Building the Temple, Building the Boutique:

The Logic Behind the Daci Temple-Commerce Agglomeration

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of an emerging model for redevelopment in contemporary Chinese cities that centers on the Temple-Commerce Agglomeration (TCA), which is based on both the nostalgic re-emergence of historical landscapes and the creative making of urban culture and space. My aim in this research is threefold: 1) to analyze both the structural forces (economic and political) and local conditions that concomitantly and progressively contribute to the formation of the Daci TCA in Chengdu; 2) to investigate the process of space formation within the Daci TCA from a microgeographic perspective based on the notion of the "spot", and demonstrate how people's movement in transcending the spots sheds a light on their modality of "doing" religion in the TCA; and 3) to produce an account on the agency of the temple through both the temple leadership in its top-down management and the everyday administration by temple volunteers (*yigong* 义工). Focusing on the interactions among touristic pilgrims and temple volunteers within the TCA setting, I provide dialogues of the everyday encounters between the tourist and the toured and examine the unseen nuances underlying the unsettling image of a commercialized Buddhist temple that Daci Temple often bears. I maintain that by studying their interactions we better grasp the realities of religious life at Buddhist temples that serve as major tourist sites in contemporary Chinese cities.

Résumé

La recherche présentée ci-dessous examine un modèle émergent de redéveloppement dans les villes chinoises contemporaines, que je référencerai en tant que Agglomération Temple-Commerce (ATC). L'ATC se base sur la réémergence nostalgique du local, ainsi que sur une reformulation créative de la culture et de l'espace urbains. Ma recherche se concentrera exclusivement sur le cas du Temple Daci à Chengdu. Mon objectif est triple : 1) analyser les forces structurelles et les conditions locales qui contribuent à la formation du Daci ATC à Chengdu; 2) investiguer le processus de formation d'espace au sein du Daci ATC à travers une perspective micro géographique basée sur la notion d' «endroit», et démontrer comment la façon dont les gens transcendent cette notion d'«endroit» aide à comprendre leur manière de pratiquer leur religion au sein du ATC; 3) produire un rapport témoignant du facteur humain au sein de l'organisation du temple, à la fois dans les plus hautes sphères à travers leur système de gestion descendante, et dans l'administration de tous les jours menée par les volontaires. Ayant choisi de me concentrer sur les interactions entre les touristes-pèlerins et les volontaires du temple, je fournis certains dialogues tirés d'interactions de tous les jours, et examine les nuances sous-jacentes qui participent à créer cette dérangeante image de temple Bouddhiste commercial souvent associée à Daci Temple. Je soutiens que l'étude de ces interactions permet de mieux réaliser les réalités de la vie religieuse dans les Temples Buddhistes qui, tels que Daci, sont des sites touristiques majeurs en Chine aujourd'hui.

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Introduction

In July 2020, the Sino-Ocean Group and Wuhan 2049 jointly launched the urban redevelopment project CityLane (Wuhan Yuanyang Li 武汉远洋里) in downtown Wuhan, which covers an area of approximately 2.4 million square meters.[1] The project was branded as the 2.0 version based on the prototype of Chengdu Taikoo Li 成都太古里, another project by the Sino-Ocean Group which was completed in 2015 in collaboration with Swire Properties.[2] In the brochure distributed by the project management of Wuhan CityLane, a strategic comparison was drawn between the two (Figure 1). While the comparison clearly illustrates an intentional use of corporate goodwill in marketing the new project, what is also present is the continuity that gave birth to a new mode of redevelopment, the Temple-Commerce Agglomeration (*miaoshang zongheti* 庙商综合体).[3]

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[1] Wuhan 2049 is a strategic plan for future urban development introduced by the Wuhan Planning and Design Institute 武汉市规划研究院. Details of the plan can be found at https://www.wpdi.cn/project-1-i_11297.htm, accessed on March 20, 2022. For more descriptions of the project, see *Xiangjian ni, Yuanyang Li* 想见你，远洋里, published in the official WeChat account of the Wuhan CityLane project, https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/FY6dsp9PfEcbUIWEfLTzIQ, accessed on March 15, 2022.

[2] "*Duibiao Chengdu Taikoo Li, dazao 2.0 shishang shenghuo xin fanben* 对标成都太古里，打造 2.0 时尚生活新范本". See more in Figure 1. The brochure is collected by the author during field visits at the sales center of Oriental Worldview (*dongfangjing shijieguan* 东方境世界观). Swire Properties is a Hong Kong based company that develops and manages commercial, retail, hotel, and residential properties in Hong Kong, the Chinese Mainland, Singapore, and the US. More details can be found at https://www.swireproperties.com/en/about-us/, accessed on March 20, 2022.

[3] TCA hereafter. In March 2022, Swire Properties has announced that it will partner with Xi'an Cheng Huan Cultural Investment and Development Co., Ltd., a state-owned subsidiary of Xi'an Qujiang New District Management Committee, to develop another Taikoo Li project in Xi'an, which is located at the Small Wild Goose Pagoda historical and cultural zone (*xiaoyanta lishi wenhua pianqu* 小雁塔历史文化片区) in Beilin District. More details can be found at https://www.swireproperties.com/en/media/press-releases/2022/20220304_taikoo-li-

维度/项目	成都远洋太古里	武汉远洋里
所在地	成都	武汉
区位	核心成熟CBD	内环核心老城
业主	远洋集团&太古地产	远洋集团&武汉2049集团
商管运营	太古地产	远洋集团
定位	【快要慢活】的城市人文与时尚地标	一站式、全客层的文化商旅地标
总建面	约22.27万平方米	约240万平方米
商业街区体量	约11.4万平方米	约17万平方米
物业特征	街区式商业	街区式商业
开业时间	2015年4月24日	预计2022年底
业态	商场/酒店/写字楼/服务式公寓	商场/酒店/写字楼/公寓/住宅/学校
停车位	商业约1000个、写字楼约610个	商业约4000个
城市融入	深度融合	规划方案深度融入
商业业态	零售/餐饮/生活方式	零售/餐饮/娱乐体验/生活服务

(Figure 1: Brochure with comparison of CityLane and Taikoo Li)[4]

This thesis is a study of the TCA as a new mode of urban redevelopment in contemporary China, in which I explore the logic behind both the formation of the TCA, and the everyday life of Chinese urbanites within it. The specific modes of urban (re)development that relate to religious spaces in post-reform China is understudied although existing scholarship has contributed greatly to shaping the foundation of this interdisciplinary research.[5]

xian, accessed on May 24, 2022. By the time of the composition of this thesis, I have already identified three cases of TCA in Chengdu (completed in 2015), Wuhan (to be completed in 2022), and Xi'an (to be completed in 2025), respectively.

[4] All photos by the author, unless otherwise stated.

[5] Post-reform China refers to the era after Deng Xiaoping's introduction of "reform and opening up" (*gaige kaifang* 改革开放) in 1978. See more in Chapter 1.

Chinese Cities in an Era of Global Modernity

Post-reform development in China is often contextualized in a "global modernity" in general and understood in China's agenda toward "a globalization of Chinese characteristics" in particular.[6] Inconsistency arises under such an analytical framework that eventually leads to a debate on China's neoliberalism.[7]

Free market mechanism in China's economy has convinced many on the inevitable trend of "global capitalism", a process in which urban restructuring in Chinese cities serves as a significant epitome.[8] In recent decades, a consumption revolution has also swept through urban China in which a consumer-citizenship became popularized among Chinese urbanites.[9] From the consumption of foreign luxury goods and domestic commodity housing to the consumption of leisure culture and urban space, Chinese consumer-citizens constantly redefine the meaning of an urban life in which social and spatial implications are transformed.[10] Such dynamics have well demonstrated traits of a transnational urbanism that

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[6] Arif Dirlik, "Global Modernity? Modernity in an Age of Global Capitalism," in *European Journal of Social Theory* 6, no. 3 (2003): 275-292; Huibin Li, ed., *Quanqiuhua: Zhongguo daolu* 全球化: 中国道路, (Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe 社会科学文献出版社, 2003).

[7] Lisa Rofel, *Desiring China: Experiments in Neoliberalism, Sexuality, and Popular Culture*, (Duke University Press, 2007).

[8] Laurence J.C. Ma & Fulong Wu ed., *Restructuring the Chinese City: Changing Society, Economy and Space*, (Routledge, 2005); Fulong Wu, Jiang Xu, and Anthony Gar-On Yeh, *Urban Development in Post-Reform China: State, Market and Space*, (Routledge, 2007); Shenjing He and Fulong Wu, "China's Emerging Neoliberal Urbanism: Perspectives from Urban Redevelopment," in *Antipode* 14, no. 2 (2019): 282-304.

[9] Jing Wang, "Culture as Leisure and Culture as Capital," in *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 9, no. 1 (2001): 69-104.

[10] Kelly Tian and Lily Dong, *Consumer-Citizens of China: The Role of Foreign Brands in the Imagined Future China*, (Routledge, 2011); Siming Li, "Housing Consumption in Urban China: A Comparative Study of Beijing and Guangzhou," in *Environment and Planning A* 32,

many scholars claim to have witnessed in China's neoliberal transition.[11] However, increasingly there are also scholars who remind us of the nuances in understanding the neoliberal effects in a global narrative and advocate a more cautious application of "neoliberalism" in Chinese socio-political settings without further abuses of the term.[12] While the debate on how to position China in general and Chinese cities in particular in the era of global modernity remains ongoing, we need to keep in mind that contemporary China is an extremely broad, complex, and rapidly changing subject of study. Therefore, the irreconcilable inconsistency in our analytical framework that eventually leads to the ongoing debate indeed tolerates much space for negotiations and contestations.

Religion as Lived Experiences in Contemporary Chinese Cities

A similar turn that emphasizes the "Chinese Way" in managing the domestic amidst global trends is also captured in the religious revival. Chinese approach to religion seems to be more than a radical and peculiar mediation of the so-called structural forces in the global

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no. 6 (2000): 1115-1134; Xiaobo Su, "Tourism, Modernity and the Consumption of Home in China," in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 39, no. 1 (2014): 50-61; Unn Målfrid H. Rolandsen, *Leisure and Power in Urban China: Everyday Life in a Chinese City*, (Routledge, 2011); Shenjing He and George C.S. Lin, "Producing and Consuming China's New Urban Space: State, Market and Society," in *Urban Studies* 52, no. 15 (2015): 2757-2773.

[11] Carolyn Cartier, "Regional Formations and Transnational Urbanism in South China," in *Locating China: Space, Place, and Popular Culture*, ed. Jing Wang, (Routledge, 2005): 52-71.

[12] Ben Anderson, "Neoliberal Affects," in *Progress in Human Geography* 40, no. 6 (2016): 734-753; David A Palmer and Fabian Winiger, "Neo-Socialist Governmentality: Managing Freedom in the People's Republic of China," in *Economy and Society* 48, no. 4 (2019): 554-578; Andrew Kipnis, "Neoliberalism Reified: Suzhi Discourse and Tropes of Neoliberalism in the People's Republic of China," in the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 13, no. 2 (2007): 383-400.

sense as Dirlik argues.[13] From the immediate post-Mao period to party leaderships in recent decades, China's management of religions has been rapidly evolving. Nonetheless, there has been a consistent mandate to reconcile conflicts between religion and party ideology while the stability of regime legitimacy is prioritized.[14] Among the five officially recognized religions in China, Buddhism in the post-reform period has been visibly revived in different social spaces where Buddhist symbols are popularized, diplomatized, and commercialized.[15] While the growing presence of Buddhism in the public space indicates a form of religious revival, scholars are skeptical about the commercialization and commodification of Buddhism in China.[16] In response to increasing urbanization, tourism development, and commercialization within Buddhism, many scholars have turned to local case studies on "urban Buddhist temples" and aim to better understand the spatial and social transformations on the ground.[17] These ethnographic accounts challenge the assumption that religion is

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[13] Arif Dirlik, "Modernity in Question? Culture and Religion in an Age of Global Capitalism," in *Diaspora* 12, no. 2 (2003): 147-168.

[14] Pitman B. Potter, "Belief in Control: Regulation of Religion in China," in *The China Quarterly*, no. 174 (2003): 317-337; André Laliberté, "Buddhism under Jiang, Hu, and Xi: The Politics of Incorporation," in *Buddhism after Mao: Negotiations, Continuities, and Reinventions*, ed. Ji Zhe, Gareth Fisher, and André Laliberté, (University of Hawai'i Press, 2019): 21-44; Richard Madsen, "Introduction," in *The Sinicization of Chinese Religions: From Above and Below*, ed. Richard Madsen, (Brill, 2021): 1-15.

[15] The five officially recognized religions in China include Buddhism, Daoism, Catholicism, Protestantism, and Islam.

[16] Zhe Ji, "Buddhism in the Reform Era: a Secularized Revival?" in *Religion in Contemporary China: Revitalization and Innovation*, ed. Adam Yuet Chau, (Routledge, 2011): 32-52; Brian J. Nichols, "Interrogating Religious Tourism at Buddhist Monasteries in China," in *Buddhist Tourism in Asia*, ed. Courtney Bruntz and Brooke Schedneck, (University of Hawai'i Press, 2020): 183-205.

[17] Benoît Vermander, Liang Zhang, and Liz Hingley, *Shanghai Sacred: The Religious Landscape of a Global City*, (University of Washington Press, 2018); Weishan Huang, "Urban Restructuring and Temple Agency – a Case Study of the Jing'an Temple," in

perceived, understood, and internalized as an institutional entity. As such, religion is an amalgam of beliefs and practices experienced and expressed in people's everyday life and there are concrete ways of engaging their bodies and emotions in "doing" religion. This thesis follows Adam Chau's modalities framework and focuses on the ways in which people "do religion" rather than their religious conceptions.[18] When we see a particular society's religious culture as consisting of a particular configuration of various modalities of doing religion, studying the agency of pilgrims, tourists, and temple community therefore complicates the image of Buddhism as commercialized and commodified because what is lived and practiced in the realms of everyday life and embodied experience simply resists categorization.[19]

Formulating the Study of the Daci TCA

In labelling the TCA as a systematic model of redevelopment, I shall make several

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Buddhism after Mao: Negotiations, Continuities, and Reinventions, ed. Ji Zhe, Gareth Fisher, and André Laliberté, (University of Hawai'i Press, 2019): 251-270; Gareth Fisher, *From Comrades to Bodhisattvas: Moral Dimensions of Lay Buddhist Practice in Contemporary China*, (University of Hawai'i Press, 2016); Yaozhong Xiao, *Dushi fosi de shehui jiaohuan yanjiu* 都市佛寺的社会交换研究, (Sichuan chuban jituan 四川出版集团, bashu shushe 巴蜀书社, 2009); Juexing ed., *Dushi zhong de fojiao* 都市中的佛教, (zongjiao wenhua chubanshe 宗教文化出版社, 2004); Juexing ed., *Youzhusiqu raoyizhongsheng: dushi fojiao de honghua moshi* 游诸四衢，饶益众生：都市佛教的弘化模式, (zongjiao wenhua chubanshe 宗教文化出版社, 2019).

[18] Adam Y. Chau, "Modalities of Doing Religion," in *Chinese Religious Life*, ed. David A. Palmer et al., (Oxford University Press USA-OSO, 2011): 67-84; Nancy T. Ammerman, "Studying Everyday Religion: Challenges for the Future," in *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives*, ed. Nancy T. Ammerman, (Oxford University Press, 2007): 219-238; Meredith B. McGuire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life*, (Oxford University Press, 2008).

[19] Quan Gao, et al., "Lived Religion Under Neoliberal Transition: Work/Leisure and Migrant Workers in Shenzhen, China," in *Social & Cultural Geography* 22, no. 8 (2019): 1122-1142.

clarifications. Firstly, the TCA is a case specific categorization attributed to the two projects by the Sino-Ocean Group in Chengdu and Wuhan, centering on the Daci Temple (Daci si 大慈寺) and Guiyuan Temple (Guiyuan si 归元寺), respectively.[20] Secondly, the TCA is not a general reference to commercial activities of various forms that take place within and surrounding the two Buddhist temples, but a particular toolkit of land developers that includes urban regeneration principles, place-making strategies, architectural designs, and marketing techniques. Lastly, the TCA relies on Buddhist temples as core amenities to promote itself in two primary ways, namely, the nostalgic re-emergence of locally defined memories with a strong Buddhist presence and the creative making of urban culture that centers on various deliberate contradictions such as traditional vs. modern, spiritual vs. mundane, and tranquil vs. chaotic.

This thesis limits its scope of analysis by focusing exclusively on the Chengdu Daci TCA because there is a lack of information on Wuhan CityLane for a comparative study.[21] Unlike CityLane, which remains in its early stage of construction during my research,

[20] The Daci Temple received its imperial title in 756 under Xuanzong 玄宗 (685-762) and it flourished during the Tang and Song Dynasties. The temple was rebuilt during Qing Dynasty under Shizu 世祖 (1644-1661) and Muzong 穆宗 (1861-1874). The historical structures from the Qing period remained until the modern times but most of them were renovated during the redevelopment project. See more at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/9wa_CBTd0ODm9cCofzwoSQ, accessed on April 17, 2022. Taikoo Li Xi'an centering on the Small Wild Goose Pagoda is excluded in this discussion because it is at the initial stage of planning and there are many uncertainties surrounding its construction.

[21] Similarly, there is limited information on Taikoo Li Xi'an, so this thesis will not include an analysis on the case of Xi'an either.

Chengdu Taikoo Li is a mature project to be studied.[22] Throughout the thesis, the use of the term Daci TCA (*Daci si miaoshang zongheti* 大慈寺庙商综合体) not only bears meanings that denote the aforementioned mode of redevelopment, but also refers to a geographical region within Chengdu CBD that includes the temple space, Taikoo Li, the neighboring residential communities, and other infrastructures and amenities (Figure 2).

(Figure 2: Daci TCA)

[22] Several Chinese scholars have studied Chengdu Taikoo Li from the perspective of urban planning and design. See Bin Liu and Zhongnuan Chen, "Power, Capital and Space – Production of Urban Consumption Space Based on the Transformation of Historical Street Area: A Case Study of Sino-Ocean Taikoo Li in Chengdu," in *Urban Planning International* 33, no. 1 (2018): 75-80; Jie Song, "A Brief Analysis about the Interaction Between RBD of Historic Districts Renewal Model and Urban CBD: A Case Study of the Renewal of Chengdu Daci Temple Historic District," in *Modern Urban Research*, no. 1 (2011): 39-43.

In analyzing the spatial and social meanings within this geographical region of the Daci TCA, I rely on the microgeographic notion of the "spot" as an alternate for "place". Studies by Borden and Sedo explore the relationship between the practice of skateboarding and the politics of urban space, in which they identify a "spot logic" of skaters as a type of "mental knowledge composed of highly detailed local knowledge about dispersed places, micro-architectures and accessible time".[23] Drawing from their analyses, I compare the notion of the "spot" with Gieryn's definition of "place". According to Gieryn, "place" has three necessary and sufficient features: geographic location, material form, and investment with meaning and value.[24] I argue that "spot" is similar to "place" in that they both possess geographic locations and material forms, however, "spots" are microscopic in scale and often dispersed across "places". Moreover, while both "spot" and "place" are invested with meanings and values, "spots" are essentially parts and parcels of a larger geographic unit. In this sense, several "spots" together contribute to a set of meanings and values that a "place" brands itself. That being said, while the Daci TCA as a "place" in its entirety has a geographic location, a material form, and a set of meanings and values that define itself, it also contains

[23] See the use of "spot" as an alternate epistemology in urban geography in Iain Borden, "A Performative Critique of the City: The Urban Practice of Skateboarding, 1958-98," in *The City Cultures Reader*, ed. Malcom Miles, Tim Hall, and Iain Borden, (Routledge, 2003): 291-297; and Tim Sedo, "Dead-Stock Boards, Blown-Out Spots, and the Olympic Games: Global Twists and Local Turns in the Formation of China's Skateboarding Community," in *Cultural Autonomy: Frictions and Connections*, ed. William D. Coleman, Petra Rethmann and Imre Szeman, (UBC Press, 2010): 257-282.

[24] See the definition of "place" in Thomas F. Gieryn, "A Space for Place in Sociology," in *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 463-496.

many “spots”. These “spots” are located dispersedly, yet in proximity; and they are designed with distinct material forms to demonstrate deliberate contradictions as a marketing strategy. Moreover, the various meanings and values that each “spot” is invested with are easily carried, transmitted, and mixed up to create a unique urban culture that the “place” of the Daci TCA advertises. In distinguishing the “spot” from “place”, I argue that people’s movements across “spots” within one “place” can be better analyzed. These movements in transcending the “spots” not only epitomize people’s everyday life within the Daci TCA, but also inform how a new modality of “doing” religion can be visualized.

Structure of This Thesis

This thesis consists of two parts. The first part, divided into two chapters, investigates the logic behind the construction of the Daci TCA. Chapter One examines the historical background in which post-reform China witnessed drastic changes in the political, economic, and cultural arenas, creating various structural forces that provided a climate for the emergence of urban redevelopment projects like the Daci TCA. Chapter Two elaborates how, nurtured by the favorable climate, local conditions provided concrete forces leading to the formation of the Daci TCA through several phases of development.

The second part, also divided into two chapters, analyzes the logic behind the everyday life in the Daci TCA. Chapter Three first introduces several spots surrounding the temple and then evaluates the ways in which movements across spots within a condensed urban

landscape instigate potential encounters of different groups and individuals. Through an emphasis on the temple's agency within the TCA setting, Chapter Four illustrates the touristic way of "doing" religion and explicates how it influences the temple management and everyday administration. By providing an account on the interactions between temple community and touristic pilgrims, this chapter also explores how temple volunteers (*yigong* 义工) self-identify in relation to the temple and the tourists.

