west of the island shortly after the Lunar New Year in 2016. We met at the BRT station early in the morning and were quickly whisked across the island. He then led me to a nearby apartment block, rather than any sort of temple. Inside were many familiar faces from the two older neighborhoods that had formed a temple alliance. I was informed that this is where many residents from one neighborhood had moved following the earlier re-development projects. Thanks to the BRT system they could now easily travel between the two locations. The event that day, however, was for their own temple, which had been established inside of one of the apartment buildings. The central area of the apartment complex had been filled with tables and chairs for all the attendees to sit. Many had not seen each other since the Lunar New Year and would wish each other prosperity in the coming year. Daoist priests were hired to perform an offering ritual (*jiao* 醮), but because the temple has no courtyard, they needed to find another space to set up their temporary altar. The apartment residents agreed that the parking lot on the first floor of one building could be used and signs were posted notifying residents of the times the parking lot would be out of service and they would need to park elsewhere (figure 20). The good fortune of these communities is seen as sharing in the efficacy of their multiple temples and gods, as well as in the continued relations between members of geographically disperse neighborhoods and different temple spaces.





**Figure 20: A Daoist altar temporarily established in the parking lot of an apartment building**

While these ritual events still point to the importance of the historic areas and territory of the temples, they have also moved numerous times following the many infrastructure projects of the past century. They maintain a sense of a spatially bounded territory, even if the devotees do not all live within it. Additionally, they still take part in the projects for the well-being of the neighborhood, particularly those that cater to the needs of the elderly. They also have been somewhat deterritorialized, while their concerns remain focused on those who participate in the temple's events, who those people are has grown more fluid, with changes in migration and transportation. Infrastructures may work with or against each other, here there is a sense that

transportation infrastructures are working in the service of the infrastructure of spiritual efficacy; the gods and their devotees can now move at speeds previously unimaginable.

#### **4.9 Off-Island Urban Centers and Peri-Urban Villages**

The bulk of my research focused on the temples in the two central districts of Xiamen; however, the development of the four off-island districts is important to note as well. Each of these has its own urban center expanding out to the countryside where one can find a blending of traditional agricultural and fishing villages alongside peri-urban villages. These can be very similar to the situations in urban villages in the center of the city and are filled with small-scale factory production and migrant workers. On other routes, one will encounter large factories and other government infrastructure projects for mass-transport and beautification. The movement between the urban and rural is by no means linear, there are many centers and many peripheries. It is easy to point to areas geographically closer to the downtown that appear much less developed, and elsewhere find patches of urban lifestyles surrounded by the countryside.

Although urban areas in Fujian certainly have a wealth of religious sites and activity, like elsewhere in China, this resurgence was more prominent in rural areas. Haicang district is located to the west of Xiamen Island bordering on Zhangzhou and in 1989 became the Taiwan Business Investment Zone (*Taishang touzi qu* 台商投資區), which brought about its rapid development. Although it only developed recently, its urban center's proximity to Xiamen Island has made it an increasingly popular choice for new homeowners who cannot afford the high real estate prices on the island.

While many temples have been re-established in traditional style within the new cityscape, others have taken on new forms, combining multiple former-village temples into a single space. One neighborhood rebuilt their communal temple, Buddhist temple, and ancestral hall into a single complex in the storefront spaces on the exterior of an apartment block where many of them lived (figure 21). When I first visited these temples, I met Ah-Wang, a man in his thirties who worked as in the fisheries but was also hired to clean trash out of the sea and other odd jobs. I noticed a framed photo of a temple above where he was sitting and asked about it. He explained that it was the old temple, which had since been demolished along with the entire village. Most of the former villagers had since moved to around this area and the temple's events attracted large numbers of residents young and old. The new storefront-style temples are also accessible from the inside of the complex by passing through a set of winding corridors and entering through a back entrance. Following their processions through Haicang's urban center, Ah-Wang and his friends would escape the noise at a restaurant located above the temples where they were still able to watch the events through the windows.

None of the temples on Xiamen Island had taken up this kind of design shift, but it does seem to better connect with the changing lifestyles of the temple devotees.<sup>52</sup> Rather than attempting to re-create the previous temple in a new environment, they have opted to transform the way they are structured in order to better integrate into their lives as apartment dwellers. This also positions the events more directly in the center of urban life, instead of traveling back to a more rural periphery, and now attracts many nearby

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<sup>52</sup> However, on Xiamen Island there is one temple complex made up of six communal temples and one popular Buddhist temple, comparable to the United Temples in Singapore.



residents who were not from the former village. During their ritual events, the parking lot in front of the temples and surrounding roadways are taken over. With fewer regulations enforced than on the island, these events are often even more explosive and bring together large crowds of devotees, passersby, and street vendors to the site. There is a striking difference here compared to the neighborhoods facing demolition described above. There is no longer a sense of preserving a heritage that may be lost but continuing their ritual celebrations in spaces that have been catered to new ways of life. It also differs from the temples in the downtown and surrounding areas in its connection to infrastructure, whereas those temples made use of new transportation networks to return to old neighborhoods and visit new ones, here the temple has been re-inscribed into a new urban morphology. Its spiritual efficacy now tied up in the construction of apartment buildings and taking on the boundaries between the inside and outside of the complex.

Surrounding the urban center is a range of peri-urban and rural villages. In their spatial organization and temple events, they are closer to the urban villages within Xiamen Island than the new storefront temple complex. The areas are often filled with migrant workers living in cheap accommodation. As there is less pressure from re-development projects than in the city, the villagers have been able to occupy larger plots of land for their temples. However, this has also led to many people moving into the city to find work, and while they do return to their home villages for the events held at the temples, these are the group who often seem the least optimistic about the future of their temples, local culture, and even the continuity of Hokkien dialect. They have entered city-worlds that separate from them such institutions and those who I talked to returning to their villages did not connect with the temples in urban environments.



**Figure 21: People gather to offer incense at the row of storefront temples.**

The relation between urban development on and off the island is different to some extent but certainly comparable. Both areas must combat issues of in-migration, dispersal of populations across greater geographic areas, rising land prices, and increased redevelopment projects. They also have used certain facets of infrastructure to their advantage, through the ease of connectivity by using transportation and communication networks. Depending on how savvy they are at manipulating these new infrastructures will impact whether their temple's infrastructure of spiritual efficacy can rise or fall.

#### **4.10 Conclusion**

Here I attempted to show the forms of organizing by temples in relation to their individual neighborhoods, each relying on the infrastructure of spiritual efficacy to mediate between community organizing and explicitly devotional religious acts. Temples publically post both the expenses for ritual events and other activities organized by the temple. Many people who take part in the events will read these and also check the postings of individual donations. The more money the temple is receiving, the more prosperous the devotees likely are, and the more projects the temple committee is able to facilitate. This ties together an understanding of spiritual efficacy with seemingly non-religious events.

All the temples discussed (and, indeed, all those I visited) organize their processions and other religious events differently, the specificity of the individual temple is something many temple members would bring up to me, explaining that each had their own customs and traditions, even if they would also describe their combination as ‘Chinese culture’ or ‘traditional culture’ in a general sense. In this following chapter, I will consider how we can then speak of all of these different temples and their events in relation to each other through the diagram of the ritual event and the circulation of ritual technologies.

## **Chapter 5**

### **The Circulation of Ritual Technologies**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The processions and ritual events described in the previous chapter involve a large number of diverse actors both coming from a local community and those hired from outside of it. In this chapter, I provide an overview of the common ritual specialists and performers at temple events in southern Fujian. I approach these different individuals and groups as exercising particular forms of ritual technologies and consider the ways these circulate within and beyond the region. This circulation can be thought of in terms of the actual people traveling to different temples but also how particular techniques are transmitted through textual production, media circuits, and conscious and non-conscious mimesis that spread an understanding or expectation of specific ritual techniques.

I begin with a discussion of how to conceive of the ritual event and the circulation of ritual technologies in general terms before moving into a discussion of the specific actors. I then present the array of Daoist ritual specialists, Buddhist sutra recitation groups, spirit mediums, opera performers, and others who work to cast out demons and thank the gods. From these accounts, I move on to a discussion of how ritual technologies circulate in terms of bodily imitation, competition between groups, regulations and bans by the government, and media technologies. Rather than focusing on one specific kind of ritual specialist and following them more closely, I attempt to give a larger picture of communal religious practices that does not favor any one actor or practice as central or essential.

## 5.2 Diffusion, Power, Event

In the study of religion in China and the sociology of China more generally, CK Yang (1961) represents an important early contribution. Not only for conducting research prior to and just after the communist revolution, but also for developing an influential conceptual structure for thinking religion in China. Drawing on the earlier work of Joachim Wach and Talcott Parsons, Yang divided religion in China into two types: institutional and diffused. Institutional religion was defined as independent in its theology, symbols, rituals, and organization from other social institutions. While diffused religion was less clearly defined and seemed to take on two different meanings. At times diffused religions referred to practices that did not exist separately from other so-called secular institutions, but were present in everyday life. But it is also used to refer to communal religious practices at local temples and ancestral halls. Institutional religion included not only recognized religions like Buddhism and Daoism but also other sorts of ritual professionals, who were seen as providing theology, gods, rituals, and priests that were used in diffused practices such as ancestor worship, local deity cults, and so on (1961, 294-295). This structuring then assumes that there was no influence of the ‘diffused’ local practices on the institutional religions, nor does it recognize local temples as institutional forms. Yet, what Yang did manage to demonstrate was the importance of religiosity in wider Chinese society that was absent in other studies at the time.

In many ways Yang’s division seems to fall apart even within his own work as he notes the organizational structure of both temples and lineage halls, thus making any clear division of diffuse and institutional religions difficult to claim. ‘Diffused religion’ suggests a debased form of the ‘institutional religions’ that somehow exists separately

from other social forms. Yet, is also ever-present in ‘diffused’ practices that are found in all aspects of life. Regardless of its problems, this division remains a common description of religion in China, particularly in works that attempt to describe it to a more general audience. Some recent examples of the use of institutional and diffuse religions include:

"Chinese popular religion is usually not institutional in form and many popular practices and beliefs are necessarily diffused within institutional religious organizations" (Leamaster and Hu 2014, 236)

"A model of religion as a clearly delineated segment of society and of religions as rationalized institutions with fixed sites and clear lines of authority is much more legible to, and hence controllable by the state, than the diffuse and under-institutionalized religious environment of traditional China" (A. Jones 2010, 35)

"the custom [of burning paper spirit money] is so diffuse that one part or another can be made to do almost anything" (Blake 2011, 450)

"This diffuse quality [of popular religion in Hong Kong] allows many Chinese to claim that they have no religion even when they participate in rituals" (Bosco 2015, 12)

Of course, an idea that has prevailed as long as this one has also received numerous critiques. To use the process of diffusion as a metaphor to describe a religious practice is to imply that it originated elsewhere and spread out in incomplete forms in contrast to the highly concentrated molecules of the institutional religion. Graeme Lang and Fenggang Yang write that "the concept of ‘diffused’ religion has its own problems in English, implying that the religious practice is relatively inarticulate and disorganized" (2011, 7), only returning to the term within a page, stating that practices are “diffused through social life” (2011, 8). Thomas Dubois notes that while the theories of Yang and other early scholars of Chinese religions do "have merit... they all share a common trait in that they focus on a knowable quality of religion as being institutional, textual or legal, and then define by default everything else... by the absence of that quality" (2015, 209). He

suggests that local religion is a more appropriate term for lived religious practice in China as it emphasizes its emplaced character.

These critiques present two key factors: first, that what Yang termed ‘diffuse’ is organized and maintains institutions (not necessarily the other way around), and, secondly, that while emphatically localized this does not suggest a religion that lacks what Yang’s institutional religion has. This leads to two additional questions for how to conceptualize religious life in China, how does a definition as “local” account for cultural change in a locality and how to account for elements of religious practice that may be shared between different localities without simply returning to a model of “diffusion” or “unity and diversity,” which would set up either the imperial state (Faure 2007) or Daoist ritual (Schipper 1994, Lagerwey 2010) as the central organizing principle of local religious life.<sup>53</sup>

Perhaps Fan Lizhu’s 范麗珠 translation of Yang’s term into Chinese as a “distributed character” (*fensanxing* 分散性) (Yang 2007) is more appropriate. Distribution does not need to be presented in opposition to institutional forms. It suggests something that can move around and between different institutional structures. This gets closer to what I mean in terms of circulation.

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<sup>53</sup> Indeed, the idea of the “unity and diversity” of Chinese culture could be traced back even earlier than the idea of “diffuse” and “institutional” types to Arthur Smith’s *Chinese Characteristics* (1890), in which he described Chinese culture as “unity in variety – variety in unity.”

### 5.3 Circulation

While the term ‘ritual’ existed in imperial China as *li* 禮 or *liyi* 禮儀, even having a Ministry of Rites (*libu* 禮部) from the seventh century onward, the word is not generally used by those participating in ritual events, with the exception of discussions among academics. Instead, temple ritual occasions are described as *events* (*huodong* 活動) or more specifically Events for the Affairs of Deities (*foshi huodong* 佛事活動)<sup>54</sup> and, less frequently, doing good deeds (*zuo haoshi* 做好事). The terms used to describe local ritual events emphasize them more in terms of action and movement: they are *huodong* also meaning movement.<sup>55</sup> This is not to say that these ritual events do not require the sort of distinct prescribed sets of bodily actions one associates with the term ‘ritual’ but that there is more to them than a single hierarchical structure like those found in Confucian writings that connect ritual, body, and discipline with specific moral codes and hierarchical relations.

I conceive of local communal ritual in southern Fujian and networks spreading overseas in terms of circulating forms of ritual technologies that assemble together in the diagram of the ritual event, only to de-assemble continuing in their own circuits that go on to assemble with other technologies elsewhere. I present the circulation of ritual technologies as a way of thinking local communal ritual as endlessly divergent forms that may or may not connect to a variety of different hierarchical structures of state, society, family, or cosmos. I hope that this approach lends itself to better understanding what I

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<sup>54</sup> Here *fo* is used as a generic term for deities, not to specify the event as being Buddhist.

<sup>55</sup> A minority of temples define the events in terms of the Daoists promoting it as an “offering” (*jiao* 醮), while the Daoists themselves more frequently refer to the events as ‘performing rituals at a Daoist altar’ (*zuo daochang* 做道場).



suggest in the following chapter as communal ritual working to both give a *power to* act for those involved and ritual as a *power over* participants by those seen as holding ritual expertise. These different forms of circuits and circulation of forms are what Arjun Appadurai (2013, 61-69) suggests make up the world through the ‘production of locality.’ Disjuncture and difference are, he writes, “produced by the variety of circuits, scales, and speeds that characterize the circulation of cultural elements” (2013, 68). The production of locality is thus seen in terms of temporary negotiations between different circulating forms on a variety of scales; localities are not subordinate to one form or circuit but are the evidence for the existence of such global forms. The circulation of ritual technologies are just one part of this production and many technologies associated with the ritual event are also tied to other flows.

This production of locality is a continuous process; the ongoing series of circuits coming together as events. In Deleuze’s discussion of Foucault, he refers to the diagram or abstract machine. It is “the map of relations between forces, a map of destiny, or intensity, which proceeds by primary non-localizable relations and at every moment passes through every point” (Deleuze 1988, 36). Each diagram involves a different relation between forces and creates intermediary diagrams, these allow us to shift between one society-diagram to another. This process of merging from one to another is possible due to the instability and fluidity of a diagram, always evolving and producing new realities. In the diagram, the relation between forces and dynamics of power are displayed as the virtual possibilities of interactions and actualized in the concrete layout of these forces. The diagram is described as machine-like in that it is defined by external relations (parts can be added or subtracted, each new mixture forming in multiplicity) and

without a primary essence. This network of relations exists in a virtuality, it is an abstract form, but the relations it creates arrange concretely. For our purposes, we can refer to these as the abstract diagram and concrete assemblage.<sup>56</sup> As the elements that make up the concrete event changes, so do the relations of the abstract diagram, and vice-versa.<sup>57</sup>

These arrangements, however, are not random but the result of specific social and historical processes of repetition and change. The way that a ritual event forms draws on the local history that tied together local cults with Daoist priests and Buddhist monastics as well as spirit mediums and other more localized customs. These ties are also based on specific relations (*guanxi* 關係) between a temple community and individual ritual masters, of building on connections and trust in the efficacy of their techniques over time. Techniques that require the use of language, such as liturgy or opera, will also be restrained by the local dialect used. In more recent times the state has also intervened how an event can come together through policy and law enforcement, however, some find ways to get around these constraints. In addition to these, there is also the influence of individual tastes and experiences that can bring new techniques into the event or elevate others. Finally, the event is not cut off from wider economic concerns, people

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<sup>56</sup> The French *agencement* comes from the word *agencer*, meaning ‘to arrange’ or ‘to lay out’ and is in many ways closer to a diagram in English than an assemblage, meaning the result of the joining of two things. The *agencement* is a multiplicity, not a unity; its parts can dismantle and recombine without destroying themselves (see Nail [2017] for a further discussion of Deleuze’s theory of assemblage and Bialecki [2018, 10-11] for an explanation of how this differs from the common use of the term in anthropology).

<sup>57</sup> Kenneth Dean (1998b, 30-63) demonstrated this kind of historical development of ritual events in the Xinghua region of Fujian and how these are arranged diagrammatically, writing that “the diagrammatic flowchart of the syncretic field of potential... is multidimensional: a constantly changing flowchart of a transforming force-field. Not only the centers of attraction, but all the various arenas and apparatuses and centers of nuclei of attraction that compose the field generate different dimensions. Within the multidimensional space opened up by the syncretic field, various strata overlay one another. These are the strata (spaces or planes) of the earth, of territory, of networks, and of collective experimentation” (1998, 59).

need to have the finances to pay for these different ritual experts and entertainers. How the event arranges in a locality then is based on its history, language, freedom of movement, relations between people and groups, individual tastes and experiences, and the temple's income.

Certain ritual technologies are divided along gendered lines. In some cases, this is the result of the masters not accepting female students, such as the hereditary Daoist lineages. Others do not outwardly reject men but are primarily made up of women, this is the case of many of the ritual drum troupes and Buddhist scripture recitation groups. The reason given for these groups being primarily made up of women tends to simply be that the men are not interested or the men are involved in other parts of the event, be in playing in the committee band or carrying flags (though in many instances women will also carry flags). However, many groups are mixed gendered including opera troupes, marching bands, and other musical or dance performances.

There are two main forms of circulation that form the arrangement of ritual events. The first is the circulation of actual people, the movement of ritual experts and other performers throughout and beyond the region. This includes Daoist priests, spirit mediums, Buddhist monks, opera performers, women's drum groups and so on. These groups circulate at varying scales, some operate at very small scales of circulation and are closely linked to one or a small number of temples. Others operate more widely but also maintain close relations with the specific temples that they perform at. Those who have the largest scale of circulation, however, tend to lose the opportunity to form these close connections, even if they have a greater potential for increasing the number of temples they can perform at. The second form of circulation is of media, both old and new. This

exists in the distribution of religious texts, clothing, ritual objects, and so on. As well as the spread of information digitally as text, image, or video, now most commonly done through the social networking app WeChat. Both kinds of circulation, however, require some sort of tradition of transmission. For the technologies to continue there is a need for them to be passed on from one to another, whether this is done by a master-disciple relationship, large group education, or shared practice between experts and novices.

The concrete circuits of ritual technologies that assemble together correspond to the abstract lines of the diagram. The diagram is the potential for the actualization of the event. There is no exact formula of how they will come together during the ritual event, but its composition draws on the different historical phases of the events among other forces. There is no center or essential elements to the event, it is not ruled by an overarching Daoist or Confucian order, nor does it have some essence defined by minor acts of pressing hands together and bowing or offering sticks of incense. All of these specific ritual technologies circulate through events but their circuits may expand, contract, or completely disappear. These minor acts are the simplest of ritual technologies, but also the most widespread and it may be difficult to imagine the ritual event without them. Regardless of their seeming ubiquity, I want to avoid pointing to them as a sliver of ‘unity’ in the diversity of circuits interacting. Even their circuits could potentially disappear without the end of the ever-changing formation and reformation in the event. They come together in different arrangements that look familiar enough to something that has been referred to as ‘Chinese religion.’ The circulation of one set can continue with the decline of another, constantly reordering the relations of the event in the process. This view of religion and ritual allows for a perspective of it in constant

transformation in its repetition, rather than merely as a single form that is on the increase or decline.

The circulation of different ritual techniques within and beyond southern Fujian are now confronted with new opportunities and adversities in the maintenance of their practices. Opportunities come primarily in the form of new communication and transportation networks and increased financial prosperity among some temple donors, which I described in relation to the individual temples in the previous chapter. These allow for an individual or group to vastly expand the scale of their circuits and the speed at which they can move from one point to another. Yet, at the same time, many groups face increasing problems in maintaining their ritual techniques as legitimate career options due to government regulation and attempts to professionalize ritual experts, increasing individual agency in one's choice of work resulting in a decline in hereditary practices, and changing market demand and competition from temple devotees who may prefer karaoke style singing or loud pop music to Daoist priests. In the following sections, I present the main ritual technologies found at Xiamen's temple events and the scale of their circulation in the region.

#### **5.4 Daoist Lineages and Associations**

Hereditary Daoist priests also known as Hearth Dwelling Daoists (*huojudao* 火居道) have been found throughout China. Studies of local religious life in Fujian and Taiwan have shown members of the Zhengyi 正一 school of Daoism as playing an important role in ritual events (Dean 1993, Schipper 1994, Lagerwey 1987, Lee 2006, Yamada 2015) and hereditary Daoists have also been studied in Guangdong (Lai 2007),

Hunan (Fava 2014), northern China (Jones 2017), among other regions. Within Xiamen city, they remain a common aspect at ritual events. A troupe will be hired to perform an offering ritual, generally lasting from one to three days on the gods' birthdays and dates of ascension, often becoming the central focus of these events. These performances known as sacrificial offerings (*jiao* 醮) involve establishing a temporary Daoist altar at the temple, the exteriorization of body gods from the priests' body, inviting and welcoming the gods, making offerings to the gods, and eventually sending them off. They involve a variety of musical performance on horns and percussion, chanting of sutras accompanied by mudras, splashing purifying water and rice, writing and burning talismans, *bugang* 步罡 (a technique of walking in a figure-eight shape that represent astrological patterns such as the stars of the big dipper), visualizations, and leading temple representatives in offering incense and other items. The intent is to bring good fortune and prosperity to the temple community it is performed in.<sup>58</sup> They are far less commonly hired for pilgrimage events, like the division of incense discussed in the following chapter, but may be hired to perform at the temple upon a group's return.

Although I met two young Daoists who lived on Xiamen Island, one a local and the other from Jiangxi, neither performed with a group on the island.<sup>59</sup> I encountered three main troupes hired by temples on the island but all travel from elsewhere to perform

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<sup>58</sup> I do not go into the complex details of the content of Daoist ritual, see Lagerwey (1987) for an extensive explanation.

<sup>59</sup> Both of these younger Daoists had received their registers and official government credentials from Mount Longhu 龍虎山, but were also, to some extent, part of hereditary lineages. One directly from his father and the other from his deceased grandfather, whose remaining Daoist equipment he inherited. In addition to these, there are temples that promoted themselves in terms of Daoism by offering classes in *taiquan*, martial arts, or organizing trips to famous Daoist sites. All are fascinating developments well worth further research and discussion, but beyond the scope of this project.

in the city. Two were from Tongan district and one from an area in neighboring Zhangzhou. There are possibly other groups that I did not come across as I did not attend events at every temple in the city and there are other troupes who are hired in the off-island districts and other nearby areas. Here, I focus on one group from Tongan led by a hereditary Daoist and the Zhangzhou group led by a hereditary Daoist who also runs a local Daoist Association. The third group that I met, unfortunately, was not interested in participating in this study to an extent that would allow for a proper comparison with the other two.

The leader of the Tongan group, Master Chen, began learning Daoist practices in his early 20s from his father following the Cultural Revolution at the end of the 1970s. Because he did not begin training as early as previous generations, he does not think he will ever develop the kind of understanding of rituals that they had, often noting how the ritual method (*fa* 法) is something learned in the body, not the classroom. Although his father has passed away, he remains in contact with some elderly Daoists in more remote parts of Tongan, who he holds in high admiration. I encountered other more senior Daoists in Haicang district and Zhangpu 漳浦 County as well. Chen is generally amiable and cheerfully cracks jokes, at other times he is more forlorn when speaking of the future of his practice. “If you work for the government it’s easy to make a living,” he told me, “but if you want to do business on your own it’s another story.” He has taken on a group of four apprentices who perform with him, but his son is too busy with his own work to attend the events. Chen is understanding of the decision, saying that he wouldn’t be able to afford a house nowadays with only a Daoist’s income.