In brief, this thesis positions the Daci TCA within the waves of post-reform development in China in general and in Chengdu in particular, and argues that the formation of the Daci TCA is a necessary epitome in China's vision for "globalization with Chinese characteristics" and in Chengdu's vision for local branding. In addition, this thesis observes the everyday life in the Daci TCA which not only helps to visualize the constantly evolving religious life in contemporary Chinese cities, but also complicate the image of commercialized or commodified Buddhism in contemporary China by studying the agency of temple volunteers.

Part One: Logic Behind the Construction of Daci Temple-Commerce Agglomeration

To understand the logic behind the construction of the Daci TCA, this part offers analyses in two chapters from both macro and micro perspectives, in which both structural forces arise from the political-economic climate in post-reform China and case-specific circumstances surrounding Chengdu Daci Temple are examined. My goal here is not to provide an exhaustive account that identifies every condition leading to the construction of the Daci TCA, but to suggest an analytical framework through which the Daci TCA as a new model for redevelopment can be properly understood.

Chapter One: Historical Background

First and foremost, the formation of the Daci TCA is contextualized within a historical analysis on the political and economic policies introduced after the "reform and opening up". Initiated by Deng Xiaoping in late 1978, "reform and opening up" provided an underlying market-oriented logic that has led to a series of changes in revolutionizing almost every aspect of post-Mao society. I will begin with a retrospect of the reform under the Deng regime by paying particular attention to the attempts made by the political leadership in reconciling problems of ideological legitimacy in the 1980s. In my arguments, the historical logic during this period in skillfully tackling ideological contradictions set a fundamental tone for the administration in contemporary China. Next, I identify three major forces that led to

the rapid urbanization and city development after 1992, namely, decentralized and localized political structure, consolidated land and housing markets, as well as the trend of cultural heritage preservation, which concomitantly and progressively offered an opportunity for the formation of the Daci TCA. In evaluating the general implications of decentralization, marketization, and conservation, I then offer a detailed case study in the next chapter on the construction of the Daci TCA from 1998 to 2015 and suggest how it embodied these three major forces.

1.1 Reform and Opening Up

China's economic reform has been an arduous journey. In the early stage of "reform and opening up", the dilemma faced by the Politburo of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was the struggle between ideological-institutional continuity and policy innovations on a market-based economy.[25] In the late 1970s, the party was able to avoid talks regarding a political reform by relying on the theory of "seek truth from facts".[26] The theory argues against a "dogmatic and deductive approach" and advocates "greater flexibility in the application of ideological principles to specific issues."[27] The process of "de-dogmatization" embedded in

[25] Ding Xueliang, *The Decline of Communism in China: Legitimacy Crisis, 1977–1989* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 113.
[26] *Shishi qiushi* 实事求是. Gordon White, *Riding the Tiger: The Politics of Economic Reform in Post-Mao China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), 151.
[27] White, 151.

the popularization of the guiding principle "practice is the sole criterion for testing truth" invited a more flexible approach to ideological diversity, in both the party and society at large.[28] As a result, Deng was provided with the political space necessary to experiment with market reforms.[29]

The first phase of "reform and opening up" from 1978 to 1985 witnessed breakthroughs in the rural sector, as well as the initial reforms of State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) and the establishment of Special Economic Zones (SEZs).[30] By the end of 1984, social production has been reorganized by market-oriented policies through decollectivization, improved incentives, reduced state control over cropping patterns, and marketing rates, thus generally allowing producers to have greater decision-making autonomy. The results of rural reforms led to rapidly growing incomes, rising productivity, increasing marketing of surplus produce, and accelerating job-creation in nonagricultural activities.[31] Built upon the success of rural reforms in the first phrase, the second phrase of reform began with a document known as the October Directive in 1984 which listed reforms in the management of the urban economy and a further opening to the West as two keys to reform efforts. The second phase of reform

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[28] *Shijian shi jianyan zhenli de weiyi biaozhun* 实践是检验真理的唯一标准. White, 152.
[29] Robert Weatherley, *Politics in China Since 1949: Legitimizing Authoritarian Rule* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 111.
[30] Li Xiaoxi, Lin Yongsheng and Liu Yimeng, "Experience: Rising from the Planned Economy," in *Emerging Markets: Reform and Development in China*, ed. Li Xiaoxi et al. (Nova Science Publishers, 2010), 13-14.
[31] Christine Wong, "The Second Phase of Economic Reform in China," in *Current History* (September 1985): 260.

indicated China's entering into the Socialist Commodity Economy.[32] A series of changes took place including the consolidation of "substituting taxes for profits", the expansion of private sector, the loosened control over rural-urban migration, the introduction of relaxed control on prices, and the official opening of 14 coastal cities with expanded economic autonomy and preferential policies for foreign investment attraction.[33]

In this period of rapid reforms, there was an increasing need to reconcile China's changing economic situation with its Marxist ideology. Deng has repeatedly argued for the compatibility between socialism and market economy in many public speeches. In his answer to a journalist on October 23rd in 1985, he made it clear that there was no fundamental contradiction between socialism and market economy. In addition, he explained the party's intention to improve productive forces and accelerate economic development through the combination of socialism and the market.[34] The use of capitalist methods to increase productivity, according to Deng, was not a violation of socialist principles because the party insisted on two rules in the reform. Firstly, planned economy remained in the dominant position; and secondly, the goal of economic development was the achievement of common

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[32] Weatherley, *Politics in China Since 1949*, 111.

[33] The Chinese for "substituting taxes for profits" is *li gai shui* 利改税. Wong, "The Second Phase of Economic Reform in China," 261-262; Li et al., "Experience: Rising from the Planned Economy," 15.

[34] Deng Xiaoping, "Shehui zhuyi he shichang jingji bu cunzai genben maodun 社会主义和市场经济不存在根本矛盾," in *Deng Xiaoping Wenxuan Di San Juan* 邓小平文选第三卷, ed. Zhonggong Zhongyang wenxian bianji weiyuanhui 中共中央文献编辑委员会 (1993), 148.

prosperity, and the state would always try to avoid the polarization of wealth.[35] In another conversation with party members on February 6th in 1987, Deng questioned the exclusive association of market and capitalist economy, as well as planning and socialist economy. He suggested that both planning and market were methods that could be applied in any economies as long as they proved to be useful, and if it served socialism, it could be called socialist.[36]

Such open-ended, "anything goes" approach led to further attempts from reformists to revise Chinese Marxism in order to win the debate over the continued relevance of Marxism in post-Mao China. While Chinese Marxism was losing touch with the realities of economic reform, it also became increasingly irrelevant to the "needs and aspirations" of the Chinese people. In effect, it was only a matter of time before official theorists were called upon again to try and reconcile the seemingly irreconcilable.[37] Weatherley has rightly questioned the efficacy of the reformist debate in securing the ideological-institutional continuity in 1980s. Tensions within the party leadership soon intensified amidst nationwide student demonstrations, and the CCP was finally pushed to a stage where they had to confront the problems of legitimacy in 1989. The national mourning for Hu Yaobang's death was more than a "symbolic act of respect", student protestors along with the increasing number of non-

[35] Deng, 149.
[36] Deng, 203.
[37] Weatherley, *Politics in China Since 1949*, 112-113.

students also had another agenda, which challenged the legitimacy of current leadership and demanded a radical political reform. The fast-changing situation eventually convinced Deng to ally with his conservative rivals in making the decision to use force rather than dialogue to end the protest.[38]

The result of the so-called "turmoil" was a sharp decline in economic growth. However, the economy quickly recovered and even made up for lost time during the over-heated years of 1992-1993, immediately after Deng Xiaoping's Southern Tour (*nanxun* 南巡).[39] Deng's pivotal tour in the south was an imperative measure that responded to the support for anti-reform following the Tiananmen incident, for which Deng needed to rally his support in the south so that he would be able to restart the reform momentum before the Fourteenth Party Congress in late 1992.[40] The Southern Tour was undoubtedly a major success. Deng continued to emphasize the importance of economic reform while trying to "finesse the possibility that economic development could trigger political upheaval".[41] In a claim made by the official Chinese press *Beijing Review* to demonstrate support for Deng Xiaoping while

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[38] Weatherley, 128-132. See also Orville Schell and John Delury, *Wealth and Power: China's Long March to the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Random House, 2013), 374-394.
[39] Barry Naughton, "The Impact of the Tiananmen Crisis on China's Economic Transition," in *The Impact of China's 1989 Tiananmen Massacre*, ed. Jean-Philippe Béja (Taylor & Francis Group, 2010), 154.
[40] Zhao Suisheng, "Deng Xiaoping's Southern Tour: Elite Politics in Post-Tiananmen China," *Asian Survey* 33, no. 8 (August 1993): 745; John Wong and Zheng Yongnian, "The Political Economy of China's Post-*Nanxun* Development," in *The Nanxun Legacy and China's Development in the Post-Deng Era*, ed. John Wong and Zheng Yongnian (Singapore University Press & World Scientific Publishing Co., 2001), 5.
[41] Elizabeth J. Perry, "China in 1992: An Experiment in Neo-Authoritarianism," *Asian Survey* 33, no. 1 (January 1993): 14.

reflecting on the turmoil of 1989, it was said that "the past 14 years have been the most stable and prosperous times in China since the Opium War… From 1840 to 1978, not a single decade could be found without wars, or civil strife, or political turbulence. That is why the Chinese people value the present millennium, and why Deng's policies are popular and welcomed."[42] The claim was right in pointing out how politically important Deng's reformist theory was and how widely it was received in the post-Tiananmen period, especially after Deng's symbolic visit in the south. At the political center, the tour provided a preview for the Fourteenth Party Congress in October 1992, where Deng was able to culminate his policies into a concept of a "socialist market economy" which was formally approved later by the Eighth National People's Congress in March 1993.[43]

The introduction of the "socialist market economy" marked the beginning of the third phase of "reform and opening up", in which market reform has been carried out forcefully with "the removal of the ideological shackles."[44] However, in Naughton's observation, the social and economic model adopted in the post-Tiananmen era was profoundly different from before because policies in the 1990s all bore the specific marks of the Tiananmen crisis.[45] The fundamental difference in the economic reform before and after Tiananmen was that

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[42] Perry, 14.
[43] John Wong, "The Economics of the *Nanxun*," in in *The Nanxun Legacy and China's Development in the Post-Deng Era*, ed. John Wong and Zheng Yongnian (Singapore University Press & World Scientific Publishing Co., 2001), 42.
[44] Wong, 43; Li et al., "Experience: Rising from the Planned Economy," 15.
[45] Naughton, "The Impact of the Tiananmen Crisis on China's Economic Transition," 176-177.

China's leaders were no longer willing to subordinate "other national interests to the quest for a viable economic reform model", and their willingness in pursuing a vision of a transformed economy was "linked to, and often subordinated to, strengthened, stabilized, and more effective government power."[46] Zhao's comment on Deng's economic reform in post-Tiananmen is complementary to Naughton's analysis, suggesting that while Deng repeatedly emphasizing "growth" during his southern tour, he did not present specific measures to prevent China's economy from overheating. Such a problem may once again result in high inflation and subsequent economic and political troubles.[47] Nonetheless, problems of potential instability did not underrate the fact that in the post-Tiananmen period a strong economic logic and a strong political logic coincided to produce a policy regime that was remarkably consistent and strongly self-replicating.[48]

A series of major changes were initiated in the third phase of "reform and opening up" and consolidated in the subsequent fourth phase, spanning from 1992 to 2007. Moving forward, these changes were no longer guaranteed by the party's attempts to reconcile problems of ideology amidst economic development. As economic performance remained a priority for the party, its legitimacy was enhanced by millions of people who benefited from the reforms and enjoyed a higher standard of living. Additionally, the concept of stability also

[46] Naughton, 156.
[47] Zhao, "Deng Xiaoping's Southern Tour: Elite Politics in Post-Tiananmen China," 756.
[48] Naughton, "The Impact of the Tiananmen Crisis on China's Economic Transition," 177.

became central to the party to legitimize itself through state-controlled media and other sources of communication by asserting that its continued rulership was the only realistic way of ensuring political stability and personal safety during the current transitional period.[49]

In the following sections, I will discuss three major changes that are pertinent to the subject of this study – the construction of the Daci TCA. Each change has emerged from different phases of "reform and opening up" starting from 1992 but remained influential to this day. Firstly, the decentralization of political-economic power became pronounced after changes in the central-provincial fiscal relationships in 1994, during the third phase from 1992 to 2001, and the process has continued up until recent years when political autonomy has been increasingly granted to administration at local levels. Secondly, urban land and housing markets were expanded in the late 1990s as a result of the successful building of legal and administrative institutions, and they went through a period of maturation in the 2000s, in which period urban redevelopments skyrocketed and accelerated the process of urbanization during the fourth phase from 2001 to 2007. Lastly, the "heritage fever" has already started in China by the time the country began celebrating the "Cultural Heritage Day" in 2006, and progressively the consideration of cultural heritage politics became one that implicated tourism, economic development, government ideology, national and ethnic imaginaries, social sustainability, and intraregional, interregional, and international

[49] Weatherley, *Politics in China Since 1949*, 149-150, 160.

relationships during the fifth phrase from 2008 to present.[50]

1.2 Decentralized and Localized Political Structure

From a comparative perspective, China has emphasized decentralization a lot more than the Soviet Union even during the Maoist period.[51] In his speech "On the Ten Great Relationships" presented in April 1956, Mao himself doubted the wisdom of the Soviet economic model by saying that, "We must not follow the example of the Soviet Union in concentrating everything in the hands of the central authorities, shackling the local authorities and denying them the right to independent action."[52] It was, therefore, acknowledged that the decentralization of the fiscal and administrative system was crucial to stimulate local enthusiasm and initiative. However, as we approach the subject of decentralization in China, we need to keep in mind that it is embedded in a socialist narrative in which everything has to do with the nature of China's political institutions.[53] In Lam's words, what has happened in the case of China was the "continuing decentralizations in the context of centralization."[54] In addition, processes of decentralization in China have been extremely complex, not only

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[50] Helaine Silverman and Tami Blumenfield, "Cultural Heritage Politics in China: An Introduction," in *Cultural Heritage Politics in China*, ed. Tami Blumenfield and Helaine Silverman (Springer, 2013), 4.
[51] Lam Tao-chiu, "Central-Provincial Relations amid Greater Centralization in China," in *China Information* 24, no. 3 (2010): 342.
[52] Susan L. Shirk, *The Political Logic of Economic Reform in China* (University of California Press, 1993), 159.
[53] Yasheng Huang, "Central-Local Relations in China During the Reform Era: The Economic and Institutional Dimensions," in *World Development* 24, no. 4 (1996): 665-668.
[54] Lam, "Central-Provincial Relations amid Greater Centralization in China," 350.

because at any point of time there were great differences across provinces, but also because changes in policies were frequently implemented that affected the degree of decentralization over time.[55]

The watershed event in the history of decentralization in China took place in November 1993, at the Third Plenum of the Fourteenth Party Central Committee when a fiscal decision was made to abolish the previous revenue-sharing schemes (*caizheng baogan zhi* 财政包干制) and adopt a system of tax-sharing (*fenshui zhi* 分税制) in response to the establishment of the "socialist market economy". As a core element of the comprehensive reform package introduced at the second plenary session of the Eighth National People's Congress in March 1994, the tax-sharing scheme was stipulated as a budgetary law (*yusuan fa* 预算法) that became effective in January 1995 with the aim of further strengthening its overall enforceability. According to Chung, the rationale for the importance of the fiscal dimension in shaping central-provincial relations is that provinces need fiscal resources to fulfill their production and investment targets. As a result, the extent of control over fiscal resources that the center and the provinces can exercise is a key factor that determines the balance of power between them.[56]

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[55] Jae Ho Chung, "Beijing Confronting the Provinces: The 1994 Tax-Sharing Reform and its Implications for Central-Provincial Relations in China," in *China Information* 9, no. 2/3 (Winter 1994-1995): 5.

[56] Chung, "Beijing Confronting the Provinces," 1-2; Le-Yin Zhang, "Chinese Central-Provincial Fiscal Relationships, Budgetary Decline and the Impact of the 1994 Fiscal Reform: An Evaluation," in *The China Quarterly*, no. 157 (March 1999): 131.

The fiscal reform included three key components that drastically reformulated the boundaries in the public finance between the central and provincial governments. Firstly, the division of spending responsibility between central and local governments was routinely included in every description of the tax-sharing schemes. However, the fiscal reform failed to incorporate a detailed division of expenditure responsibility in the budgetary law and thus led to a real problem of uncertainty. Secondly, division of taxes between the central and local governments were made clear through the introduction of three categories of taxation, namely, the central, local, and shared. The shared taxes being the largest portion of revenue included value-added tax (*zengzhi shui* 增值税), resource tax (*ziyuan shui* 资源税), and securities transaction tax (*zhengquan jiaoyi shui* 证券交易税), each of which was to be further divided between the central and the localities. Thirdly, the reform divided the administration over the collection of central and local tax revenues through the establishment of a bi-level system. Both national-level (*guo shuiju* 国税局) and local tax bureaus (*difang shuiju* 地方税局) were set up, taking charge of the collection of central and local taxes respectively. However, it is worth noting that all shared taxes would first go to the national-level tax bureaus which would then be distributed to local governments according to fixed ratios. This constituted an important example in which the vertical control (*tiaotiao* 条条) reasserted itself over the horizontal management (*kuaikuai* 块块) in the era of decentralization in China. As a result, Zhang argues that the current system is a combination

of the status quo and new changes in favor of the centre.[57]

Provincial leaders reacted strongly against such a fiscal reform and refused to accept their compromised positions in terms of tax administration. In order to mitigate provincial discontent, the central government accepted compromises by guaranteeing the revenue level of the provinces as compared to the base year 1993 and adopting the mechanism of tax repayment (*shuishou fanhuan* 税收返还) which was different from normal central grants because its expenditure was not subject to central control.[58] As Zhang concludes, "While the provinces were largely self-sufficient in terms of budgetary revenue prior to the 1994 reform, they now depended on transfers from the centre to finance one-third of their expenditure."[59] However, large amount of central transfers based on the mechanism of tax repayment did not help to equalize differences among the provinces. Instead, it benefited regions that collected more taxes such as Zhejiang and Guangdong, which received the highest amount of per capita transfers from the central government. A series of measures have been implemented to improve the situation since the late 1990s, and a major instrument has been to re-link the expenditure with central control by conducting need-based assessment of the financial conditions of the different provinces. This again altered the terms of central-provincial interactions. Provincial leaders now had to lobby the central government to spend more on

[57] Chung, "Beijing Confronting the Provinces," 13-19; Lam, "Central-Provincial Relations amid Greater Centralization in China," 341.
[58] Zhang, "Chinese Central-Provincial Fiscal Relationships, Budgetary Decline and the Impact of the 1994 Fiscal Reform: An Evaluation," 132-133.
[59] Zhang, 139.

their regions by competing with other provinces. The development of a region thus not only depended on the programs that central actors "play to the provinces" such as the Western Development Program (*xibu da kaifa* 西部大开发), the Revitalization of Northeast (*zhenxing dongbei* 振兴東北), and the Development of Central China (*zhongbu jueqi* 中部崛起), but also relied on charismatic local leadership.[60]

The role of local leadership in regional management was further essentialized since the latest round of government restructuring in 2008. While the central government continued to set quotas for the number of departments and the size of the personnel establishment for each province, provincial governments now have been given room to design and create government structure to address their local problems. In some cases, the provincial governments were even granted the autonomy to experiment with more radical reforms at the lower level where different administrative systems were enacted.[61]

The evolution of the fiscal reform since 1994 led to seemingly contradictory outcomes of increased central control and provincial autonomy, both of which were evident elements in Chinese political structure. Indeed, central power and provincial autonomy are not zero-sum in that effective centralizations have provided the required conditions for provincial

[60] Lam, "Central-Provincial Relations amid Greater Centralization in China," 348-350; Barry Naughton, "A Political Economy of China's Economic Transition," in *China's Great Economic Transformation*, ed. Loren Brandt and Thomas G. Rawski, (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 122.
[61] Lam, "Central-Provincial Relations amid Greater Centralization in China," 355-356.

autonomy and bargaining to exist.[62] In summary, central and local actors may have different perspectives and preferences in the administration, not least because they are posited differently in the bureaucratic hierarchy and located distantly in geographies; but one should not always expect a clash or even a direct confrontation between different actors in that socio-political setting. As will be demonstrated in the next chapter, the decentralized administrative system prompted the emergence of charismatic local leadership who aimed for promotion in their official career, indicating a logic that underlay the local construction of large-scale redevelopment projects such as the Daci TCA in the early 2000s.