The group service a number of temples in urban villages and redeveloped areas in the north of Xiamen Island, as well as some temples in Haicang and Tongan districts. Business during my final months of fieldwork seemed to have gotten worse for Chen. The previous year he had been hired to perform a number of large-scale events for sending off the Royal Lords, but as these are not held annually it seemed like a slower year was approaching. In off-island districts like Tongan, Daoists are still hired to perform at funerals but this is very uncommon within the city. Unfortunately for Chen, it seemed like this side of his business had been taken over by a less-experienced Daoist priest in his 40s.<sup>60</sup> Despite Chen's at times pessimistic attitude about the future of Daoism in the region, there continue to be numerous hereditary Daoist troupes practicing in and around the city. Those that I encountered all had young disciples eager to learn more about the tradition. The degree of mastery these new Daoists will be able to attain before they face other issues in life (such as income, marriage, and so forth) that may take them away from their training, however, is difficult to say at this point.

Chen's disciples, in general, were more optimistic that things would improve, this is perhaps because the money earned from Daoist rites is a supplement for other income. One of the disciples, now in his late 30s, began to study with Chen seven or eight years before I had met them. He ran a shop selling deity statues and other religious goods and saw studying Daoist ritual as a way to expand his existing business. He had known Chen for a number of years beforehand as they live in the same village and knew of his ritual

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<sup>60</sup> This less-experienced Daoist did not seem to be particularly well respected. After he invited me to attend an event he was organizing, one of the musicians who performed with him at funerals suggested that the event would be of no real substance and perhaps the Daoist had invented it himself in an attempt to gain prestige. Unfortunately, I cannot say for sure, as the musician was supposed to be the one to give me details of where it was held but refused to tell me, insisting it was a waste of time.



expertise. At his shop, he now offers additional services to customers, such as performing the consecration or ‘eye-opening’ ceremony (*kaiguang dianyan* 開光點眼) on new statues and offering fengshui services for those building new homes or placing graves. The musicians who performed with the troupe also generally seemed more satisfied with current business as they would also be hired to perform at multiple funerals and other smaller events in the area each month.



**Figure 22: Children watch as a Daoist troupe perform.**

Although there is a Tongan Daoist Association, this troupe expressed no interest in involvement with them and Chen was particularly disdainful towards such organizations. Chen understood the Daoist Association as being concerned with only the

management and regulation of Daoists and temples, rather than knowing anything of the actual practices.<sup>61</sup> He thought that those involved with the association were the people who received ordination at Mount Longhu 龍虎山, not hereditary Daoists whose family had been cultivating their techniques for generations. In his mind, these Daoists did not understand the tradition, saying “they can’t [even properly] perform a Daoist ritual” (*buhui zuo daochang* 不會做道場). This may indeed be true for some, as the training received at Mount Longhu was described as insufficient by the young Daoists I met who had traveled there. However, they continued to study Daoism after their initiation with masters from hereditary traditions. The association itself also participated at some large ritual events in Tongan, even if this may function as a way to improve state-temple relations or the monitoring of religious practices. My interest in the Tongan Association seemed to harm my relationship with Chen and so I focused instead on a group connected to a different local Daoist Association elsewhere and who also performed in Xiamen.

While Chen held these sorts of bureaucratic institutions in contempt, this other Daoist troupe not only readily affiliated with them but were led by its vice-president. Daoist Master Lin has taken the opposite position to Chen on religious associations, working to help establish the local Daoist association while continuing to perform rituals throughout the area. Lin’s background is not so different from Chen, both are from hereditary Daoist families and grew up in rural areas that have recently started to be

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<sup>61</sup> Xiamen City also has its own local Daoist Association, which was founded in 2005, but has limited influence as the Daoists who are hired in the city are generally from outside of the central urban districts. Instead this association is run by a board of professionals, academics, and temple members who see the group’s goals in terms of helping to promote Daoism more broadly and keeping records of the events held by the eleven temples (both on and off-island) that are affiliated with it.

engulfed by urban development and infrastructure projects, but they followed very different paths. Lin traveled to Mount Longhu to receive official government approved ordination as a Zhengyi priest and went on to work with the local Religious Affairs Bureau in his position with the Daoist Association.

The local association was founded in late 2000 and stated its goals as promoting and reflecting the teachings of Daoism, advancing patriotic education, following official regulations, and protecting cultural relics. In practice, they have worked to survey the temples in the region, promote Daoist activities as religion not superstition in meetings with local government, and attract a small number of young men to study with the more senior Daoists in the area. As Lai Chi-Tim (2003) noted, since the 1990s the Daoist Associations have been particularly concerned with the issue of managing household Daoists hired by individuals or temples or perform ritual services. This role of the Daoist Associations is intertwined with the dual process of increased professionalization of religious workers alongside increased surveillance of their activities by the government. While those involved in the local-level associations may see themselves as advocates for their tradition, they are also doing the state's work in surveying and registering religious sites and professionals.<sup>62</sup>

Although this involvement with the government opens the possibility for increased monitoring and potential regulations restricting how Daoist priests circulate in the region, so far it seems to have largely worked to Lin's advantage. Within the central districts of Xiamen, he is hired by temples in the southwest of the island in addition to

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<sup>62</sup> These efforts of professionalization to avoid being characterized as 'superstition' has even been found among diviners (Li 2015) and the standardization of religious training has been particularly evident in the state-sponsored schools for Daoist religious training (Yang 2012, Herrou 2013).

temples within Zhangzhou. For the time being, this group's more bureaucratic leanings seem to be benefitting them and increasing their client base. Such organizing has not come without opposition and conflict within the Daoist community, not only due to those like Chen who oppose such associations on principle but also when said Daoists lost former or potential clients to members of the association. The Daoist priest-cum-bureaucrats carry double-sided name cards, one with their professional title and given name, the other with their lineage of teachings, bestowed Daoist name, and ritual services they can provide. These groups appear to have a growing influence and increasing scale of circulation in the area due to both their willingness to present themselves as having a sort of professional expertise and their ability to organize troupes together in a period when groups need to extend beyond kin-based affiliation resulting from the desire for many sons of older Daoists to engage in non-ritual work that does not allow the time-off to perform rituals. Organizing all of the Daoists in an area then allows for the possibility of switching between groups when others leave the profession, retire, or pass away. However, many temples also continue to patronize the troupes not associated with any Daoist association, privileging the relations that have built up over time as well as trusting the efficacy of their rituals.

The Zhangzhou group maintain a number of localized elements like hereditary troupes such as the use of local dialect, hand-copied scriptures, as well as the general musical styles and movements of the Daoist in ritual performances. However, in other ways they have taken advantage of modern technology, this is particularly notable in the electronic printing of signs and scriptures that are pasted to the walls of temples with blanks to fill in the specific details of location and gods called upon in the rite. Some

Daoists may point to this as an example of their lack of understanding of the proper ritual method, as the meditative act of writing out of calligraphy in itself can be seen as a part of cultivation. Both this technical skill and rigor understood as necessary to Daoist cultivation may be seen as lacking. However, this is not of much concern for the client temples who hire the association Daoists and does not seem to have harmed their business. Indeed, Lin had little to say on the matter of printed material, for him it was merely a way to change with the times, and, perhaps, a necessity for someone whose time is now filled with the mass of bureaucratic paperwork and meetings that come along with working in conjunction with the CCP. Furthermore, as in pre-modern times, these Daoists would also spend large amounts of time doing agricultural work, it is not as if in the past Daoists committed all their waking hours to cultivation.

For those concerned with the preservation of the local Daoist tradition, these changes will likely be disappointing. It speaks to both the deterioration of ritual training and the increased role of standardization and monitoring by the state. Yet, there is also continued interest from some young men to take on this training from hereditary masters and outside of Xiamen city, there are numerous other troupes who perform. Additionally, those involved in the local Daoist associations do positive work for Daoists in the region more broadly, particularly by defending Daoist ritual from claims that it is superstition.

## 5.5 Sutra Chanting and ‘Buddhification’

Buddhist monastics or Veggie Aunties (*caigu* 菜姑)<sup>63</sup> are also hired to perform liturgical rites at temples, however, at events that I attended they are not hired at the same event as Daoist priests. In other instances, groups of women who are not formally affiliated with a Buddhist temple will also chant sutras inside their local temple. Regardless of the group performing, the practice itself is relatively similar, they will recite sutras over the repetitive rhythm of knocking on a wooden fish. Depending on the temple, the hired performers will either chant on their own or be accompanied by some of the temple’s devotees.

Events I attended at one temple had worked Buddhism more closely into the standard practices of the space, building a small Guanyin lake outside of the main shrine and having sutras chanted by a group of women inside the temple for ritual events held for their non-Buddhist gods. This is what some may consider the ‘Buddhification’ of local ritual practices, which Sun Yanfei (2014) suggests goes along with a ‘feminization’ of temples as women become increasingly dominant in ritual performance. While I cannot speak to Sun’s local specifics, within Xiamen I do not see this as a more general trend, nor does the increase in one form of ritual necessitate the decline of another. While this temple increased Buddhist elements of ritual practice, the men involved continue their own musical practice, and, additionally, another temple in the same neighborhood that shares some of the participants has not adopted these Buddhist elements.

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<sup>63</sup> In southern Fujian, vegetarian may be referred to as “eat vegetables” (*chi cai* 吃菜), fasting (*zhai* 斋), or vegetables (*cai* 菜), rather than “eating plain” (*chi su* 吃素) in Mandarin



**Figure 23: A group of veggie aunties chant sutras inside a communal temple.**

Veggie Aunties are the most common Buddhist performers found at communal temple events. The title refers to mostly middle-aged and elderly women who have converted to Buddhism and taken the Brahma Net Precepts (*fanwang jie* 梵網戒) and Bodhisattva Precepts (*pusa jie* 菩薩戒) in addition to the five basic precepts,<sup>64</sup> follow a vegetarian diet, and wear black Buddhist robes (*ziyi* 緇衣) to chant sutras at rituals. They are frequently widows whose children have already grown up, however, in other instances, they are interested in Buddhism but do not desire to cut family ties. They may also help out at Buddhist temples in a variety of different ways from office work to

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<sup>64</sup> Brahma Net Precepts are a series of ten bodhisattva precepts as listed in the Brahmajala sutra (Fanwangjing 梵網經), see Thanh, Minh (2000). "The Brahma Net Sutra". New York: Sutra Translation Committee of the United States and Canada.



washing clothes. Buddhists describe them as ‘neither nuns nor secular (*feini feisu* 非尼非俗).<sup>65</sup> The monastic establishment is somewhat condescending in their descriptions of these women, the Xiamen Buddhism Guide 廈門佛教志 describes them as often lacking education and, as such, now receive training from the Buddhist training schools to differentiate between Buddhism and what they deem as ‘superstition’ (XMFJZ 2005, 123). Marjorie Topley (2011) found similar customs in 1950s Singapore, unmarried and widowed women took on semi-monastic lives but did not cut ties with their family. Unlike in Fujian, however, these women formed institutions separate from monasteries known as Vegetarian Houses (*Zhaitang* 齋堂). More recently, Lin Meirong 林美容 and Li Jiakai 李家愷 (2017) note the different understandings of who is considered a Veggie Auntie with some far closer to a definition of a nun (one did not consider herself a Veggie Auntie because she had previously been married). They also found that some moved around to live in temples in different cities. This mobility perhaps partially explains why many temple devotees that I met did not know who the Veggie Aunties were or where they lived.

Compared to Daoists, Buddhist monastics are far less common at communal temples, but as mentioned in chapter three a small number of communal temples have identified as Buddhist since the 1920s. Additionally, Veggie Aunties have also begun to influence the performance of rituals, this is partially due to the increased awareness of Buddhist practice through popular media and ease in distribution and circulation of

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<sup>65</sup> See Liu Yi-jung 劉一蓉 (2005) for a discussion of the historical development of the Caigu since the late Qing.



Buddhist texts. These efforts from monastic Buddhist institutions have worked to shape the practices of a small number of temples without being engaged directly with them. The hiring of monastics or veggie aunties from a nearby Buddhist temple occurs either when a communal temple has been converted into a Buddhist temple or, more commonly, for the ritual celebrating the birth of Prince Nezha (and at least one temple also for the birth of Guandi) at temple's that would otherwise not include chanting Buddhist sutras in their ritual events. However, none of the events held for local deified monastics, such as Qingshui Zushi 清水祖师 or Zhenyi Dashi 真異大師, that I attended hired Buddhists.<sup>66</sup> Depending on the temple, their participation may be the central aspect of the event (in which case, general attendance is small) or occurring alongside processions, musical groups, and local ritual masters (seen as more exciting and drawing more people in).

Buddhist sutra chanting presents a more easily repeated and economical form of liturgy than Daoist priests, yet these individual groups also operate within much smaller scales of circulation. In the case of the women's group chanting, they do not perform at rituals held in any other temple. While the Veggie Aunties they either only perform at the temple in the neighborhood they live or the ones near the Buddhist monastery they live in. Instead, the spread of Buddhist practice is aided by the spread and availability of texts as well as more widespread knowledge of what Buddhist practice is through other media forms. The expansion of the sutra chanting does not require the physical movement of

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<sup>66</sup> While Daoists are often hired to perform at events for Qingshui Zushi and he is seen more broadly as the protective deity for Anxi, the actual founding temple of the cult is notably Buddhist with a number of monks living at the Cliffside monastery. Zhenyi Dashi (also known as Sunying Zushi 孙应祖师, Huiying Zushi 惠应祖师, Huiying Dashi 惠应大师, Zhenren Dashi 真人大师, Taihu Zushigong 太湖祖师公), however, appears to have remained relatively separate from Buddhist institutions and instead is closely connected to the Sun lineage.

people in wide scales, instead, the simplicity of the practice allows for it to spread through the emergence of new pockets of practitioners gaining access to textual knowledge.

## 5.6 Spirit Mediums

Men known as Jitong 乩童 or Tongji 童乩 act as conduits for the gods, embodying them in their spastic movements and providing devotees with a line of communication to the spirit as the god speaks through them in spirit writing sessions. This form of mediumship has been studied in Taiwan (Lin 2015, Jordan 1999, Marshall 2006), Singapore (Heng 2016), and Putian (Dean and Zheng 2010) where they remain an important element of temple events in both rural and urban areas.<sup>67</sup> Mediums will take part in temple's neighborhood processions, pilgrimages to founding temples, as well as spirit writing sessions. However, in the central areas of Xiamen, their presence is limited. Their absence from most events in the city may suggest a move in urban areas towards a more ordered and predictable form of ritual events.

I found it difficult to find evidence to account for the general absence of spirit mediums in the city, finding only two mediums who service three different temples. However, as with the Daoist troupes, because I did not attend events at all temples included in the survey there could indeed be more. The most obvious reason for their absence is that regulation of ritual events, particularly aspects like spirit mediums that are

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<sup>67</sup> Another phenomenon is women who are possessed by spirits, but do not take on the same violent martial characteristics as the *tongji*. Unfortunately, I was not able to meet any, but they exist throughout the region. Chang and Lin (2015) discuss one such medium at Xiamen's popular Xian Yue Earth God Temple. Based on videos that people showed me, they are comparable to the trance dances of women mediums described by Yang (2015) in Wenzhou and Wu (2015, 122-146) in Yan'an.

deemed superstitious, is much stronger in urban than rural areas. While this may explain the situation in part, especially during the 1980s and 1990s, one of the spirit mediums who performs in the city does so at two temples in the downtown, where regulation is the strictest. I would suggest the general absence of mediums in the city needs to be understood beyond the enforcement of official regulations.

In off-island urban centers and peri-urban areas, spirit mediums remain more prevalent. However, even here the scale of their circuits of movement is smaller than ritual masters like Daoist priests or other ritual performers like opera troupes. The spirit mediums who I encountered service the community they are from and also some nearby, but do not extend far beyond this, and, unlike some ritual masters and most opera performers, it is not their full-time job. This smaller scale of circulation is part of the reason why the mediums have a much closer relationship to the specific temple or temples and their surrounding communities than many other ritual specialists.

I suggest there are three factors for the general absence within the city: 1) stricter regulation prevented a return of spirit medium practice as temples were reconstructed, 2) as regulations relaxed people had grown used to mediums not taking part in ritual events leading to feelings of fear associated with such unpredictable power (I discuss this further in the following chapter), and 3) if the expansion of circuits is based on our conscious and nonconscious mimetic factors, then a prolonged absence will make the future expansion of the circuit increasingly difficult. Indeed, one of the two mediums on the island I knew of left Xiamen in 1949 and traveled to Jilong 基隆 in Taiwan where he lived for over thirty years. He had already married prior to this, but his wife and young child did not travel with him to Taiwan, and as a result, his son has not trained in the

tradition. Yet, despite how infrequently mediums are part of events, when one is present they attract the most attention from onlookers. There is an intensity to the possessed body that cannot be ignored, though this fascination is also a result of how uncommon it is for many to witness the medium.



**Figure 24: Spirit talisman writing session in Haicang.**

### **5.7 Opera Performers as Ritual Experts**

Opera performers are a common and important element of many ritual events in the region, taking on various roles to become and also thank the gods. Margaret Chan (2009) contrasts Chinese theater as entertainment with what she refers to as the “true theatre of the Chinese,” the temple festival performances that involve a “sacral act of transmogrification” through the mask (2009, 3) and also points to the historic importance

of theater performances in shaping how most people's conceptions of who particular gods were and what they looked like. Noting important mediumistic qualities of Chinese theater, in her study of opera performers in colonial Hong Kong, Barbara Ward wrote that,

The [masked] actor who plays [the role of a god]... has to take peculiar precautions, for it is believed that as soon as he puts on the mask the spirit descends into him. In other words, he has put himself in the mystically dangerous position of a medium, and he must avoid others as much as possible, both for their sakes and for his own. Similarly, other people who may come into contact with him must observe appropriate precautions too (hence the taboo on speech, lifted by the shout) and everyone else also needs to be protected (hence the row of chairs along the front of the stage). On some occasions at least, then, one can state that actors are not only expert exorcists but also mediums (1979, 32).

This link between theatre, possession, and ritual continues today for many opera troupes, despite the repeated attempts throughout the twentieth century to secularize China's artistic traditions. In Xiamen, Gezai opera 歌仔戲, also known as Zhangzhou-style opera (*Xiangju* 薌劇),<sup>68</sup> is by far the most predominant form with much less frequent performances by Gaojia opera 高甲戲 and Glove puppet theatre (*Budaixi* 布袋戲). It was not until the 1980s that the *gezai* style began to dominate the region, during this decade a number of Taiwanese opera troupes began visiting Fujian. Some of these groups were invited by the government but most came as part of pilgrimages to founding temples with the first recorded trip visiting the Baijiao Ciji Temple for the annual pilgrimage by temples dedicated to Baosheng Dadi in 1982 (FJXQNJ 1982). As Gezai troupes began to

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<sup>68</sup> While previously Gezaixi referred to the Taiwanese tradition and Xiangju to the Zhangzhou tradition, which both share linguistic and musical styles but their history over the past hundred years is quite different. However, the terms are now used interchangeably in southern Fujian. This is perhaps due to the large influence Taiwanese groups have had on performances since the 1980s.

expand through southern Fujian, the popularity of other local opera styles decreased. Like the spirit medium who returned from Taiwan, the visits from these opera troupes point to how ritual events have been shaped by religious practice in Taiwan following the period of Reform and Opening Up. It was not only that Taiwanese and other Overseas Chinese groups donated to the reconstruction of temples, but also were heavily influential on the kinds of ritual technologies that were experienced and would later spread through the area.

The troupes vary in size but usually have around twenty members in total, larger groups tend to grow due to a larger number of musicians accompanying them. Each group has a boss who is in charge of maintaining the scripts, purchasing equipment, booking their performances, and hiring performers. They are hired by temples, paid for by an individual donor or by a group, and some groups are also hired to perform at other institutions, such as schools in rural areas. In areas where there is no temple, they may be hired by the community to perform on a makeshift stage in a large open area. While a small number of “professional” (*zhuanye* 專業) troupes primarily perform in non-religious venues, such as at the massive Xiamen Arts and Culture Center, and receive funding from the government, the vast majority continue to make their income from performances at temples. Most temples will hire the troupes to perform opera two or three times (in the afternoon and evening) a day, and are generally hired for one or three days, but on certain occasions when donors want to show off their wealth, they may be hired to perform for a full week or more. Depending on the temple these performances may take place at the same time as Daoist rituals, fireworks, musical groups, and a variety of other loud distracting activity showing that the performance is primarily for the

gods. In other instances, they are separate from the larger ritual event and attract large human audiences.

None of the performers I interviewed were part of a hereditary tradition of opera performance. In fact, the only ones with family members who also performed were those who had older or younger sibling that joined a troupe and convinced the other to do the same. Those I spoke to had begun learning the practice after leaving school, usually between the ages of 16 and 18, and tend to speak of a general curiosity, fascination, or admiration with the tradition when ask how they began to get involved. Initial training is very difficult as one's body and mind are not used to memorizing so many different lines or repeating so many gestures in time with the music. The frenzy of activity often going on at ritual events along with the heat of the stage lights during a hot summer performance don't make things easier for the actors.

The performers must also adapt to a transient lifestyle, having to travel throughout the region to frequently enter into the world of the gods. At most temples, the performers will sleep in tents (each member brings their own with them) that are set up in a room attached to the main shrine or stage, living in close proximity to the supernatural forces. This seems to give many performers a closer or more intimate relation to the gods. None of those that I spoke to ever expressed the same kind of anxiety or fear associated with unknown gods or unfamiliar temples that I heard from those with non-religious careers. Instead, for the performers, the powers of the supernatural were simply a part of everyday life.

In addition to the gods enshrined at temples, the opera troupe brings their own portable shrine to be established backstage. The god of theatre, Tai Yezi 太爺子,

depicted as a child, is perhaps the opposite cosmologically to location-based gods like the City God or Earth God; he travels along with the opera troupe without any permanent territory and is re-enshrined in new spaces night after night. Indeed, there are different positions of gods during the performance: the god of the temple watching from the crowd, the actors as gods on the stage expressing their gratitude, and the god backstage making sure the performance is a success.

Unlike liturgical ritual specialists, there is seemingly little to no allegiance to the troupe or boss. It is common for performers to change from one troupe to another each year or even after just a few months. This could be for a variety of reasons: too much competition between groups in a region, wanting to move closer to one's hometown, disagreements with the boss or other performers, or not getting paid enough money. Performers hear about troupes seeking new performers through word of mouth or notices posted on the stage of another troupe performing. Just as the members are not loyal to their troupes, nor are the temples loyal to them. There are no set circuits that an opera troupe repeats each year, a temple might hire one troupe for three nights and then a different one for the next three. Additionally, there is a large degree of competition between troupes in order to be hired, some will even convince a temple to cancel the performance of another troupe by offering a lower rate. Nor does any of this seem to bother the performers, stealing others' shows, not getting hired back, and frequently changing groups are all accepted parts of the profession. This frequent shifting of the opera troupe hired by a temple can be seen in contrast with the relation to Daoist troupes, Veggie Aunties, and spirit mediums who tend to establish closer ties with the temple committee or other devotees of the temple.





**Figure 25: Opera performers dressed offer incense in a temple while the God of Fortune performs on stage.**

The rituals performed by the troupe can be divided into two types: exorcisms and possessions. The exorcism is what begins the performance with a musical exorcism known as ‘starting the drum’ (*kaigu* 開故), banging on drums and gongs works to both cleanse the stage of bad spirits, who are frightened away by the loud rhythms, and alert the audience that things are about to begin. The possession and accompanied ritual are seen as the most important role of the opera troupe by their clients, even if it takes up a much shorter period of time than the opera proper. The troupe will be asked to perform the Eight Immortals Drama (*Baxian xi* 八仙戲).<sup>69</sup> On stage, one performer wears a large pale white mask with long black whisker-like facial hair and red robe embroidered with yellow dragons. The performer has transformed into the God of Fortune who will bring prosperity to the community and the coming performance as he bows in three directions facing the temple or outside altar.<sup>70</sup> Taking on the role of the god, the actor must hold the mask to his face by biting onto a piece of wood on its backside, this is because a human body taking on the role of a god is not supposed to speak. This restraint shows the direct contrast to the unpredictable movements and often incomprehensible speech of the spirit medium who is unafraid to take on the full scale of a god’s power. The other members of the troupe put on make-up and dress as the Eight Immortals, and although they do not wear masks, they are also silent during the performance. As the god of fortune bows from

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<sup>69</sup> Also known as *da baxian* 打八仙, *fen xian* 扮仙, *tiao jiaguan* 跳加官, *song haizi* 送孩子, and *baxian baishou* 八仙拜壽, for a description of the same practice in Taiwan see Wang Songshan (1988, 127-160). When described as *tiao jiaguan* or *song haizi* it does not necessarily have performers dress as the Eight Immortals, instead two performers will act as a couple presenting the baby.

<sup>70</sup> The performer is identified as the Tang dynasty prime minister 狄仁杰, also known as the Celestial Minister 天官, who was said to have performed to Empress Wu Zetian and wore the mask to hide his high rank.

the stage, the immortals walk back and forth from the stage to the temple or altar carrying a basin with a doll of a baby, known as Sun Xingwang 孫興旺, who is offered to the gods as the immortals prostrate themselves in front of the altar, while the troupe's band continues to play repetitive rhythms. Through this ritual, the Eight Immortals, who are high ranking in the hierarchy of deities, submit to the power of the local god. The baby is then carried back to the stage by one of the temple members, often containing offerings for the immortals, and then the practice is repeated. The length of this performance varies depending on the requests of the temple, it may take just five minutes or can last up to half an hour. In these performances, the opera troupe becomes central to the ritual, not only conferring blessings and good fortune but also bringing other deities to the event who worship the temple's gods.

Evening opera performances can attract large crowds who squeeze into the temple courtyard to sit on wooden benches or short plastic stools. Although the audience tends to be largely made up of seniors and young children, smaller groups of people of all age groups can be found. The song lyrics are displayed to the side of the stage on a vertical red LED screen, allowing those not familiar with the dialect or unable to understand what words are being sung to follow along as well. The plays themselves also contain degrees of becoming gods or religious figures and acting out rituals that are treated as the actual event. The audience throws coins to the traveling monk and presents gifts at the marriage of a young couple. Just as in playing the role of immortals and gods, for the time of the performance they are treated as the roles they take on.<sup>71</sup> These performances, however,

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<sup>71</sup> Other performers are also treated as the gods they dress up as. In a recently imported practice from Taiwan known as Electric-Techno Neon Gods (*Dianyin santaizi* 電音三太子), young men in large cartoonish costumes of gods dance to electronic music. Like the opera troupes, they are treated as having

offer something very different from the spirit medium, their techniques cannot be viewed as a replacement. These deities do not give out any new information as in spirit writing, they are instead predictable and controlled, they come to make their own offerings to the temple's gods and to receive offerings from the temple in return.<sup>72</sup>

The circuits of these troupes are much wider in their scale than those of an individual spirit medium and are only restricted to the linguistic boundaries of their style. Furthermore, they are not only one of the most common type of performers at ritual events in the region but also the one whose demographics are largely younger, with many performers are in their 20s and 30s, and who make their living solely or primarily from their work at ritual events. While joining an opera troupe is seen as a profitable occupation for young rural residents with limited formal education, opera performers in many ways remain marginal figures in society, looked down upon as strange or bizarre people. Perhaps this is part of why they are also considered to have such a close connection to the gods; it is that which makes them lack social power gives them spiritual power. This status was not something that was ever mentioned to me by the performers but from others who did not understand my interest in spending time with people like that. Those who have chosen the profession seem to have little concern, well aware that they have taken on a fairly unconventional lifestyle.

Most people do not understand the performers' chosen lifestyles, taking up a life of low pay, frequent travel, and spending nights on end sleeping in tents in or around

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powers to bring fortune, they will throw out blessed candy and bits of food that the crowds rush to collect and people rub their costumes for good luck. As the performers' movement is limited by the large costume, their dances are usually somewhat goofy and seem to be only mildly coordinated, bearing no resemblance to the movements of the spirit medium.

<sup>72</sup> Margaret Chan (2006) argues that even the spirit medium should be thought of as a kind of theater, as the medium adopts theatric gestures and uses costumes, make-up, and props.

temples. Yet, these lives also offer the performers opportunities that they would most likely be unavailable otherwise. They get to travel to the major cities in the region and some are even invited to perform overseas for temples in Southeast Asia and more recently they have also been given at least some level of prestige through the numerous government-funded projects on local culture and intangible cultural traditions of southern Fujian. But, perhaps, this too highlights the atypical nature of the performers, these projects present them as living relics of the past, once again they become dually excluded and exalted.

### **5.8 Casting Out Demons and Thanking the Gods**

In addition to these common ritual forms, there is a seemingly endless array of traveling groups and local ritual performers who take part in the events in order to either exorcize demons or thank the gods. Prior to any form of communication with gods, whether through their materialization in mediums and opera troupes or contact through ritual experts, the space of the temple or wherever the ritual is held must be cleansed of any demonic presence. This happens repeatedly throughout ritual events and may be performed by a variety of different groups. Ritual events suggest that there is an unseen world of innumerable spirits always around us, and when inviting a god to their temple, its safety and well-being are tantamount. The task of casting out demons is taken on by almost everyone involved in the event. From the complex ritual procedures of the Daoist priests to the everyday devotees and committee members tossing out ribbons of firecrackers. Noise and motion are used to startle the demons out of the god's path, but also work to take people into the event and make the god's presence known. Casting out

demons presents a moment in which the vision of the cosmos and ritual technologies meet: an understanding that there can be unseen malicious forces all around us that can be expelled through a variety of combined sounds, gestures, and motions. The technologies to do so are never uniform but the reasoning behind them is one of the most widespread in circulation.

In chapter four, I described a man who holds the title of Master of the Whip (*Fashengshi* 法繩師), in that example the Master took a rather central role in the procession as the main actor to cast out demons. More often than not, this figure is less central and many of the others taking part in the ritual event do not know his title or if he even has one. Compared to the actions of Daoists or opera performers, this is a very simplistic ritual action, even if some of them try to stand out more by dressing in costumes comparable to Daoist ritual masters found in period dramas that are easily available for purchase online. One of the men I spoke to who held this role, however, was considerably modest about his role in the event. When talking to me, he even admitted that the same acts are also performed in far more elaborate ways by Daoists. He simply took over the role when the former Master decided he was too old and received instructions from him about the proper gesture and stance for cracking the whip. He was uncertain who, if anyone, would take on the role when he becomes unable to perform. Others see their actions as slightly more complicated, not only casting out demons but also being the one who welcomes the gods down from the heavens and into the material statue. This is done not through the use of liturgical language but in removing demonic presences by cracking the whip and burning strips of spirit money.

The Horn to Open the Path Group (*Kailu laba* 開路喇叭) perform a similar function as the Master of the Whip. The group is made up of men and women wearing robes inspired by outfits from late imperial China (the men have embroidered patches of the immortal crane sewn on the back) and conical hats blowing on horns and banging on gongs and drums. The man leading the group holds a banner reading vertically ‘open the path wide’ (*dakaidao* 大開道) with dragons adorning each side. Another spectacle of noise and gesture to clear the way for the honored deities. Groups of elderly women may also work to cast out demons or, more precisely, to sweep them away. These groups stand near the front of the procession in front of the god statue or palanquin sweeping the streets to purify the pathway. Each of these groups provides a similar function but using different combinations of dress, sound, and movement to accomplish it. The appearance of one within the event does not mean the absence of the others, there can be many groups whose function is the same, the more present simply means the more dedicated the event’s organizers see themselves to exorcizing malevolent forces.

In addition to ensuring the safety of the gods and making offerings to them, the gods are thanked for bringing good fortune to the community through song, dance, opera, and whatever else is thought to be entertaining. This practice is perhaps the most varied as any form of entertainment could be seen as a way to thank the gods. Instead of one form taking precedence over another, they tend to pile up, expanding what is included within the event. Like casting out demons, the conception of thanking the gods is widely circulated but the actual technologies take on seemingly infinite forms. The Daoists, opera troupes, and Buddhist groups described all perform some sort of thanksgiving

within their rituals, as do the everyday devotees as they offer incense in praise of the god and in hopes of prosperity for themselves and others.

Numerous other song and dance groups are hired or volunteer for the sole purpose of increasing the gratitude shown towards the god. Women's ritual drum bands (*ligudui* 禮鼓隊) wearing colorful outfits and mixed-gender marching bands are the most common forms. They may be members of the community or come from elsewhere in southern Fujian. Their loud and repetitive rhythms are a mainstay of temples events, drowning out the surrounding urban soundscape and meshing together with whatever other performances are occurring. Facing the temple or statue of the deity, the women's drum bands also prepare dance routines for the god's entertainment, performing with a recorded backing of electronic music or the same simple rhythms used in the procession. The importance of these groups in the event should not be overlooked, not only for their part in setting the rhythm and atmosphere, but also the place these devotional acts take for the women involved. While those who follow only the circuits of a Daoist priest, spirit medium, or Buddhist sutra recitation group may come to the conclusion that whoever they have followed is the central element of the ritual event, all of these are absent from many temples, while the women's drum bands are almost ubiquitous. Like the Buddhist sutra chanting groups at other temples, these drum and dance groups provide an important ritual role for many of the women involved in the temple. Even though women are now a part of other elements, such as the prostrations and offerings led by the Daoists, they maintain their own traditions as a valuable part of the event.

Other more raucous song and dance groups are also hired, mixing routines of choreographed dance, traditional instruments, electronic karaoke-style songs, and even



magic tricks together to delight the gods and spectators alike. One such group known as the Xishuangbanna 西雙版納 Folk Song group make their living performing in the region. They frequently perform at funerals in the countryside but also make trips to perform at ritual events in the city. The group's founder is a young woman originally from Yunnan who moved to Fujian in the late 2000s, settling in Jinjiang, Quanzhou. She began performing by combining Yunnan folk songs with electronic instruments and dance routines. Their musical performances combine horn, woodwinds, with gongs and other percussion instruments along with vocals amplified through a large speaker portable on wheels in order to easily move with them in a procession. Unlike opera or Daoist groups, their performance is not tied by linguistic region and, as a result, are able to perform throughout southern Fujian as well as Putian and elsewhere in Fujian without knowing any of the local dialects. Because Mandarin is now commonly understood by many people in more rural areas, even if not used for daily conversation, the founder has even acted as an MC at funerals announcing the events in Mandarin. The Xishuangbanna group exhibit the possibility for those from outside the region to enter into the economy of ritual events and, in some cases, are able to spread further than those tied to local dialect. They also present the constantly evolving nature of ritual performances, especially those designed to thank the gods.

Finally, young children also get to take part in the festivities through the Centipede Pavilion (*Wugong ge* 蜈蚣閣), a long thin wheeled carriage of sorts decorated with banners for good fortune and a dragon or centipede's head and tail added to both ends. Children are dressed up as historic and mythic figures and join in the procession route. The custom is found throughout southern Fujian, but unlike most other performing

groups, they do not travel to perform in other neighborhoods, nobody is forcing their children to travel around from one temple to another. Rather, it introduces many of the devotees' young children to a more elaborate form of worship and offering through the symbolic transformation of their bodies through costume and performance.



**Figure 26: A centipede pavilion in the midst of a procession through an urban village.**

These forms of ritual thanksgiving expand with the tastes of temple-goers. Whatever the people find entertaining will, of course, be entertaining for the gods, their tastes change with the times as well. The more traditional forms are able to continue alongside these new techniques, Daoists or opera troupes will be hired along with these varieties of other song and dance performers. Most of these groups for casting out demons and thanking the gods do not travel particularly widely, often only performing in one or two neighborhoods. A smaller number of groups who make their living from their

performances are engaged in frequent travel to many parts of the region. The actual techniques involved, however, are widespread, growing as people visit other temples or go on pilgrimages and witness these groups performing while there. What is more, different groups can now be seen without even going to a temple, as videos of them are frequently shared over social media, by the performers and the audiences.

### **5.9 The Mimetic Factor**

These diverse forms of liturgy, mediumship, exorcism, and devotional practice join together in a seemingly infinite number of arrangements. Every event seems to form in a somewhat different ensemble, but certain aspects connect one event to another. No one form can be taken as central or essential. Even though if you speak with many of the individual actors in the event they may point to one actor or group as the key, there is never an agreement between everyone as to who it is. How the circuits of these different groups expand and contract, and how new, but often related, circuits and ritual technologies appear can be thought of in terms of the mimetic quality of bodily actions and sensation, working on both conscious and nonconscious levels. In one instance a group may purposely copy certain techniques seen performed by others for their own gain, while at other times the repetitions occur without even thinking about it, they become attuned to bodily memory.

In a discussion of Marcel Mauss' essay on techniques of the body, Michael Taussig suggests that what Mauss overlooks is the connection between the conscious and nonconscious, body and mind, voluntary and involuntary; the connection between bone and brain, heart and mind. He writes "what involuntary memory can achieve in this

regard is the retrieval -- the reliving -- of the sensuous clustering composing actions and ideas that the intellect strips bare... On the other hand, conscious memory 'presents the past in monochrome,' writes Beckett. 'It has no interest in the mysterious element of inattention that colors our most commonplace experiences'" (2009, 188). That which has become truly unforgettable connects to both the involuntary nonconscious affective traces in the body and the conscious functioning of the brain. When people talk of the forms their ritual events take as 'just being what we do' or 'as it has always been done,' it is because of this sort of connection to the repetition of events, even if in reality the forms the events take are constantly changing as they interact with different ritual technologies. As the rhythms of life change over time, so do our repetitions, new mimetic resonances develop, and in this sense it should be no surprise that practices once associated with the Maoist period, such as military garb and marching bands, as well as the more recent karaoke style singing among other performers have now been incorporated into ritual events.

These mimetic repetitions are not just connected to the longer history of ritual events, but also to the history of individual bodies. The linked conscious and nonconscious mimetic factor can be seen in one of the most basic of ritual technologies, putting hands together and bowing. Though there can be many forms of this act, such as those that have stricter rules for the height hands are held and degree the body is bent, for most individuals the practice starts in a less disciplined form, as parents or grandparents grasp a small child's hands and shake them up and down at the temple. The child soon may do it at will, laughing at their imitation of whatever the adults are doing, as there is no explanation of what the act is about, only a repetition of "*baibai baibai*" 拜拜拜拜, the

term used for acts of worship. While the meaning of the gesture as a ritual act is not explained, in repetition the act becomes naturalized in the body and the idea that this is what to do in a temple remains in conscious memory.

Like the act of putting hands together and bowing, the other ritual technologies (liturgy, dance, possession, and so forth) become thought of as naturally part of a temple's event repertoire through their repetition. These technologies, however, are different as they connect to movements and gestures that are not part of most participants' daily life. As Catherine Bell (1992) described, the acts are set apart from the every day through their ritualization and this is what gives them a sense of power; it is a kind of purposeful othering of the self. The ritual technologies of spirit mediums, Daoists, opera troupes, and so on set themselves apart from the other temple participants, whether through secrecy, complexity, gesture, appearance, or extremes of alterity in spastic movements and self-harm. Like the ritual acts of the temple participants, it is through their repetition at temple's event that its place within the ritual event becomes further embedded. The rise or decline of particular technologies, therefore, are seen to multiply in their velocity; when one does not appear, it will more quickly be seen as unnecessary to include as it becomes disconnected from what is felt like the natural way the event unfolds. These acts may also be copied to produce new ritual technologies through their imitations. New more localized ritual forms, like the Master of the Whip, can emerge that borrow specific gestations from more established ritual masters. In this way, the more localized form undercut the established wider traditions in the economy of ritual events.

Beyond the mimetic faculty, groups of ritual experts and other performers will try to increase the scope of their own circulation, trying to attract new business in an

increasingly competitive field. The Daoist's business cards act both as a functional description of what they can do and a claim to their authenticity. The different song and dance groups will be led by one member holding a sign displaying their name, place of origin, and contact information. Displays on opera troupe's LED display panels provide their relevant contact information before and during the performance. The ritual event works as a marketing event for the performers hoping to expand their connections. These can be particularly useful as the large-scale pilgrimages to founding temples, which I discuss in the following chapter, as different temples arrive at the same time and are able to see the performance of others who come before and after them. However, marketing is not everything. Especially for performers like Daoists and spirit mediums, there is a large emphasis placed on relations between performers and the temple. The development of trust in their knowledge and reliability.

These circuits are not confined to the borders of the People's Republic of China as a Nation-State, though this can hinder the ease of circulation. Opera troupes, in particular, are invited by overseas Chinese temples in Southeast Asia. One performer told me that in his previous troupe, he had performed in Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia. When temples travel overseas to make pilgrimages, most often to Taiwan, they may also bring also certain performers with them, and likewise, groups coming from Taiwan, Southeast Asia, or elsewhere will bring their own ritual technologies and performers with them. These travels can have a large influence on the forms ritual events take in their destinations, as seen in the rise of Gezai style opera or the appearance of Electric-Techno Neon Gods following Taiwanese temples pilgrimages to Fujian.

### 5.10 Competition and Bans

The ritual technologies do not only operate on the mimetic level but also need to maneuver their position within the economy of local temple events as well as within the ever-changing regulation and implementation of said regulation by the party-state. The ritual technologies present in the event are determined by their historic presence, repetition, relationships, and tastes of the event's organizers, but also in the functioning of the economic market and legal systems. The disciplinary powers of the state acting on the ritual event to limit the power to act that it can evoke in people. The local government sees firecrackers as delinquent and they are deemed 'uncivilized.' The state no longer needs to evoke terms like 'feudal superstition' (*fengjian mixin* 封建迷信), instead, activities like setting off firecrackers are presented as a public nuisance, a purported issue of safety, and not respecting the individual rights of the new homeowners living in nearby apartment buildings.

While in the virtual state of the abstract diagram such banned activities still hold a potential to return, in the concrete assemblage they become a rarer sight. The implementation of regulations is strongest in the downtown, weaker in urban villages, and far less apparent in peri-urban areas. The state appeals to the language of being "uncivilized" (*bu wenming* 不文明) and messy (*luan* 亂). While I am generally skeptical of promoting 'civility' in China, many people I talked to in Xiamen saw it as a good thing, as long as it didn't directly disrupt their own life. Young migrant workers who lived in the urban villages, spaces defined as uncivilized, saw civility (*wenming* 文明) as signaling social and material improvement, but to others, these campaigns are experienced through shutting down of street food carts, of arbitrary rules that are given

no clear reasoning. In a generalized sense, people often support campaigns for civility but may become frustrated when it impacts them more directly.

Temples and their ritual events fall somewhere in between the civility (*wenming* 文明) promoted by the state and what stands on the other side, the messiness, the hot and tumultuous (*renao* 熱鬧) atmospheres. The temple's ritual events define themselves in terms of local culture (*difang wenhua* 地方文化) or local customs (*difang xisu* 地方習俗). These are categories that are largely safe from attacks from the civilizing campaigns, but at times they get dragged back into these regulations and increased controls are placed on their events. During the Lunar New Year in 2017, stricter enforcement on firecrackers being set off began. While the regulation existed already, outside of the downtown it was not enforced, despite banners being hung up that demanded people not to set them off. In this period, however, the local police forces were sent out to roam around on motor scooters making sure there were no unexpected explosive noises coming from any alleyways. Some temple committees followed suit, putting up their own small handwritten signs telling the participants that firecrackers were not allowed. Instead, they were replaced at events with noisemakers and tubes that sent out explosions of colored paper. Though in other cases, the temples have continued to set off huge amounts of firecrackers and fireworks, like many laws in China, the implementation of the regulations remains uneven.

The local police are also required to attend any public events, in case things get out of control, and are present at many (but not all) temple events. Their presence is largely ignored unless the officers actually take part in the offerings to the gods or help to stop traffic while crossing a road. Those I asked about their presence had little respect for



these low-level police and did not think they held any real authority. My friends would even mock me and laugh when I admitted to feeling nervous when they were around. The police stand around in the background of the ritual events and their main role is understood as traffic control when processions need to cross a large road. Many of these officers are from the communities or at least currently reside there, their small police offices may even be linked to the larger temple complexes. The ability of local low-level police to enact a ban or prohibit any aspect of temple events only comes when there is a larger move by the municipal government against activities like firecrackers.

Performers must also cope with competition from other groups to take their place in the event. Opera troupes in particular, as mentioned above, will vie to snatch up chances to perform from other groups. This may involve cutting their overall income in order to undercut the previously booked group, or it may be part of networks of relationships in which the ritual performers try to present themselves as more talented, experienced, or efficacious than others. As the wealth of a temple's participants increases the scale of their event will likely also grow, hiring more performers in order to show off the prosperity to both those from neighboring communities and their gods.

### **5.11 Circulation of Objects, Images, and Data**

This discussion has largely focused on ritual technologies spreading through the movement of people in the region. Yet, there are other platforms through which ritual technologies spread, this includes publishing religious texts, local histories and official government statements that describe 'local culture;' spreading images, videos, news and essays online, now largely on the smartphone messaging app WeChat; and depictions of

Daoist priests and other ritual specialists in film and television. From these sources, ritual technologies, or parts of them, can then be taken up by non-experts, who either develop a degree of mastery of them or continue in amateurish performance. They can be used by individuals to gain prestige and merit or by groups for large-scale performances. These too can involve sharing, conscious theft, or nonconscious mimetic repetitions.

As I have already mentioned, the spread of Buddhist practices has in part relied on the mass publication and free distribution of Buddhist sutras. In Buddhist temples and some communal temples that have introduced Buddhist sutra chanting, there are boxes stuffed with copies of a variety of Buddhist texts for anyone to take free of charge, some even including transliteration of the characters into Hokkien written in the Roman alphabet. This has allowed for Buddhist sutra chanting to spread more widely without the need of direct monastic intervention. The Jade Record (*Yuli baochao* 玉歷寶鈔), a popular text from late imperial China that contains a mix of popular Buddhist and Daoist myths and concepts, is also published by a Buddhist group and is found in large stacks at a number of temples in the region. Despite its continued presence, however, it is by no means as commonplace as Buddhist sutras.

More pervasive than physical texts now, however, are smartphones and the sharing of videos, photos, and information about ritual events and ritual technologies over WeChat or other forms of social media. This intensifies the repetition of ritual acts, as following the event anyone with friends who attended will once again be confronted with the array of ritual activities in the form of photos and short video clips. The event becomes remediated through the phones to be re-experienced through the screen. WeChat also works as a new platform for self-promotion by ritual specialists and other

performers, sharing videos as examples of their repertoire and their own popularity.

Attendees of the events will take photos or videos to share on their WeChat friends circle.

A natural capacity for imitation is revitalized, Taussig (1993) argues, by the invention of machines like the camera and gramophone. Perhaps the smartphone has now reached a level for imitation unfound even in the machines Taussig discusses, an enchantment that was previously unknown has emerged and entrenched itself in our daily life. In addition to this, a number of temples and neighborhoods have their own public WeChat accounts that publish information about and photos of past and future events. Many ritual experts and temple goers will also connect through group chats in which they share their practices with each other. I was invited to join two group chats among Daoists, one featured over 200 Daoists priests and enthusiasts from all over China and the other had around 40 largely from Fujian. Most of the content in these groups is the same wave of memes and emojis that are found in any standard group chat, but there are also instances of sharing videos of their ritual performances, objects, and texts. These groups then offer to a new way for ritual experts to connect and share examples of their practices with others who are a part of the same or related traditions.

Commercial entertainment media has also begun to have an impact on the events. Period dramas that depict Daoist priests, Buddhist monks, and a variety of other characters from Chinese religious culture appear, and, in doing so, change the expectations of local people as to what these ritual specialists should be doing. Likewise, more localized ritual specialists may borrow from these media representations drawing on their movements and costumes. One local Master of the Whip that I met wore a robe more akin to those seen in TV dramas than those worn by local Daoist priests. These

items are now easily available through shops on the online retailer Taobao that specialize in all sorts of religious clothing, objects, and texts.