1.3 Consolidated Land and Housing Markets

The establishment and consolidation of land and housing markets in post-reform China involved an active presence of the state who allowed the processes of market building to be enacted in an *ad hoc* and gradual manner.[63]

The "reform and opening up" introduced a market-oriented understanding of "land" in China, which despite being owned by the state can be used by non-state actors. Initial experiments of paid land-use rights started in early 1980s. However, the official implementation of the Land Administration Law (*tudi guanli fa* 土地管理法) was not in

[62] Lam, 357.
[63] Fulong Wu, Jiang Xu, and Anthony Gar-On Yeh, *Urban Development in Post-Reform China: State, Market, and Space* (Routledge, 2007), 304.

place until June 1986. The law granted local governments much power in land-use planning, land allocation and acquisition, and illegal land-use administration. Accordingly, a ministerial level authority, the State Land Administration Bureau (*guojia tudi guanliju* 国家土地管理局), was set up in August 1986 under the direct auspices of the State Council. Modifications to the law were introduced in 1988 to allow the state to implement the paid transfer of land-use rights. Subsequent details of the implementation were issued later in 1990 in a document entitled the *Provisional Regulation on the Granting and Transferring of the Land Use Rights over the State-Owned Land in Cities and Towns* (*chengzhen guoyou tudi shiyongquan churang he zhuanrang zanxing tiaoli* 城镇国有土地使用权出让和转让暂行条例). While the central government gave provinces and cities considerable discretion, as Dowall observes, urban land reform in China has been a decentralized process in which the pace and range of activity varied considerably among localities. Based on the available statistics, by 1990, there were twenty-eight cities and nineteen counties in the coastal region that were experimenting with the land reform, which marked the end of free land use and the establishment of an urban land market in China.[64]

A series of problems emerged following the establishment and expansion of the land market in 1990s. Firstly, the primary land market was not well developed because of the

[64] Wu et al., *Urban Development in Post-Reform China*, 30-31; David E. Dowall, "Establishing Urban Land Markets in the People's Republic of China," in *Journal of the American Planning Association* 59, no. 2 (Spring 1993): 182.

popular practice of administrative allocation and negotiated conveyance, leading to issues of nontransparency, inefficiency, and illegal deals. Secondly, the secondary market has witnessed widespread illegal land transactions and speculations due to the ambiguity in property rights, the lacunae in policy-making, as well as irregularities in land transactions. Thirdly, the loss of cultivated land amounted 1.73 million hectares between 1988 and 1996, which became a pressing concern for the authorities.[65]

In order to mitigate these problems, *ad hoc* measures were introduced after 1998 with the creation of the Ministry of Land and Resources (*guotu ziyuan bu* 国土资源部). In 2001, the Directory of Allocated Land was issued by the Ministry to specify categories of qualified development and to minimize ambiguity. In 2002, the *Regulation of Granting State-Owned Land Use Right by Tender, Auction and Quotation* (*zhaobiao paimai guapai churang guoyou tudi shiyongquan guiding* 招标拍卖挂牌出让国有土地使用权规定) was issued. Known as the No. 11 Decree, it required all land for business purposes to be transacted publicly. The Regulation was reiterated in 2004 in No. 71 Decree to forcefully ban negotiated conveyance for commercial development. In general, according to Wu, Xu and Yeh, land policies since 1998 have been aimed at "curbing corruption, tightening land supply, and refining the land

[65] Samuel P.S. Ho and George C.S. Lin, "Emerging Land Markets in Rural and Urban China: Policies and Practices," in *The China Quarterly* 175 (September 2003): 704-707; Peter Ho, "Who Owns China's Land? Policies, Property Rights and Deliberate Institutional Ambiguity," in *The China Quarterly* 166 (June 2001): 397, 407, 420; Lester Brown, *Who Will Feed China? Wake-up Call for a Small Planet* (New York: Norton, 1995), 55-65; Wu et al., *Urban Development in Post-Reform China*, 31.

market", which were also made to match nationwide macroeconomic policies.[66]

Similar to the initiatives in land reform, housing reform was born as a solution to problems in the previous system where public sectors were in domination. The introduction of a housing market originally aimed at solving problems of housing shortage, insufficient investment, unfair distribution, the low rent system and poor management.[67] Three rounds of initial housing reform experiments were carried out between 1979 and 1988.[68] At the beginning of 1988, the central government held the first national housing reform conference in Beijing and discussed a number of principles and objectives, which were summarized into a document entitled the *Implementation Plan for a Gradual Housing System Reform in Cities and Towns* (*guanyu zai quanguo chengzhen fenqi fenpi tuixing zhufang zhidu gaige de shishi fangan* 关于在全国城镇分期分批推行住房制度改革的实施方案). According to Wang and Murie, the publication of this document "marked the turning point of housing reform from pilot tests and experiments in selected cities to overall implementation in urban areas."[69] The document was subsequently updated in 1991 and 1994. In July 1998, under the support of Premier Zhu Rongji, a new housing policy was formulated to replace the direct housing

[66] Wu et al., 37-41.
[67] Ya Ping Wang and Alan Murie, "The Process of Commercialisation of Urban Housing in China," in *Urban Studies* 33, no. 6 (June 1996): 973-974.
[68] The first round of experiment took place between 1979 and 1981, the second between 1982 and 1985, and the third between 1986 and 1988. See more in Wang and Murie, 974-977; Ya Ping Wang and Alan Murie, "Social and Spatial Implications of Housing Reform in China," in *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 24, no.2 (June 2000): 403.
[69] Wang and Murie, "Social and Spatial Implications of Housing Reform in China," 403.

distribution with a multi-tiered supply system of state-subsidized affordable or low-cost commercially developed housing, and to set up a new financing system to facilitate the housing market. Although these policies were aimed at benefiting the whole society, their impact on different socio-economic groups varied tremendously. In essence, the heart of the reform policy has been a more fundamental adjustment of social and economic distribution within the public sector in the urban regions. Despite being limited in its scope, broadly speaking the housing reform had significant social impacts because of the separation of work and housing. While the government and employers relaxed their responsibilities in terms of the provision of housing, they also relaxed the ways in which they exercised control over citizens and employees. In Wang and Murie's forecast, they are correct in suggesting that the social impacts of housing reform would thus turn the population "from one of proletarians and socialist workers into petty bourgeois and property owners."[70] However, their analysis does not extend to suggest how the deepening of marketization in housing segment would impact the socio-economic transition of China in which a growing real estate sector took up a major component of China's economy.

In the late 1990s, commodity housing became dominant in new housing supply, and there was limited affordable housing in the primary housing market while a secondary market

[70] Wang and Murie, "Social and Spatial Implications of Housing Reform in China," 403-405, 409; Wang and Murie, "The Process of Commercialisation of Urban Housing in China," 974-978; Wu et al., *Urban Development in Post-Reform China*, 53.

was underdeveloped. Initially, housing commodification was aimed at solving housing shortage in the socialist era, in practice the reform began to deviate from such an objective and imposed various constraints on housing affordability. Multiple efforts were made to mitigate the problem. In 2001, *The Housing Provident Fund Management Ordinance* (*zhufang gongjijin guanli tiaoli* 住房公积金管理条例) was issued by the State Council to implement a financing system for housing and to expand the purchasing powers of better-off households. Moreover, *The Notice for Stabilizing Housing Price* (*guanyu qieshi wending zhufang jiage de tongzhi* 关于切实稳定住房价格的通知) was announced in 2005 to officially express the government's concern in controlling skyrocketing prices. But for the majority of the urban poor, major reform policies were irrelevant to them because they did not bring immediate benefits to the poor. Meanwhile, commodity housing providers were less interested in the provision of basic accommodation to low-income groups, instead they were invested in the competition for high-end clients. Through inventing and advertising a "new lifestyle" for their targeted elite customers, real estate developers were profit-seekers in a market-driven housing economy who would easily claim that "the majority of the population is irrelevant to commodity housing development".[71]

The increasing maturation of urban land and housing markets has made redevelopment profitable and therefore possible. As a result, the number of redevelopment project

[71] Wu et al., 50, 53-56, 63-64.

skyrocketed after 2004.[72] While redevelopments resulted in large-scale housing demolition across Chinese cities and provoked various social problems, they were nevertheless carried out actively by both local governments and real estate developers.[73] The causal connection between massive demolition of old homes and the creation of demand for new housing was popularly known as the "economy of demolition and relocation (*chaiqian jingji* 拆迁经济)", which thus became an explicit strategy of "urban operation and management".[74] Local government was actively involved in urban redevelopment as long as the project improved city image and generated revenue. The proliferation of Central Business Districts (CBDs) and shopping malls through the conversion of "under-use" urban spaces is a good example. A survey commissioned by the Ministry of Construction suggested that, by 2003, thirty-six cities were planning or building CBDs in their New City (*xincheng* 新城) projects.[75] Furthermore, along with the progress of the real-estate market, the driving force has shifted urban redevelopment from welfare provision to profit-making, a process in which the government has retreated from its social responsibility in the operation of land development, leading to consequences in which many dilapidated areas were either not being redeveloped due to a lack of potential in profit-making, or being relentlessly demolished without any

[72] Wu et al., 236-237; see also Shenjing He and Fulong Wu, "China's Emerging Neoliberal Urbanism," in *Antipode* 41, no. 2 (2009): 293.
[73] Wu et al., 240-242; He and Wu, 292-293.
[74] You-tien Hsing, *The Great Urban Transformation: Politics of Land and Property in China* (Oxford University Press, 2010), 108-109.
[75] Hsing, 113.

consideration of the affected residents.[76]

As I have shown above, it is clear that the involvement of the state was crucial in consolidating the market formation for urban land and housing segments in China. As Wu, Xu and Yeh conclude, "the state not only uses marketization as an institutional fix to solve its own crisis derived from socialist overaccumulation, but also becomes an active market actor in the marketized political economy."[77] Convincingly, the state's actions in the process of market building were both path-dependent and path-breaking, which included the stage of "rolling back" that introduced market incentives and relaxed state resource control, and also the stage of "rolling out" that created market institutions and included its direct involvement in creating market demand. The active presence of both the state and the market is not an "ideological outcome", but an embodiment of the "impasse of neoliberalism in the context of transitional cities."[78] To conclude, the Chinese state, at both the central and local level, has become "qualitatively" different from its previous counterpart in the early stage of "reform and opening up", and is "evolving at the very frontier of today's governance in the 'triumphal' capitalist world."[79] It is in this context in which the state, while engaging in construing the market, is itself redefined by the imperative of market development that government entities and real estate developers created local conditions in Chengdu for the

[76] Wu et al., *Urban Development in Post-Reform China*, 261.
[77] Wu et al., 308.
[78] Wu et al., 308-309.
[79] Wu et al., 309.

construction of the Daci TCA. As will be shown in the next chapter, different phases in constructing the Daci TCA precisely epitomize the interplay of the state and the market in urban redevelopments in contemporary China.

1.4 Cultural Heritage Politics

Previous sections have primarily analyzed the political and economic changes in post-reform China. This section turns to cultural heritage politics and suggests how policies also extend to the cultural and religious arenas in reshaping the social life of the Chinese people. First of all, what is considered 'heritage' is continually subject to interpretation and reinterpretation, claim and counter claim, and negotiation.[80] It is essentially an interpretive process, "with meanings generated by those in a position to make a heritage claim and aimed at an intended audience", without whom the claim itself becomes of little use.[81] In the context of China, the term "*wenhua yichan* 文化遗产" as a translation for "cultural heritage" is a neologism that has become popular in the Chinese lexicon only since the 1980s. However, similar concepts referring to ancient objects (*guwu* 古物), historic sites (*shiji* 史迹), cultural relics (*wenwu* 文物), and national treasures (*guobao* 国宝) were already used in

[80] David Harrison, "Introduction: Contested Narratives in the Domain of World Heritage," in *The Politics of World Heritage: Negotiating Tourism and Conservation*, ed. David Harrison and Michael Hitchcock (Tonawanda: Channel View Publications, 2005), 1-10.
[81] Robert J. Shepherd and Larry Yu, *Heritage Management, Tourism, and Governance in China: Managing the Past to Serve the Present* (Springer, 2013), 2.

the early twentieth century amid the formation of the modern Chinese state.[82] Since the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, state authorities held a hostile attitude toward China's material past and nationalized most cultural sites. During the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976, tangible cultural heritage being one of the "Four Olds (*sijiu* 四旧)" was severely destroyed by the Red Guards (*hong weibing* 红卫兵) across China. The situation was overturned after Deng Xiaoping's succession as the leader who advocated pragmatism over dogmatism. Since the "reform and opening up", the Chinese government has invested significant resources in relic preservation and become a major supporter of the world heritage movement. The underlying logic of these initiatives can be linked to the way the CCP has justified its legitimacy in the post-Deng era. As is discussed previously, the party has promoted a carefully controlled nationalism founded on the notion of "stability" in legitimizing its rule in the post-Deng reform era. As a result, a patriotic narrative in the display as well as the presentation of well-preserved heritage served to consolidate and reify the party's claim for legitimacy. After all, preservation of the past was not defined as an end itself, it was also a means to encourage a national consciousness, reflect socialist values, and aid with material development in the present.[83]

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[82] Guolong Lai, "The Emergence of 'Cultural Heritage' in Modern China: A Historical and Legal Perspective," in *Reconsidering Cultural Heritage in East Asia*, ed. Akira Matsuda and Luisa Elena Mengoni (Uniquity Press, 2016), 50.

[83] Shepherd and Yu, *Heritage Management, Tourism, and Governance in China*, 19; Robert J. Shepherd, *Faith in Heritage: Displacement, Development, and Religious Tourism in Contemporary China* (Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), 14-15.

In November 1982, the first *Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage of the People's Republic of China* (*Zhonghua renmin gongheguo wenwu baohu fa* 中华人民共和国文物保护法) was issued by the State Council, after which the government ratified the World Heritage Convention in 1985 and made cultural heritage preservation a part of its national five-year plans.[84] The law has gone through five revisions – in June 1991, December 2007, June 2013, April 2015, and November 2017, respectively.[85] In May 2003, the *Implementation Guideline of Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage of the People's Republic of China* (*Zhonghua renmin gongheguo wenwu baohu fa shishi tiaoli* 中华人民共和国文物保护法实施条例) was issued on the basis of the 1991 law, and was modified accordingly in December 2013, January 2016, and March 2017.[86] As the *Law* and the *Implementation Guideline* went through several revisions, more freedom has been given to the utilization of heritage sites and the regulations have been more elaborate while the main body of this legal framework remained more or less the same since 2002.[87] Various legal and administrative entities were also established at the provincial, municipal, and local levels,

[84] Shepherd, *Faith in Heritage*, 19.
[85] See the 2017 version 中华人民共和国文物保护法(2017 年修正本) on the website for National Cultural Heritage Administration 国家文物局 via http://www.ncha.gov.cn/art/2017/11/28/art_2301_42898.html.
[86] See the 2017 version 中华人民共和国文物保护法实施条例(2017 年修正本 2) on the website for National Cultural Heritage Administration 国家文物局 via http://www.ncha.gov.cn/art/2017/3/1/art_2301_42897.html.
[87] Lui Tam, "The Revitalization of Zhizhu Temple: Policies, Actors, Debates," in *Chinese Heritage in the Making: Experiences, Negotiations and Contestations*, ed. Christina Maags and Marina Svensson (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 247.

along with the establishment of the National Cultural Heritage Administration (*guojia wenwu ju* 国家文物局). The functioning of these administrative entities should be viewed in the general process of decentralization and localization discussed in previous sections. Beginning in 1998, state authorities have shifted control of tourism and heritage management to the provinces, municipalities and counties. Therefore, increasingly, local governments have competed to capture part of the domestic tourism market as a revenue source, and they have sought a comparative advantage by promoting, reconstructing and even creating their own unique heritage sites. Although heritage preservation has been explicitly defined in political terms by the party state with the aim to strengthen national unity and promote sustainable development of the national culture. Local authorities tended to view cultural heritage in terms of its economic and thus development potential. Shepherd and Yu argue that these two intentions were viewed as synergetic and not antithetical for local leadership, and they agree with Nyíri in that the Chinese bureaucrats have followed the rationale that "existing cultural resources can drive economic development which will in turn produce more cultured subjects."[88]

Even though national and local interests in heritage preservation were often not viewed

[88] Shepherd and Yu, *Heritage Management, Tourism, and Governance in China*, 49-50; Pál Nyíri, *Scenic Spots: Chinese Tourism, the State, and Cultural Authority* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2006), 80; Chen Shen and Hong Chen, "Cultural Heritage Management in China: Current Practices and Problems," in C*ultural Heritage Management: A Global Perspective*, ed. Phyllis Mauch Messenger and George S. Smith (Florida Scholarship Online, 2011), 72.

as antithetical, one should not always expect a smooth, harmonious and consistent system of heritage management. Indeed, the complexity of ownership, management, and law enforcement responsibilities has presented many challenges to the administration of cultural heritage. As Silverman and Blumenfield point out, the fundamental issue here is "how cultural heritage is managed, by whom, in whose interests, and with what impacts."[89] Shepherd and Yu characterize three distinct models in the management of cultural heritage for tourism in China, namely, government control, joint ventures between local governments and private management companies, and private management contracting. These models with the participation of various stakeholders often encounter problems including the lack of coordination, conflicted interests, problematic and uneven exercise of power and authority, and tensions and disagreements across vertical and horizontal management.[90] In addition to these, management becomes even more difficult in cases where religious heritage sites are preserved, reconstructed, and promoted for tourism.

Post-reform religious policies have created a desirable condition for the preservation of historic Buddhist temples, and increasingly, Buddhist temples are popularized, diplomatized, and commercialized.[91] Existing scholarship pays particular attention to accessible localities

[89] Silverman and Blumenfield, "Cultural Heritage Politics in China: An Introduction," 9.
[90] Shepherd and Yu, *Heritage Management, Tourism, and Governance in China*, 52.
[91] For religious policies, see Pitman B. Potter, "Belief in Control: Regulation of Religion in China," in *The China Quarterly*, no. 174 (June 2003): 317-337; Laliberté, "Buddhism under Jiang, Hu, and Xi," 21-44; Ji, "Buddhism in the Reform Era," 32-52.

such as Shanghai.[92] The management of Buddhist temples, as Weishan Huang indicates, is often complicated by multiple governmental departments and religious actors including local Buddhist Associations (*fojiao xiehui* 佛教协会), Cultural Heritage Departments (*wenwu bumen* 文物部门), Renovation Departments (*gaijian bumen* 改建部门), and temple leaders.[93] However, "a religious heritage site is simultaneously preserved and yet alive" which is often caught "between the preservationist ideal of freezing time and the practical realities of faith as a life practice."[94] The complication not only results from the additional maneuvering and negotiations between religious leadership and the government, as well as private management companies, but also lies in the realities that preservation itself becomes problematic when a living religious community has already been involved at the beginning. Understandably, what often seems to be a promising preservation plan in the eyes of government officials and private investors might not be the case for the religious community. The question is, how much is the religious community involved in the process of negotiation, given that they are the ones who have to deal with a series of "knock on" consequences resulting from the decision-making?[95] The repercussions from managing a religious heritage site will be clearer

[92] Vermander, Zhang, and Hingley, *Shanghai Sacred: The Religious Landscape of a Global City*; Huang, "Urban Restructuring and Temple Agency," 251-270.
[93] Huang, "Urban Restructuring and Temple Agency," 255-257.
[94] Shepherd, *Faith in Heritage*, 13.
[95] Andrew Law, "The Role of History, Nostalgia and Heritage in the Construction and Indigenisation of State-led Political and Economic Identities in Contemporary China," in *The Heritage Turn in China: The Reinvention, Dissemination and Consumption of Heritage*, ed. Yi-Wen Wang, Linda Walton and Carol Ludwig (Amsterdam University Press, 2020), 234.

to us if we take into consideration Holtorf's observation, which suggests that "heritage is often less valued for its literal than for its metaphorical content, that is, stories about the past that are much more so stories about the present."[96] As a result, "it matters little for the story-telling potential if a heritage site has been meticulously repaired, faithfully restored, or entirely reconstructed – as long as it gives a believable total impression."[97] How much does the "believable total impression" respect the historical continuity of the site? How much does it ensure the continuous survival of the site amid the challenges it concomitantly brings? How much does it authenticate or stigmatize the religious communities involved, their practices, self-identities, and lived experiences in everyday life? These are the questions that I intend to answer in the rest of this thesis. I argue that they also deserve the attention from anyone who studies the preservation and management of religious heritage sites in contemporary China.

Thus far, I have provided an overview for the emergence of the concept "cultural heritage" in modern and contemporary China. In addition, I have introduced the legal and administrative establishments regarding cultural heritage in post-reform China, and how heritage has been preserved, reconstructed and managed. Finally, I have raised the uniqueness of religious heritage sites in the narrative for cultural heritage preservation by suggesting the problematic, complication, and subtlety involved in managing religious heritage sites. In the following chapter, I will turn to providing a detailed account on the management and

[96] Silverman and Blumenfield, "Cultural Heritage Politics in China: An Introduction," 19.
[97] Silverman and Blumenfield, 19.

everyday administration of a religious heritage site in Chengdu, the Daci Temple.

Chapter Two: Constructing the Daci TCA

Having conducted a macro analysis in Chapter One, this chapter turns to a close investigation on case-specific circumstances surrounding the construction of the Daci TCA from 1998 to 2015. I argue that this case study serves as a good example to show how structural forces born out of post-reform political-economic policies at the national level are constructive in the formation of local projects. In a similar attempt, Liu and Chen contextualize the formation of the Daci TCA within the framework of glocalization and argue that the completion of the project is jointly achieved through administrative power and capital.[98] While this is certainly not a rare case in China, given that urban redevelopments in recent decades have been central to the agenda of local governments, and they have taken a variety of forms from property-led initiative to culture-led one, the uniqueness of the Chengdu Daci TCA within the tides of CBD construction in Chinese cities should not be overlooked. On the one hand, while projects in other cities also bear the marks of decentralization, marketization and conservation, the Chengdu Daci TCA has been particularly successful and well-received as one of the forerunners among its counterparts to utilize city branding. As for the expression of place brand identity and image, Chengdu is influenced by an imagery that "includes a combination of contrasting images, such as

[98] Bin Liu and Zhongnuan Chen, "Power, Capital and Space – Production of Urban Consumption Space Based on the Transformation of Historical Street Area: A Case Study of Sino-Ocean Taikoo Li in Chengdu," in *Urban Planning International* 33, no. 1 (2018): 75.

'modern' and 'traditional', 'vibrant city life' and 'traditional culture', 'city' and 'nature', as well as 'Chinese' and 'foreigners'".[99] What is made explicitly visible in advertising the Daci TCA corresponds to the city's ambition in creating a unique imagery of its own. On the other hand, while it is not uncommon to have a heritage site involved in a city's CBD, the Daci TCA is unique because it transcends its symbolic use, that is, a "nonmaterial interpretation of the past" which at its core no more than an architectural design coated with the sweetness of "history, nostalgia, and heritage".[100] As I will argue extensively in Chapters Three and Four, the Daci Temple is indeed a space of lived practices and experiences, which has witnessed and continued to nurture new "modalities of doing religion" in contemporary Chinese cities.[101] My findings later in the thesis correspond to Adam Chau's frameworks for the study of religious practice and action, in which we understand what happens on the ground "religiously" as a congruence of "local customs, historical accidents, social environment, personal temperaments, and configurations of modalities of doing religion."[102]

In the following sections, I identify three phases in the construction of the Daci TCA, which include the initial stage of planning and demolition, the unsuccessful redevelopment

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[99] Emma Bjorner, "International Positioning Through Online City Branding: The Case of Chengdu," in *Journal of Place Management and Development* 6, no. 3 (2013): 219.
[100] Shepherd and Yu, *Heritage Management, Tourism, and Governance in China* 25; Law, "The Role of History, Nostalgia and Heritage in the Construction and Indigenisation of State-led Political and Economic Identities in Contemporary China".
[101] Adam Y. Chau, "Modalities of Doing Religion" in *Chinese Religious Life*, edited by David A. Palmer, et al. (Oxford University Press USA – OSO, 2011), 67-84.
[102] Chau, 82.

conducted by the state, and the final construction of Sino-Ocean Taikoo Li in which the state's responsibility in redeveloping the Daci TCA was transferred to real estate developers. As I have shown earlier in the previous chapter, the Daci TCA precisely epitomizes the interplay of the state and the market in urban restructuring because the state has been continuously involved in the project supervision, even though the detailed planning was carried out by the market players. Moreover, the state has also been central to propagating the success of local developments, advertising a state-approved city image for the attraction of investment capital and tourism while fitting well with the party's claim of its "correct" leadership.

2.1 Phase One 1998-2004: Initial Planning and Demolition

Corresponding to the national attention to cultural heritage preservation in the early 1980s, Daci Temple and its surroundings (areas within a 80-meter radius) were listed as the Relic Preservation Area (*wenwu baohu qu* 文物保护区) by the municipal government and the temple became accessible to the public as the city museum on October 1, 1984.[103] As an effort to incorporate heritage preservation into the grand planning for land administration, the

[103] Qiuping Jin, "Chengdu Daci si pianqu gengxin zhong chuantong minju qunti kongjian yingzao de chuancheng yu chuangxin 成都大慈寺片区更新中传统居民群体空间营造的传承与创新," in *Jianzhu sheji guanli* 建筑设计管理, no.7 (2015): 51; Dashi ji 大事记, Zoujin Cheng Bo 走进成博, Chengdu Museum 成都博物馆, accessible via https://www.cdmuseum.com/dashiji/, accessed on January 9, 2022.

Chengdu Institute of Planning and Design (*Chengdu shi guihua sheji yanjiuyuan* 成都市规划设计研究院) published the *Planning for Chengdu Daci Temple Historic-Cultural Preservation District* (*Chengdu daci si lishi wenhua baohuqu guihua* 成都大慈寺历史文化保护区规划) in 1998 with an intended area of 9.8 hm^2 for future planning.[104] The project began with a large-scale demolition of 23 hm^2 in the city centre in 2002, in which the local United Construction Office (*tongjian ban* 统建办) invested 1.3 billion *yuan* to demolish all dilapidated and poorly managed architectures while preserving only a few buildings including the historic temple structures.[105] The process of demolition included much tension, resonating with scholars' observations discussed previously. 3667 households were affected and forced to relocate by accepting some forms of compensation offered by the government. The first option was in-kind compensation for those who wished to be relocated to other parts of the city with a replacement of the property rights. The second option was monetary compensation according to valuation of the property by a state-designated agency. According to my knowledge, there are no records on the social resistance related to this large-scale demolition. However, it is not hard to imagine the tension in this process given that controversies surrounding overheated redevelopment became visible across China and

[104] Liu and Chen, "Power, Capital and Space – Production of Urban Consumption Space Based on the Transformation of Historical Street Area: A Case Study of Sino-Ocean Taikoo Li in Chengdu," 77.

[105] See "13 yi qidong Chengdu zuida diwa penghuqu Daci si pianqu gaizao gongcheng 13 亿启动成都最大低洼棚戶区大慈寺片区改造工程"via https://news.sina.cn/sa/2002-06-23/detail-ikknscsi0178142.d.html?isJump=0&universallink=1&from=wap, accessed on January 9, 2022.

conflicts of demolition and relocation became extremely acute in 2003.[106] According to He and Wu, "tens of thousands of people appealed to municipal and central governments over unfair housing compensation and violent relocation", which have forced the state to hold back the pace of redevelopment, albeit only for a short period of time.[107]

In September 2003, the city updated the planning in a document entitled *Chengdu City Chunxi Road – Daci Temple District Urban Design and the Preservation and Regulation of Historic District Plan* (*Chengdu shi chunxi lu – daci si pianqu chengshi sheji ji lishi jiequ baohu zhengzhi guihua* 成都市春熙路-大慈寺片区城市设计及历史街区保护整治规划), in which it was stated that the redevelopment of the Daci Temple district aimed at building a commercial complex that combined elements of local tradition, history and culture.[108] With the Daci Temple being the core that symbolized the cultural substance of this redevelopment, the city restored the status of the temple as a religious site and the museum was moved out in December 2004.[109]

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[106] He and Wu, "China's Emerging Neoliberal Urbanism: Perspectives from Urban Redevelopment," 292.
[107] He and Wu, 292-293.
[108] Liu and Chen, "Power, Capital and Space – Production of Urban Consumption Space Based on the Transformation of Historical Street Area: A Case Study of Sino-Ocean Taikoo Li in Chengdu," 77.
[109] Dashi ji 大事记, Zoujin Cheng Bo 走进成博, Chengdu Museum 成都博物馆, accessible via https://www.cdmuseum.com/dashiji/, accessed on January 9, 2022.

2.2 Phase Two 2005-2010: Unsuccessful Planning and Redevelopment

In 2005, the municipal government published the *Planning for Daci Temple Central Preservation District* (*daci si hexin baohuqu guihua* 大慈寺核心保护区规划), which clearly stated that the restoration of ancient structures would be carried out alongside the construction of new Ming- and Qing-style architectures.[110] In a more detailed document, it was stated that the newly constructed buildings should not exceed 12 meters in height, thus allowing the temple to remain the tallest structures within this district.[111] By preserving the original residential setting in the historic-cultural district, planning at this time aimed to recreate the historical scene in which people's religious life and street life were intertwined.[112] The redevelopment was carried out subsequently, and the first phase of the project was finished in 2008. In May 2009, the redevelopment was expanded to integrate the surrounding areas, including the commercial districts of Chunxi Road and Hongxing Road.[113] According to the planning, together these areas would form Chengdu's CBD in which the Daci Temple would be placed at the core for a "temple-commerce oneness (*si shi heyi* 寺市合

[110] Liu and Chen, "Power, Capital and Space – Production of Urban Consumption Space Based on the Transformation of Historical Street Area: A Case Study of Sino-Ocean Taikoo Li in Chengdu," 77.
[111] The document is called *Detailed Planning for Controlling the Chengdu Daci Temple District* 成都大慈寺片区控制性详细规划, see Liu and Chen, 77.
[112] The original terms in the *Detailed Planning for Controlling the Chengdu Daci Temple District* 成都大慈寺片区控制性详细规划 are "再现宗教与市井生活的完整，再现大慈寺及其周边地区唯一集中了宗教寺院和传统'里坊制'市井居住形态的重要历史文化街区", see Liu and Chen, 77.
[113] Liu and Chen, 77.

一)" that amalgamated Buddhist culture, Sichuan architectural style, local culture, and new commercial culture.[114]

Although the planning seemed to be promising, the redevelopment carried out by the local government was not very successful. According to a local official Wen Jin 文勁, the government-led construction was below expectation because it failed to fully utilize the value of the land. Consequently, the authority decided to hand over the task to the market.[115] Such a failure of local governments in carrying out redevelopments was not uncommon because the implementation and enforcement of urban planning have been complicated by shifting balances of power among government entities, policy-makers, and project planners, which permitted numerous concessions to high-profile developments.[116] In recognition of the limitation of government-led redevelopments, the role of local leadership thus changed from the "preparation of detailed plans to the preparation of overall schemes and regulations designed to facilitate detailed planning by others."[117] The transfer of the main responsibility

[114] The original terms in the *Planning for Daci Temple Central Preservation District* 大慈寺核心保护区规划 are "建成以大慈寺为中心，融合佛教文化、川西建筑文化、民俗文化和新商业文化的'寺市合一'新街区，并与春熙路、红星路融为一体，共同构成成都市中央商务区核心", see Liu and Chen, 77.

[115] The original words of Wen Jin 文勁 are "当时在建设过程中，政府在推进过程中也感觉到，仅由政府为主体为主角，单一运作，政府各方面的资源很难实现最大价值: 历史文化和商业发展的有机融合。我们觉得推向市场，政府把握总体规划要求，由市场来做，更为合适。这个模式，这个思维方式产生了以后，就没有再进行新的建设", see Liu and Chen, 77.

[116] Piper Gaubatz, "Globalization and the Development of New Central Business Districts in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou," in *Restructuring the Chinese City: Changing Society, Economy and Space*, ed. Laurence J.C. Ma and Fulong Wu (Routledge, 2005): 91.

[117] Gaubatz, 93.

in redeveloping the Daci TCA from the state to the market resonates with the general trend of marketization discussed in previous chapter. The market introduced a competitive mechanism of selection in which the land use right would be given to those with higher offers. In the case of the Daci TCA, the winning bidders were Sino-Ocean Group and Swire Properties.

2.3 Phase Three 2011-2015: Sino-Ocean Taikoo Li

In 2010, the Sino-Ocean Group and Swire Properties jointly purchased the land use right of the Daci Temple district at the price of 2 billion *yuan*, which, according to Liu and Chen, marked the transition from the dominance of power to the dominance of capital in the construction and redevelopment of this project.[118] In March 2011, all buildings previously built by the local government were demolished without ever being put into use. The fact that 40 million *yuan* were wasted due to the incompetence of the local government provoked widespread criticism and the incident was later reported by the CCTV.[119] On April 29, the groundbreaking ceremony took place next to the temple.[120] The Sino-Ocean Taikoo Li

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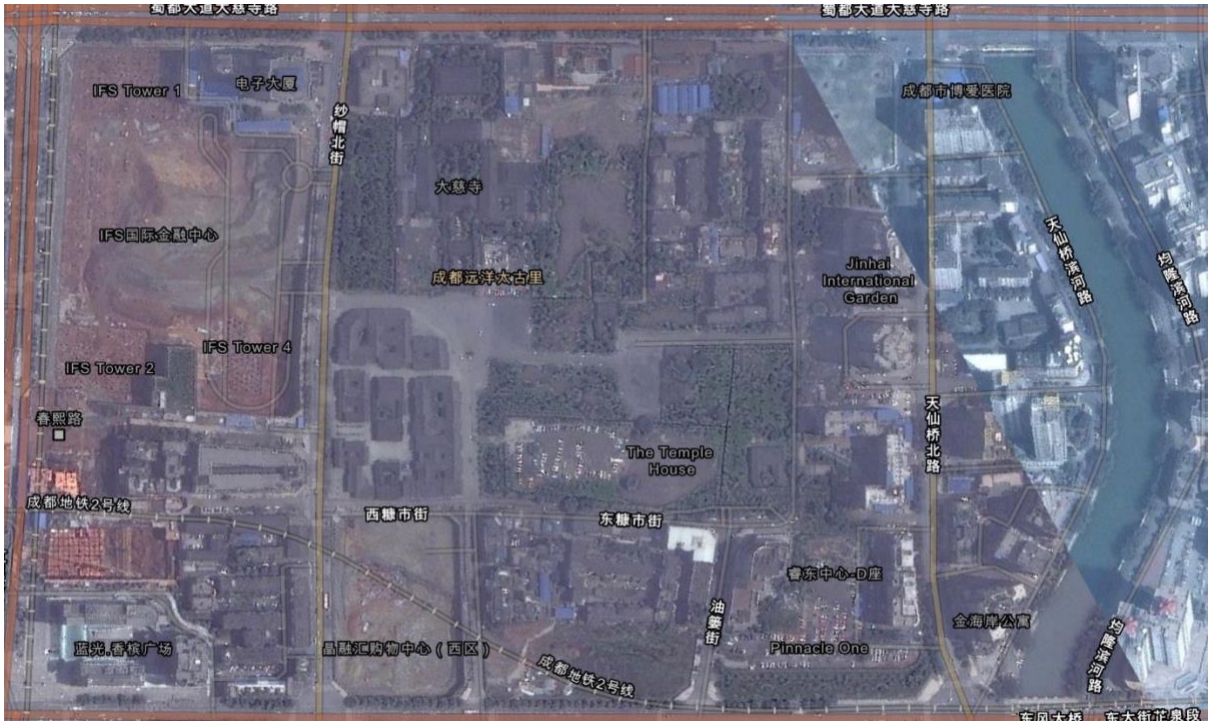
[118] Liu and Chen, "Power, Capital and Space – Production of Urban Consumption Space Based on the Transformation of Historical Street Area: A Case Study of Sino-Ocean Taikoo Li in Chengdu," 77.

[119] See "Chengdu fanggu jianzhu weiyong ji chai, 4 qianwan huawei wuyou 成都仿古建筑未用即拆, 4 千万元化为乌有" published on June 14, 2011 via http://www.landscape.cn/news/54361.html, accessed on January 11, 2022.

[120] The original passage is "2011 年 4 月 29 日上午 8:28—10:38 分，位于合江亭辖区内的成都市大慈寺文化商业综合体在北纱帽慈寺南门隆重举行了开工典礼。按照改造总体规划，大慈寺文化商业片区将以春熙路、红星路两大商业步行街为依托，以地铁二号线建设为契机，建成一个以大慈寺为中心，融合佛教文化、川西建筑文化、民俗文化和新商业文化'寺市合一'的新街区", see *Daci si wenhua shangye zongheti kaigong*

started a soft opening on October 31 in 2014 and formally opened on April 24 in 2015. The following satellite pictures reveal how the underdeveloped residential space of the district has been transformed into a spatial agglomeration of the commercial, consumer, recreational and cultural, and how changes in the urban landscape of downtown Chengdu have facilitated a much higher degree of vitality, diversity, and versatility of the space (Figure 3&4).



(Figure 3: Satellite picture of the district prior to the construction)[121]

qingdian juxing 大慈寺文化商业综合体开工典礼举行, published by Chengdu Municipal People's Government on November 28, 2011, via http://gk.chengdu.gov.cn/govInfoPub/detail.action?id=371810&tn=2, accessed on January 11, 2022.

[121] Satellite picture can be found via https://livingatlas.arcgis.com/wayback/?active=4230&ext=104.07762,30.61543,104.09157,30.64143.

(Figure 4: Satellite picture of the district after the construction)[122]

I argue that the transformation of Daci Temple district into an agglomeration of religious and commercial spaces integrated into the CBD of Chengdu was a major success in contemporary urban restructuring. On the one hand, it became a significant part of Chengdu's identity, adding to its competitiveness in attracting capital investment and tourism. The Sino-Ocean Taikoo Li was known for the "first-store economy (*shoudian jingji* 首店经济)", which meant that it was the place to host the first opening (*Zhongguo shoudian* 中国首店) of many international brands in China, or in the southwest of China (*xinan shoudian* 西南首店).[123]

[122] Satellite picture can be found via https://livingatlas.arcgis.com/wayback/#ext=104.07716,30.65258,104.08885,30.65913&active=119.

[123] See more in *Zhongxibu kan Chengdu, Chengdu kan Jinjiang – "shou dian shougedi" beihou de shangye luoji* 中西部看成都 成都看锦江 –"首店收割地"背后的商业逻辑, published in the official WeChat account of Jinjiang District Department of Commerce at Municipal Office, 2020.10.23 via https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/c0lgt7Lw_WAQyRsRo_Ei5g,

The thriving retailing industry offers abundant choices to touristic consumers seeking for shopping experiences. During the Golden Week of Spring Festival (*Chunjie huangjin zhou* 春节黄金周) in 2018, the Taikoo Li hosted 1.06 million tourists and generated a revenue of 133 million *yuan* from sales. While benefiting from its central location in Taikoo Li, Daci Temple received a total number of 83.7 thousand visitors and derived a revenue of 1.42 million *yuan* from tourism, achieving a growth rate of 16.63% compared to the previous year.[124] On the other hand, compared to other commercial projects, Sino-Ocean Taikoo Li was one that received international recognition, such as the Urban Land Institute 2015 Global Award for Excellence.[125] It therefore opened a window for Chengdu to promote itself as a global city and to further engage in the process of globalization.[126] In a document published by the Chengdu Municipal Development and Reform Commission (*Chengdu shi fazhan he gaige*

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accessed on January 13, 2022; see also in *Kan Jinjiangqu chengfengpolang yangshi xinwen jujiao Chunxi lu shangquan shoudian jingji* 看锦江区乘风破浪 央视新闻聚焦春熙路商圈首店经济, published in the official WeChat account of Jinjiang District Department of Commerce at Municipal Office, 2020.06.30 via https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/gWtGo1momIkZOb14IyJDsg, accessed on January 13, 2022.

[124] See *Niaweier nong xiaofei wang chunjie qijian Jinjiangqu ge da shangchang jingqu renqi baopeng* 年味儿浓 消费旺 春节期间锦江区各大商场景区人气爆棚, published in the official WeChat account of Jinjiang District Department of Commerce at Municipal Office, 2018.02.24 via https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/2TxVac6WY1YQJE5vcrGY8A, accessed on January 13, 2022.

[125] See details of the ULI Award at https://americas.uli.org/sino-ocean-taikoo-project/?_gl=1%2A1td131i%2A_ga%2AMTE3NDMwOTg0Ni4xNjQ4NjY3NzMy%2A_ga_HB94BQ21DS%2AMTY0ODY2NzczMi4xLjEuMTY0ODY2Nzk0NC4w, accessed on March 30, 2022.

[126] See *yingfeng lingting, shunfeng er wei – Chengdu jianshe guoji xiaofei zhongxin chengshi, Jinjiang zai lushing* 迎风聆听 顺风而为 – 成都建设国际消费中心城市 锦江在路上, published in the official WeChat account of Jinjiang District Department of Commerce at Municipal Office, 2019.12.23 via https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/BKzCzjJD-W_ttRUciD8V1g, accessed on January 13, 2022.

weiyuanhui 成都市发展和改革委员会), Taikoo Li was indeed the core in the city's planning for a global consumption centre (*guoji xiaofei zhongxin chengshi* 国际消费中心城市).[127] More than aiming at consumption alone, Chengdu also incorporated cultural branding as a significant part of its endeavour to become globalized, as was repeatedly reiterated in a document entitled *Chengdu 2025 Planning for the Construction of a Globalized City* (*Chengdu shi guojiahua chengshi jianshe 2025 guihua* 成都市国际化城市建设 2025 规划).[128]

While many factors concomitantly and progressively led to the success of this local redevelopment, this thesis has primarily looked at, firstly, the national-level policy reforms on decentralization, marketization and conservation, and secondly, the case-specific development in the process of planning, negotiation and construction at the locality. I will conclude this chapter with an example in which the local government has intentionally and skillfully propagated the success of urban planning. Through propagation, successful regional development under effective national guidance and local planning became a crucial justification for the legitimacy of the party leadership.[129]

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[127] See "Chengdu zhongyang shishang huoli qu 成都中央時尚活力区" in *Chengdu shi chanye fazhan baipishu* 成都市产业发展白皮书 (2019), published by Chengdu Municipal Development and Reform Commission, 2019.09.26 via http://cddrc.chengdu.gov.cn/cdfgw/ztlm028004/2019-09/26/content_b75ce4dca1f749fc9f419eacead5f492.shtml, accessed on January 13, 2022.

[128] The document was published by Chengdu Municipal Development and Reform Commission in January 2016, see the document via http://cddrc.chengdu.gov.cn/cdfgw/c114905/2017-07/14/content_3ef0b7291aa3441babe416fa272d51db.shtml, accessed on January 13, 2022.

[129] It should be acknowledged that such a claim on the success of urban regeneration often

2.4 Propagating the Success: Chengdu Planning Exhibition Hall

The Chengdu Planning Exhibition Hall (*Chengdu shi guihua guan* 成都市规划馆) was officially opened in July 2012 in a three-story building with a total area of approximately 6800 square meters. As an important window for Chengdu to showcase its urban planning objectives and strategies, the interior design of the Hall embodied the positioning of Chengdu as a city of openness and global-ness. The Hall went through renovations in April 2018 to update its exhibition contents, which now combined the use of traditional exhibition boards and new technology such as digital and interactive multimedia to deliver different viewing experiences.[130] The first floor is a lobby with a few receptionist desks and a space to demonstrate Xi Jinping's directive in "building cities that fully represents the new development concepts (*jianshe quanmian tixian xin fazhan linian de chengshi* 建设全面体现新发展理念的城市)", and four strategic positioning of the city as "a national central city (*guojia zhongxin chengshi* 国家中心城市)", "a world famous cultural city (*shijie wenhua mingcheng* 世界文化名城)", "a beautiful and livable garden city (*meili yiju gongyuan chengshi* 美丽宜居公园城市)", and "an international hub city (*guoji menhu shuniu chengshi* 国际门户枢纽城市)" (Figure 5).