To think how ritual technologies now circulate, the circulation of forms that are not the human ritual actors themselves should also be taken into account. Textual production, smartphone cameras, wireless network speeds, and media representations all now connect to circuits of ritual events. They can result in bringing in new ritual technologies or adding to the repertoires of existing ones. The processes of circulation, therefore, occur on multiple levels that relate to changes in technology and infrastructure, as well as the desires and opinions of the event organizers themselves.

## **5.12 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I presented the actors in southern Fujian's temple events as ritual technologies that circulate through the region and expand or contract their scales based on not only the demands of the local ritual economy, but also related to issues of local history, relationships, embodied mimesis, government regulation, competition between groups, and the changing forms of media technologies and textual production. I suggest that this approach allows us to consider the great diversity of religious practice in China without favoring one element as being essential to what occurs. Depending on one's perspective, liturgy, dance, incense offering, or anything else could be seen as the most important element. While some may be more complex in their performance or commonplace in their frequency, I have tried not to privilege one form over another. In the next chapter, I move from this overarching view to present an example of one particular temple, but I do so by connecting it to a wider cult and pilgrimage networks to

founding temples. This brings communal ritual practice into a wider view in a different way, not in terms of the specific ritual technologies, but in relating temples dedicated to the same deity in the region and throughout the diaspora.

## Chapter 6

### Divine Geographies: Annual Pilgrimages for The Cult of the Great Life Protecting Emperor (Baosheng Dadi 保生大帝)

#### 6.1 Introduction

The cult of Baosheng Dadi is one of the largest in southern Fujian and extends to communities in Taiwan and throughout Southeast Asia. The god is identified as Wu Tao 吳仝 (979-1036),<sup>73</sup> a physician from the Song Dynasty said to be born in Baijiao 白礁 village in present-day Longhai 龍海, a county-level city located on the eastern edge of Zhangzhou 漳州 city, and bordering Xiamen's Haicang 海滄 district. Stories of Wu Tao speak of his miraculous ability to heal those deemed incurable and also for his noble and virtuous nature. He is said not to have desired wealth or to hold official positions of power, instead, he is said to have dedicated his life to treating the illnesses of poor villagers without accepting payment.

In this chapter, I will analyze the annual celebrations for the god's birthday based on three different ritual practices. First, I consider the annual visits to founding temples by branch temples, how these develop affective atmospheres that are then spread throughout the wider geography of the cult. Next, I describe the development of a festival for Baosheng Dadi culture at one of the founding temples that is supported by local government officials and presents very different and far more banal ritual forms. Yet, it also creates new forms of networking and organization for temple committees. Finally, I

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<sup>73</sup> As *tao* 仝 is a somewhat obscure character, it is sometimes printed as *ben* 本 with a note on the pronunciation or as *tao* 套.

return to the excitement of the more raucous event, this time during the night, to counter the more sanitized version of the god at the cultural festival, by acknowledging feelings of fear and trepidation felt in the presence of the god's power materialized in spirit mediums and the ritual of leaping the firepit.

## **6.2 Affective Atmospheres and the Geography of Cults**

The territories of a deity's cult stretch much farther than the territories of the individual temples. Cults form networks with supple boundaries that act as geographies defined by devotion to deities, rather than by political states or natural environments, though both of these may play a role in the limits of a cult. These territories are centered on one or more founding temples (*zumiao* 祖廟) connected to the early formation of the cult as a whole or in one specific area. These temples are the central nodes of the wider networks that extend beyond the regions they began, even reaching outside of China's political borders to overseas Chinese communities throughout the world. While many will refer to the gods they worship as "our god," the link to founding temples remind them of the wider worship of *their god* by communities elsewhere, and these communities are brought together annually for the celebration of the birth of their deity. Each temple will see those coming before, after, and during their own performances for and worship of the deities and division of incense. Additional meetings of the temples then provide further opportunities for discussion and interaction between the groups. These events transform the areas surrounding the temples during the days of the celebration. The founding temples that are often located in rural and less developed areas become the center of attention for rural and urban residents alike. They become not only a hub for religious

practice, but also for small-business as many from nearby towns will go themselves or send temporary employees to hawk goods at the event. The large-scale ritual events work to de-center the city as the beacon of prosperity through the geographies based on temple networks and the worship of deities. As Stephan Feuchtwang wrote about cult networks in Taiwan, “Pilgrimage centres do not coincide with either the imperial or the republican administrative centres any more than they do with marketing centres. And the *ling* which protects the peace of a territory within the bounds of its festival defines itself directly in relation to its neighbours, not as a unit in a nested hierarchy” (2001, 88).

The cult dedicated to Baosheng Dadi is thought to have begun in either Qingjiao 青礁 village, located in the west of present-day Haicang district in Xiamen, or Baijiao 白礁 village, at the eastern edge of Longhai and intense debates continue between the two temples as to which is, in fact, the earliest temple. The cult spread from southern Fujian into Guangzhou and Guangxi, as well as throughout areas of Taiwan and Southeast Asia. Kenneth Dean, referencing the *Ciji gong bei* 慈济宫碑, writes that by the end of the Shaoxing 紹興 reign (1131-62), the cult is said to have spread north to Puyang, Changle; south to Tingzhou, Chaozhou; and into Guangdong and Guangxi (Dean 1993, 83). It is likely that, like other cults, it spread with trade routes and migration, as noted by Barend ter Haar (1990, 383-384). When people from Tongan county migrated to Taiwan they brought their deities with them, as Kristofer Schipper (1990) has shown, and if these new temples prospered they developed further subsidiary groups of temples.

The two rival founding temples share the name, Ciji gong 慈濟宮, and their patronage is often divided into those from Quanzhou who make pilgrimages to Baijiao,



and those from Zhangzhou who make pilgrimages to Qingjiao. By and large this continues to be the case, and temples from the two regions will still get into arguments with each other; however, a number of temples from each region will contradict this tendency or even visit both temples. In Xiamen, there is a mix of affiliation to both temples, this is due to the historical changes of governance of the island, members of temples tracing their ancestry to either Zhangzhou or Quanzhou, as well as more recent boundary changes incorporating the Qingjiao Temple into Xiamen city. This has resulted in many groups visiting both temples annually or alternating which temple they visit each year.

Branch temples make a pilgrimage to one or both of the founding temples for a ritual known as the division of incense (*fenxiang* 分香). With the increased ease of transportation in the region, as well as increased wealth and leisure time for many temple participants, growing numbers of temples now make the pilgrimage annually. However, some only attend every three to five years, as is often the case for temples coming from outside of China. The division of incense connects the branch temples to the founding temple and all of the branch temples together, both symbolically and materially. The ritual involves taking ashes from the founding temple's incense burner and bringing them back to each individual temple. While this takes place, worshippers from all over clamor around, squeezing through the hoards of devotees to add their own incense to the burner. Connecting their incense to the founding temple as their temple leaders take ashes out of the burner as a way to recharge the spiritual efficacy of their own temple. In 2016, 150 temples visited the Baijiao Ciji Gong each making a donation, a significant increase from the 113 that Dean (1993) recorded in 1987. Of the 150 temples, 21 temples were from

Xiamen's Siming and Huli districts, nine from Tongan district, four from Jimei district, and eight from Xiang'an district. There were no temples from Haicang district as their temples all affiliate with the Qingjiao temple.

I took part in visits to the founding temples of Baosheng Dadi with a small temple located north of the downtown in Siming district. The temple arranged to leave for the Baijiao and Qingjiao temples on the tenth day of the third lunar month, five days before the actual birthday of the deity. A large red poster was pasted to the side wall of the temple as well as a nearby temple in the north of the neighborhood. The second temple does not enshrine Baosheng Dadi but shares many of the same temple participants and has more visibility than the first temple to passersby. The poster was handwritten with a calligraphy brush in black ink and listed off the time of departure and fee for the buses that would take us there. Though I offered money to go, I was told that I was now considered a member of the temple since I'd been attending all of their events over the past year, and as such was not required to pay. Though 'members' (there is no official designation) will give donations at each event, they are not expected to pay for things like the bus fare. Others who are less involved with the temple will join these large scale pilgrimages are required to purchase tickets and also make additional donations to the temple. As noted in chapter four, the participation at these temples is now open to anyone and includes both those who formerly lived in the neighborhood as well as some of the new residents.

The group was scheduled to leave at 6:30 am but there was already a large gathering of around 300 people in and around the temple when I arrived at 6:00 am. A banner was hoisted above the road leading up to the temple announcing the celebration.

The temple is located in a fairly inconspicuous small concrete building hidden behind a park on one side and large high rise apartment block on the other. The shrine only takes up a small front room, while the bulk of the building is taken up by an office that doubles as a mahjong room, and a senior citizen center located on the second floor, which provides services to the elderly in the neighborhood.

As the crowd waited to load onto the buses they served themselves sweet congee or thick savory noodle soup accompanied by fried dough sticks (*youtiao* 油條) from large metal pots on the ground outside the office door. Next to the door was a table where the temple boss and other committee members sat and handed out yellow vests with the temple and neighborhood name printed on the front and back and a packet of cheap cigarettes in the pocket that were given to all of the men who held flags, instruments, or the palanquin for the gods, as well as myself, though I had no additional role in the procession. A marching band was hired and the musicians in military-inspired uniforms began playing drums and brass instruments at 6:30 am indicating the beginning of the event proper. At the same time, the women's drum and dance group dressed in red and yellow outfits started in their own rhythm. The temple committee band made up of a small group of older men then emerged and started banging on drums and gongs next to the entrance of the shrine as a group of young men carried out the statues of the gods and loaded them onto trucks in the laneway. Next, a man carrying a container for incense ashes over his shoulder exited the temple and climbed onto the back of one of the trucks along with the temple's set of banners and other items used in the procession. Soon the temple boss shouted at people to begin loading onto the buses parked out on the main road as the bands continued to play. There were five buses in total as well as a separate

van for the brass band, trucks for each of the three deity statues, two trucks with missile launcher shaped noise makers attached to the back, and seven cars bringing the total number of vehicles to eighteen. As the vehicles departed, the faux-missile launcher trucks sounded out a loud crackling noise replacing firecrackers along the roads.

Previous studies of these cults have often emphasized practice over belief and quoted participants as saying something along the lines of ‘I don’t have a religion, I just carry incense’ (such as Weller 1999, 340). However, it is important to also consider how imported terms like ‘religion’ (*zongjiao* 宗教) and ‘belief’ (*xinyang* 信仰) are now used by participants as well, even if it is at times problematic. Temples must register with the religious affairs bureau and many are now officially categorized as “folk belief” (*minjian xinyang* 民間信仰). Frequently people will question themselves about what religion is going on at the temple, with Buddhism, Daoism, and Folk Belief all being invoked. Some even joke about the changing definitions of these terms, as one older man said to me “they used to call this ‘superstition,’ but now they call it ‘Fujian-Taiwan cultural exchange’ 閩台文化交流.” Others, however, find different ways to speak about their connection to the temple and ritual events. On the bus ride for this particular pilgrimage, one older man who I’d gotten to know throughout the year asked me “do you identify (*rentong* 認同) with these events?” He did not ask if I believe in the gods, but if I identify with the practice of offering incense. I said “I don’t know,” and he replied with an understanding look, “Yeah, this kind of thing isn’t easy to figure out.” While in these large-scale ritual events there is a sense of collective experience of an atmosphere, the participants also make conscious choices to participate or to identify with this set of practices. Although belief is also used when talking about the deity, it remains more

common to discuss offering incense, processions, and other practices that define much of the popular religious practice. Despite the now commonplace use of ‘belief’ and ‘religion,’ these practices are still described as something that you feel through doing it, whether or not you know that this is something you believe in or even something you understand.

The bus arrived at the Baijiao temple at 8:00 am, other temples had already started making their annual visit to the founding temple over the past three days and would continue for another four after this temple’s visit. On the date of the deity’s actual birthday, the local villagers make their own offerings. Members of each individual temple make their journey to one or both of the two founding temples. These are the spaces where the forces of the different localities are joined together under the power of the deity they have enshrined in their home territories. As quickly as these forces gather, they then disperse outward. No temple is the same in its practice in, journey to, or performance at the temples, but they briefly interact passing by each other; one leaves as others arrive. There is no space for more than two or three temples to make offerings in the temple at once, but there is also no formal organization to the event. Other founding temples schedule when each branch arrives and designate a space for them to wait or distribute their performers, but the Baijiao temple committee told me they do not do any of this. Somehow, the event runs smoothly, as one temple may wait for others to leave, and luckily, from my experience, there is no instance where there are too many groups arriving at the same time.

We exited the buses on the main road, Baosheng road, itself named after the deity, and a few people rushed ahead of the group to make their own offerings, unconcerned

with the temple's procession. One of the men in a yellow vest also went ahead to see if there was space for the temple's group to enter at that time. The road towards the temple was littered with scores of small stands selling incense, spirit money, firecrackers, and other items for use in the temple. Along the road were also a number of shops, restaurants, pharmacies, and medical clinics. The man who ran ahead returned before the group had finished unloading everything from the different trucks to inform them that the road ahead was clear. The group then proceeded led by a man carrying the long vertical black flag followed by men playing the suona and gong, the man carrying the incense ash container, men carrying flags, the committee member band, deity statues, devotees carrying incense, women's drum and dance troupe, and finally the marching band. These were trailed by the two missile launcher noise maker trucks. A middle-aged woman who was the head of another temple jogged by the group making sure everything was in order.

Arriving at the founding temple connects each branch temple to the wider web of temples that make up the geography of the cult. Like the ritual events of Putian described by Dean and Zheng (2010), there is no way to observe the entire ritual, as they argue, it is the deities who receive the overall view of the event, and not the diverse performers, ritual masters, or masses of devotees and other onlookers on the ground. There is no single meaning, no unified view, or proper experience one can have to provide a view of the event in its entirety. As each temple arrives and leaves the founding temple they point to different beginning and end points, each featuring their own unique arrangement of ritual technologies. Those collecting donations at the temple, the hawkers selling goods outside of it, and the foolish researcher who stays at the temple for over a day inhaling

vast quantities of incense smoke are able to view the different waves of separate groups as they arrive, but these also miss where they came from and where they end up.

As the procession that I arrived with marched forward and entered the main courtyard in front of the temple. There is a large concrete square with an opera stage on the other end and an area set off for lighting firecrackers to one side, which was already covered in the red scraps of paper and other debris left behind after the explosion of noise from earlier visitors. Behind the firecracker area was the furnace for burning spirit money and other paper offerings, which was already teeming with smoke. Crowds gathered to the other side of the temple next to more stands selling snacks and incense, and even more people were lined up along the front of the temple and on the second story balcony, which functions as a viewing area for the event. As each temple arrives their noises, lights, songs, and movements blur together with those of the previous groups in a further intensification of the event. The men carrying flags, committee band and others' wearing the yellow vests, women's drum and dance group and marching band proceeded ahead of the rest of the group clearing a space in the center of the courtyard by forming two straight lines to either side of the area. The gods in their sedan chairs were then raced through the open area moving counterclockwise facing towards the temple and led by a man waving the black flag to guide those carrying the god statue while also scaring away ghosts and other unwanted spirits in the process. The palanquin swung raucously from side to side, the young men moved with such vigor and excitement that it looked as though the palanquin rotated 90 degrees to each side almost knocking against the ground. The gods were then brought inside of Ciji gong followed by the members of the temple,

while outside the marching band and women's drum and dance group began to play simultaneously in formation facing towards the temple.

Inside the temple, the palanquin was placed to the side of the main incense burner. As multiple temples visit at one time and many bring multiple statues, there will often be statues resting on both sides or on the lower level closer to the entrance, each with their own small incense burner attached. Devotees make offerings of rice, slaughtered animals and fruits, along with other items on the table in front of the main shrine's altar. The crowds are so tightly packed together it is easy to lose oneself in the moment, drawn in by the movements, gestures, smells, and sounds of the mass of bodies in affective interaction. Most devotees make three sets of prostrations on their knees and bow three times in between each, before placing their incense in the burner. Many will hold their incense stick at their forehead while making a wish or oath before placing it into the incense burner. There is a back-and-forth relation between the cognitive process of these wishes and devotion with the bodily sensation of the collective event. Elsewhere I have described this in terms of an animality, what Deleuze and Guattari call "pack modes" (1987, 240), that spreads contagiously and impersonally (Murray 2018). As one's body temperature increases, heart rate rises, breathing speeds up, lungs become filled with pungent incense smoke, movement gets constrained by the surrounding bodies, and muscles contract and expand, the nervous system receives an amount of sensory data in excess of the everyday and one experiences the power of the cult no longer bothering to think if belief or identification is important to all of this. It is an immediate and spontaneous experience of bodies affecting bodies is transformed in the event into something codable and identifiable, Massumi refers to these as "categorical affects"



(2011, 153), the point at which we can put a name to the affect as an emotion. This occurs within the event itself, there is an interaction between the bodily reactions and ongoing thoughts and feelings about the situation. As Margaret Wetherell notes in a discussion of affective neuroscience, “the neurobiological polyphony producing emotional body reactions (thumping hearts, sobs and screwed up faces) is not sealed off from the neurobiological polyphony that supports decisions, thoughts, [and] complex moral evaluations” (2012, 45).<sup>74</sup> There is a looping back and forth between the body and mind, the logic of the nervous system in interaction with the brain. The wishes and devotional thoughts exist in relation to the bodily sensations of the event, one in continuous interaction with the other. The event offers an excess of bodily affect and also an excess of emotion that can lead to feelings of catharsis, joy, or even breaking out in tears of simply too much feeling.

If the temple has hired a Daoist troupe to accompany them, at this point one of them will recite a scripture for the peace and well-being of the temple next to the incense burner. However, this practice is becoming less and less common. Some temples now only hire a group of Daoists to come to their own temple and perform a *jiao* ritual on the days following the pilgrimage, if they hire them at all. Regardless of hiring any sort of ritual master, the incense will be taken from the founding temple’s burner and placed into the temple’s own container for ashes. These containers also vary in size and style from temple to temple, some bring containers shaped like miniature temples, but others simply have plain boxes. The group I visited with used one made of two red lacquered wood

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<sup>74</sup> Wetherell is quite critical of Massumi, particularly in his selective use of scientific evidence, but only draws on his earlier work. While her critique is not entirely unwarranted, I find in his more recent publications there is a clearer connection to this back and forth between body and mind.

boxes with gold finish held together by a beam and held over the shoulder. One of the boxes is used to store the incense and was designed with a temple gateway on the top, while the other may contain a whip, paper talisman, or other ritual objects.

Once the incense is stored securely, the visiting group exits the temple without their god statues to burn paper money and set off firecrackers outside of the temple. They will then also purchase candles to offer and make a donation to the temple at a table set up in the busy center of the temple to the left of the main shrine where visitors must squeeze through to make their offerings. The donations are written out by hand in a notebook and the donation placed into the same bin that individual devotees can place donation money in. Then people have a short break to take a rest, watch the performances outside, eat or drink, or make their own offerings to the different gods at the temple.

Outside the temple some members watched the following temple's performance, a song and dance group made up of three young women blasting pop songs through a portable speaker, while one sang along, and in the background, more crowds of people arrived and piles of firecrackers were set off. As noted in the previous chapter, these events provide an opportunity for the performers to expand their client base, many holding up signs with the group name and contact information. Observers took out cameras or smartphones to capture the event and share it with their friends over social media, spreading the god's power out through digital networks. One of the temple members stood next to me watching and with a feeling of enjoyment said, "this is more hot and tumultuous (*renao* 熱鬧) than the lunar new year!" This is the most common, but also the most succinct description of the atmosphere.



**Figure 27: The inside of Baijiao Ciji Gong.**

The hot and tumultuous atmosphere of the ritual event is a contagious drawing into the intensity, stirring up an impulse to get in on the action (literally ‘to move close to hot and tumultuous’ *cou renao* 湊熱鬧).<sup>75</sup> The atmosphere forms through bodies amassing together, affecting and being affected by one another always with the possibility of the unexpected. Although each temple must plan out their visit in terms of timing, transport, performers, and so forth, there remains a spontaneity to the event. I find Ben Anderson’s description of affective atmospheres helpful to understand this not as an individual sense experience, but as something that is apprehended by a subject and also

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<sup>75</sup> *Renao* is perhaps an overused emic category in the anthropology of China, having been previously discussed by Chau (2008), Farquhar and Zhang (2012), Hatfield (2010), and Weller (1994), among others. However, it is a central aspect to these events and as such warrants at least some discussion. My interpretation here owes a debt to the earlier writings of Chau and Weller in particular.

“emanate[s]’ from the ensemble of elements that make up the aesthetic object” (2014, 145). The atmosphere surrounds and attunes as it envelopes bodies (human and non-human, earthly and celestial, animate and inanimate) that affect and are affected, and yet the atmosphere also exceeds the bodies it emanates from, it is more than the sum of its parts.



**Figure 28: The outside of Baijiao Ciji gong**

After close to an hour had passed at the temple, the group I visited with collected their god resting inside its palanquin along with the other objects they brought with them and exited the temple. As they left, their committee band stood on the two sides of the center entrance stairway and the gods were brought out and once more raced around the courtyard in a circle counterclockwise. Finally exiting the area to return to their trucks, cars, and buses to visit the second founding temple. What was once a dirt road between

the two temples has been replaced by highways that actually make the bus journey last almost as long as walking once would have. The performance at Qingjiao is repeated in the same order, although with considerably fewer onlookers. The group then returned to their home temple to combine the incense collected from the founding temples with their own, their god reinvigorated by the smoke in the temple; connecting to the cult's wider geography by joining in all the other temple's passing through the same sites.

### **6.3 Dispersion of Hot and Tumultuous Atmospheres**

With the exception of the occasional jarring bursts of noise from the faux-missile launcher truck, the return bus ride to the city was far more serene. Most people needed a break from the excess of sensation at the ritual event despite only staying for a short time. This is markedly different from earlier periods, when the procession itself would march all the way to the founding temple and back, some of those who travel in cars and trucks now continue the event by holding incense sticks out their windows, but on the bus there was a clear discontinuity in the passengers participation in the event and transport to and from. During these breaks, some people would reflect on their experience at the founding temple, still surging with excitement from the event, and generally feeling satisfied that good fortune was coming their way. While others use it as a chance to take a rest and nap through the drive back.

By 11:00 am the buses and other transport arrived back in the city and prepared for another repetition of rhythms of ritual actions, now surrounded by unexpected urbanites, rather than other devotees. This repetition is by no means exact, as Massumi (2011, 107-108) argues, repeated rhythms 'echo' the past events, they connect to both the



bodily-traces left by affective atmospheres past and of conscious memories of what came before. The philosopher Suzanne K. Langer (1976 [1941], 144) explains this in terms of experiences creating ‘sense-images,’ these are not direct copies of what occurred, but projected copies that allows us to retain the experience as memory (body-memory and cognitive-memory), so that when a similar process occurs, we can point to it as being related. The procession in the city is a repetition of not just the actions in the pilgrimage attended earlier in the day (the same running of the palanquin, offering of incense, and chants), but also of the events in all previous years.

The buses stopped on the main road outside of the temple and the procession moved along the roadways to some approximation of what were the previous boundaries of the neighborhood. They had little caution for oncoming cars and no police officers to block traffic as found in some temples elsewhere in the city. Henri Lefebvre (1996 [1968]) argued that as the urban spaces are enacted in new ways, there is no way to go back to any sort of traditional city, there are now different spatial practices that define urban life. Yet, Lefebvre did see something to be revitalized from the former rural French society, the *fête*, the society of festivities. The procession through the neighborhood is not a going back to tradition, it is not mere ‘heritage’ to be preserved, but a mix of bodily practices from different periods co-existing in celebration. The society of festivities is not only an echoing of the rural past but shapes the urban future. Along the way there is a variety of responses from onlookers as they are folded into the event, there is no way to discriminate who joins in and who does not. There is something almost contagious about the event, how the affective atmosphere expands through the processions movement engulfing unexpected onlookers in its wake. Some stop what they are doing to hold up

their two hands together in reverence, others come out of their storefronts and offices to see what all the noise is and take photos on their phones, while others plug their ears in pain and frustration, confused or simply annoyed by what is going on. Daniel Goh (2015) describes temple events in Singapore as having a similar quality. He writes that the rituals are a spilling out of spiritual meaning; the affective force of the rites flows through the streets, affecting what may have been thought as purely secular grounds.