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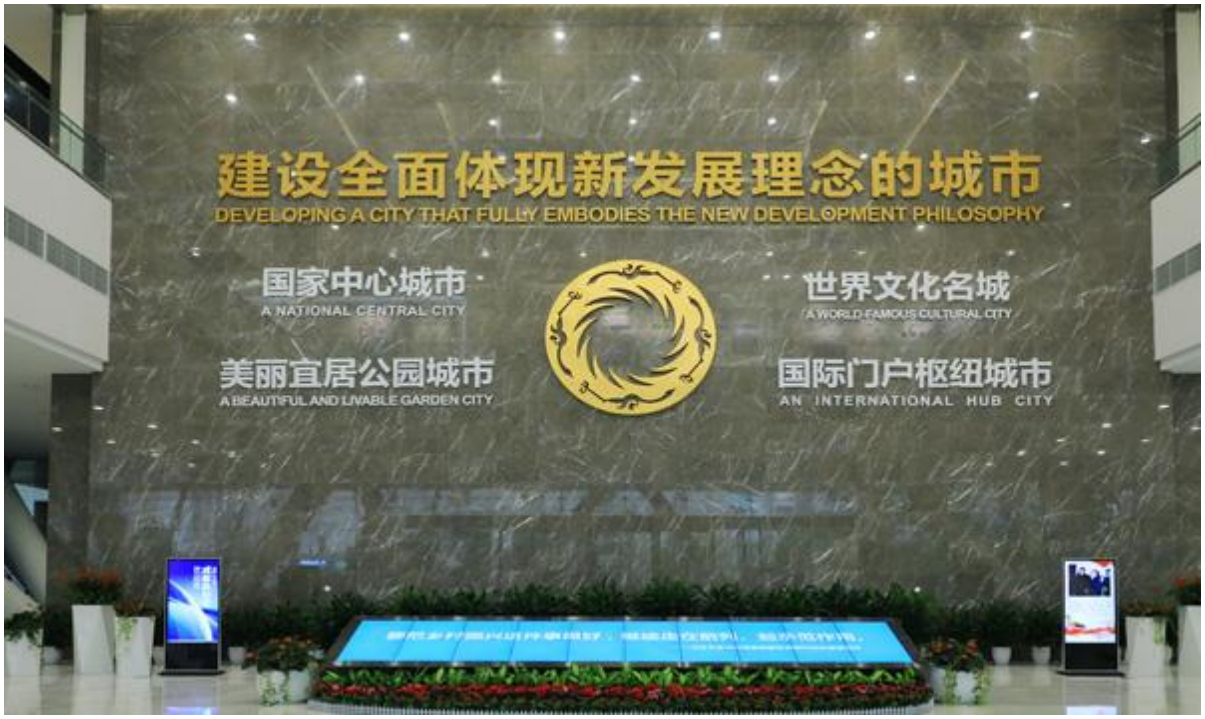
skillfully avoid talks on broader social problems such as environmental issues, tensions in residential relocation, and widening income gap among citizens. See Shenjing He and Fulong Wu, "China's Emerging Neoliberal Urbanism," 282-304.

[130] Descriptions of the Exhibition Hall can be found via http://www.cdghg.com.cn/cdsghg/c122116/2018-10/25/content_3921ec35522e4ca7931c046074d4a760.shtml, accessed on January 13, 2022.



(Figure 5: Chengdu Planning Exhibition Hall first floor)[131]

The second floor of the Hall includes three main sections: Exhibition of City History (*chengshi lishi zhanqu* 城市历史展区), Exhibition of the History of Planning (*liban zonggui bianxiu yange zhanqu* 历版总规编修沿革展区), and Exhibition of Strategic Positioning and Objectives (*zhanlue dingwei he zhanlue mubiao zhanqu* 战略定位和战略目标展区).[132] There is also a large subsection on the Protection of Famous Cities (*mingcheng baohu* 名城保护) on this floor, where it introduces the legislation and planning on the preservation of cultural heritage in the Greater Chengdu Area (Figure 6&7). The Daci Temple district is one of the eight Historic-Cultural Districts that the city has listed to preserve and promote

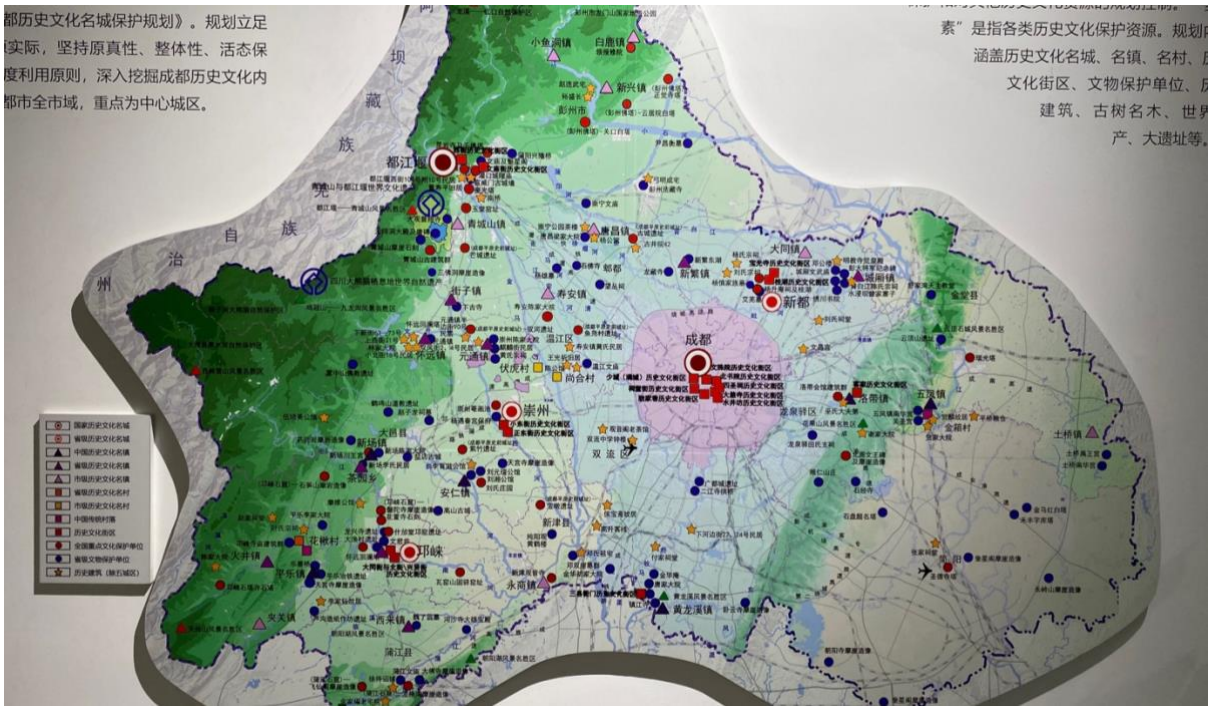
[131] The image is taken from the website of Chengdu Planning Exhibition Hall, see via http://www.cdghg.com.cn/cdsghg/c121959/zggk.shtml, accessed on January 13, 2022.
[132] For a detailed description of these exhibition sections, please see via http://www.cdghg.com.cn/cdsghg/c122118/2018-10/25/content_35d26f10cea843738c34bf9fa6d2d52f.shtml, accessed on January 13, 2022.

following the *Guidelines on the Preservation of Historic Architectures and Historic-Cultural Districts* (*Chengdu shi lishi jianzhu he lishi wenhua jiequ baohu tiaoli* 成都市历史建筑和历史文化街区保护条例), which is a localized version of Decree No. 524 implemented in July 2008 (Figure 8&9).[133]

(Figure 6: Subsection on the Protection of Famous Cities)[134]

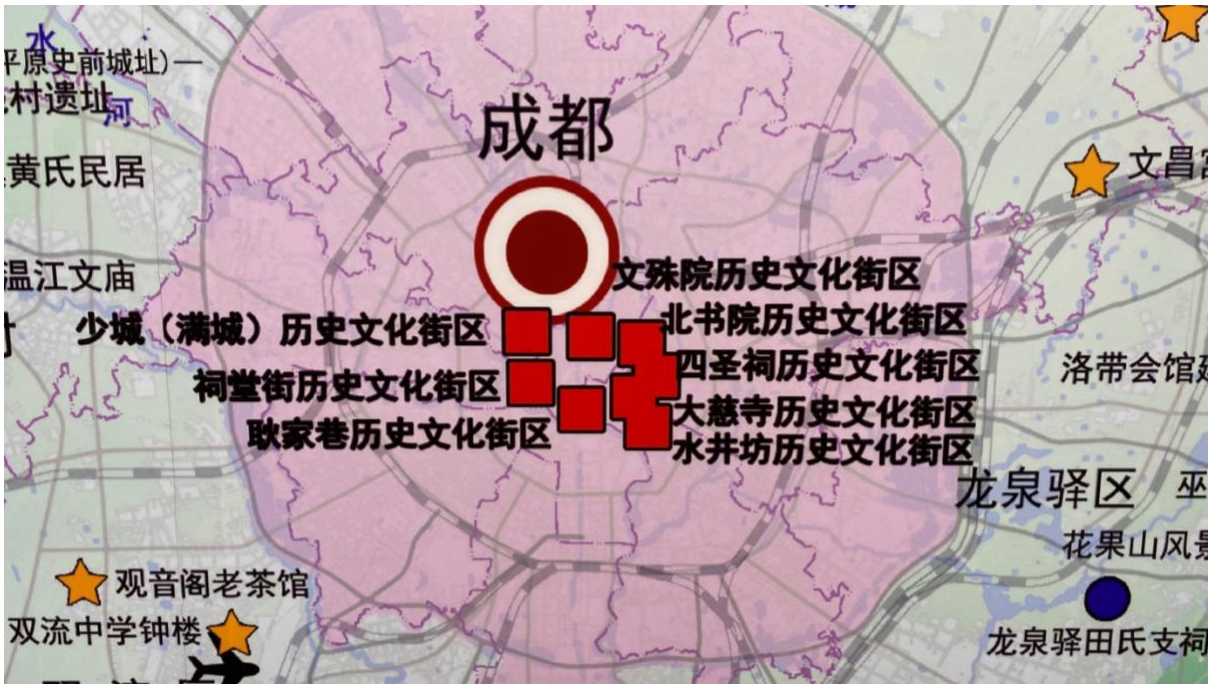
[133] The original *Regulations on the Preservation of Chengdu Historic Architectures* 成都市历史建筑保护办法 was abandoned after the introduction of *Guidelines on the Preservation of Historic Architectures and Historic-Cultural Districts* 成都市历史建筑和历史文化街区保护条例, see the *Guidelines* via http://gk.chengdu.gov.cn/govInfoPub/detail.action?id=91703&tn=6, accessed on January 13, 2022; Decree No. 524 is the *Historic-Cultural Famous Cities Famous Counties Famous Villages Protection Regulation* 历史文化名城名镇名村保护条例, which can be found via http://www.gov.cn/flfg/2008-04/29/content_957342.htm, accessed on January 13, 2022. Figures 5,6 and 7 are photos taken by the author.

[134] The image is taken from the website of Chengdu Planning Exhibition Hall, see via http://www.cdghg.com.cn/cdsghg/c121963/2018-10/25/content_3631267486a347d6aa2353868d3e4cf8.shtml, accessed on January 13, 2022. The model at the bottom left of the image is the Daci Temple.



(Figure 7: Overall planning on the Protection of Famous Cities)

(Figure 8: Model of the Daci Temple at Exhibition Hall)



(Figure 9: Chengdu Historic-Cultural Districts)

The third floor of the Hall includes five sections: Exhibition of Master Plan (*zonggui moxing zhanqu* 总规模型展区), Exhibition of Urban Design (*chengshi sheji zhanqu* 城市设计展区), Exhibition of Differentiated Regional Development Strategy (*chayihua quyu fazhan celue zhanqu* 差异化区域发展策略展区), Exhibition of Specialized Planning (*zhuanxiang guihua zhanqu* 专项规划展区), and Exhibition of Rural Revitalization Strategy (*xiangcun zhenxing zhanlue zhanqu* 乡村振兴战略展区).[135] The master plan for the development of the Greater Chengdu Area is magnificently laid out in a large exhibition room where dozens of seats are provided for visitors to sit down to view multimedia presentations from across the room (Figure 10). Documentaries are played in the room to introduce the history of

[135] For a detailed description of these exhibition sections, please see via http://www.cdghg.com.cn/cdsghg/c122119/2018-10/25/content_14e1781ae82443f6b19b528e8a664024.shtml, accessed on January 13, 2022.

Chengdu's urban development as well as its planning objectives for the future. With the stirring music and excited narration, one can hardly not be aroused to appreciate how rapidly the city has developed and to taste the excitement in the ambition of local planning.

(Figure 10: Exhibition of master plan at Exhibition Hall)

The underlying political implication in the exhibition of regional master plan at the Hall is indeed more subtle than expected. Political propaganda is often embedded in an educational narrative. At first, it did not occur to me that there was a strong political intention behind this presentation until I asked myself the question "Who is the intended audience? Who are the visitors?" Admission to the Hall is free. One only needs to provide an identification document prior to their entry. However, the Hall is located around 10 kilometers away from the city centre, and the surrounding areas include mostly office

buildings and residences with few commercial districts that can attract flows of people. As a result, it is unlikely that visitors at the Hall are random tourists because, on the one hand, the Hall is not a tourist attraction and it is not known to many people, on the other hand, the Hall is inconveniently located to attract any local residents even if they are aware of its existence. According to the interpreters at the Hall, visitors often consist of groups from state-owned enterprises or residential neighborhoods organized by the company leadership or the neighborhood offices (*jiedao ban* 街道办). They usually arrive on coach buses. As a result, grassroot party members play an active role in facilitating the local government's propaganda on the planning. This serves as an example for Weatherley's arguments discussed in previous chapter in which grassroot leadership in the political system continuously reinforce the legitimacy of the party through activities in the everyday life, which as much as it seems subtle at times indeed exerts tremendous influences on the justification of "stability" as a form of legitimacy.[136]

In the first two chapters, I rely on scholarly works, policy evaluations, and media reports to investigate both the structural forces and the idiosyncratic conditions that led to the redevelopment of the Daci TCA. In the following chapters, I will turn to the description and analyses of everyday life at the Daci TCA, which are drawn primarily from my observations and first-hand experiences during my fieldworks.

[136] Weatherley, *Politics in China Since 1949*, 149-150.

Part Two: Logic Behind the Everyday Life in Daci Temple-Commerce Agglomeration

The previous chapters provide a historical overview for the political and economic policies introduced after the "reform and opening up" and offer a detailed case study on the process of local redevelopment surrounding the Daci Temple in Chengdu. I argue that policymaking at the macro level and case-specific conditions at the micro level are both significant factors in shaping the logic behind the construction of the Daci TCA. This part turns to the post-construction period of the Daci TCA and aims to investigate the everyday life in the redeveloped urban space. As I have shown, the emergence of similar urban regeneration projects in post-reform China has amalgamated "symbolic elements of past traditions with contemporary values generated in the commodity economy", in which social formations with complex representational positions were produced.[137] The following two chapters, using the example of the Daci TCA, aim to address the dynamics in the formations of social spaces and cultures, and to shed light on the complexity of how various individuals, groups, and institutions position themselves in their everyday encounters.

Chapter Three: Spaces and Cultures

Space, according to Henri Lefebvre, is abstracted from human meanings of place.[138] As

[137] Carolyn Cartier, "Regional Formations and Transnational Urbanism in South China," in *Locating China: Space, Place, and Popular Culture*, ed. Jing Wang (Routledge, 2005), 52.
[138] Henri Lefebvre. *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).

such, our goal in studying space formation is essentially to assess the production of located meaning, the human importance of place and the ways in which space creates cultural forms and political economic power.[139]

This thesis adopts an alternate epistemology in studying space formation which is based on the microgeographic notion of the "spot".[140] By "spots", I am referring to microscopic and dispersedly located architectures that despite possessing their distinct meanings and values are indeed parts and parcels of a place-making process. This chapter identifies and analyzes three geographic "spots" within the Daci TCA: the Daci Temple International Youth Community (*daci si guoji qingnian shequ* 大慈寺国际青年社区), the Daci Temple Neighborhood Center (*daci si shequ* 大慈寺社区), and the Temple Plaza (*man guangchang* 漫广场).

These three spots are not necessarily distinct "places", as Gieryn would define them.[141] Unlike a "place" that often contains closed-end meanings and values, microgeographic units like the "spot" provide ways to better demonstrate how people's movements in transcending

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[139] Cartier, "Regional Formations and Transnational Urbanism in South China," 54-55.
[140] The "spot" logic is brought up by Tim Sedo and Iain Borden in their studies of skateboarding. See Tim Sedo, "Dead-Stock Boards, Blown-Out Spots, and the Olympic Games: Global Twists and Local Turns in the Formation of China's Skateboarding Community," in *Cultural Autonomy: Frictions and Connections*, ed. William D. Coleman, Petra Rethmann and Imre Szeman (UBC Press, 2010): 257-282; Iain Borden, "A Performative Critique of the City: The Urban Practice of Skateboarding, 1958-98," in *The City Cultures Reader*, ed. Malcom Miles, Tim Hall, and Iain Borden (Routledge, 2003): 291-297.
[141] Thomas F. Gieryn, "A Space for Place in Sociology," in *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 464-465.

the physical environments invigorate a process in which meanings and values are carried, transmitted, and mixed up. Such open-ended exchanges among microgeographic units contribute to a dynamic process of place-making due to which the Daci TCA is successful in attracting tourists.

In this case study, the built environments of these three spots are epitomes for a form of transnational urbanism in Chinese cities where the state and transnational elites are engaged in implementing new internationalized cultural forms, often with Chinese characteristics.[142] I will show how social spaces at these spots celebrate the production, dissemination, consumption, and discussion of various forms of popular culture, and how they tie to diverse local, regional, national, and international spheres. I argue that exchanges across these social spaces through people's movements in transcending microgeographic spots are central to our understanding of urban life in Chinese cities.

[142] Cartier, "Regional Formations and Transnational Urbanism in South China," 59.

3.1 Daci Temple International Youth Community (IYC)

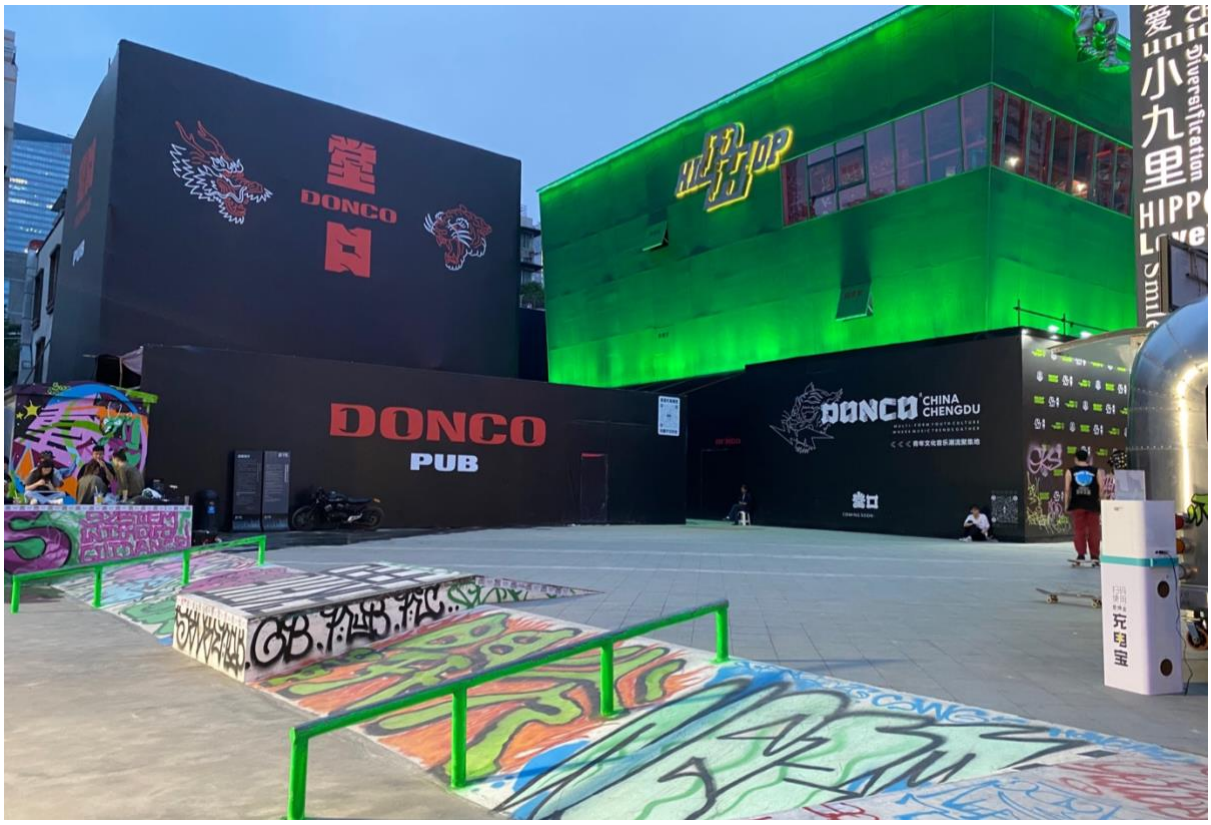
(Figure 11: IYC during the day)

(Figure 12: IYC during the night - enthusiastic onlookers at the skate park)

(Figure 13: IYC during the night – crowds gathering at IYC)

It was a Friday afternoon in mid-May Chengdu. After I finished my volunteer work at the temple, I left from the back gate and soon joined the crowds that were gathering around Taikoo Li as night closed in. Roughly a hundred meters away form the back gate of the temple, young people started to flood into the Daci Temple International Youth Community, an open space that neighbored the temple at the back of Taikoo Li (Figure 11&12). Surrounded by skaters, street performers, and tourists, the International Youth Community soon became lit up by neon lights and loud music (Figure 13&14). One might be amazed by how vibrantly the skateboarding community has grown, given the fact that it is restrained within a small space between ancient temple structures and shopping districts. Nonetheless, it is also the very condensity and vitality of the space that has made the study of

microgeography of cities particularly interesting. The relationship between the practice of skateboarding and the politics of urban space, captured by "a Lefebvrian sensitivity", suggests how skateboarding "becomes a distinct urban strategy that gives life to the progressive social politics of communal empowerment."[143]



(Figure 14: Skate park at IYC)

In addition to the agency of skaters who have proactively empowered the presence of their community, city planning also inadvertently expanded the living space of skaters. Similar to many American cities, local government planning in post-reform China has also attempted to rationalize the urban space to serve capital flows and formations, a process in

[143] Tim Sedo, "Dead-Stock Boards, Blown-Out Spots, and the Olympic Games," 260-261, 272.

which the efficient city has created spaces and structures that are necessary and perfect for modern city street skating. Indeed, the cities that have seen the most dramatic and intense urban restructuring in the past twenty years tend to harbour China's largest and most vibrant skateboard populations.[144] As a result, it is of no surprise that Chengdu, in the renewal of its CBD in the early 2000s, created the International Youth Community within the Daci TCA.