The procession then arrived at the other temple in their neighborhood, which many of the same members are affiliated. Here the gods were placed down, and offerings were made to the two separate shrines to share the good fortune and spiritual efficacy gained from the visit. The group then lifted the gods up once more and proceeded south, stopping a second time at a bank that had set out a table of offerings outside. The smaller god statue in the sedan chair and the man with the black flag went inside and circled around the main entranceway as they had done at the main temple spreading the fortune of the gods to the financial industry. The spiritual efficacy that is centered in the rural landscape is seen as bringing benefits to urban life and even the global capitalist system.

Finally, the procession returned to their own temple, the gods were once again raced around the outside in the small area to the side of the actual shrine entrance due to spatial constraints. They were then brought up the steps and set down inside the temple, and people began to eat a lunch similar to the breakfast we had that morning. At the same time, the women's drum and dance group conclude their ritual without much fanfare, banging on drums, shaking back and forth, and then ending with another chant of "All Things According to Our Wishes" (*wanshiruyi* 萬事如意). Some stayed for the lunch while others quickly left heading back to their cars or nearby homes. As a group and as

individuals there is no single end to the event, for the women's drum group it continues slightly longer than for many of the other temple devotees. The wider event continues on long after this single group has concluded its return home. Other temples continue to arrive at the founding temples late into the evening, with some groups who traveled greater distances even spending the night, setting up sleeping bags on the second floor.

As each temple group returns to their home they take with them the affective atmosphere and gained spiritual efficacy, proliferating it through their own territory as they return. Although each presents their own unique combination of ritual technologies, they are connected to each other through the pilgrimage, not so much in a sense of *communitas* as in Victor Turner's (1969) classic study, but of sharing selections of affective atmospheres and sensations, that are repeated at the founding temple and on their return home. It is these repetitions that connect to both the bodily-traces and personal memories that form the geography of the cult.

#### **6.4 Rebuilding the Cult, Foreign Investment, and the State**

The two founding temples claim similar origins dating back to just after the supposed transformation of Wu Tao into an immortal. It is said that in 1036 CE, he was climbing the nearby mountain collecting medicinal herbs but somehow fell from a cliff and, without anyone to aid him, died there. The irony of the great doctor who cured everyone but himself. Both temples have similar stories, only with different names for the mountain, each claiming that an elderly male villager built a shrine named Longqiu an 龍



湫庵 that developed into the larger temple.<sup>76</sup> For the purposes of this chapter, however, I will focus on the modern destruction and revival of the cult with no need to make claims to which was the true original.

After falling into decay during the late Qing, the Baijiao temple was rebuilt in 1918 with the support of two local people from the Wang surname group<sup>77</sup> as well as from overseas devotees on the board of directors of Singapore's Chinese Chamber of Commerce (*Zhonghua zongshanghui dongshi* 中華總商會董事) and Penang Chamber of Commerce (*Bincheng zongshanghui* 檳城總商會) (Shi 2012b, 18). As seen in chapter three, this was not a time of prosperity for religious practice in China and both temples and the cult more broadly faced first criticism and then the destruction of many temples and artifacts throughout the Republican and Maoist period.

The Baijiao temple, while damaged, surprisingly survived the Cultural Revolution, and still contains a number of the earlier architectural structure and artifacts. As a result, in 1982 it was named a first rank county level protected cultural site by the Longhai county government, allowing them to later receive funding from the provincial Bureau of Cultural Relics and Zhangzhou municipal-level Taiwan Compatriot Friendship Association (*Taiwan tongbao lianyi hui* 台灣同胞聯誼會). Along with the aid from its various branch temples, it received tens of thousands of yuan to repair the temple in 1984. They received further funding from Ye Shengtao 葉聖陶, the president of the

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<sup>76</sup> For details of the longer history of the cult see Zheng (2009) and Fan (2008).

<sup>77</sup> The majority of residents in the village are part of the Wang lineage and venerate the Sacred Founding Ruler of Min (Kaimin Shengwang 開閩聖王), the divinized Wang Shenzhi 王審知 said to have founded the kingdom of Min. A shrine to him is located in the back shrine of Baijiao Ciji gong.

Central Research Institute of Culture and History (*Zhongyang wenshi yanjiuguan* 中央文史研究館), the director of the National Commission for the Identification of Cultural Heritage, as well as a horizontal inscription of the temple's name from Qi Gong 启功, the chairman of the National Calligraphy Association, in 1987. As the prominence of the temple grew, it rose to the rank of a provincial level cultural heritage site in 1991 and then a national level site in 1996, when it was also legally approved as a religious activity site (Ye 2012, 1; Shi 2012a, 16).<sup>78</sup> Although elsewhere in China this kind of government intervention has transformed historic pilgrimage locations into crowded commercial tourist destinations (though still with plenty of pilgrims visiting), the Baijiao temple has thus far remained relatively autonomous despite its slew of official statuses.

This period also saw the return of Chinese from outside the PRC, particularly those from Taiwan, traveling and gaining increasing influence over the temples. Following a visit to the temple in 1988, Zhou Dawei 周大围, head of the Taiwan Baosheng Dadi Temple Association, managed to collect donations from 300 different Taiwanese temples equaling 1,200,000RMB to repair the interior wooden structure. At this point, Zhou also became a member of the Baijiao temple committee. Chen Kunhuo 陈坤火 from the Zhenan Temple 镇安宫 in Xinzhu City was also a major Taiwanese donor, giving 120,000RMB for the construction of an entrance gate (Shi 2012b, 18; BJCJZGGLWYH 2012, 23). These donations from overseas were key to the revival of the founding temples.

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<sup>78</sup> Dean noted that in 1987 people at the temple complained that it was difficult to gain status as a provincial cultural relic, which would make them eligible for increased government money to further repair the temple (1993, 69)

The revival of the Qingjiao temple was similar but has become more entangled with the local government since the early 2000s. They have funded the construction of numerous shrines, statues, a scenic viewing area, and other building on the temple property. More recently the district government has developed plans to attract at least some of the masses of tourists visiting Xiamen island, who rarely venture past the downtown, and the Qingjiao temple has been incorporated into their promotions. The airport now features cutesy maps of Haicang listing all of the entertaining, scenic, and cultural sites to visit, and flights on Xiamen Airlines feature advertisements for the district as well.

The Qingjiao temple was in far worse shape than the structure of Baijiao in the 1980s. According to Dean (1993, 64), in 1985 the roof and back hall of the Qingjiao temple had collapsed, the side halls were in ruins, and the balcony on the second story of the building appeared collapsing. The temple's own publications agree, stating that parts of the temple were completely destroyed and mold was growing throughout (QJCIG 2006). Things began to turn around in the years that followed and by the end of the decade, they had also received support from Taiwanese devotees. Soon they also gained a number of provincial and national statuses for cultural protection as well as visits from groups of Taiwanese pilgrims (Yang 1997, 12; QJCIG 2006).

Following the rebuilding of the two sites, there was an increase in promoting them in terms of their historical and cultural value. This began primarily in the form of academic conferences and exhibits organized by the temple or those associated with it and developed into large-scale cultural festivals attended by government and temple representatives linked to the annual celebrations of the god's birthdate. The conferences

and exhibits would focus on two specific topics: Baosheng Dadi as a symbol of Traditional Chinese Medicine and the cult's role in cross-straits ties. Zhou Dawei was the first to organize such an event in 1989 and was clearly playing to the interests of local government by emphasizing the god as merely a symbol and focusing on what would be considered a rational Chinese culture, not what many would have still been seen as 'feudal superstition.' Additionally, these conferences tried to emphasize the use of the cult more widely to improve ties with Taiwan and, in doing so, promoting economic development (BJCJZGGLWYH 2012, 23). These themes have continued to be what is promoted by the local government, to present their involvement in the revival and promotion of the cult as cultural rather than religious. In Haicang, they have even created their own event that is separate from the division of incense, the Protecting Life and Charity Relief Cultural Festival (*Baosheng ciji wenhua jie* 保生慈濟文化節) held at the Qingjiao temple. The rebuilding of the two founding temples relied heavily on investment from Taiwan, but more recently the local government has become increasingly involved with further developments. This has had mixed results in continuing the traditional division of incense alongside developing the cultural festival in cooperation with the state.

## **6.5 Cultural Festivals and Banal Ritual**

The Protecting Life and Charity Relief Cultural Festival began in 2006 under the advice of the deputy district chief of Haicang, Chen Shihai 陳式海. Chen described the festival as an expansion of the celebrations for the god's birthday, but, in fact, was more of a way for government officials to take part in the celebrations without taking part in what may

be seen as religious activity. As such, the event focused on the promotion of characteristics that could link the cult to concepts that the party would approve of: health, charity, and social harmony, as well as cross-straits cultural exchange. This festival was held annually from 2006-2009, then was replaced by organized trips for over a hundred people to visit Baosheng Dadi Temples in Taiwan to offer incense, and then reinstated from 2012 onwards (QJCIIG 2006; XMSHCQZXWS 2008).

Fujian has been far more lax on religious control than elsewhere in China, as the local officials are well aware of its importance to investment from overseas Chinese as well as the local organization and power structures that they must be sensitive to. However, the central government's recent re-emphasis on party members not taking part in superstitious activity is worth noting. On January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016, Xinhua, the state news outlet and mouthpiece of the party, reported on a revised edition of its disciplinary regulations that now take a stronger stance on party members attending or organizing superstitious activities (*mixin huodong* 迷信活動) and consider participation in such events as a betrayal of the values of the party (Xinhua 2016).<sup>79</sup> The category includes

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<sup>79</sup> The report divides doing superstition into categories of organization and attendance of superstitious activity, with organization obviously being a much more serious offence. Defining these as follows: "First category: Characteristics of "organizing superstitious activities," obviously this is a much graver [offence], and it results in two forms of disciplinary measures: those who organize superstitious activities will have their position in the party revoked or remain under careful disciplinary watch within the party: [in cases when the] circumstances are serious they will be dealt with by expelling them from the party. Second category: "Attending superstitious activities," This form has four kinds of disciplinary measures: 1. those who create a bad influence will be given a warning or severe warning as discipline, 2. those whose circumstances are more serious will have their position in the party revoked or remain under careful disciplinary watch within the party, 3. those who have severe circumstances will be expelled from the party, 4. those whose circumstances surrounding their attendance is unclear will attend reeducation and show repentance for their actions, they can be exempt from disciplinary action or without disciplinary action.

第一类情形“组织迷信活动”的性质，显然严重得多，其处罚有两种：组织迷信活动的，给予撤销党内职务或者留党察看处分；情节严重的，给予开除党籍处分。

many practices tied to communal temple practices, particularly practices that relate to mediumism and exorcism. While these are now openly practiced, they are not a desired photo opportunity for the local officials.<sup>80</sup> The new policy also goes even further than previous regulations by expecting both retired and current party members not to take part in religious activities at all. Yet, local religious practices remain such an integral part of cultural and social life in Fujian that many of the officials desire to establish ties with these groups. To work around these regulations, they talk about cults of local gods as being part of local cultural traditions and important symbolically as the gods represent moral virtues and that they help promote exchange with Taiwan based on a shared culture. They will use terms like Fujian-Taiwan cultural exchange (*Mintai wenhua jiaoliu* 閩臺文化交流), local customs (*difang xisu* 地方習俗), and intangible cultural heritage (ICH, *feizhiwu wenhua yichan* 非物質文化遺產, often abbreviated to *feiyi* 非遺) to describe the events. What is more, many temple committees have picked up on these terms as well and use them in talks with officials and local media.

These categories are not just used for this particular cult but have grown into a massive cultural industry. Cultural centers in the city have produced numerous volumes detailing the city's or a district's ICH, which include large numbers of local religious practices. Television stations feature spotlights on ritual events described as local cultural

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第二类情形“参加迷信活动”，其处罚分为四种：一是造成不良影响的，给予警告或者严重警告处分；二是情节较重的，给予撤销党内职务或者留党察看处分；三是情节严重的，给予开除党籍处分；四是对不明真相的参加人员，经批评教育后确有悔改表现的，可以免于处分或者不予处分 (see Xinhua 2016b. For a comparison between the 2005 and 2016 policies on religion see Dubois [2016]).

<sup>80</sup> An explanation of what is considered religion and its difference from superstition was published by the United Front Work Department of the CPC Central Committee in 2002 and states superstition derives from witchcraft and exorcism (*wushu qugui* 巫術驅鬼) (UFWD 2002)

traditions. The belief and customs of Mazu, Guanze zunwang 光澤尊王, Sanping zushi 三瓶祖師, Qingshui zushi 清水祖師, and numerous other gods are all classified at municipal, provincial, national, or global levels of ICH. I will return to the topic of ICH in more detail in the following chapter. For now, I will consider it in terms of the cult of Baosheng Dadi and the Qingjiao temple where there is a separation of the cultural festival and conferences that government officials will appear at and the larger ritual practice of pilgrimage and division of incense.

The difference between the two rituals is that the cultural festival lacks the intensity of the division of incense; it is exactly what I expected from a public ceremony associated with local government officials. There is no excitement or hot and tumultuous atmosphere, it is a banal ritual. Unlike the events held by individual temples or their incense trips to founding temples, the cultural festival is not something anyone thought was of significance for someone studying temples in Xiamen. It was not even something anyone talked to me about until I brought it up in conversation. While the temple's own events are discussed with much pride and the people I met would not only encourage me to attend but to also bring my friends along, the cultural festival was seen as something they send a representative or two to attend, and is more about making connections, than enjoyment, good fortune, or spiritual efficacy.

The event was attended by numerous local government officials and business leaders who made large donations to the temple, as well as representatives from the branch temples and nearby community.<sup>81</sup> It allows a chance for the temple

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<sup>81</sup> Similar events are also held by the Xiamen Baosheng Dadi Culture Association and Taiwan Baosheng Dadi Association.

representatives to show their appreciation to the local officials and businesses who have helped the Qingjiao temple in its development. This section of the festivities is designed more in terms of cultural appreciation and veneration of Baosheng Dadi for his contributions to moral actions and virtuous deeds, not spiritual efficacy. Here, the ritual is seen as honoring what the god represents, rather than creating the hot and tumultuous atmosphere of most temple events. As such, the opening ceremony is far more structured and precise, detached from the sensations of the culture it claims to celebrate.

Attendees first registered their information at a reception table, where they also filled out a form for their donations. A temporary free medical station was also set up nearby offering some basic health check procedures, such as checking blood pressure, to anybody interested as a way to emphasize Baosheng Dadi's image as a great physician. The event began with a large-scale opening ceremony (*jidian* 祭典) conducted in both Hokkien and Mandarin by young male and female hosts, they welcomed the guests to the event and introduced a series of performers. The performers were similar to the various kinds of song and dance groups at festivals described in chapter five, except, here the performance was much more clearly directed at the crowd who sat facing the low-rise stage and politely applauded at the end of each set, rather than an act to thank the gods. While in the program schedule these were still listed as "Welcoming the God" it lacked the incense, liturgy, or whip cracking commonly associated with such a practice.

Local business owners, government officials, and representatives from cultural associations were then invited onto the stage, and firecrackers were set off. Eight of the representatives made short speeches, all except one speaking in Mandarin, repeating similar statements about the promotion of local culture and cross-straits cultural exchange



with Taiwan, as well as using the party jargon of a healthy and harmonious society in connection belief in Baosheng Dadi. The representatives of the different temples then made their donations, one by one dropping in their red envelopes stuffed with crisp one hundred RMB bills into a clear plastic donation box.

Following the display of the wealth of the cult, the more overtly religious section of the event began as the temple representatives donned brown robes embroidered with gold designs over their clothes and lined up orderly facing towards the temple. The two official masters of ceremony, heads of the Qingjiao temple and Taiwan Baosheng Dadi Association, stood in the front wearing the same robes with the colors inverted. The hosts read out a list of all of the participants and the two masters of ceremony were given large sticks of incense to offer, incense was distributed to the other participants who bowed then had their sticks collected and placed in the burner by attendants. Each member made three sets of prostrations in unison as the masters of ceremony made offerings of flowers, fruit, and tea. A short scripture of praise was then unrolled and read by the two men in front and repeated in Mandarin and Hokkien over a loudspeaker by the hosts. Ending the ritual, the two scrolls were set on fire to send off the gods and paper imitation firecrackers were launched.

This kind of ceremony is not unique and can be found as part of Daoist *jiao* rituals as well as conducted by at large events organized by individual temples that invite representatives from other groups to attend. It is a simple formalized way to show thanks and appreciation, of the temple to the participants for their donations, and of the participants to the gods for their good fortune. It is an addition to the other celebrations, not a replacement. It lacks the hot and tumultuous atmosphere because there is no

excitement, nothing that intensifies our bodily functions, no contagion, and no sense of surprise. Jon Bialecki's recent ethnography of Charismatic Christianity in America notes, there is an importance of the affective space of surprise in religious practice as it points to "*the feeling of an absence of individual causative agency*" (2017, 97 italics in original). This helps explain what is found to be boring or tedious about the event described above, the outcome was certain, there was a clear beginning and end, and it did not connect to the god's spiritual efficacy.

The event functioned more in terms of networking that may have benefited the participants forming connections between temples, government officials, and business owners. The event closed with a banquet for all the participants, giving them all chances to raise their glasses and toast those who they desire to form relationships with in the future. Likewise, the annual event held by the Xiamen Baosheng Dadi Association, which formed in 2010, held at a different temple in the city each year, allows the city's temples to form new alliances based on their current location, rather than which founding temple they associate with. It gives them strength as a larger city-wide collective instead of always acting as smaller neighborhood groups.

## **6.6 Health, Longevity, and Fearing the Gods**

The affective space of surprise is not necessarily an entirely enjoyable one. In discussing the hot and tumultuous atmosphere of the division of incense, the waves of bodies affecting and being affected, I focused on how this often leads to feelings of joy and good fortune. These are frequently being worked out in tandem to conscious functions of wishes and other devotional acts while sensing the god's power. But this power is not

always one so easily accepted as entirely positive or enjoyable, the affective intensities of rituals can also lead to unease, trepidation, and fear. Though the contagious element of the affective atmosphere folds people into the ritual event, they do not all end up in the same emotional space. No clearer is this than in rituals that employ mediumistic and other techniques to materialize the god's power, such as "Leaping the Firepit" (*tiao huopen* 跳火盆).

As mentioned in the previous section, Baosheng Dadi is commonly associated as a great healer, a virtuous doctor with immense compassion for others, and many stories about his life before his divination reflect this. One story claims he cured Song Emperor Renzong's 宋仁宗 wife's inflamed breast and in doing so Wu Tao amazed the court with his ability to diagnose and treat the patient. Elsewhere, he appears as a Daoist Master who learned exorcism and recipes for elixirs from the Queen Mother of the West 西王母 at the age of seventeen. Other stories describe him proving a court ruling wrong and saving the life of an innocent woman, and, in yet another tale, saving the life of a bandit. All point to both Wu Tao's outstanding medical ability as well as his desire to act justly and its influence on others. People in the tales feel forever indebted to the doctor for his aid.<sup>82</sup> This is why many worship the deity for good health or simply good fortune and feelings of inner peace in a general sense, and this is the side of the god promoted at events like the cultural festival.

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<sup>82</sup> These stories continue to be passed down orally in various forms, but have also been collected in volumes of local folk stories (XMSMJWX 1991, TAXMJWX 1989) as well as numerous gazetteers from the region.

Many gods are seen as virtuous but are also beings of great power, and it is a power that can be materialized. In a recent ethnography of religious practices in villages and cities in Taiwan, Lin Weiping (2015) focuses on how a god's power is materialized through statues and mediums, the former seen as a static materialization and the latter dynamic. While this differs from my argument in chapter four that the god's power or efficacy is in fact always materialized in the goings-on of its territory, she raises an important point about how a god's body is materialized in the body of a spirit medium. Unlike divination blocks, the spirit medium is able to convey messages from the deity more directly, even if unintelligible to most, in some form of vocal language that is interpreted. As Lin argues, it is in the medium's body that the god's dynamic, spontaneous, and sensual qualities can be materialized in a temporary state.

The excess of affect experienced en masse in the division of incense becomes localized in a single body as the god descends into the medium. As mentioned in chapter five, mediums are uncommon within the central city and I found only three temples that would use one during events. This has led to an unfamiliarity with mediums for many city dwellers, and a sense that they are 'too scary' (*tai kongbu* 太恐怖). Yet, many do encounter them during events that bring urbanites to the countryside whether for the division of incense or returning to ancestral villages during the Lunar New Year. At the division of incense, the mediums may ride atop the god's palanquin and even enter the temple. They are also often used in another ritual at the event, one tied not to Baosheng Dadi, but his companion animal, the tiger god Huye 虎爺.

The story of the connection between Baosheng Dadi and the Tiger God, who is generally positioned to his lower right in temples from the devotees' perspective, tells the

tale of a vicious tiger following Baosheng Dadi and one of his disciples. The disciple was terrified of the approaching tiger, but Baosheng Dadi remained calm and discovered the tiger's problem is that there is a hairpin trapped in his mouth, which got stuck there when he attempted to kill and eat a young woman (he was a tiger after all). After Baosheng Dadi removed the hairpin, the tiger was forever indebted and vowed to follow him on his journeys, protecting him from any future harm. He was later deified for this good deed. The god is referred to by some as Huye 虎爷, while others differentiate this tiger as a separate tiger deity. He is commemorated in the ritual of Leaping the Firepit in which a group of young men or women carry the sedan chair or palanquin around the temple and then a large pile of ashes is placed in the center of an area leading up to the temple. A spirit medium or a barefoot man mimicking a medium's gestures will circle the pile of ashes while holding a sword or large knife and then cut into the ashes spreading it apart. If a Daoist is hired, he will recite an incantation over the pile of ashes before setting it ablaze. Ideally, the cutting will produce a large row of flames, sometimes filled with exploding firecrackers, and the young men or women will run jumping over it to display their praise for the tiger. At times this is less successful and only some hot ash or, in damp weather, nothing at all appears. In some villages, the event is also held during the Lantern Festival on the fifteenth day of the first lunar month as part of Competitions for the Gods (*saishen* 赛神).

Here, we not only have the medium wielding a sword and moving spastically but also groups of people running over flames, often accompanied by blasting fireworks during the night. For those involved in carrying the palanquins or sedan chairs, there is a surge of adrenalin, the excitement of the hot and tumultuous atmosphere, arising not only

from human bodies but also the heat of the actual fire. For some onlookers, however, this can bring feelings of fear. While both men and women described mediums to me as ‘too scary,’ describing feelings of fear at rituals is something only younger women mentioned to me. That older men were less likely to talk openly about feeling afraid is to be expected, though some did express their aversion to mediums. In these events, the nervous system senses a legitimate fear of bodily harm, open fire and explosions are not generally what one instinctively seek out in this way, but also a fear of the gods themselves; those who are powerful enough to bring about such acts of courage or foolhardiness should not be taken lightly.

Though the feeling described to me was named by informants as ‘fear,’ the relation of this fear to the god’s power materialized in the ritual event, is comparable to work in the psychology of emotion on awe in the Western world. Indeed, others who did not feel fear describe ritual events as making them feel humbled (*qianbei* 謙卑), which is also connected to a sense of awe. However, while there are numerous Chinese terms to translate the English ‘awe,’ many connecting it to feelings of fear, none of these were used by informants. In the Euro-American world, awe is a feeling that has been associated with an experience with the divine or supernatural. Perhaps it is the conception of the one God in Christianity as both one to fear and love that brings about this feeling, the Christian is amazed to be in the presence of the divine, but at the same time, there is a threat of what misfortune may occur when one is too close. Rudolph Otto’s (1950) account of the numinous side of religion describes experiences that are affective or non-logical. He understood these kinds of experiences as incomprehensible for individuals and inspiring both a sense of awe of and of dread. However, as Roy A. Rappaport (1999,

377-379) notes, Otto's religious experience is solely focused on the psychological individual, cut off from social or collective experiences. More recent psychological studies of awe place the individual more firmly in their environmental settings. Keltner and Haidt (2003) relate experiences of awe to a perceived vastness and need for accommodation that are both accounted for by in terms of threat, beauty, exceptional ability, virtue, and the supernatural. Additionally, Piff et al. (2015) have argued that awe can be conceived as a collective emotion that results in a diminishing sense of the individual self and an increase in prosocial behavior. This does not result in negative emotions about the self, but rather greater feelings of being part of something larger than oneself. Finding that awe increased ethical decision-making, generosity, and prosocial values. Awe, they argue, may help an individual situate themselves within a broader society and increase concern for the collective.

The experiences of both joy and fear from the hot and tumultuous atmosphere seem to point to something similar and can help understand how both emotional states may result from the same affective forces. Even if the individuals involved did not describe the feeling using the specific term awe, they did describe a sense of feeling more aware of being part of something larger than themselves, which is often connected to experiences of awe. The magnitude of both the division of incense generally and the leaping the firepit specifically bring about a collective affect that connects one to something larger than the individual. The god's power is something that is both vast pervading its wide territory but is also something that can be materialized in a human body, displaying extraordinary feats that would otherwise not occur. When both the body and mind are acclimatized to these kinds of experiences, it is more likely to result in the

feelings of joy and excitement, though for the uninitiated the surprise and confusion can lead to feelings of fear instead.

## **6.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I suggested that ritual events create an affective atmosphere described as hot and tumultuous and that this is not confined to a single space, but emerges out of and moves through the god's wider territory through the division of incense. They develop a contagion of affective networks. Other rituals, such as the ceremony of the cultural festival, may not have such a contagious result as they lack the same kind of intensity. Instead, they work to develop relations between temples, government officials, and businesspeople. The emotions or categorical affects that emerge out of these atmospheres are not predetermined, bodies and minds work to make sense of affective atmospheres in different ways based on past experience. I pointed to two different ways the atmosphere may be categorized as one of excitement and joy or of trepidation and fear, both of which may occur within the same individual, and point to how the god's power can lead to feeling a diminished sense of individual self and increased connection to something larger. In the following chapter, I focus on the issue of ICH through the example of the ritual of Sending off Royal Lords (*Song wangchuan* 送王船). In doing so, I consider the different ways re-categorization of ritual events impacts its relation to the state and local society.



## Chapter 7

### Burning Royal Boats as Intangible Cultural Heritage

#### 7.1 Introduction

In recent years, local ritual traditions have been categorized in political, media, and popular discourses as “intangible cultural heritage” (*feiwuzhi wenhua yichan* 非物質文化遺產) and “Fujian-Taiwan Cultural Exchange” (*Min-tai wenhua jiaoliu* 閩台文化交流).

Both government employees and temple organizers attempt to use this new terminology for their advantage, the former looking to gain control over local culture for political or economic benefits, and the latter seeing them in terms of increased official recognition and financial gains. In the previous chapter, I used the example of the Baosheng Dadi Cultural Festival as creating new and far more banal rituals separate from the hot and tumultuous atmosphere of the division of incense. This chapter focuses on the ritual of “Sending off Royal Lords” (*Song wangchuan* 送王船) and the various ways these new categories have and have not impacted the practice. I first outline the growth of the category of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) globally and within China, then present the ritual of Sending off Royal Lords as it takes place within the ICH industry, the role state-run cultural centers play in this, the use of exchange between Fujian and Taiwan at events, and how it the ritual also continues outside of these two new categories. I end with some comments about the relation between the perception of the event and its affective resonances.

## 7.2 Intangible Cultural Heritage Globally and in China

In 2003, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) held the Convention for Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) marking a new category for the organization who had previously been known for their work to preserve tangible heritage since the 1970s.<sup>83</sup> They divide ICH into the following categories: “oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts.”<sup>84</sup> UNESCO considers these practices important by as ways to maintain cultural diversity in an era of globalization and in hopes to increase intercultural dialogue. Like the tangible sites, items were added to this new category after experts and managers were assigned to identify and document the ‘cultural heritage’ and work to safeguard them, as well as providing financial assistance to developing nations with grants of up to \$100,000USD. The UNESCO list suggests that whatever the cultural heritage is, it is something in need of protection, documentation, and categorization. Every four years, governments are required to submit a report that assesses the current state of their specific ICH and what impact efforts to safeguard it have had. Every six years, an additional report must be filed detailing the status of all ICH in the territory. UNESCO’s official website explains the potential risks and threats to ICH as follows,

Heritage can be ‘blocked’ (loss of variation, creation of canonical versions and consequent loss of opportunities for creativity and change), decontextualized, its sense altered or simplified for foreigners, and its function and meaning for the communities concerned lost. This can also lead to the abuse of intangible cultural heritage or unjust benefit inappropriately obtained in the eyes of communities concerned by individual members of the community, the State, tour operators,

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<sup>83</sup> The categorization of tangible culture also continues, such as the categorization of Gulangyu as a UNESCO world heritage site in 2017 for its historical architecture.

<sup>84</sup> <https://ich.unesco.org/en/what-is-intangible-heritage-00003>

researchers or other outside persons, as well as to the over-exploitation of natural resources, unsustainable tourism or the over-commercialization of intangible cultural heritage (UNESCO n.d.).<sup>85</sup>

Although bureaucratizing local culture is an essential part of gaining status as ICH, the stated intention of the organization is to do so without significantly altering the practice or transforming it into a mass commercial tourist industry.

Between 2002 and 2004, China held three international academic conferences on ICH that initiated a push to develop a national research center on the topic. In 2006, the Chinese ICH Protection Center (*Zhongguo feiwuzhi wenhua yichan baohu zhongxin* 中國非物質文化遺產保護中心) was established as part of the National Art Research Institute (*Zhongguo yishu yanjiuyuan* 中國藝術研究院) and the center began conducting a national survey to document the country's ICH and work towards its protection with an initial staff of thirty researchers.<sup>86</sup> Like UNESCO, this is in many ways an extension of earlier work for cultural protection in China, such as protecting sites designated as 'important cultural relics' (*zhongdian wenwu* 重点文物), or in other words, 'tangible culture.' These projects included the collection of folk stories, songs, and opera throughout the country as well as the ethnology of minority groups' 'folk arts' (*minjian yishu* 民間藝術). In 2006, they produced the first list of China's ICH, which included 518 items categorized as folk literature, folk music, folk dance, traditional theater, folk musical theatre, acrobatics and athletics, folk art, traditional handicrafts, traditional

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<sup>85</sup> See <https://ich.unesco.org/en/faq-00021#what-is-the-difference-between-the-1972-world-heritage-convention-the-2003-convention-for-intangible-cultural-heritage-and-the-2005-convention-on-the-protection-and-promotion-of-the-diversity-of-cultural-expressionsij>

<sup>86</sup> <http://www.ihchina.cn/2/10313.html>

medicine, and folk customs (including a wide range of practices such as calligraphy, festivals, wedding customs, communal rituals, and clothing).<sup>87</sup> Additional items were added in 2008, 2011, and 2014. ICH as an industry, however, did not become a major phenomenon until the National Department of Culture established the China ICH Protection Association (*Zhongguo feiwuzhi wenhua yichan baohu xiehui* 中國非物質文化遺產保護協會) in 2013. They describe their work as including “survey and research, information collection, curating exhibitions, professional training, consultation services, and international cooperation” 调查研究、信息收集、举办展览、专业培训、咨询服务和国际合作.<sup>88</sup> Similar offices were also set up at the provincial and municipal levels creating an expanding hierarchy of ICH recognition. Once recognized, an individual will often be selected as the inheritor (*chuanchengren* 傳承人) of the tradition, a plaque will be awarded to the group or individual, and an annual funding grant will be transferred to them. While there are many similarities between UNESCO’s ICH and China’s, there are also important (although expected) differences such as ICH in China being part of “promoting the construction of socialist spiritual culture” (促進社會主義精神文明建設) and maintaining social harmony.<sup>89</sup> While scholars like Michael Herzfeld (Bryne 2011) have suggested that UNESCO ICH only reinforces nationalist narratives and Khun Eng Kuah and Zhaohui Liu (2017) agree that this is the case within China, Chang Jung-a (2017) complicates this assessment arguing that there is a tension between the state and local actors in ICH. On one level, ICH is used by the government as part of a nationalist

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<sup>87</sup> <http://www.ihchina.cn/3/10323.html>; [http://www.gov.cn/zwgk/2006-06/02/content\\_297946.htm](http://www.gov.cn/zwgk/2006-06/02/content_297946.htm)

<sup>88</sup> [http://www.chinaich.org/association/association.do?qm=plistAssociationIntroduction\\_default](http://www.chinaich.org/association/association.do?qm=plistAssociationIntroduction_default)

<sup>89</sup> [http://www.chinaich.org/protection/protection.do?qm=plistLaw\\_default](http://www.chinaich.org/protection/protection.do?qm=plistLaw_default)

construction of ‘Chineseness,’ but on the other, ICH must constantly be recreated by humans in ever-changing and diverse ways, and, in doing so, also escapes the grasp of nation-building projects.

Intangible Cultural Heritage has become a massive industry in China, leading officials and cultural workers to scramble to collect the details of every possible custom in their locality in hopes for some sort of prestige or economic gain through their promotion. The national listing now has well over a thousand items and even more have been recognized at local and provincial levels. However, only thirty-four of these have reached the coveted status of UNESCO approved ICH. Looking through the lists it is striking how many of these items are related to ritual events, both those directly categorized as “customs” (*minsu* 民俗) and others that are categorized as theatre, music, art, and so on.

At the provincial level, Fujian has recognized 66 customs as ICH, of the nine recognized in Xiamen six are classified as folk belief customs, the term used for cults to specific gods. The other three are the Mid-Autumn festival, centipede pavilion (itself a part of ritual events), and the customs of boat people (*danmin* 疍民). Numerous volumes have been published by local cultural centers detailing the content of each ICH, based on accounts of specific neighborhoods, districts, and cities giving either firsthand accounts from interviews or more generalized descriptions. Many temples are eager to have their specific site recognized and display their plaques on the temple walls alongside those recognizing their legal status as a religious site. This allows them to receive funding from the local government and also gives them a sense of recognition that their culture once

deemed to be superstitious or part of the ‘four olds’ in need of destruction during the Cultural Revolution is now seen as something to be valued and preserved.

### 7.3 Sending off the Royal Lords

One of the most eye-catching events that is classified as ICH is the ritual of Sending off the Royal Lords (*song wangye* 送王爺), also known as Sending off Royal Boats (*song wangchuan* 送王船) and Burning Royal Boats (*shao wangchuan* 燒王船) held at intervals of three to twelve years. The event is more than the standard processions through the neighborhood that are held for many other gods, for the Royal Lords a boat is built and carried out of the temple, then it is brought out of the neighborhood and placed either on the beach or in a large open area where it is set on fire. The scale of these events vary widely, some will only burn a small paper boat constructed by a Daoist priest and others will hire someone to construct a full-sized wooden replica of a boat. It is the temples that build these large scale boats that attract the most attention and their individual events are recognized as ICH.<sup>90</sup>

Typically a Daoist troupe is hired for the event and performs a special Royal Lord *jiao* 王爺醮, which involves securing the deity to the boat with a series of talismans.

Prior to the event, the Daoists construct a number of paper figurines, commonly three representing Wangyes and a large number of smaller figurines representing people dressed as yamen runners from late imperial China in a procession for the deities, holding signs and banners for the safety and prosperity of the event. At the event, these statues are set up on a temporary altar, either inside or outside of the temple. Like in a normal *jiao*,

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<sup>90</sup> On the historical development of the ritual and its relation to Daoism see Jiang (2017) and Katz (1995).

community representatives are led in a series of kneeling, kowtowing, and offering of incense and the Daoists recite scriptures, perform a figure-eight dance, toss water and rice to purify the space in front of their temporary altar to Daoist deities. Following this, additional groups such as opera performers acting as the eight immortals or musical performers may make offerings to the Royal Lords' altar. Next, the Daoists take the paper figurines to the boat and it is then taken from the temple to wherever it will be set on fire as firecrackers and fireworks explode along the way. This section frequently, but not always, occurs during the night. At the final location, the Daoists once again chant sutras, leading the community representatives once again in worship and offerings. The head Daoist then acts out a ritual dragging of the boat into the water (real or imaginary) and tosses cups of liquor onto the vessel before the fire is lit. Others throw bags full of spirit money, paper offerings, and, in some instances, even sacks of live chickens (who always seem to escape the blaze once the bags are burnt). As the boat burns, the crowds circle around it, many of them kneel holding incense and reciting their hopes for good health, while many others stand up holding up cameras and smartphones to capture the event. In some cases, many people will remain until the fire is completely extinguished, holding sticks of incense and kneeling for a hours on end, in other cases, the majority of the crowd leaves before the event is completed.

Although the purpose of the ritual is generally connected to removing plagues from the community and bringing good health and prosperity, the identity of the Wangye differs widely. There are many different Royal Lords, generally differentiated to by their Family name, but there are also various perspectives on their backgrounds as even the individual beings have different stories and interpretations. Lin and Peng (1993, 251-257)

and Katz (1987) have both shown how there are multiple contradicting narratives associated with the origins of the Wangye. Often these involve tales of scholars with aspirations of working as government officials, only to meet an early and violent death, something said to cause a person to transform into a ghost rather than an ancestor. Others speak of men who lost their lives while preventing plague demons from poisoning local water supplies. Their spirits were so powerful they are said to have either become a demon or a god associated with causing or preventing plagues. If it is understood to be a demon, then the entertainment and offerings involved in the ritual act as some form of trickery, to put the demon at ease before forcing it out of the community, and exorcizing potential bodily threats. If it is understood to be a force for good, then the god is understood to be helping the community to remove these same threats. The god would be sent off to meet with the Jade Emperor instead of being expelled for its malevolent spirit. Kristofer Schipper's (1985) study of the ritual in the Xigang 西港 region of southern Taiwan distinguished three distinct understandings of the god and experiences of the ritual. For the Daoist priest, the Royal Lords were understood in terms of abstract cyclical energies that bring epidemics and are symbolically represented by numbers. For the local chiefs, the Royal Lords are divine inspectors who were once doctors symbolically represented by commandments. Finally, the local people who represent the Royal Lords with wooden statues had developed their own myths as to their origins. They linked the deities to three bandits who had been killed in the area and then wreaked havoc on the locals from beyond the grave. They were then worshipped by a spirit medium and promoted to Lords after a few years and assimilated to the twelve doctors. The three different narratives existed at the same time as the groups took part in the same ritual



events. Southern Fujian's humid subtropical climate made epidemics such as malaria or smallpox a major concern and caused mass death throughout the late imperial period. Yet, while there generally are no longer concerns about such pandemics, the idea of maintaining good health or the peace and harmony of a community remain important to people, and the exorcism is now also transposed onto these issues.



**Figure 29: A Royal Lord Boat burning.**

#### **7.4 Sending Off the Royal Lords as ICH**

Sending off the Royal Lords was recognized as a provincial ICH in 2005 and then by the national association in 2011, in both instances it is referred to as “Fujian-Taiwan Sending off Royal Boats” (*Min-tai song wangchuan* 閩台送王船), notably emphasizing the

connection with Taiwan.<sup>91</sup> Other cults that are recognized as ICH such as those dedicated to Mazu and Baosheng Dadi also have ties to temples in Taiwan, but it is not emphasized in their ICH status.

The process of official recognition is often associated with the commercialization of ritual practices or their transformation into tourist attractions. Chen Zhiqin's (2015) study of religious rituals re-categorized as ICH in Zhejiang province found that local government officials used the designation as a way to exert control of the practices and attract tourism. You Ziyang (2015) describes how the promotion of worshipping the Yao and Shun sage kings in Shanxi was largely the result of the work of one local cadre, but also became a tool for local communities to mobilize through ritual and supernatural powers in order to solve conflicts. Stephen Jones (2017, 331-333) details the process of a Shanxi Daoist troupe receiving ICH status for their musical abilities and demonstrates how their musical performances as ICH in concert halls detach them from their ritual origins in terms of venue, length, and practice. While there is a degree of promoting ICH in this way in Fujian, particular for music such as Nanyin 南音 and forms of local opera, which are performed at cultural centers and auditoriums as celebrations of 'local culture'

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<sup>91</sup> Oddly, the national website lists its recognition in one instance as 2008 (<http://www.ihchina.cn/55/19360.html>) and on another 2011 (<http://www.ihchina.cn/3/18566.html>). In both cases it is listed as part of the third batch of recognized ICH which occurred in 2011. The provincial ICH website however lists it as part of the second batch recognized nationally.

or cultural festivals like the one described in the previous chapter.<sup>92</sup> Yet, to preserve ritual events such as Sending off the Royal Lords or the various deities' "belief customs" that are also categorized as ICH, they must continue to be practiced as rituals, not mere entertainment. As such, this new categorization has not significantly changed local people's ability to control and organize their own events. However, the perception of these events by both those inside and outside of the event has shifted more dramatically.

This change in perception is not just the result of their ICH status, but also how the events have been documented and presented in publication and exhibitions of cultural centers as well as media reports. The provincial ICH website has only a short description of the event:

In some of Xiamen's coastal villages, they hold the ritual of Sending off Royal Lords. Sending off Royal Lords sends off the Royal Lord of "Representing Heaven and Patrolling the Territory" and already has over 500 years of history. This Royal Lord does not represent the "plague god," rather he is a substitute for the Yellow Emperor in patrolling the four directions, he rewards goodness and punishes evil, blesses and protects through good weather, and brings peace and prosperity to the country. Typically the event is held once every three or four years, the lunar date to hold the Sending off the Royal Lords ritual is determined by tossing moon blocks: A Royal Lord boat is constructed, the Royal Lord is asked to get on the boat, and the boat is burnt by the seaside.

在廈門沿海一些村落有舉行送王船的儀式，送王船是送“代天巡狩”的王爺，已有 500 多年的歷史。此王爺並非代表“瘟神”，而是代替皇帝巡遊四方、賞善罰惡、保佑風調雨順、國泰民安。一般是三到四年舉行一次，通過擲筊在固定的農曆月份確定某一天舉行送王船儀式：造一艘王船，把王爺請上船，

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<sup>92</sup> This transformation of ritual into performance by categorizing it as ICH is a common critique of UNESCO. Lisa Gilman (2015) demonstrates how the ritual healing dance Vimbuza in northern Malawi is now performed as entertainment and cultural display. Valdimar Tr. Hafstein (2015) suggests that Gilman's work points to something more widespread in ICH, that it works by diagnosing what is wrong (economic development, depopulation, and so forth) and presents the treatment of 'safeguarding' by institutions as the cure. Yet, despite the 'wrong' of persecution of religious practice under Mao, by the 2000s, these kinds of traditions in Fujian province could hardly be described as something in need of saving or protection by an outside institution. So while some ICH that are associated with religious traditions, such as opera or dance, have been sanitized of their ritual components by shifting their venue and role of audience, they also continue as part of ritual events.

在海邊焚燒。<sup>93</sup>

What is notable about this description is how it takes an example of one event (not specified) and uses it to explain all the events in the area. It undercuts the possibility of multiple meanings that change over time and also change depending on the individual asked or the temple involved. The connection with the plague gods is denied and the god is instead a representative of the Yellow Emperor bringing the standard blessings associated with other gods and ritual events. Xiamen City ICH Protection Centre (XMSHLQWHG 2008, 42-45) repeats much of the same information, including that the Royal Lord is a substitute for the Yellow Emperor not the plague god, but does use the term ‘expelling evil’ (*quxie* 驅邪), a word relating more closely to exorcism. However, the provincial association’s website differs in that it does not specify if the god is or is not related to the plague god, describing it as a ‘folk belief-custom ritual event to send away plagues and seek good fortune’ (*songwen qifu de minjian xinsu yishi huodong* 送瘟祈福的民間信俗儀式活動).<sup>94</sup> These, however, also seem to assume only one static and singular meaning to the events.

Numerous publications documenting ICH by district-level cultural centers contain much lengthier descriptions and also include more specificities of individual events with the location listed. Huli district’s publication (XMSHLQWHG 2009, 87-88) includes page length descriptions of two events at two different temples, one referred to as “Sacrificing the Royal Boat” (*ji wangchuan* 祭王船) and the other using the more

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<sup>93</sup> <http://www.fjfyw.net/daibiaozuo/2015-01-16/1508.html>

<sup>94</sup> <http://www.ihchina.cn/55/19360.html>

common “Sending off the Royal Lords.” The former lacking the Daoists frequently included in descriptions of the event and the latter adding details of the importance of offerings made by opera performers, often excluded in descriptions. Perhaps the most extensive work in the city on ICH has been conducted by Haicang District Cultural Center and its director Huang Dasui 黃達綏. The center first published a collection similar to the Huli center (XMSHCQWHG 2008) and then a series of three volumes detailing ICH in different subdistricts (XMSHCQWHG 2009). The series is significantly different from other collections as it includes the dates that the information was collected as well as details of who collected and who gave the accounts such as age, gender, education, and so on. In doing so, they present ICH items, not as a single standard form (even if they only have one account), but coming from numerous specific individual experiences. Huang also published a monograph entitled *Haicang Folk Custom Culture* (*Haicang minsu wenhua* 海沧民俗文化, 2012), which includes an account of Zhongshan 鐘山 village’s 2007 event for sending off the royal lords (ibid, 54-77).

When looking at the national, provincial, and municipal levels, it is easy to be skeptical, concerned, or distrustful of what the recognition of cultural practices as ICH does to them. At these levels it does seem to present a standardized and often sanitized version of culture, frequently removing the practices from the environment they occur in and placing them in museums and performance halls, or profiting from them as tourist attractions. Despite definitions of ICH as something both lived in the contemporary world and relating to long traditions, the categorization frequently transforms these practices into a mere performance of history. Yet, at the more local level, I do see the benefits that can come from ICH, both in terms of valuable resources for future scholarship and in the

collaborations between cultural workers and local communities for their mutual benefit. Indeed, ICH status from China seems so appealing to some that a temple in Malaysia is even attempting to gain the title for their own ritual of Sending out Royal Lords.<sup>95</sup> At all levels, however, there is an influence on how ritual events are perceived, both in terms of people's pride in their history and culture, no longer relegated to the realm of 'feudal superstition,' and also in their perceived openness by people from outside of the communities who now are not only increasingly aware of the events, but also participate in a variety of ways.

### **7.5 The Haicang Cultural Center**

Each of the city's districts has their own cultural center, but I found the Haicang center to be involved in the most ambitious projects and also more closely connected to both those native to the area and new residents. The center was established in 2004 and moved to its current location in the larger cultural center in November of 2007. The center also houses a library, theatre, and youth center, as well as a large public square. In addition to the offices of employees, it also includes an art exhibition space on the first floor, exhibit about local culture on the second, classrooms, and a salon room used for public lectures and other events.

In addition to documenting the rituals for Sending off Royal Lords, the center has connected with rituals in three distinct ways. The center does more than just collect descriptions of the event, they promote the event on their WeChat account and the plaza

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<sup>95</sup> <https://www.thestar.com.my/metro/focus/2017/01/07/seeking-unesco-recognition-for-wangkang-procession-ageold-tradition-observed-by-the-hokkien-community>

outside the center now acts as the actual site for the final stages of the ritual. The Zhongshan village temple is located nearby the cultural center with a large gated-off stone inscription outside it from 2011 declaring Fujian-Taiwan Sending off Royal Lords as national level ICH. Despite this title, looking at the donations for the temple's reconstruction, their only overseas ties are to one donor in Malaysia and one in Hong Kong, rather than any in Taiwan. When I attended their event in November of 2016, the process was much the same as Huang described in 2007. The event began as male committee members in blue robes and black hats offered incense inside the temple and then raised two large red poles with lamps and flags hanging off of them on either side of the temple entrance. The boat was then completed by hammering it for tightly together while the Daoists led the men in a series of prostrations facing the boat. The Daoists then invited the gods down from Heaven and committee members carried out small statues while banging on gongs and drums. The boat was 'settled' in a rite known as "fixing the dragon eyes" (*an longyan* 安龍眼) in which nails with red ribbons are hammered into the dragon eyes on the boat. Fireworks were set off outside the temple and three clay bowls with leaves inside were placed inside a smaller boat, then the procession began to a nearby waterfront to collect water that is poured into the bowls. The flags were then added to the boat and two smaller boats are placed inside the temple next to the large boat. The head Daoist wrote out talismans while ringing a bell in front of a live chicken. He then sacrificed the chicken, cutting its neck and dropping some of its blood onto a mirror. Following this, he then burnt a talisman around the god statues ensuring their safety during the event.