3.2 Daci Temple Neighborhood Center

Corresponding to the Daci TCA's strategy in presenting a deliberate contradiction of traditional vs. modern, the Daci Temple Neighborhood Center is situated right next to the International Youth Community (Figure 15).

(Figure 15: Daci Temple Neighborhood Center)

[144] Sedo, 271-272.

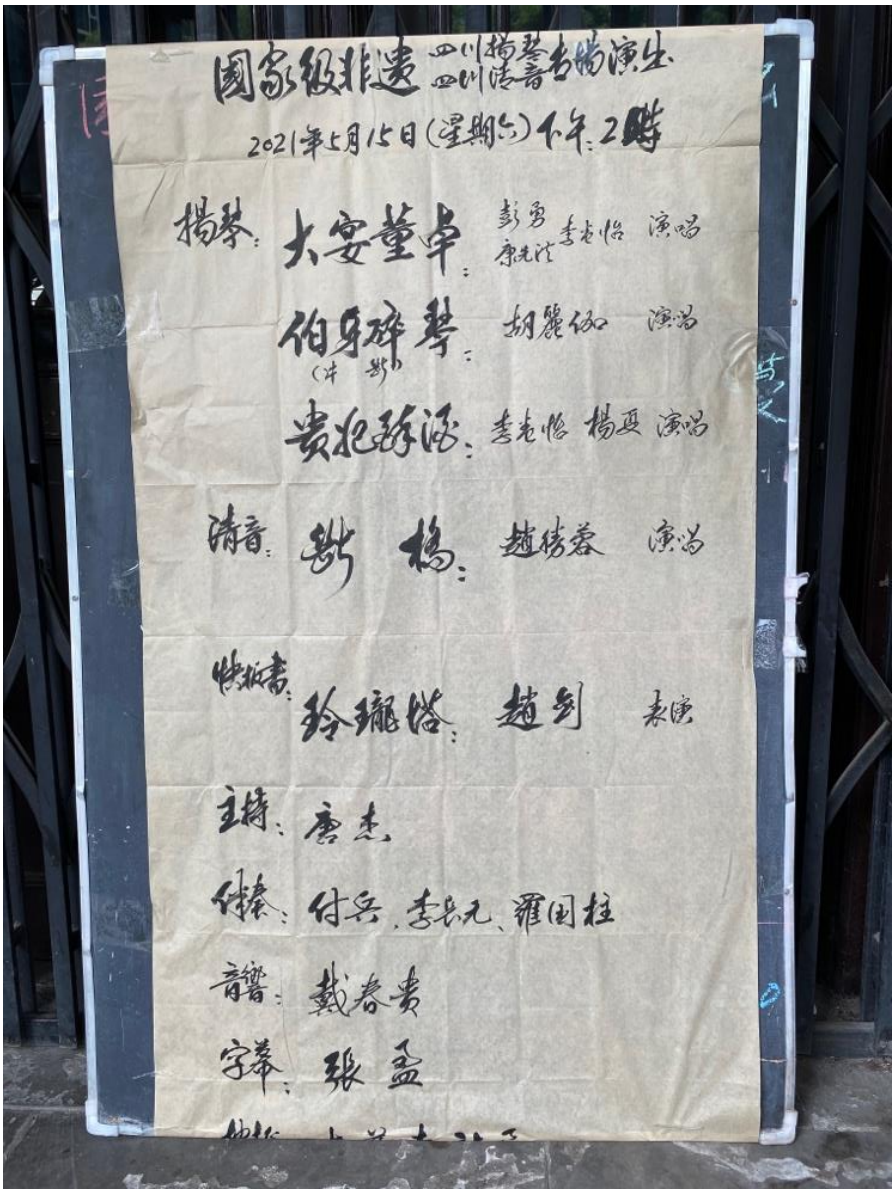
What functions does the Daci Temple Neighborhood Center serve exactly? Judging from the plaques, signs, and posters in front of the building, the Center houses the administrative office of the Daci Temple Neighborhood (*jiedao ban* 街道办), communal facilities such as the cultural lounge (*wenhua xiuxian zhongxin* 文化休闲中心) and a tea room (*cha guan* 茶馆), the local office of Sichuan Institute of Art (*Sichuan sheng yishu yanjiuyuan chuancheng jidi* 四川省艺术研究院传承基地), the local office of the Sichuan Institute of Folk Music (*Sichuan sheng quyi yanjiuyuan chuancheng jidi* 四川省曲艺研究院传承基地), the local office for the Sichuan Intangible Cultural Heritage Preservation (S*ichuan sheng feiwuzhi wenhua yichan baohu chuancheng jidi* 四川省非物质文化遗产保护传承基地), as well as the Folk Music Hall of the Chengdu Jinjiang District Museum of Culture (*Chengdu shi Jinjiang qu wenhua guan quyi guan* 成都市锦江区文化馆曲艺馆). It is surprising how multifunctional the place is given that it is a small building with only a few rooms. While it is evident that political and cultural propaganda lies at the core of the administration of the Center, it is equally recognizable that the Center provides a lived space where community members seek help, make connections, socialize, and routinize their everyday activities.

On one afternoon, I passed by the Center and happened to see the musical performance of Yangqin 扬琴 and Qingyin 清音, which was designated as a part of the larger project called “Culture entering the ten-thousand households, intangible heritage being in the

communities (*wenhua jin wanjia, feiyi zai shequ* 文化进万家，非遗在社区)".[145] The project was skillfully integrated into the promotion of locally held international event Universiade under the slogan "Love Chengdu, welcome the Universiade (*ai Chengdu, ying dayun* 爱成都，迎大运)", as well as the propagation of the national ideology "Our Chinese dream (*women de Zhongguo meng* 我们的中国梦)" as part of centennial celebration of the founding of the CCP. While there seems to be little relevance among these distinct claims, the fact that they are put together in one poster as the background of a traditional musical performance testifies to the usefulness and efficiency of cultural policy permeated into the realms of local, regional, national, and international politics (Figure 16&17).

(Figure 16: Musical performance at the Center)

[145] Yangqin is a traditional Chinese string instrument and Qingyin is a form of Sichuan opera.



(Figure 17: List of performances on May 15, 2021)

Being the youngest person in the audience, I was not surprised by the predominance of elderly people because, out of my personal experiences, young people in China were rarely prompted to participate in community activities organized by neighborhood offices. Nevertheless, I could not help but pondered the question of how, in this modest area of land, social spaces were fragmented into geographically proximate spots, in which the participants produce their own understandings of time, space, and communal life. It is convenient to

implement a clear-cut barrier between the Center and the International Youth Community and make claims on how decidedly they differ from each other. However, it is perhaps more rewarding to ask how the proximity of these spots can potentially create exchanges between social spaces. As I will argue later in this chapter, people's movements in transcending these microscopic spots offer ways to better understand their everyday life in an urban context in China.

3.3 Temple Plaza

Moving away from the spaces of youth culture and traditional culture, I now turn to those born out of and sustained by a transnational market-oriented logic adopted by the Taikoo Li. Much of existing scholarship on Taikoo Li pays particular attention to the geographical combination and isolation of spaces, as well as the architectural assimilation and differentiation between historic buildings and shopping areas.[146] In such analyses, Taikoo Li is said to provide a unique mix of shopping, dining, drinking, entertainment, live performance, workplace, and hotel accommodation where strategic conservation and adaptive use of preserved buildings and ancient lanes associated with the Daci Temple are interwoven

[146] See Xuan Chen, "Shi yu si – Chengdu Yuanyang Taikoo Li jianzhu sheji mantan 市与寺-成都远洋太古里建筑设计漫谈," in *Jiangxi Jiancai* 15 (2017), 63-69; see Lin Hao, "Future Tradition: the Urban and Architectural Design of Sino-Ocean Taikoo Li, Chengdu," in *Architectural Journal* 5 (2016), 43-47; see Chunhua Wu, "Sino-Ocean Taikoo Li Chengdu as an Urban Centre development: Interview with Dr. Hao Lin," in *Architecture Technique* 11 (2014), 40-47.

into the landscape of the commercial complex.[147] It is interesting to see that the uniqueness of Taikoo Li not only lies in the ingenious amalgamation of the traditional and the modern, but also manifested through a set of deliberate contradictions such as "fast versus slow", "chaotic versus tranquil" and "mundane versus spiritual". These contrasts, often highlighted by developers for marketing purposes, are more than designed, directed and imposed, in practice they are also interpreted, narrated, understood, felt and imagined by visitors. To Hao Lin, the main designer of Taikoo Li, the preservation of cultural heritage needs to transcend the physicality of historic buildings. As a result, the emphasis on strategic conservation is to enrich people's experiences on cultural relics, deepen their understandings of historic environment, and promote the participants' ability to better acknowledge and appreciate the local culture and society.[148] In this sense, the material forms are only secondary to the study of Taikoo Li precisely because it is the gathering of people who actively participate in the interactive and shared space that enlivens the physical environment, forming the "public life" that enlightens sociological interpretations.[149] While the entirety of Taikoo Li embodies Hao Lin's humanistic visions in transforming historic sites and regenerating urban spaces, the center stage that consistently promotes what is conveniently called the "Taikoo Li culture" is

[147] See "Sino-Ocean Taikoo Li Chengdu" published by the Oval partnership and Elena Galli Giallini Ltd on Archello via https://archello.com/project/sino-ocean-taikoo-li-chengdu#stories, accessed on July 22, 2021.
[148] Hao, "Future Tradition: the Urban and Architectural Design of Sino-Ocean Taikoo Li, Chengdu," 45.
[149] Hao, 47.

set up at the Temple Plaza through predictable forms of popular culture such as music, television, print media, film, fashion, and dance.

To mark the sixth anniversary for the opening of Taikoo Li, a large-scale outdoor new media exhibition "My Six Domains (*wo you liu ge longmenzhen* 我有 6 个龙门阵)" was held at the Temple Plaza in April 2021. Inspired by the unique and diverse values shaped jointly by visitors and the built environment of Taikoo Li, the immersive exhibition "People/ Grid/ Soul" reflected the artists' understandings of the interactions taking place among individuals, groups and places through a series of techniques in visual arts. The themes include "Perceive Others & Be Influenced (*kan taren zhanshi, bei taren yingxiang* 看他人展示，被他人影响)", "Express Yourself & Show Uniqueness (*bu suibo zhuliu de ziwo biaoda* 不随波逐流的自我表达)", "Self-Revealing & Be an Inspiration (*zhanxian ziwo, yingxiang taren* 展現自我，影响他人)", "Explore Novelty & Discover Yourself (*tansuo xinqi, faxian ziwo* 探索新奇，发现自我)", "Appreciate Life Optimistically & Freely (*yi leguan ziyou de taidu xiangshou rensheng* 以乐观自由的态度享受人生)", and "Make Friends & Fall in Love (*shua pengyou* 耍朋友)" (Figure 18&19&20).[150]

[150] The English translation of these themes is provided by the Taikoo Li management, see Figure 20.

(Figure 18: Exhibition at the Temple Plaza)

(Figure 19: Introduction of the exhibition)

(Figure 20: Description of six themes)

All themes emphasize self-assurance and self-expression, which, to these visual artists and ultimately to the management of Taikoo Li, are qualities that define these young consumers. It is because of their self-assurance that differences are created, internalized, and embodied in their increasing demand for goods and services, which leads to the expansion of existing markets as well as the emergence of new markets. Similarly, it is through self-expression that their purchasing powers are reified, turned into actions of buying and selling that continuously enable the mechanism of a profit-driven market economy.

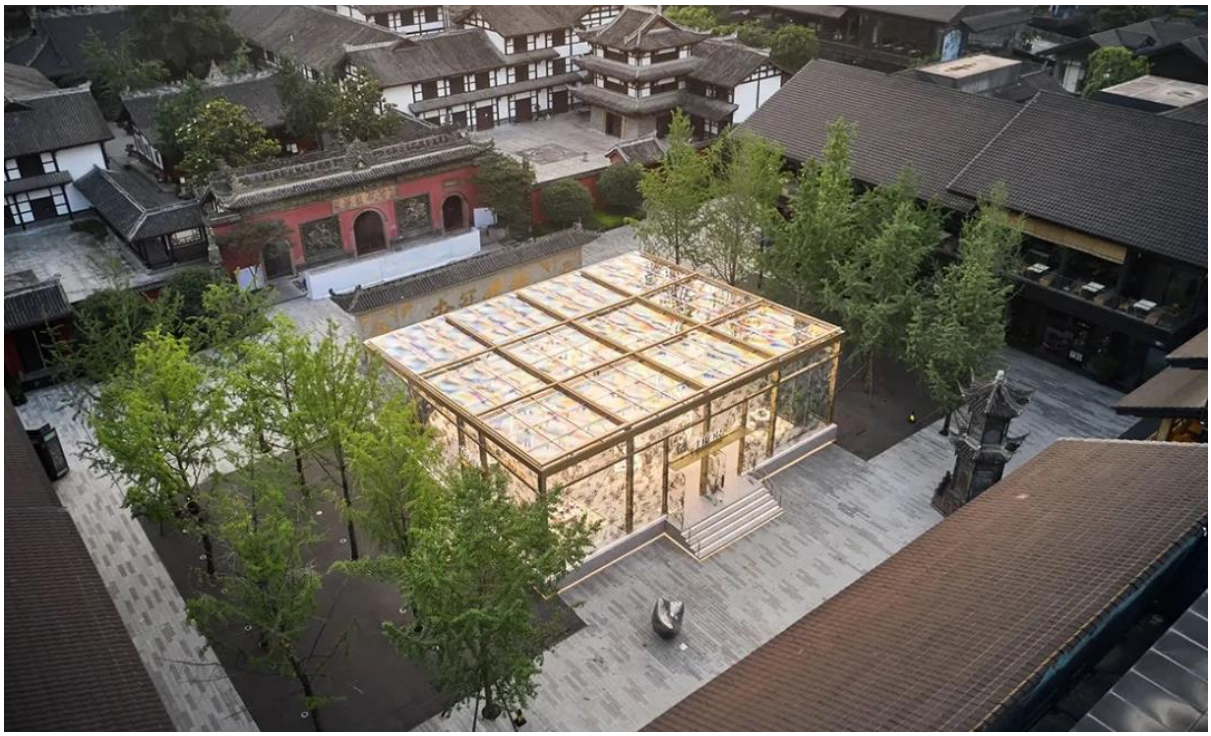
"My Six Domains" was by no means the only example that implied the market-oriented logic in the cultural production of Taikoo Li. Indeed, the Temple Plaza has hosted a number of events under various themes to promote values and attitudes of an urban identity while

collaborating with international luxury brands by allowing their active and strategic presence on the cultural stage of Taikoo Li.[151] The most common way for brands to participate is to build temporary showrooms at the Temple Plaza (Figure 21&22).

While the exterior design of these showrooms is often a product collectively manufactured by brand identities, seasonal product lines, as well as artistic expressions of transnational elites, it is evident that the collective effort in design makes no attempt to integrate the showrooms into surrounding temple structures. On the contrary, these showrooms are overtly claiming territories of their own, which then exemplifies the unique "Taikoo Li culture" that takes pride in the deliberate contradictions of "fast versus slow", "chaotic versus tranquil" and "mundane versus spiritual". If the showroom represents the so-called "realm of the mundane" and the temple structures represent the "realm of the spiritual", the question is how this contrast can be understood in spatial terms? Indeed, the fact that they are spatially overlapped with each other renders their contrast a purely symbolic representation. For anyone who exits the temple from its front gate, they are almost inevitably forced into a tour, if not within the showroom, then at least around it. In correspondence to the question concerning the analysis of microgeography at the end of the previous section, it is also interesting here to ask how the proximity of these spots that represent distinct symbolic spaces can potentially lead to exchanges. Moreover, in the case of Temple Plaza,

[151] Detailed description of all historical events can be found via http://www.soltklcd.com/zh-CN/ActivityPage/Events, accessed on February 19, 2022.

the more interesting question to ask is how and by whom these exchanges are experienced, narrated, resisted, and embraced. Without further ethnographic work, these questions can only be partially addressed and answered in this thesis. Nonetheless, I have provided insights, using the examples of the Daci Temple International Youth Community, the Daci Temple Neighborhood Center, and the Temple Plaza of Taikoo Li, into how the notion of the spot as an alternate urban epistemology can be adopted in describing the everyday realities of individuals and groups in contemporary Chinese cities.



(Figure 21: Dior's temporary showroom at the Temple Plaza, June 2021)[152]

[152] The image is credited to Dior Chengdu Sino-Ocean Taikoo Li Branch, from https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/DSeaqw-XIgMSn0IpUhz7zg, accessed on February 19, 2022.

(Figure 22: Burberry's temporary showroom at the Temple Plaza, September 2021)[153]

3.4 Transcending the Spots

So far, I have analyzed three "spots" in the Daci TCA that embodied the formations of distinct social spaces and popular cultures. The notion of the "spot" provides a way to better capture the process in which visitors frequently transcend the spatial boundaries of these microscopic and proximate locations as they "stroll through the streets (*guangjie* 逛街)".[154]

The practice of *guangjie*, or "window-shopping" as Rolandsen translates it, suggests how social meanings are abstracted from the spatial transcendence of different urban spots.[155]

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[153] The image is credited to Burberry Chengdu Sino-Ocean Taikoo Li Branch, from https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/JHSO1ecfUG5VDbhs8ne5Rg, accessed on February 19, 2022.
[154] Unn Målfrid H. Rolandsen, *Leisure and Power in Urban China: Everyday Life in a Chinese City* (Routledge, 2011), 149.
[155] Rolandsen, 149.

Window-shopping as a common social occasion among Chinese people, being either individual recreation or a social event, creates the typical Chinese streetscapes of "heated noises (*renao* 热闹)", which consistently shapes how urban space is perceived in China.[156] How exactly did window-shopping become a formative role in contemporary Chinese urban streetscapes? Firstly, the popularization of the discursive construction of leisure culture since 1994 has led to a leisure culture fever in which urbanites in China quickly learned consumerism's paralogic, that is, "the invisible link between free time, consumption, and exhaustion."[157] Moreover, the introduction of the Double Leisure Day and Golden Weeks such as the Labor Day holiday has helped to further "control and construct urban experience by redefining residentship or citizenship as an activity of consumption."[158] Lastly, the increasing emphasis on the development of tertiary sector, as well as globalized markets have made local retail industry a tempting place for capital accumulation, thus attracting investors, tourists, and consumers who ultimately proliferate urban scenes in Chinese cities.

[156] Rolandsen, 150.
[157] Jing Wang, "Culture as Leisure and Culture as Capital," in *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 9, no. 1 (2001), 75.
[158] Wang, 80.

(Figure 23: Window-shoppers at Taikoo Li)

A little stroll through the streets (*guang yixia* 逛一下) has not only become a leisure activity in itself, but also informed the socio-economic realities faced by younger generation Chinese in a market-oriented economy. For many shoppers, the volume or cost involved is inconsequential, given the fact that the core in the practice of *guangjie* is the act of leisurely browsing. Nonetheless, the mentality of these practitioners indicates the importance of consumption, whatever form it might take, in their utility for leisure as a substitute for work. In addition, in the case of Taikoo Li, the fact that the majority of young people cannot afford any purchases in the practice of *guang yixia* demonstrates the mismatch between their strong desire to consume and the inability in their financial circumstances, which has become a widespread phenomenon in major Chinese cities in recent years. A meme that went viral on Dou Yin (Tik Tok) serves as the perfect example that addresses these social realities (Figure

23):[159]

> Nicely dressed as a modern urbanite,
> (*yishen jingzhi zhuozhuang, dushi liren moyang* 一身精致着装，都市丽人模样)
> [people] leisurely stroll the streets around the Taikoo Li,
> (*Taikoo Li wai xianguang* 太古里外闲逛)
> [they] tour back and forth fiercely like a racing tiger,
> (*zoulaizouqu meng ru hu* 走来走去猛如虎)
> it turns out that they have only spent thirty-five yuan.
> (*yigong xiaofei sanshiwu* 一共消费三十五)

As a result, the notion of the "spot" serves as an alternate epistemology in which the production, dissemination, consumption, and discussion of various forms of popular culture can be better grasped in relation to the diverse local, regional, national, and international cultural spheres. What's more important is how it also implicates a process of transcending in which the agency of people, either skaters at the Daci Temple International Youth Community, elderly neighborhood residents at the Daci Temple Neighborhood Center, tourists at the Temple Plaza, or window-shoppers at Taikoo Li, can be properly understood as a crucial means to analyze social realities in urban Chinese cities.

Building on the idea of "transcending the spots", the next chapter will turn to a group of touristic pilgrims at Taikoo Li, whose practices of "transcending the spots" inform their modality of "doing" religion in an urban Buddhist temple, which is based on the convenience of passing-by, or *shunbian* 顺便. The fact that touristic people pass by the temple as they "transcend the spots" and decide to enter the temple to worship the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas

[159] Dou Yin 抖音 is the Chinese counterpart of Tik Tok. The meme can be found at https://v.douyin.com/Nw5ENMH/, accessed on April 16, 2022.

(*shunbian baiyibai* 顺便拜一拜) is strong evidence that does justice to the prolific religious life in contemporary urban China.