The next morning, a stage was set up outside the temple and a Daoist altar was set up inside. In the afternoon, the boat was taken out of the temple on a procession ending at the cultural center's plaza. Men on top of the boat wearing maroon robes and black hats then tossed out spirit money that scattered in the wind all over the street. A Daoist altar was set up in front of the boat and a group of young men wearing flower covered hats was led by the Daoists in offering incense and making prostrations. The supports were slowly removed from the boat and sand and bags full of spirit money were tossed around it. Two groups of men in black robes soon arrived with even more paper offerings of their own to add to steadily increasing piles. The crowd thinned out as members of the temple continued to fill the boat with offerings. At 6:00 pm, an opera troupe began a performance, holding the attention of some of the attendees. Then around two hours later, a large group of people returned for the main event when a lion dance troupe began to entertain the crowds and the Daoists continued their ritual offering. Street hawkers also joined in the festivities, selling balloons, snacks, and cotton candy to the growing crowds of people. Finally, at 9:00 pm the boat was set ablaze and people of all ages crowded around to make their offerings or film the event.

Unlike “cultural festivals” held for other deities, there were no speeches, no visits by government officials or business leaders to make note of the ethical symbolism of the deity or the importance of maintaining ties between Fujian and Taiwan. No explanation was presented at the event about the meaning of what was happening or the history of the event, though this was included in the announcement posted on the cultural center’s WeChat account. It seems like the center is actually doing what ICH states as its intended purpose, they are facilitating the continuity of these ritual practices without transforming



them into a tourist spectacle or performance of history. In fact, from what I was told, the participation in the event has expanded in recent years attracting a wider range of people from the area and beyond. This is not the only way the cultural center has become involved in this specific temple and cult, it has also organized events aimed to inform the wider public about its content.



**Figure 30: Event held outside of the Haicang Cultural Center.**

On the second floor of the center, there is a permanent exhibit about Haicang local culture. Although I was the only person there when I visited, it does organize guided trips for young students. It contains a recreation of traditional Hokkien architecture and some historic items such as a large grain mill, still seen in many villages today. A section of the exhibit is dedicated to the cult of Baosheng Dadi and another to the cult of the Royal Lords. The exhibit is not particularly impressive, there is a small

model of a boat with orange lamps acting to imitate flames and a short explanation of the event is placed next to it along with a low-resolution photo. The boat lacks much of the quality and scale as the one used in the actual event and the description did not inspire much interest in me as a visitor. Regardless of the quality, the museumified form does attempt to present local culture as both traditional and contemporary providing photos and videos of recent events; as something not only to be preserved but also lived.

The center also organizes a series of salons about local culture, inviting people from the community to come and talk or answer questions on something they are considered to be an expert in. On one occasion in 2016, the head of the Zhongshan temple committee and the man who constructs their boat were invited for an afternoon discussion. Unfortunately, I was not able to attend the talk but did manage to take part in another session with an elderly self-educated man who worked as a security guard at the city museum. Around 20-30 people attended that event, which used Mandarin as the language of discussion, and most attendees were between 20 and 40 years old with some bringing along their young children. A great deal of respect and admiration was shown to the speaker by the audience, although he lacked formal education he was presented as a protector of local cultural knowledge and traditions. Based on its promotion, the event focused on Sending off the Royal Lords likely had a similar atmosphere. It referred to the men as experts (*zhuanjia* 專家) who would reveal the mysteries of the meaning and history of the ritual as well as the construction process of the boat.

The center's involvement with the temple and ritual event work to establish the organizers as inheritors of specialist knowledge. Yet, there is also a striking difference in this presentation compared to work by academics like Jiang (2017) and Katz (1995), both

of whom spend a great deal of effort connecting the ritual to the history of Daoism.

Although the Daoists continue to play a role in the ritual, the promotion of the event as ICH or local culture tends to diminish their importance and leaves them out of the discussion with the wider public. I do not think there is a singular reason for this, at the most basic level one could point to the general disinterest many Daoists have in taking part in projects promoting ICH, on another the fact that Daoism exists throughout and beyond China may diminish the importance of locality in the event, and then there is also an effort to distance ‘local culture’ from religion and superstition. Regardless of this kind of presentation inside the center, the actual event does not seem to have been changed significantly due to its new categorizations, except in that it now receives increasing numbers of participants.

In considering what ICH status offers the organizers and participants in the event, Bourdieu’s (2002) concepts of cultural and social capital come to mind, yet, I’m hesitant to suggest it provides a full understanding of this re-categorization. Clearly, there is a very direct gain in economic capital for the temples designated as ICH coming from government funds, but I am less certain that the kind of increase in status of the event is ever transferable to economic form beyond this. First, when Bourdieu spoke of cultural capital, he used culture in a very conservative sense of “being cultured” by means of formal education, how this is embodied through in the preconditioning of children in ‘cultured’ families, and objectified by obtaining objects such as writings and paintings seen as ‘cultured.’ While the ICH status does give validity to traditional forms of local education (Daoist cultivation, boat building, and so on) as culture, this does not translate into its increased worth economically. They do not gain the kind of value that Bourdieu

described and these careers remain to be seen as precarious career choices. Social capital seems closer to ICH status as it refers to obtaining a credential, but due to the top-down structure of ICH recognition, those who receive it can do little in terms of mobilizing around others with the status. In fact, the more who receive the status, the more devalued it will likely become. So although ICH offers some financial benefit to the temples, it is primarily a status that gives validity or at least peace of mind to those involved in organizing that it is an approved practice, and that, while lacking education, they still can speak of themselves as ‘having culture.’<sup>96</sup> Yet, this is rarely transferred to actual economic capital. This is not to diminish the gains the temples and their ritual events have made in recent decades in terms of their political and cultural status.

## **7.6 Sending off the Royal Lords as Cultural Exchange**

The categorization of Sending of the Royal Lords as ICH is different from the other local cults and ritual practices that have gained this status in that rather than being referred to as a ‘belief custom’ its name instead emphasizes that it is a shared practice between Fujian and Taiwan. This connection between the two places is promoted at numerous ritual events with banners and promotional material highlighting the event as “Fujian-Taiwan Cultural Exchange” (*Mintai wenhua jiaoliu* 閩臺文化交流). This connection is not limited to the Royal Lords but their cult is the only one to have it listed as a part of its ICH title. I see three main purposes for this kind of promotion: 1) its used in official

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<sup>96</sup> Much like in English, culture in Chinese has now taken on two distinct meanings. One closer to Bourdieu’s use that points towards education or ‘high culture,’ seen in terms like ‘cultural level’ (*wenhua chengji* 文化成績) to refer to one’s education; while the other is more general and can be applied to popular, traditional, or local culture that is detached from any formal educational status.

categorization by state cultural bureaus as a way to emphasize the shared culture of the two places in order to suggest Taiwan is inherently part of China; 2) being aware of the government's use of the term, local temples seize on an opportunity to navigate the political system surrounding organizing ritual events, in using the improvement of cross-strait relations as an important part of the event, they expect to receive increased support from the government; and 3) it is used because many temples do have actual connections to temples on Taiwan proper or nearby Jinmen island who contribute financially and participate in events. Although this categorization is deeply entrenched in politics, it should not be understood as gaining some sort of 'political capital' because it does not appear to be in anyway convertible into economic gain. The prestige of status as cultural exchange and as ICH works as a way for local temples to find ways around and support from the government, but also gives the government increased awareness of what is actually going on at the temple events.

Previous work on religious practice as cultural exchange between Fujian and Taiwan have focused on the cult of Mazu described as either Mazu culture (媽祖文化 *Mazu wenhua*) or Mazu customs (媽祖信俗 *Mazu xinsu*). DJ Hatfield described the earliest pilgrimage from Taiwan's Dajia Zhenlan temple 大甲鎮瀾宮 in 1987, he understands the use of terms like "*minjian xinyang*" and "*Mazu wenhua*" as tools to make Taiwanese donors, temple committees, and the local state cooperate under the guise of a 'spiritual bridge' (*jingshen qiaoliang* 精神橋樑) linking Taiwan and Fujian, despite the existing political separation (2016, 151-181). In 2000, Mayfair Yang (2004) observed the pilgrimage by the same temple, now accompanied by a Taiwanese TV news network who broadcasted the event via satellite feed. She suggests that even as the mainland television

news reports focused on the political implications of the pilgrimage rather than the religious, the Mazu cult still posed problems for the state in both China and Taiwan by emphasizing the ritual territories over the official state administrative divisions. Lin Wei-Ping (2014) participated in the first pilgrimage from a village on the Mazu islands to China in 2008. Their voyage was not based around historic ties, but to a new collaboration with the local tourism bureau in Ningde county 寧德縣, and she argues that through the event villagers are able to aspire to new economic and political futures aided by the Mainland. Each of these points quite rightly to the looming figure of the state concerned about cross-straits relations and tourism bureau hoping for economic development, yet, in the rituals for Sending off the Royal Lords, neither appear particularly present at the events aside from slogans on banners and t-shirts.

One event held in late 2015 in downtown Xiamen was sponsored by two temples from Keelung in Taiwan whose representatives took part in the procession. Its content was similar to that of the Haicang ritual described above with some differences in the performers taking part and that it took place in an area of the downtown heavily trafficked by tourists. The event's intensity was only heightened by the masses of unexpected onlookers who joined the event, marching on at the end or side of the procession, often with no idea what was going on, but curious none the less. Although the temple's WeChat account had published detailed descriptions of what the event was for and the route of the procession, at the event itself explanation was minimal. One banner listing the temples' names described it organized by 'two sides of the straits' (*haixia liangan* 海峡两岸) and noting its ICH recognition. T-shirts worn by representatives from one temple were particularly vague reading, "two shores pass on their wonder – splendor

prevails in its creation” (*liangan chuanqi – chengying diazo* 兩岸傳奇·晟嬴締造). There is some notion here of cross-straits relations and members of the Taiwan temples were taking part, but the spectacle of the event remained largely the same as those held elsewhere. Even the mass of tourist participation did not manage to transform the event into merely a performance, their presence worked to build up the intensity of the atmosphere, and did not prevent others from making offerings and wishes to the deities as the boat burned on the beach.

For the ritual specialists, organizers, and devotees there exists a range of meanings. However, for passersby, the ritual acts as a spectacle that takes them in not by its meaning or symbolism, but through the social-heat that surrounds it. Yet, this ritual was clearly different from those that consist primarily of temple goers and their relatives who they convinced to come along. The sheer number of cameras and smartphones at this event, especially during the boat burning, noticeably outnumbered the number of those offering incense. Not that the temple made it easy for passers-by to join in making offerings, there were no visible place for anyone to get incense sticks if they did not arrive at the temple prior to the procession. The temple members also joined in the mediatization of the event hiring a number of videographers to record the event including the use of two small drones to record a bird’s eye view of everything going on. Despite this, the content of the ritual remained the same and devotees did not face barriers in their worship. While I realize that categorizing rituals as ICH or cross-straits culture often comes hand-in-hand with increased state intervention, transformation of religious acts into performances for tourists, and an overall standardization of ritual practice, in the case of Sending off the Royal Lords I did not find this to be the case, even when attracting

large numbers of tourist spectators.

### **7.7 Sending off the Royal Lords outside of the ICH Industry**

Other groups have remained outside of the ICH industry taking no interest in applying for the status, nor do they ever mention cultural exchange with Taiwan or cross-straits relations. This is not because they disdain accepting government funding or fear becoming a tourist attraction, instead, it is that their events are more small-scale and do not expect to be listed alongside the temples that build life-sized wooden replicas of boats. When I inquired about an event at one temple the day before it began, the temple president, who was busy preparing for the ritual, even told me that their event wasn't very impressive in comparison to other temples that he had seen on recent TV reports. But what these non-ICH rituals point to is the continued diversity of practice in Sending off the Royal Lords that ICH reports, especially on the national level, tend to miss. I was able to attend two such events, one centered on Daoist ritual and the other Buddhist.

The Daoist centered event was held in an urban village in December 2015 and was similar to those that gained ICH status except that there was no actual boat because the temple was not located near a body of water. Therefore the ritual was referred to as Sending off Royal Lords instead of Sending off Royal Boats. The day before the main event, the Daoists performed an offering to the Jade Emperor, though few were in attendance aside from the committee members and opera performers who were preparing for their evening performance. On the second day, three long tables were set out in front of the temple with an assortment of offerings including flowers, stacks of ghost money, boxes of Hennessy, cakes, prepared foods, raw meat, rice dumplings, cigarettes, fruit,



firecrackers, and so on; as well as four slaughtered pigs and sheep, yellow mesh bags full of live ducks, and a single live chicken that wandered around the courtyard. Beneath the pigs were red buckets full of their organs that had been removed. In the afternoon the Daoists continued the *jiao* and once again led the committee members in making offerings, while the opera troupe performed outside after making their own offerings to the gods. There was a break in the ritual for people to eat dinner and because no communal meal was cooked, people divided up heading off to different restaurants or homes in the area. The attendees returned in the evening around 9:00pm as fireworks and firecrackers were set off and the procession exited the temple grounds led by the Daoists and even included a pickup truck full of paper offerings and well over a hundred men and women holding incense, as well as a paper horse, chariot, and god statue built by the Daoists.<sup>97</sup> The procession ended in a nearby empty field where some members of the local fire brigade were waiting. As the Daoists completed a short invocation the truck's contents along with other offerings were piled up and set ablaze. Although the event differed from those for other deities by burning the paper sculptures outside of the temple, the spectacle was not any grander than their other celebrations.

More peculiar, however, was a communal temple that converted to Buddhism in the 1920s but continued to also worship their non-Buddhist deities. I attended their event in July of 2015, rather than a life-sized wooden replica they used a small paper boat constructed by the temple committee. This contradicts Jiang's assertion that in Xiamen wooden boats are used, whereas in Zhangzhou they construct boats from paper (2017,

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<sup>97</sup> In other instances, this group built paper boats when performing the ritual at temples located closer to water.

227). As the two locations are very close together, clearly there has been much migration and exchange between the two cities. On the morning of the event, the boat was placed in front of a table of vegetarian offerings outside of the small temple. Six monks and four Veggie Aunties chanted sutras and blessed peanuts and coins that were thrown out to the crowd. Most of the other attendees were older women, though a number of men and younger women stopped by on their way to work to make a donation and make their own offering of incense, ignoring the monks completely. After a break, the monks went inside the same temple and chanted sutras into microphones following along with the repetitive rhythms of the bell and wooden fish accompanied by a number of women who followed along with printed sutras available in the temple. The repetitive sounds of the chants mixed with high pitch bells and chimes as well as the repeated bows work to put everyone into a meditative state. There was much less spectacle than the other events described and it did not attract the curiosity of any passersby. Later a monk recited the names of all those who donated to the event followed by more sutra recitation and circumambulation of the boat with most of the remaining devotees in tow. The monk then blessed each person with water after they each offered incense to the burner in front of the boat. The boat was not set on fire or even moved to the nearby lake, instead of the typical Daoist transformation through flames, the monks sent the Royal Lords out through liturgy alone. The event ended with yet another session of sutra recitation closing with three bows and prostrations to the boat. The Buddhists treated the event much like that of any other deity, but the temple committee still maintained the custom of building a boat.

Both of these examples show the continued practice of Sending off Royal Lords that is disinterested in taking part in ICH and that the ICH industry is equally disinterested in. Even studies of this ritual that try to get at the local specificity of individual communities tend to ignore the further diversity seen when also looking at these more low key events. Including these complicates what indeed counts as Sending off the Royal Lords, it at times appears to be markedly local, but also tied to wider Daoist traditions having specific liturgical components included in the Daoist canon. Yet, in other instances, it is stripped of these Daoist elements almost entirely and replaced with Buddhist sutra recitation. There is a tendency to conflate classification as ICH with a standardization and touristification of traditions, yet in Xiamen, there is still diversity in the practice for both temples categorized and not categorized as ICH. What has changed for many participants is how these events are perceived, and this has led me to consider the relation between perception and affection at ritual events.

### **7.8 Perception and Affection**

Rituals are created, but their meaning and experience is by no means solely tied to their creators. The event spreads by attaching itself to others, who in turn shape it through the event's proliferation and repetition. Deleuze and Guattari describe this process in relation to visual art and the novel, explaining how these objects detach from their creator preserved as "a bloc of sensations, that is to say, a compound of percepts and affects" (1994, 164). The ritual event differs with each repetition in new times and places but also differs in how it attaches to each individual in attendance. Regardless of the categorization as ICH, the event can potentially occur in almost the same way as it did in

the past. For the individual participant or observer, however, what has changed is the recollection of the past events, this occurs both on an unconscious level of bodily recollection and conscious level of cognitive recollection which shape our perception.

The classification of the ritual event as ICH effects these recollections and in turn shifts the ways the event is perceived. On both levels of recollection, there are now numerous new past experiences formed not through the direct participation in the event, but in observing news coverage, visiting exhibitions, or reading descriptions of the event published by cultural centers and the temples themselves. Increasingly then, there is a more standardized form of perceiving the different aspects of the ritual as they are named and listed out for anyone to see. Though it is possible to ignore all this information (indeed, during the event held near the tourist area of Xiamen many onlookers could be heard saying “I don’t understand what I’m seeing”) and those who do have more knowledge of the event do not necessarily privilege the same ritual technologies. For participants, it also shifts the perception of the event to tie to conceptions of a shared local culture between Fujian and Taiwan. Certainly, many were aware of actual historic ties between the two regions in the past, but the re-categorization shifts from an emphasis on the ritual to expel plagues to improving ties with Taiwan.

Beyond this sort of identification or representation, there is another level of perception that comes from bodily recollection, the ways in which the ritual affects participants appears largely the same. But these affects may be reconfigured in how they are processed due to our shifting conscious perception. The content of the ritual may be the same, but the perception and affection can change. Yet, for the time being, I did not find that these had changed significantly. The events continue to develop *renao*

atmospheres building with the intensity of the crowds and the actual heat from the flames. Many participants also approach the event with a sincere level of piety for the deity, even without the threat of plagues, there are more general feelings that the Royal Lords can bring good health and prosperity for the community. While there is precedent to be skeptical of ICH status from the Chinese government or UNESCO, ritual events in Fujian have been able to adapt to their new categorization in order to receive some additional funding. This has also brought increased involvement of locals with the cultural centers and some hobbyist photographers to the events, but these changes do not appear to have had any significant impact on how the events are organized.

## **7.9 Conclusion**

Although there are many cases in which ICH is used to transform rituals and other cultural practices into mere performance (often in connection to tourism), in southern Fujian, many local temples have been able to take advantage of the status for financial gain and more temples continue to apply for ICH status. The reason for this seems to largely be that the rituals were not really in need of assistance for their preservation. Despite the hardships faced during the Maoist period, the practices had returned decades before the promotion of ICH status and many of the locals continue to have increasing wealth and contribute to the temples. The re-categorization does bring the temples into closer contact with the state, who hope to use such conceptions of local culture as a way to connect China and Taiwan, but there are also employees at cultural centers with a sincere interest in preserving local traditions.

While the perception of the event has changed for some people through its re-categorization, the actual content and performance remain largely the same. Even if the employees of the cultural center use the language of heritage preservation to talk about the ritual, it is far from becoming a museumified version of its former self or a mere spectacle for tourists, even if they now take part. The affective resonances of the event remain and, in this sense, Sending off Royal Lords still draws on the same kind of hot and tumultuous atmospheres as described in the previous chapter. Both the examples of the cults dedicated to Baosheng Dadi and the Royal Lords point to how local people work to navigate their relations with the state in new and varied ways in order to maintain a degree of control over their practices.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Conclusion**

The survey of temples in Xiamen that I conducted found that there were 142 communal temples within the two central city districts, in addition to the almost fifty other temples dedicated to Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Daoist deities, and others. Although it is well-known that compared to elsewhere in China, the reconstruction of temples in Fujian has been faster and more widespread, the actual quantity of them within major urban areas will likely still come as a surprise to many. Given the damage that modern urban development plans and political campaigns have had to religious institutions in the city, as documented in chapter three, the scale becomes even more impressive. From this survey and historical overview, I went on to analyze the ways in which people organize around temples and why they remain important today.

In describing temples and ritual events I wanted to make them appear just as compatible with urban environments as IT workers or subways stations. Although scholarship in urban studies frequently ignores the role of religion in the city, it is often ubiquitous and embedded in forms of urban life. If we do not approach communal temples and ritual events as always in opposition to modernization and urbanization, as is frequently the case in urban studies, then it becomes more appropriate to speak of them in terms of infrastructures and technologies as I did in chapters four and five. This perspective also allows us to analyze temple activities and ritual events in terms of their productive qualities and see what they add to city life, whether in explicitly religious ways or not.

Although this study is of a specific locality, it is valuable for the study of urban China and religion in the city more broadly. The bulk of existing studies of religion in urban China have focused on major cities like Beijing and Shanghai. In these cities, religious life is most often organized around larger religious institutions such as monasteries, churches, and mosques. Although these organizing structures are different from the communal temples investigated in this dissertation, they still leave room for smaller group organizing within or around these religious sites that may not be in line with the official rhetoric of patriotic religious associations. However, the temples studied as part of this project are (or will be) more comparable with religious life in second and third-tier cities throughout the country as well as the emerging urban county seats. Like much of Xiamen city, large parts of these cities were formerly rural agricultural land and, before urban development reached them, they too were able to reconstruct their local temples and ritual traditions to varying degrees. Now, as urbanization has spread out to these areas, they also must grapple with the changing relation to territory, development, and state intervention just as residents of Xiamen have.

On April 26, 2018, Daoist priests were hired to perform a ritual for a new thorium molten reactor nuclear energy system in Gansu province. After images of the event were made public, there was an uproar on Chinese social media. The focus of news reports was often on the outrage of some netizens over what they saw as superstitious practices or the apology made by the Chinese Academy of Sciences. Yet, we could also see this event as evidence of how ingrained ritual practice remains in life for many people in China. So much so that it was obvious that new infrastructure projects require the assistance of ritual specialists. Despite the desires and propagations of the central government,



scientific research and modern infrastructures are not seen by everyone as in opposition with ritual practice. As urbanization expands further throughout the country, this will likely be an issue faced again elsewhere in China. The example of Xiamen shows how during the process of urbanization, communities organized around temples have been able to work together to have more say in the development process.

The relation between state-approved ICH and ritual practice can also be found throughout the country. There is a sense that this exists as a way to sanitize culture and to transform it into performance. But as I demonstrated in chapters six and seven, there is much more to the process than that. The designation of ICH may create new forms of rituals and events that the government approves of, but this does not necessitate the end of existing practices. For example, in Suining, a prefecture-level city in Sichuan province, ICH has been evoked to promote “Guanyin Culture” (*Guanyin wenhua* 觀音文化) by drawing on stories that the city was her hometown. Much like the Baosheng Dadi cultural festival, the local government describe Guanyin in connection to charity and kindness and promote events in the city for a Guanyin Festival full of lively performances. Yet, this does not detract from temples dedicated to Guanyin in the city, in fact, they draw more attention to it, especially during the festival. That the state has tried to take advantage of religious culture for tourism or other economic benefits does not necessarily mean a complete loss of agency for the local religious institutions. Much like in Xiamen, local groups elsewhere in China attempt to navigate these new terrains for their own benefit to varying degrees of success.

In many ways, Fujian is an exception to how religion has been practiced and regulated in post-Mao China. Yet, it is not irrelevant to the current or future situations

throughout the country. In chapter three, I described the urban development of modern Xiamen, which until the 1980s was largely comparable to other coastal cities. Following the strength of investment by overseas Chinese in the economy and local temples, however, there was a return of ritual events unlike that found elsewhere in the country. This gave rise to what I describe in chapter four, the link between the spiritual efficacy of a temple and the development of local infrastructure. I explained how communal temples are central to many local infrastructure works and other projects, something that is often ignored in studies of urbanization in China. Local communal temples exist not only as sites of religious worship and celebration but are also trusted institutions that prove themselves to be accountable to their communities.

In chapter five, I then considered the different actors in ritual events in terms of the circulation of ritual technologies. Looking at ritual events from this perspective does not place any single actor at the center or as an essential element, rather it points to the endless possibilities of divergent performers. Yet this diversity is also determined by historical, political, and economic conditions. In analyzing ritual in terms of circulation, it moves away from any sort of world religions framework that would present the events as Daoist, Buddhist, or primarily associated with any one religion. This offers a useful perspective to analyze ritual events as ever changing but also contingent on their historic and contemporary circumstances.

Chapters six and seven focused on the affective dimensions of rituals, first in terms of the collective atmospheres created and then through a consideration of the changing language and perception of events. Chapter six presented different events surrounding a single cult and showed both how the hot and tumultuous atmospheres at

large-scale events can bring about a collective experience that then spreads throughout the wider geographies of a cult. But these atmospheres are also transformed at the individual level into feelings like joy or fear and the changing experiences caused by the states promotion of local culture. Finally, chapter seven describes the growth of the ICH industry and government support for ritual events and local cults as cultural exchange with Taiwan. Despite the connection between these re-categorizations with tourism or standardization of culture, I found that they have had minimal effects on the actual rituals, but they have changed how the events are often presented in the media and perceived by onlookers.

Focusing on the role of affect and emotion in ritual allows for a consideration of both the social and psychological experience of the events. Although we can speak of affect as pre-conscious or non-personal, the way in which these intensities come together is based on both the historical background that shapes the circulation of ritual technologies, as well as the individual history of experience and understanding of ritual events. This points to both the levels of shared experience emphasized in chapter six in terms of affective atmospheres, as well as the individual level pointed to in chapters four, six, and seven. This affective-emotional level is not a denial of the power of the gods worshipped or the individual conceptions about what rituals do but adds another layer to these. Indeed, these aspects are key to understanding the link between the individual experience and the impact that a temple can have in city life. Without these individual experiences, there would not be any room for collective organizing.

Temples and their ritual events in Xiamen and southern Fujian more broadly continue to be important sites for collective celebration and individual devotion.

Religious practices and their related events impact people's lives in a multitude of ways. I have focused on the embodied experience of these events and their resulting emotional responses to consider the ways in which rituals connect to forms of community organizing. This is seen through the trust in local temples to be transparent in their expenses, pride held for long-held customs, and the ability to innovate and expand the projects the temples are involved in. From this, communal temples as local institutions can be understood as playing a significant role in the lives of many urban residents in southern Fujian.

## Appendix A

### List of Temple Events in Xiamen (Comparison with de Groot [1886])

J. J. M. De Groot's (1886) *Les fêtes annuellement célébrées à Émoui (Amoy): étude concernant la religion populaire des Chinois* documented the annual ritual events in Xiamen during the late 1880s. However, he did not include many of the celebrations of local deities throughout the island. Judging by the deities he listed, I suspect that his research was based largely, if not entirely, in old Xiamen city and Gulangyu, rather than what were then villages in the surrounding area. However, the City God is also absent from his list of events despite mentioning the temple. De Groot's list includes local temple events, Buddhist celebrations, as well as events centered on the household or family such as Tomb Sweeping Day. His list also shows the former importance of festivals like the Lunar New Year and Dragon Boat festival for temples, which have now largely moved to more rural areas. Although some communities still hold the Lunar New Year to be an important temple event, many within the city do not even hold a celebration for the Lunar New Year. Additionally, it demonstrates the decline in popularity of specific gods, namely Wenchang (The God of Literature) whose temple located in present-day Sun Yat-Sen Park was never rebuilt. For events like the division of incense, different temples will celebrate the gods' birthday or ascension to Heaven on different dates and often for multiple days. Additional Buddhist celebrations could also be added to my own list such as Sakkyamuni's day of renunciation (02/08), Samantabhadra's (Puxian pusa 普贤菩萨) birthday (02/21), or Cundi's (准提菩萨 Zhunti pusa) birthday (03/16) but since these were not the focus of my study I did not include them.

### De Groot's Calendar of Ritual Events

Date (Lunar)	De Groot's Listing	Listing based on 2015-2017 fieldwork
01/01-15	Lunar New Year 春節 to Lantern Festival 元宵節	Lunar New Year 春節 to Lantern Festival 元宵節
01/06		Qingshui zushi 清水祖師 Birth
01/06		Zhenyi dashi 真異大師, day of awakening
		Sanping zushi 三平祖師, birth
01/13	Guan Di 關帝	
		Wufu wangye 吳府王爺, birth
01/15		Kaimin shengwang 開閩聖王
01/15		Zhusheng niangniang 注生娘娘, birth
01/18		Chifu wangye 池府王爺, birth*
01/24		Wufu wangye 吳府王爺*
02/01		Taishang laojun 太上老君, birth
02/01	Earth God 土地公, birth	
02/02		Earth God 土地公, birth
02/03	Wenchang 文昌, birth	
		Kaizhang shengwang 開漳聖王, birth
02/19	Guanyin 觀音, birth	
02/22	Guangze Zunwang 光澤尊王, birth	Guangze Zunwang 光澤尊王, birth
02/29		City God 城隍爺

03/02		Xuantian shangdi 玄天上帝, birth
03/03	Double Threes Day	
03/08	Tomb Sweeping Day 清明節	
03/15	Baosheng Dadi 保生大帝, birth	Baosheng Dadi 保生大帝, birth
03/23	Mazu 媽祖, birth	Mazu 媽祖, birth
03/28		Rensheng digong 仁聖帝公
04/01		Yuhuang shangdi 玉皇上帝, ascent to Heaven
04/01		Wanshi fozu 萬土佛祖, birth
		Prince Nezha 哪吒太子, birth*
04/08	Bathing the Buddha 釋迦牟尼佛	
04/09		Wufu wangye 武府王爺/Su wangye 苏王爺, birth
04/20		Dating ye 大廳爺, birth
04/26		Lord of Grain 炎帝, birth
04/29		Baosheng dadi, ascent to Heaven
05/05	Summer Festival - Dragon Boat Festival 端午節	Summer Festival - Dragon Boat Festival 端午節
05/13	Guandi, birth	Guandi, birth*
05/29		Wufu qianshi 五府千帥, birth
06/03		Tianjun ye 天君爺
06/06	Opening the Gates of Heaven	Opening the Gates of Heaven, Earth God, Tiankan jie 天侃節
06/07		Xuanfu wangye 宣府王爺, birth

06/15	Mid-Year Festival 半年節 - Offer to domestic gods and ancestors	Mid-Year Festival 半年節
06/16		Xiangjiang die 相江爹, birth
06/18		Chifu wangye 池府王爺*
06/19	Guan Yin, awakening	Guan Yin, awakening
06/20		Guandi, birth*
06/23		Longan zunwang 龍安尊王, birth
07/01	Ghost Festival 開鬼門	Ghost Festival 開鬼門
07/07	Double Sevens 七夕	Double Sevens 七夕
07/15	中元節 Second fest for Sanxing (Fu Lu Shou 福緣壽, first during New Years)	中元節 Second fest for Sanxing (Fu Lu Shou 福緣壽, first during New Years)
07/23		Yueyang god altar 岳陽佛壇
07/29		Pudu 普渡 (end of Ghost Festival)
08/03	Kitchen God 灶君	
08/04		Huguo zunwang 護國尊王, birth
08/06		Qinghua guniang 青花姑娘
08/08		Dade chanshi 大德禪師
08/15	Mid-Autumn Festival 中秋節	Mid-Autumn Festival 中秋節, Prince Nezha's birth,* and Yuanshuai ye's birth*
08/16		Wenying gong 文應公, birth.
08/22	Second Guangze Zunwang 千秋、神誕日	Xiang wanggong 相王工, birth



09/09	Double Yang Festival 重陽節	Double Yang Festival 重陽節, Mazu's ascent to Heaven, Prince Nezha's birth.*
		Da gongye 大公爺, birth
09/19	Third Guan Yin 觀音出家	
10/05		Chifu wangye*
10/10		City God's Wife 城隍夫人, birth.
10/15	Third Sanxing (Fu Lu Shou)	Sanguan taidi 三冠太帝, birth
10/20		Jin wangye 金王爺, birth (numerous nondescript Wangyes are celebrated during this month)
11/12		Si hai Long wang 四海龍王, birth
11/22	Winter Solstice 元旦節	Winter Solstice 元旦節
11/27		Puan fozu 普庵佛祖, birth
12/16	Fest to honor the earth 土地公	
12/24	Sending Domestic gods to Heaven 送 神 (众神上天)	
12/29 or 30	End of Year Festival	

\*Repeated during different periods depending on temple.

## **Appendix B**

### **Temple Income and Expenses**

This appendix contains details of income and expenses from different temples within Xiamen. The names of the temples have been removed from transcriptions of documents. They display a range of scales, of events, and of temple committees. Figures one through seven are translated into English, figures eight through twelve are transcribed in Chinese, and figures thirteen through sixteen are shown in photos. They demonstrate not only the kinds of spending one typically associates with temples, such as expenses related to ritual events, meals, and building maintenance, but also non-religious expenses for the temples (mahjong tables) and those that are intended to benefit the wider community or individuals connected to the temple (bereavement gifts, medical fees, exercise equipment, shoes). That these expenses all fall under the same accounting system show that these kinds of seemingly secular practices for community development are not separated from religious practices or the everyday workings of the temple.

Currency exchange: 1 US Dollar = 6.3715 Chinese Yuan Renminbi on 5/16/2018

#### **Figure 1: 2015 Event Expenses for Baosheng Dadi and Mazu's Birth**

Total donations: 122,000

Daoist Jiao: 16,000

Pigs and Sheep: 4000

Opera performance and stage: 35,000

Bus and Noise-Maker Car: 13,000

Table Offerings: 10,000

Miscellaneous fees: 10,000

Cigarettes, alcohol, etc: 10,000

Total: 98,000

Previous period total: 231,000

This was used to purchase a Mahjong table, chairs and electric fridge for 30,000. 201,000 remaining. From the above event 24,000 and 225,000 total remaining.

**Figure 2: 2015, Third month, 11th Public Expense Report**

Income

1. Donations for March: 37,680
2. Store rental from January to June: 20,400
3. Opera stage setup: 6000
4. Donation box: 2825

Expenses

1. Six days of Opera performances: 28,360
2. Purchase Lanterns for Lantern Festival and outfits for Ritual Drum Group: 14,415
3. Purchase spirit money and firecrackers: 2810
4. Purchase mineral water: 1153
5. Donations to Dianqian, Houpu, and Zengcuoan temples: 5110
6. Purchase red turtles, pig head, and ritual fruits: 2691
7. Bus to Baijiao and two trucks: 4210

Total expenses: 58749

2015.05.18

**Figure 3: Posted List of Names of those Who Thank the Opera Performers**

For 6/22. Performance at 7pm.

Image: (2015/06/15, 0054

1. Name (female), one performance: 4200
1. Name 1 (male), Name 2 (female), one performance: 4200
3. Name 1 (male), donates 1000
4. Name 1 (male), donates 4000
5. Name (female), donates 5000
6. Name (male), donates 5000

**Figure 4: Temple expenses 2015/07/29**

Temple Monthly Donation Box Donations

2015.1: 14,096

2015.2: 15,104

2015.3: 10,238

2015.4: 14,221

2015.5: 14,065

**Figure 5: Temple Income and Expenses 2015/02**

Income

Month 1 surplus: 4527.8

Donation from Auntie Yu: 3000

2.2-2.17 Donation Box: 13,127

2-18-2.28 Donation Box: 9807  
Big Sister Aliao's monthly donation: 1000  
Total: 31,461.8

Expenses

Disposable Chopsticks and bowls: 90  
Clipboards: 6.8  
15 Offerings: 290  
Spirit money: 216  
Talismans  
Memorial paper, 245 sheets: 160  
Taisui packets 50: 180  
Chinese Medicinal Incense 50 jin: 600  
Worker phone fee: 50  
Water bill: 72  
Grannie Lin's bereavement gift: 500  
Roast Suckling Pig: 500  
01/15 Tribute: 480  
Haomai 豪迈 cigarettes, two boxes: 190  
Mushrooms: 32  
Beef, lamb, and pork: 30  
Offerings for Sending off the Gods: 172  
Committee members' meals: 200  
Bags: 16  
Highway fee: 25  
Gasoline: 300  
Lamb eyes: 20  
Water management equipment: 26  
Photo processing and framing: 33  
Peanut oil: 43  
Employee salary: 2500  
Event fee: 500  
Laser pointer: 25  
Drum Group: 1000  
100 red envelopes: 10  
Flowers: 400  
Balance due: 7500  
Flowers: 240  
Dishes and plastic bags: 63  
Art and culture group's tea party: 380  
Total: 16,849.8

Surplus: 14,612.

**Figure 6: Event expenses 2015/09/22**  
Public Announcement

03/03. Xuantian Shangdi's Birthday. A public announcement of the balance sheet is listed below.

Total assets: 75,000. This includes donations from villages.

Ritual canon funds: 28,260, Funds from the temple's donation box: 23,540.

Procession donations funds: 203,200

Total expenses: 36,075

Details of the expenses are listed below.

Purchase: Spirit money: 460

Purchase: ritual canon [noisemaker placed in back of truck]: 15,720

" : Bamboo leaves: 40

" : Bandages: 18

" : Fresh meat and fruits: 493

" : Red turtle cakes: 92

" : Rice: 21

Red envelope for \_\_\_\_\_: 2000

Banners: 125

Transport to \_\_\_\_\_: 1750

One opera performance: 4000

Opera troupe: 1320

Lineage hall cleaning fee: 200

Dance, lights, and sound system fee: 1000

Opera stage backdrop fee: 400

Dance, performance, and drinks for lifting the ancestral god: 1236

Dance, drum group, makeup, and meal fee: 7200

2015.4.26

**Figure 7: Yearly expenses (2012/10-2013/10/13) Income and Expenditure Public Announcement Below:**

I. Income

1. Shuiwei Temple donations: 1. 1096, 2. 1000, 3. 200, 4. 200, 5. 200, 6. 60, 7. 70020, 8. 1340, 9. 680, 10. 707, 11. 500, Total: 76,003.

2. Resident Car Exchange Fee: 1. 250, 2. 660, 3. 13380, total: 14,290.

3. Village committee subsidized tree cutting: 1000

4. Ancestral Buddha Birthday Donations: 31202

5. Sales: 1100

6. Mazu birthday donations: 24,150

7. Baosheng Dadi birthday donations: 6538

8. Xiang Wanggong birthday donations: 1. 11,300, 2. 14,002, total: 25,302

9. Shuien chongyangjie donation: 5000

10. Chair rental: 1. 405, 2. 570, 3. 310, 4. 910, total: 2195

11. Opera stage rental for four weeks: 20,000 (2013/12/10)  
 12. Saving retrieved from village trust: Original money: 10,000, profit: 683.19, total: 10,683.19  
 Total: 217,463.19, including retrived savings: 10,000, actual total income: 207,463

#### Expenses:

1. Opera performance: 1. 2012/11/22: 3000, 2. 2013/05/02: 4380, 3. 5/22 Perform pingan opera, hire Daoist, offerings total: 6478.5, 4. 9/26 opera stage, performance, and housing for performers: 5132, total: 18,990.5  
 2. Income, candles, and offerings: 1. 22 expenses: 3830, 2. 2/4/10 expenses: 1056.1, 3. 2/24/6 List of expenses: 923, 4. 3/26/8 expenses L 677.  
 3. 09/09 Division of incense: 3 expenses: 5340, received 2. 5. 5/2: 2835, 6. 1302, 7 : 849. Total: 11,472.1.  
 4. \_\_\_\_\_ temple incense, candles, offerings, sanitation, and tree clearing: 1.7 expenses: 1316, 2. Bulding repairs 2116.5, 3. Celebration: 19,721, total: 23,153.5.  
 5. Deposit in village trust: 1. 20,000, 2. 20,000, 3. 10,000, 4. 70,000. Total: 120,000.  
 6. Lin Family Temple Repairs: 1. Longtian, 1200, 2. Jingtou, 1400, 3. Weiyuan, 2000. Total: 4600.  
 7. Deposit for electricity, opera stage electricity and opera, etc: 1. 1596, 2. 1200, total: 2796.  
 8. Xiang wanggong birthday, 1. 04/02: 941, 2. 09/25: 2163. Total: 2796  
 9. Dance, opera stage clearing: 1473.  
 10. Purchase men's outfits, 30. Total: 5400.  
 11. Community shoes: 3000.  
 12. Putian Division of Incense: 15,900.  
 13. Fireworks, firecrackers, gasoline for car: 780  
 14. Event at other temple: 600  
 15. Medical fees: 572.3  
 16. Opera stage water and electric fee: 975  
 17. Aluminum gold medal: 300  
 18. Chongyang jie hold banquet: 21,420  
 Total expenses: 239,840.4  
 Includes 120,000 deposited in village trust.  
 Actual total: 119,840.

Previous period's total: 277,825.29, includes bank savings: 243,193.59, return 10,000 = 233,193.59 add new deposits from previous period 120,000 = 353,193.59.  
 277,826.29 add received in current period: 207,463.19 subtraction of expenses for current period: 119,840.40: 365,449.08.  
 Current finances: 12,255.49  
 Additional: 1600.

#### Figure 8: Expenses

\_\_\_宫 2014 年度财务收支公布

收入部分

1. 全年信用社利息收 4 单 1949.86
2. 本社村民请龙源宫放电影（10 晚收） 1 单 4000
3. 后埔，梧桐来抬公祖插炉 2 单 2600
4. 元宵节公祖巡安收捐款 3 单 39435
5. 卖金灭卖修金炉废钱 3 单 8315
6. 三月十五保生大帝诞辰收 1 单 43090
7. 外社单位日常向\_\_\_宫添油 3 单 5400
8. 公祖做辇轿收捐钱 2 单 339700
9. 四月二十四都督府王诞辰收 3 单 198154
10. 全年添油箱收添油款 12 单 28450
11. 四月二十四日文艺活动余烟及余平安米拍卖 3 单 1095
12. 禾山公司捐四月二十四文艺活动经费拍流水号 2 单 53000
13. 新戏台全年租金厨房租金 9 单 72700
14. 收戏台、幼儿园、小苗全年水电费 39 单 63399.8

全年收入：861288.64 元

2015 年元月 22 日

\_\_\_宫 2014 年度财务收支公布

支出部分

1. 付给腰鼓队 2014 年度活动费 1 单 5000
2. 往外参加文化节筵道费会费慈善捐款 3 单 5000
3. 做马夹帽子五风旗捐辇轿打牌费 4 单 42696
4. 元宵活动买矿泉水烟做旗杆抬虎爷奖励 4 单 3900
5. 三月十五，4 月二十四演戏戏金赏封管理车辆补贴 8 单 17689
6. 做庙内桌 7 件不锈钢大柜冰柜千斤顶潮鼓 5 单 59585
7. 仓库餐厅外贴砖修金炉做铁棚买风扇 8 单 12534
8. 发给 7 人助奖学励金 1 单 4500
9. 往举溪买回茶叶 30 斤及日常买茶叶 4 单 3800
10. 打扔志支活费买红纸文具资料书净水芯等 8 单 2881.70
11. 2014 年度庙戏台幼儿园小店水电费 18 单 66973.35
12. 庙买大金天公金壽金拜品青花等 6 单 6597.70
13. 丽日 2014 年度日常管理庙工资 12 单 12000
14. 四月二十四都督府王诞辰及举行文艺活动用费 13 单 27053.70

2014 年度总支出 270210.95 元。

2013 年度余款 547082.44 元家 2014 年收入减 2014 年支出 2014 年终于 1138160.68 元

2014 年元月 22 日

**Figure 9:**  
**2015 First Half of Year and Previous Year of a Founding Temple**

年度项目	金 (万 元)	金 (万 元)	备注 (万元)
2016 至 6 止收入	315		
其中修缮收入		67	
文化节		13	
服务部		19.7	
安太岁		5.1	
捐款		210.2	
2015 年至 6 止收入	255		
其中文化节		12.5	
服务部		22.5	
安太岁		5	
捐款		215	
与上年度同期减少收入	60		

年度项目	金 (万 元)	金 (万 元)	备注 (万元)
2014 年至 6 月止支出	349		
其中修缮		125	此修缮 2013 年度余 87.6
文化节		74	
服务部		4.9	
公益支出		36	
日常		109.1	
2015 年至 6 月止支出	182.9		
其中文化节		57	
服务部		10	



公益支出		3.8	
日常		85.1	
与上年度同期减少支出	166.1		

### Figure 10: Cost of building small temple

Tudi Gong Construction Account Public Announcement

铁板材料工作 - 16,000

增加屋顶铁板 - 500

铁线, 运费, 工资 - 748

水泥工、粗工、柱工 - 3120

跳板 - 60

水、电材料 - 1097

云洲工人快餐 - 100

大炮 礼花 - 270

公园椅 2 x 170 - 340

公园椅 2 x 280 - 560

红纸、宣传单、笔、糊、胶纸、黑油纸、竹扫把、高亮扫把、果树锯、地虫灵 - 362

铁板材料工资 - 19,075

钢材料、运费 - 1421

水泥 - 1275

沙石 土头 - 1360

钉模工资 - 1800

电工工资 - 400

石桌梯一套 - 730

健身 双人大转轮 - 450

健身 双人漫步机 - 430

健身 双人单杆 - 522

健身 腹肌板 - 378

物流费、谢土、店仔烟茶灯等杂项 - 2691

信众捐献: 人民币 85,920

以上总支出: 人民币 53,956

### Figure 11: Temple expenses for six months 2016.07.20

宫 2016 年 1--6 月份上半年收支清单表			
序号	收入明细	收入金 (元)	备注
1	房租及电费	22,562.24	戏台房租 3 月份减免一个月
2	油箱收入	12,359.00	
3	正月至三月份公庙祭祀信众添油	36,373.00	
*	上半年 1--6 月份收入金合计	71,294.24	
序号	支出明细	支出金 (元)	备注
1	银行活期水, 电费代扣账户存入金	5,000.00	
2	过年公庙值班人员津贴	7,000.00	
3	煤气、香烛、拖把、灯油、鞭炮寿金等	1,205.00	
4	青椒、顺技工进香租车费	3,500.00	3 车
5	对外宫庙互动添油及会费	12,585.00	请龙宫, 青礁白礁 城隍庙等
6	戏台钢构楼梯	1,360.00	
7	慰问金	200.00	医院深望
8	1-6 月份历次祭祀贡品	15,052.00	
9	交通费	1,926.00	
10	汽油费	2,748.00	2 部车共 8X
*	上半年 1-6 月份住处金合计	50,576.20	

**Figure 12: Temple expenses for six months**

宫财务报表 (2015.12.1-2016.5.10)				
	票 据	收入	付出	余额
承前余额 (含银行 50917.28)				159372.5
黄标车报废款 (农商银行对公账户)	1	33,000.00		
利恩收入	1	2,298.51		
收戏金	6	23,600.00		
日常添油	1	3,150.00		
三月十三添油	7	45,660.00		
三月二十三添油	6	40,910.00		

香客车费	10	37,350.00		
付戏金鸡赏封	5		29,200	
付车费	2		52,680	
三月十三、二十三总开支	82		22,578	
对外添油	8		13,600	
退戏金	1		1900	
做服装购大鼓	7		5776	
水电、电话费	22		8370.99	
林发成工资	5		2150	
春节开支	1		10,600	
购茶叶	3		600	
慰问金	2		1800	
本期余额		185,968.5	149,255	36,713.52
____宫总金额（含银行 84,949.84）				196,086

Figure 13: Image of donations for movie screenings



福多財多喜多

順心如意



Figure 16: Temple revenue and expenses for six months

濠头宫庙2016年1—6月份上半年收支清单表

序号	收入项目	收入金额(元)	备注	序号	支出项目	支出金额(元)	备注
1	房租及电费	22,562.24	戏台房租3月份减免一个月	1	银行活期水、电费代扣账户存入金额	5,000.00	
2	油料收入	12,359.00		2	过年宫庙值班人员津贴	7,000.00	
3	正月至三月宫庙祭祀信众香油	36,373.00		3	煤气、香烛、陈肥、灯油、鞭炮寿金等	1,255.00	
*	上半年1—6月份收入金额合计	71,294.24		4	青墩、顺济宫进香租车费	3,500.00	2部车
				5	对外筑路互动联谊及会费、宫膳	12,585.00	青龙潭、新白礁、城隍庙等
				6	戏台钢结构楼梯	1,360.00	
				7	慰问金	200.00	医院探望黄五平
				8	1—6月份历次祭祀用品	15,052.20	
				9	交通费	1,926.00	
				10	汽油费	2,748.00	2部车共8趟
				*	上半年1—6月份支出金额合计	50,576.20	
*	上半年1—6月份收、支相抵结余金	20,718.04					
*	2015年度结余现金计	17,714.53					
*	截止2016年6月30日现金余额计	38,432.57					

主管: 叶永根      会计: 叶国良      出纳: 叶永贵

2016年7月20日

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