Chapter Four: The Tourist and the Toured

There is an ongoing debate concerning the development of religious tourist sites in contemporary China. From the perspective of urban design and planning, as some scholars claim, such a mode of redevelopment is the best way to achieve a win-win situation between the preservation of historic-cultural relics and the extraction of economic benefits.[160] Various attempts are also made to further systematize these redevelopment concepts so that they can be better put into practice. For example, Song, in his analysis for Daci Temple, raises a concept of recreational business district of historic district renewal model, in which he identifies several features of such redevelopments. Firstly, the district contains fragmented or destroyed historic-cultural information, for which developers need to utilize means to revitalize the historic spirit of it. Secondly, on a functional level, the district targets historic and cultural tourism. However, the commercial mode of it can be completely irrelevant to its cultural core. Thirdly, physical sites of the district are designed with greater diversity and versatility so that on the one hand they tolerate a greater variety of business forms, and on the other, attract a wide spectrum of visitors and consumers.[161] While these scholars have pragmatic concerns for the preservation of religious sites under the market-oriented logic of a

[160] Huayuan Deng and Jingxiang Zhang, *Xiaofei wenhua zhuanxiang xia de jindai lishi fengmao qu gengxin gaizao zaijiedu* 消费文化转向下的近代历史风貌区更新改造再解读. Zhongguo chengshi guihua nianhui 中国城市规划年会, 2008.

[161] Jie Song, "A Brief Analysis about the Interaction between RBD of Historic Districts Renewal Model and Urban CBD: A Case Study of the Renewal of Chengdu Daci Temple Historic District," in *Modern Urban Research*, no.1 (2011), 39-43.

communist state, others look at the repercussions of the secularization of religion, as well as how religious individuals, groups, and institutions are affected.

The transformation of Buddhist temples into tourist sites as "a means to invigorate the economy" has been one of many instances where Buddhist symbols are incorporated into the "enlarged and diversified secular culture and social spaces of the reform era."[162] Once tourism becomes "an economic strategy", "a money-making activity", and "a policy of state", not only the physical, or the lived environment is transformed, the series of relations by which cultural identity is constituted for both the tourist and the toured in any given context are also transformed.[163] In the process of transforming Buddhist space, the material accumulation and the social influence of Buddhism are growing while Buddhist signs, representations, and discourses are well diffused in the wider society. However, such a form of Buddhist revival, according to Ji Zhe, is in itself an "alienating process for Buddhism" because Buddhist symbols are susceptible to losing their religious referents and becoming empty signs exposed to manipulations for any secular purpose.[164] In the same light, Liu and Chen, in their study of Daci Temple, criticize the construction of Taikoo Li because on the one hand, it creates social injustice by enclosing an exclusive recreational and cultural space

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[162] Zhe Ji, "Buddhism in the Reform Era: A Secularized Revival?" in *Religion in Contemporary China: Revitalization and Innovation*, ed. Adam Yuet Chau (Routledge, 2011), 32.

[163] Meaghan Morris, "Life as a Tourist Object in Australia," in *International Tourism: Identity and Change*, ed. Marie-Françoise Lanfant, J.B. Allcock, and E.M. Bruner (London: Sage, 1995), 177–191.

[164] Zhe Ji, "Buddhism in the Reform Era: A Secularized Revival?" 46.

for the social elite; on the other hand, it leaves the traditional religious space in a vulnerable position being overshadowed by the space of consumerism and commercialism.[165]

My attempt in this chapter is not to take either position in the debate because the case of Daci Temple indeed complicates both positions. I argue that the Daci Temple simultaneously benefits from and is restricted by the development of Taikoo Li, therefore, the dynamics involved in the development of an urban temple should not be simplified in terms of commercialization and commodification. As such, Brian Nichols' distinction between a temple's weak sense and strong sense of commodification does not do full justice to what visitors and temple community take part in on a daily basis both within and outside the temple space.[166] To align with Weishan Huang's approach in studying temple's agency, this chapter turns to the temple community and illustrates how the agency of the temple in actively and strategically developing itself is reified through, on the one hand, the temple management and everyday administration, and the interactions between temple volunteers and visitors on the other.[167] That being said, my contribution to the debate is a descriptive ethnographic account on a local case study that firstly suggests a mode of "doing" religion commonly witnessed at the Daci Temple, and secondly challenges the constructiveness of

[165] Liu and Chen, "Power, Capital and Space – Production of Urban Consumption Space Based on the Transformation of Historical Street Area: A Case Study of Sino-Ocean Taikoo Li in Chengdu," 75-80.
[166] Brian J. Nichols, "Interrogating Religious Tourism at Buddhist Monasteries in China," 187.
[167] See Weishan Huang, "Urban Restructuring and Temple Agency," 251-270.

terms such as “traditional”, “secularized”, “authentic”, and “commercialized” in describing anything that is lived and experienced in people’s everyday encounters in contemporary China.

4.1 Touristic Pilgrimage

In tourism studies, the “de-differentiation” of the established oppositional categories of tourism and everyday life gives birth to the notion of “post-tourism” that defines tourism as “a widespread, protean practice that occurs in mundane settings, everyday routines and home cities as well as in far-flung places.”[168] The “de-differentiated collection of performative, embodied, and digitally backed practices that structure both navigation through urbanscapes as well as the exploration of them” has blurred the distinction between a local and a traveler in their “touristification of everyday life”.[169] In a similar process of deconstruction, the categorization of tourism and pilgrimage also becomes problematic. Essentially, “a tourism-as-pilgrimage perspective assumes the extraordinary foundations of pilgrimage”, which “neglects the extent to which such journeys may not be a quest for liminality but instead an aspect of everyday life.”[170] For those who travel at a religious site, “they may pray, travel

[168] Tim Edensor, “Tourism and Performance,” in *The Sage Handbook of Tourism Studies*, ed. T. Jamal and M. Robinson (London: Sage, 2009), 545.
[169] Natalie Stors et al., “An Introduction,” in *Tourism and Everyday Life in the Contemporary City*, ed. Thomas Frisch, Christoph Sommer, Luise Stoltenberg, and Natalie Stors (Routledge, 2019), 5-7.
[170] Shepherd, *Faith in Heritage*, 124.

along a predetermined route, visit a set number of shrine-like destinations, and yet also eat well, shop for souvenirs, and, broadly speaking, 'have fun', thereby collapsing any distinctions among secular and religious, serious and playful, contemplation and entertainment."[171] If the pilgrimage process is not limited to religious intentions, it can be used to describe a wide variety of travel actions at any popular "sacred-like" destination, given that what is 'sacred' is profoundly individual and hence resists categorization.[172]

Due to the fluidity in the categorization of local tourists, travelers, and pilgrims, I will describe this particular group of people I observed at the Daci TCA as "touristic pilgrims" by three defining features: firstly, their actions of randomly touring around and within the temple; secondly, their self-identification with "having faith" (*you xinyang* 有信仰); and thirdly, their practices of worshipping the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas (*bai fo* 拜佛 or *bai pusa* 拜菩萨). This group of people characterizes a form of touristic pilgrimage in which they "do" religion on the basis of *shunbian* 顺便; unsurprisingly, their visits constitute the primary scene of religious life at the Daci Temple.

[171] Shepherd, 122.
[172] Shepherd, 123; Ian Reader, "Conclusions," in *Pilgrimage in Popular Culture*, ed. Ian Reader and Tony Walter (Macmillan, 1993), 244.

(Figure 24: Human traffic in front of the Daci Temple)

As one of the landmarks of Chengdu, the Daci TCA attracts both tourist travelers and local fun-seekers while hosting the life routine of many workers, students, and residents who often inevitably pass by the temple on their way to somewhere else (Figure 24). The convenient location of the temple at the center of the CBD in one of the most populous districts in Chengdu profoundly determines how its pilgrimage is constituted and welcomed. However, the convenient location alone does not lead to *shunbian* pilgrimage. What is equally important is the fact that increasingly Chinese identify with having faith (*you xinyang* 有信仰), believe in "fate and fortune", and possess an attitude of reverence (*gongjingxin* 恭敬心) to the supernatural.[173] Even though religion as an exclusive or primary identity marker is quite low among Han Chinese, religious practice, especially Buddhism, is increasingly

[173] Shepherd, *Faith in Heritage*, 142.

important and common.[174] The practices of people in worshipping the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas vary depending on how well they are familiar with Buddhist rituals and how much they are willing to financially support the temple through a variety of merit-making activities at different prices.[175] Most commonly these pilgrims would prostrate in front of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas when they felt like and donated a small amount of money in merit-making boxes (*gongde xiang* 功德箱), which nowadays can be done through scanning a QR code via WeChat and Alipay. Quite often some pilgrims would also stop at the front of the temple as they walked by, put their palms together and prayed without entering the temple (Figure 25). Once they finished their ritualistic moment in reverence of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, they returned to their fast-paced life and soon disappeared into the human traffic at the busiest intersection of Taikoo Li. Daci Temple as a pure land in the bustling city center (*naoshi zhong de jingtu* 闹市中的净土), as some media articles put it, might be more than a fantasized story for the purposes of tourism promotion and place branding. In fact, it is simultaneously a marketing strategy and a lived experience embodied in the peaceful moment of their ritual performances at the temple.

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[174] Shepherd, 142.

[175] Merit-making, or *zuo gongde* 做功德, refers to actions of those who perform virtuous deeds in order to accumulate *gongde*, which are causes and roots for attaining the Buddha's enlightenment, see Digital Dictionary of Buddhism via http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?q=功德, accessed on April 11, 2022. For studies on merit-making activities in contemporary China, see Adam Yuet Chau, *Miraculous Response: Doing Popular Religion in Contemporary China*, Stanford University Press, 2020.

(Figure 25: People praying in front of the temple, with a Hermès showroom at the back)

On several occasions, I asked pilgrims in the temple why they decided to come and enter the temple, in most cases their answer was because they happened to be nearby, they might as well come and worship the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas (*zhenghao zai fujin jiu shunbian jinlai baibai* 正好在附近就顺便进来拜拜). This *shunbian* pilgrimage associated with the Daci Temple was also the reason why temple volunteers had auspicious affinities with the temple (*gen simiao jieyuan* 跟寺庙结缘). When I asked a few long-term volunteers living afar why they would come to volunteer at the Daci Temple despite the long commute, they told me about their unintentional and auspicious experiences of passing by the temple, entering for the first time, making wishes, worshipping the Bodhisattvas, and eventually being rewarded for their merits. The unintentional and *shunbian* pilgrimage in correspondence to the cosmological reasoning of causes and conditions deeply rooted in a Buddhist way of thinking

made full justification for their persistence in volunteering at the temple despite the physical distance.[176] Indeed, what has eventually led to this thesis was also my unintentional and *shunbian* visit to the temple in June 2019 when I travelled to Chengdu and went shopping at Taikoo Li for the first time. Admittedly, I was once one of the touristic pilgrims that I later observed in my fieldwork and am now writing a thesis about.

From the notion of "transcending the spots" to the *shunbian* mode of "doing" religion, space formation, place-making, as well as spot building in contemporary Chinese cities have well demonstrated the potential dynamics implicated through people's own movements as well as their encounters with each other in a highly condensed way. The *shunbian* pilgrimage serves as an example for us to understand the agency of those who "transcend the spots" in their daily motions and encounters around and within the Daci Temple. As a primary scene constituting the religious realities at the Daci Temple, *shunbian* pilgrimage also implies the proliferation of religion that is lived in the realms of everyday life and embodied experience.[177] The following sections turn to analyzing the agency of the temple in its daily

[176] In Buddhist understanding, all things are interconnected in the cosmos, therefore, an unintentional connection will lead to a series of causes and results. For *shixiongs*, they believe their previous encounters at the Daci Temple are auspicious connections they have unintentionally made. As a result, volunteering at the temple is a reasonable response or a result for such a connection. For a detailed analysis of Buddhist concept of "cause and consequence (*yinguo* 因果)" and interconnectedness in a contemporary Chinese context, see Gareth Fisher, *From Comrades to Bodhisattvas: Moral Dimensions of Lay Buddhist Practice in Contemporary China*, University of Hawai'i Press, 2016.

[177] Most scholarship on "lived religion" focuses exclusively on western contexts, nevertheless, they serve as insightful references, see Nancy T. Ammerman, "Studying Everyday Religion: Challenges for the Future," in *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives*, ed. Nancy T. Ammerman (Oxford University Press, 2007): 219-238;

reception of *shunbian* pilgrims. In doing so, I intend to show the wisdom of temple administration in operating with both the opportunities and challenges concomitantly brought forth by the development of Taikoo Li.

4.2 Temple Administration

My analysis of the temple administration is divided into two parts. Firstly, I evaluate the ambitious plan of the temple's abbot in developing the Daci Temple prior to the construction of Taikoo Li. While the later redevelopment was not carried out in a way envisioned by the abbot, it nevertheless implied his initial involvement in the planning of the project. Secondly, I turn to analyze the everyday management of the temple after the construction of Taikoo Li, through which we witness the wisdom of the temple administration in operating within a liminality, making it simultaneously a well-received temple of much solemnity and an "over-commercialized" temple being accused of its unauthenticity.

After the temple reclaimed its religious status in 2004, Master Da'en (Da'en fashi 大恩法师) was appointed the first abbot in charge of the restoration of the temple. At the beginning of the redevelopment project, Da'en was very optimistic because governments and offices of the neighborhood were invested in rebuilding the temple. As the planning continued, he expressed his ambition to restore the glory of the Daci Temple dating back to

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Meredith B. McGuire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life*, Oxford University Press, 2008.

the Tang and Song Dynasties and to expand it to become the largest urban temple in contemporary China. In his vision, the expansion consisted of a pilgrimage area (*chaosheng qu* 朝圣区), a Buddhist commercial area (*fojiao shangye qu* 佛教商业区) including restaurants, tea shops, paraphernalia stores, hotels and shopping malls, and a Buddhist art and culture area (*fojiao wenhua yishu qu* 佛教文化艺术区) including galleries, museums, art exhibition halls, and a Xuanzang cultural park (*Xuanzang wenhua yuan* 玄奘文化园).[178] However, as the project was handed over to developers instead of the temple administration, Da'en realized the profit-driven logic of the governments in redeveloping the district and eventually he even had to fight for the preservation of the existing three courtyards of the temple (*san jin yuanluo* 三进院落), otherwise the temple would have been completely taken over by Taikoo Li developers. Indeed, the fight over property ownership is a long-lasting one. Currently, Taikoo Li still legally owns the East and West Yards (*dongyuan xiyuan* 东苑西苑) of the temple where Dizang (*dizang dian* 地藏殿) and Wenshu Halls (*wenshu dian* 文殊殿) are hosted.

Although the temple's ambition in redevelopment was not met and the fear of further acquisition by governments and commercial agents persisted, Da'en's initial participation in the planning was evident and thus should not be overlooked. Corresponding to Weishan

[178] The detailed plan of Da'en Master in redeveloping the district is included in an article written by himself, see *Dacisi lishi tese yu weilai tujing chutan* via https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/4qb084xYgI0thLTIOW_-Mw, accessed on July 27, 2021.

Huang's study on the Jing'an Temple in Shanghai, we see how the ambitious plan of the temple abbot has well demonstrated his leadership in developing the temple through actively seizing opportunities brought along with the process of urban restructuring, which, despite being abandoned in the end, has informed how the temple was later managed in the everyday administration.[179]

Even though diplomatic and financial constraints were commonly imposed on the management of a religious site in contemporary China, Da'en utilized his resources to the maximum as he rebuilt and operated the temple. I was told by a long-term volunteer that when she first volunteered at the temple four years ago, she heard from the general manager (*jianyuan* 监院) that the temple had borrowed 60 million RMB from the bank for the renovation and substantial portion was still not repaid.[180] It was not surprising that Daci Temple has been under great financial distress given the fact that local governments rarely finance the development of temples, and sunk costs were inevitable for the temple's ambition to grow and sustain. While the maintenance of outdated structures and the construction of new buildings were major financial investments to make, there was also a pressing need to

[179] Weishan Huang, "Urban Restructuring and Temple Agency," 251-270.
[180] *Jianyuan* is sometimes referred to as the "right arm" of the abbot, it is the head position that supervises all affairs within a temple in Chinese monastic system. For a detailed description of *jianyuan*, see https://religion.moi.gov.tw/Knowledge/Content?ci=2&cid=401, accessed on May 26, 2022. The translation of *jianyuan* as the "general manager" is borrowed from Brian J. Nichols' works, in which he considers that Welch's translation of the term as "prior" is ripe for updating. See Brian J. Nichols, "Taking Welch and *The Practice of Chinese Buddhism* into the 21st century," in *Studies in Chinese Religions* 3, no. 3 (2017): 268.

"re-create", if not "invent from scratch", the sense of auspiciousness within the temple space while making it adaptive to tourism purposes. The temple leadership has made much effort to make the temple an extraordinary place (*shusheng* 殊胜). However, the most important part to be included in the sunk cost was the installation of Buddhist statues.

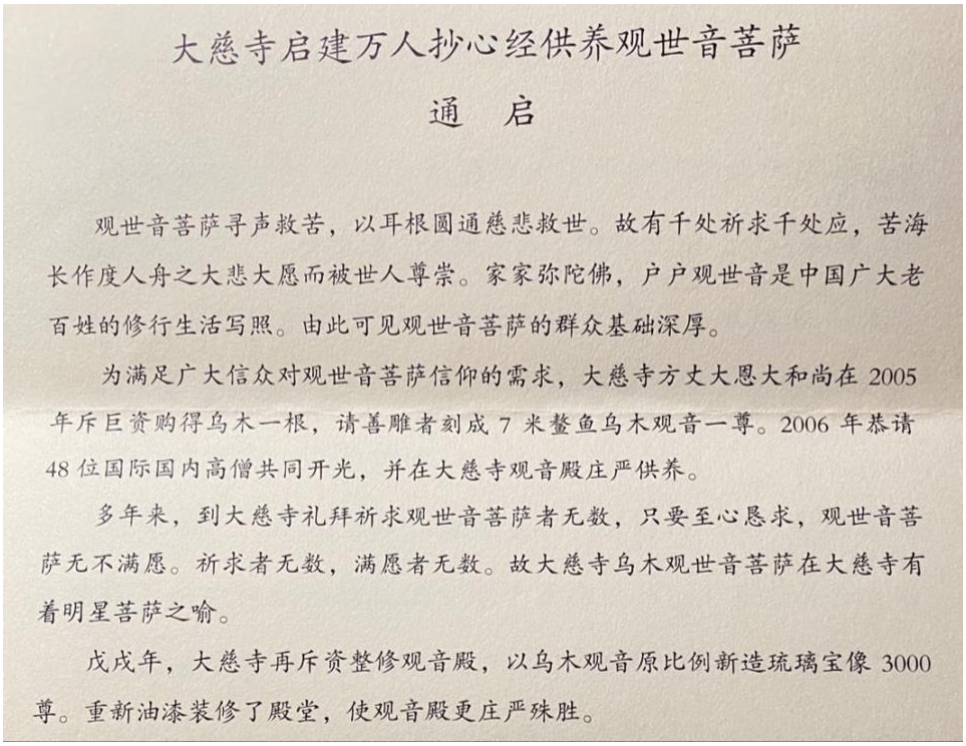
(Figure 26: Wooden statue of Guanyin)

There is a seven-meter tall statue of Guanyin Bodhisattva (*aoyu wumu guanyin xiang* 鳌鱼乌木观音像) displayed at the center of the Guanyin Hall, which was nicely carved out from a twenty-one-meter long ebony, serving as the *menmian* 门面 of the temple depicting

its great solemnity (Figure 26).[181] Another *menmian* is the Medicine Buddha Hall, where the golden statues of the Medicine Buddha (*yaoshi fo* 药师佛), Sun Bodhisattva (*riguang bianzhao pusa* 日光遍照菩萨) and Moon Bodhisattva (*yueguang bianzhao pusa* 月光遍照菩萨) are enshrined (Figure 27). While I was volunteering at the temple, many visitors have asked about the Buddhist statues, especially the "celebrity" Bodhisattva (*mingxing pusa* 明星菩萨) Guanyin statue because of its solemnity.[182] Overtime, it became a routine for volunteers to introduce the statues and tell merit-makers about their efficacy (Figure 28).

(Figure 27: Medicine Buddha Hall)

[181] *Menmian* literally means "gate surface", referring to the façade of a shop, or the first impression of things that people grasp at their first sight.
[182] The Guanyin statue was considered to be the most precious statue at the Daci Temple, therefore, it was sometimes called the "celebrity" Bodhisattva, see Figure 28.



大慈寺启建万人抄心经供养观世音菩萨

通　启

观世音菩萨寻声救苦，以耳根圆通慈悲救世。故有千处祈求千处应，苦海长作度人舟之大悲大愿而被世人尊崇。家家弥陀佛，户户观世音是中国广大老百姓的修行生活写照。由此可见观世音菩萨的群众基础深厚。

为满足广大信众对观世音菩萨信仰的需求，大慈寺方丈大恩大和尚在 2005 年斥巨资购得乌木一根，请善雕者刻成 7 米鳌鱼乌木观音一尊。2006 年恭请 48 位国际国内高僧共同开光，并在大慈寺观音殿庄严供养。

多年来，到大慈寺礼拜祈求观世音菩萨者无数，只要至心恳求，观世音菩萨无不满愿。祈求者无数，满愿者无数。故大慈寺乌木观世音菩萨在大慈寺有着明星菩萨之喻。

戊戌年，大慈寺再斥资整修观音殿，以乌木观音原比例新造琉璃宝像 3000 尊。重新油漆装修了殿堂，使观音殿更庄严殊胜。

(Figure 28: A handout introducing the Guanyin statue)

In addition to renovating the buildings and enshrining the Buddhist statues, the temple leadership also had an explicit intention for tourism development as they allocated their financial resources. In order to attract tourists and accommodate the needs of pilgrims, the temple runs a large and well-decorated tea terrace on the side where visitors can enjoy a variety of food and drinks while watching traditional Sichuan art performances (Figure 29&30&31). Another scenic spot creatively designed by the temple leadership is the Monk Yuanyi (*Yuanyi heshang* 圆一和尚) (Figure 32). The cartoonish figure which resembles a chubby and meditative monk has become a popular icon for tourists to take pictures with and share on the internet, which further epitomizes the temple's presence for being more than a religious site (*zongjiao changsuo* 宗教场所), or a pure land in the bustling city center, but a

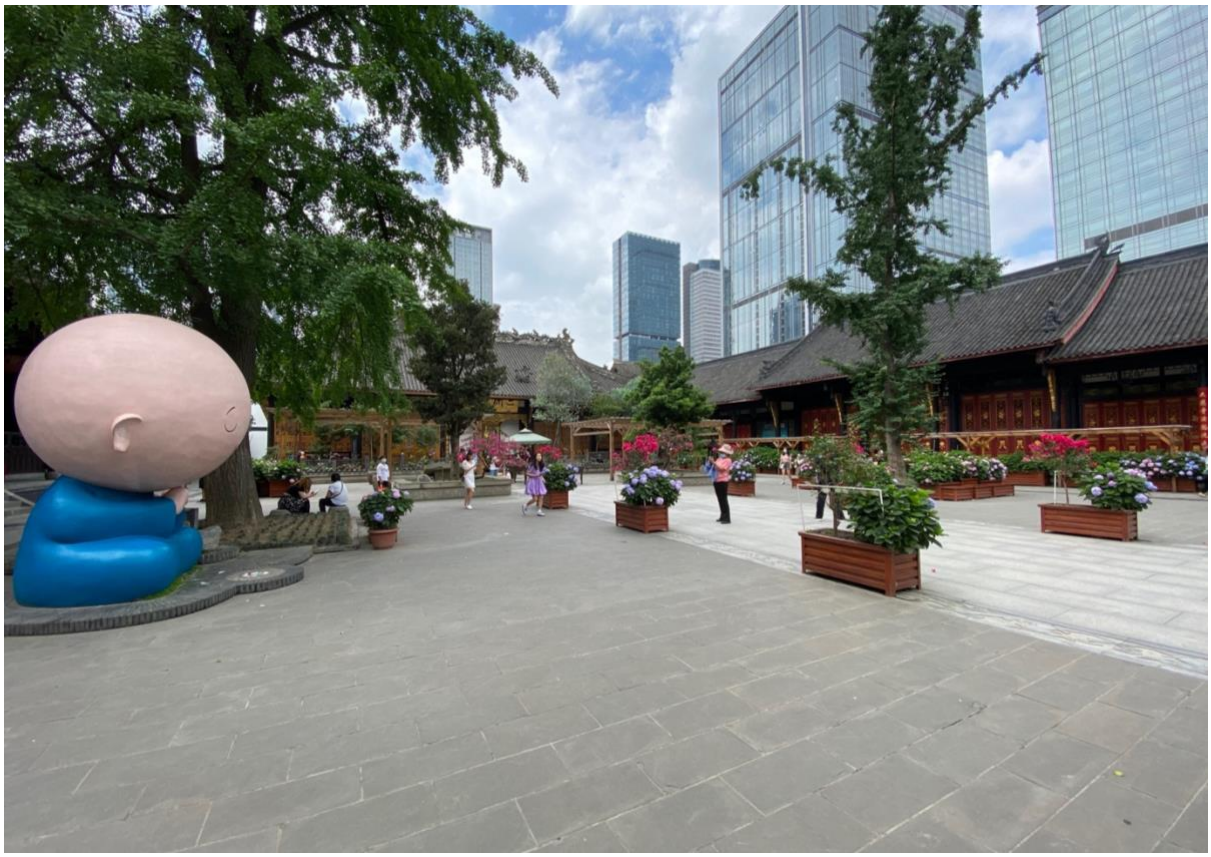
popular tourist site in and by itself (*wanghong daka di* 网红打卡地).[183]

(Figure 29: Tea terrace)

(Figure 30: Decorations inside the tea terrace)

[183] A *wanghong daka di* in the Chinese context is equivalent to an Instagram hot spot.

(Figure 31: List of performance in the tea terrace)



(Figure 32: Monk Yuanyi)

Having analyzed the agenda of the temple leadership in rebuilding and designing the temple, it becomes clear that even though Da'en's initial plan in developing the temple was not achieved, his ambition remained in a compromised territory within which the temple leadership creatively and skillfully operated, seizing opportunities brought along with urban restructuring and tourism. The renovation of architectures, installation of Buddhist statues, and new construction of the tea terrace and scenic spots are only partial aspects of temple administration that come from a long-term perspective. I argue that what is equally important in the study of temple administration is how everyday activities are designed, managed, and performed.

The daily operation of the temple, while being guided by Buddhist monks (*shifu* 师父), is indeed carried out by paid workers (*gongren* 工人) and volunteers (*yigong shixiong* 义工师兄).[184] The group of *shixiongs* at Daci Temple are mostly devoted Buddhists who are committed to volunteer at the temple on a long-term or short-term basis. Being divided into several administrative units, *shixiongs* perform crucial tasks at every corner of the temple to ensure the proper operation from tourist reception to logistic support. The majority of *shixiongs* works at the Buddha halls and paraphernalia shops so they are the ones most

[184] Strictly speaking, volunteers are *yigong* 义工, but they are referred to as *shixiong* 师兄, or literally "Dharma brother/sister". The term is gender neutral, but in most cases, male volunteers are called *dashixiong* 大师兄, or literally "big Dharma brother". When I volunteered at the temple, as the youngest male volunteer, I was often called by middle-aged female volunteers as *xiao dashixiong* 小大师兄, or literally "little big Dharma brother".

exposed to the interactions with touristic pilgrims. As such, the nature of their jobs relies heavily on their ability to promote the goods and services provided by the temple, and to convince the pilgrims to make merits through both monetary and non-monetary contributions.

Most long-term *shixiongs* have taken refuge under the Three Jewels (*guiyi sanbao* 皈依三宝) and they abide by the basic five precepts (*wujie* 五戒).[185] As far as I know, there is only one *shixiong* who has taken the Bodhisattva precepts (*pusa jie* 菩萨戒) within the *shixiong* community at the Daci Temple. These *shixiongs* are not contract workers so they are not obliged to make full commitment to a single temple because many *shixiongs* also volunteer at other temples. However, most long-term *shixiongs* tend to have a fixed commitment to the Daci Temple by working and taking classes there on a regular basis. Moreover, they are also assigned with fixed responsibilities at their designated positions. The group of short-term *shixiongs*, myself included, have much greater flexibility. Their work schedule often depends on the demand of the day and the tasks are often assigned by long-term *shixiongs*.

To accommodate the large number of touristic pilgrims, many services are available at

[185] *Guiyi* 皈依 literally means to "turn to and rely upon", referring to those who take refuge in the Three Jewels of Buddhism, the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. See Digital Dictionary of Buddhism via http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?6b.xml+id(%27b6b78-4f9d%27), accessed on April 11, 2022. *Wujie* 五戒, or five precepts, refers to the minimal set of moral restrictions to be observed by Buddhist householder-practitioners, or *zaijia jushi* 在家居士. They include the precepts of not killing, not stealing, no sexual misconducts, no false speech, and no consumption of alcohol, see Digital Dictionary of Buddhism via http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?q=五戒, accessed on April 11, 2022.

the temple for merit-making. The most special services at the temple include copying Heart Sutra (*chao xinjing* 抄心经) at the Guanyin Hall and lighting incenses (*da xiangzhuan* 打香篆) at the Medicine Buddha Hall. Both copying the Heart Sutra and lighting incenses are complemented with a set of chanting and bodily practices so that the completed ritual brings most blessings to the merit-maker. Most services in the temple are priced at a fixed rate and only some paraphernalia such as car pendants and keychains can be "invited home (*qinghuijia* 请回家)" at a flexible price (*suixi gongde* 随喜功德) depending on how much merit-makers are willing to give (Figure 33).

Services	Prices
Paraphernalia (car pendants, keychains...)	Minimum of 20 *yuan* , *suixi* 隨喜
Guanyin water (*dabei shui* 大悲水)	20 *yuan*
Fragrance-making per person (*da xiangzhuan* 打香篆)	80 *yuan*
Incenses per box	88 *yuan*
Sutra-copying per person	240 *yuan*
Guanyin lapis lazuli statue (small, worshipped at the Guanyin Hall)	2,400 *yuan* per year and 38,000 *yuan* for long-term
Guanyin lapis lazuli statue (small, bought and worshipped at home)	4,800 *yuan*
Guanyin lapis lazuli statue (large, worshipped at the Guanyin Hall)	4,800 *yuan* per year and 88,000 *yuan* for long-term
Guanyin lapis lazuli statue (large, bought and worshipped at home)	7,800 *yuan*

(Figure 33: List of merit-making activities)

All these merit-making services can be accessed through the digital platform on WeChat (*xianshang lifo* 线上礼佛). With a few tabs on the phone, pilgrims can make merits without even going to the temple. On the one hand, prices of these merit-making activities are not always affordable to many visitors, so are prices in the tea terrace. On the other hand, the fact that Daci Temple is tourist-oriented and located in a highly commercialized area further makes it vulnerable to criticism of its commercialization and commodification of Buddhism. Several times when I introduced the digital merit-making platform to visitors, they jokingly

said to me that nowadays when it came to worshipping the Buddha all you needed was to pay money (*xianzai baifo shenme dou buyongzuo geiqian jiuxing le* 现在拜佛什么都不用做给钱就行了). There was even a time a curious visitor approached me to verify if the Daci Temple was a "real" temple and he was surprised by the fact that there was a group of Buddhist monks residing in the temple.

The skepticism and uneasiness are inevitable and there are concomitant challenges that the temple administration faces as they seize opportunities of development in the process of urban restructuring and tourist promotion. Again, my purpose in this thesis is not to take a position either with or against Ji Zhe's arguments. By including this descriptive and ethnographic account, I aim to highlight the complexity in addressing the critics on the commercialization of Buddhism in contemporary China precisely because positionalities matter, and they change the narrative of this argument. The thesis thus does not answer the question "Is the Daci Temple commercialized?" Rather, it complicates the question by asking a series of other questions: Why is the question asked? Who is asking the question and who is asked? How to define a "commercialized Buddhist temple" and who defines the benchmark for that?

In the following section, I will present stories from my encounters with *shixiongs* at the Daci Temple. I argue that these interesting narratives, despite being idiosyncratic, sometimes conflicting, and unable to directly answer the aforementioned questions, can nevertheless

testify to the complicated nature of this debate that I essentially aim to reiterate.

4.3 Encountering *shixiongs* at the Daci Temple

There is no doubt that selective stories from my brief interactions with *shixiongs* at the Daci Temple provide only a partial picture for the evolving religious life at one designated site of observation where different agents participate in. Nonetheless, these stories provide strong evidence that complicates the question of the commercialization of Buddhism in general, and the commercialization of the Daci Temple in particular. To these *shixiongs*, the question is no more than a groundless attack that undermines their everyday activities in their quest for religious meanings, stigmatizes their sincere interactions with pilgrims out of wishes for merit-making, and ultimately erases their agency in reconciling their own identities with the stigmatized portraits.

4.3.1 Ways of "Believing in the Buddha (*xinfo* 信佛)"

The only *shixiong* who had taken the Bodhisattva precepts in the volunteer community at the Daci Temple was a middle-aged woman whom I only met once during my time at the temple. It was a random Tuesday in mid-May, 2021. I was staffed to volunteer at the Medicine Buddha Hall, with the company of this *shixiong*, to sound the big gong (*daqing* 大磬) and give away fruits and candies (*gongguo* 供果) to pilgrims. Like how I would usually

start a conversation with other *shixiongs*, I told her about my academic research and how it related to my volunteer work at the temple. Similar to the reactions I got from other *shixiongs*, she was impressed by my commitment to Buddhist Studies (*foxue yanjiu* 佛学研究), although like anyone else I had talked to in the temple, my commitment to Buddhist Studies was not primarily understood by her as a professional path in an academic setting, but one that was more or less synonymous to her dedication to the Dharma study (*xue fofa* 学佛法). For this reason, she was more willing to exchange her thoughts with me on how to believe in the Buddha and to study the Dharma.

As she sounded the gong when pilgrims came to prostrate in front of the Medicine Buddha, she turned to me and lamented how these people were believing in the Buddha in a wrong way (*xincuo fo* 信错佛). She said, only because she thought I was a competent young man was she willing to share with me that *xinfo* was about intellectual cultivation and listening to the teachings of great Buddhist masters, and not about coming to temples to pray for personal success and well-being. She did not shy away from harshly criticizing the pilgrims' deeds of *xincuo fo*, to the point that I was worried our loud conversation could be overheard by the pilgrims. She continued to make clear to me about her preference for *xinfo* by attending lectures and online workshops, and that in rare occasions only, she would come here because she was asked to help. I listened to her quietly and did not interrupt her, thinking to myself that I would personally take the Middle Way and agree to both ways of *xinfo*. She

asked if I was willing to add her on WeChat so that she could share her lectures with me, I happily agreed and thanked her for her kindness.[186] I was surprised by the abundance of online resources for Dharma learning being circulated on WeChat as she forwarded me the videos and articles that she found particularly insightful. While studying the online circulation of Dharma learning materials of various sources could be an interesting subject in itself, what caught my attention was this *shixiong*'s firm position in favoring one way of *xinfo* over the other.

I took this opinion to the leading *shixiong* later that day as I routinely reported my daily work to her. I asked about her thoughts on the many ways of *xinfo* and what position she would take. While she did not believe that there was a best way or the only correct way of *xinfo*, she was skeptical about learning the Dharma from unauthorized online sources because one can be misguided (*xue za le* 学杂了). She said the most reliable and rewarding way was to study the sutras and follow consistently with one learned master. I then asked her if she thought intellectual cultivation was more important than merit-making, she took a similar position with me and admitted that both were needed for one's good. She then told me about her experiences in which she believed she had received rewards for her merits from volunteering at the temple, and for which she believed her work was rewarding and truly extraordinary.

[186] WeChat, or *weixin* 微信, is the most popular social media app in China.

Which way of *xinfo* is better is perhaps an unsolvable issue, and also beyond the scope of this thesis. What is more relevant here is the fact that these *shixiongs* are actively searching for religious meanings while performing their work at the Daci Temple. I would argue that any sweeping claims or critiques on the commercialization and commodification of the temple overlooks the religious experiences of *shixiongs* in their everyday life.

4.3.2 Merit-making in *Suixi* 隨喜

Being involved in the monetary transactions between pilgrims and the temple, *shixiongs* are sometimes stigmatized by skeptical visitors as sales agents who promote goods and services related to merit-making for a financial reward (*ticheng* 提成). In my volunteer training, the leading *shixiong* constantly reiterated the nuances (*fencun* 分寸) in introducing and promoting merit-making activities to the pilgrims because people might be misled to think that the *shixiongs* would financially benefit from the sales (*na ticheng* 拿提成) if they were pushed too hard for participating in merit-making activities. Such an issue is more pronounced in a tourist-oriented site like the Daci Temple, where *shixiongs* sometimes have to deal with difficult visitors and to skillfully resolve the awkwardness in their encounters. It was interesting to see how every *shixiong* possessed different attitude toward the promotion of merit-making activities, and how everyone tackled the nuanced situation in personalized ways. One *shixiong* that I worked with in the Medicine Buddha Hall was an active and

impressive promoter who was in charge of renting out tribute spots (*zu gongwei gongyang fo* 租贡位供养佛) on the walls of the Hall to pilgrims who wished to worship the Medicine Buddha in a tribute spot with their names written down (Figure 34). While common criticism such as the tribute being overpriced, and the use of lapis lazuli statues being environmental-unfriendly were easily manageable for the *shixiong*, the more difficult task was to find the most suitable spot for merit-makers who had a number of "superstitious attachments" to directions, positions, and numbers. Unsurprisingly, spots on the northern wall in the right side of the Hall were more popular because they are overseen by the Sun Bodhisattva who represented the ascending motion of the Sun (*richu dongsheng* 日出东升). Spots associated with numbers such as 1, 6, 8, and 9 were quick sales because many believed these to be auspicious numbers. When all these spots were sold out, practically the *shixiong*'s job got difficult because she now had to convince merit-makers that other spots were equally auspicious. Depending on how much merit-makers were willing to compromise, the *shixiong* often told easy-going merit-makers to randomly choose a spot because one should not be attached to form, according to teachings in the scriptures. In contrast, she would tell picky merit-makers that number 4 was also good because it suggested the saying "everything would turn out well as you wished (*shishi shunxin* 事事顺心)", or number 7 as it was an auspicious number in Buddhist tales. It was at these moments that I truly admired her wisdom in interacting with pilgrims and one cannot deny that she possessed the necessary qualities of an

excellent sales agent.

(Figure 34: Pilgrims in front of the Medicine Buddha Hall)

While the interaction between touristic pilgrims and *shixiongs* is one of many kinds of human interactions within the temple that require much wisdom, what lies behind their daily wisdom is simultaneously the intention to form auspicious ties with the pilgrims (*jieyuan* 结缘) and to share the merits from merit-makers by saying the word *suixi*. When I spoke to her about the difficulty in interacting with these merit-makers, she seemed to be inured to the situation and treated it as a part of her job. I then continued to ask her how proactively we, as temple volunteers, were supposed to promote these merit-making activities. She replied that the merit-making activities were primarily for the good of the merit-makers and not for her.

Therefore, how much she wanted to make sure a pilgrim know the rewards of merit-making and to help them make merits depended on how much she could relate to the person that she met through an auspicious connection (*shifo shi youyuanren* 是否是有缘人). While there were also merits associated with the act of helping itself, and she could share some of the merits made by the merit-makers by saying *suixi*, but essentially she was not doing her work out of a selfish intention.

The practice of saying *suixi* was common among the *shixiong* community because it was simultaneously an act of appreciation for others and a cosmologically merit-driven concern shared by everyone in the community that formed an identity. When *shixiongs* came to know about my commitment to Buddhism-related research and my devotion to volunteering at the temple, they always put their palms together and said the word *suixi* to me. Interestingly, I was later asked by a *shixiong* to also perform the practice of saying *suixi* because it could generate countless merits for my own good. The invocation of *suixi* thus became a symbolic act that connected myself with the identity of "*shixiong*" that transcended the mere reference of me as a person to be referred at the temple, and further formed a communal bond in the process of identity-making on the basis of a cosmologically merit-driven concern. Needless to say, the auspicious connection, the process of identity-production and the formation of a communality are things that transcend the overly simplistic categorization of "a commercialized Buddhist temple".

4.3.3 Everyday Life through *Fangbian* 方便

How do *shixiongs* reconcile the tension between understanding their roles at the temple and the criticism of "commercialization"? On many occasions I asked *shixiongs* about their understandings of commercialization, and whether they agreed that the Daci Temple was one of the commercialized Buddhist temples. The answers were not homogeneous. Some *shixiongs* I have talked to tended to ignore the skepticism, or joke about it at most, and turn to their everyday life of volunteer work, study of *sutras*, and ritual performances.[187] Others asked about my opinion because they rarely thought about the issue even though they were interested in such a debate. I told them about my observation on the differences between the Daci Temple and other Buddhist temples in Chengdu such as the Wenshu Monastery (*wenshu yuan* 文殊院), Zhaojue Temple (*zhaojue si* 昭觉寺), Aidao Nunnery (*aidao tan*g 爱道堂), and Tiexiang Nunnery (*tiexiang si* 铁像寺). On the one hand, the location of Daci Temple was unique because it occupied a strategic space in Chengdu's most bustling, tourist-centric, and high-end shopping district, thus attracting groups of people that were quite distinctive from the visitors commonly seen at other temples (Figure 35). On the other hand, both the layout and the operation of the temple were tourist-oriented. Decorative flowers, open spaces, scenic spots, and amenities such as the tea terrace and mobile drink vendors all seemed to present the Daci Temple in a different manner in comparison with other temples in Chengdu

[187] They told me not to care about these critics, be myself, and do my own things well. The Chinese is *buguan zhexie, zuohao ziji jiuxing le* 不管这些，做好自己就行了.

(Figure 36).

(Figure 35: Visitors touring around the temple)

(Figure 36: Decorative flowers in front of the Guanyin Hall)

But what exactly do all the differences suggest? Historically, the Daci Temple has been

situated in such a convenient location closely associated with tourists and street markets. The historical Twelve-Month Markets (*shier yueshi* 十二月市) that the municipal government now aims to bring back into the streetscapes around the Daci Temple as a cultural strategy to promote tourism and local economy precisely testify to the "continuity" in how Daci Temple has been integrated into the city life of Chengdu (Figure 37).

(Figure 37: Events at the Twelve-Month Markets)[188]

A short-term *shixiong* approached me to tell me about her thoughts on the debate. She did not think that there were any problems of the Daci Temple being different from other Buddhist temples in Chengdu because the temple is a manifestation of *fangbian*, or *upāya*.[189]

[188] The image is credited to Jinjiang qu rong meiti zhongxin 锦江区融媒体中心, through https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/hkS1nhAvaXTfTThpis0avA, accessed on February 28, 2022.
[189] *Fangbian*, also known as *upāya*, suggests that the Buddha teaches "according to the capacity of the hearer by any suitable method, including that of device or stratagem where there is benefit to the recipient". In a broad sense, to many Chinese Buddhists, *fangbian*

It is under the logic of *fangbian* that the presence of the Daci Temple and the administration of the temple by *shixiongs* become sufficiently justified in a religious sense with an additional meaning in cultivating groups of people such as tourists, young people, elite consumers, and office workers.

If *fangbian* justifies the presence of the temple in an agglomeration of shopping districts, the obstacle that the temple still faces is the high cost of self-maintenance. The competition among Buddhist temples in Chengdu, perhaps as subtle as it may seem, is an evident source of challenge for the Daci Temple. I was told that the Wenshu Monastery is much wealthier than the Daci Temple because there are multiple major patrons (*da gongdezhu* 大功德主) to sustain the monastery. Perhaps due to the modest size of the temple, its corporate-like operation, its newly renovated and unhistorical outlook, or the fact that it is perceived as a chaotic tourist attraction, the Daci Temple receives much less attention from local pilgrims. One of the *shixiongs* told me that the Daci Temple could have been better off if the Wenshu Monastery returned the relics of Xuanzang (*shelizi* 舍利子) that was sent there years ago for preservation due to warfare and unrest.

The Daci Temple's "commercialized" sensitivity to the opportunities brought forth by the construction of Taikoo Li has been epitomized through a series of scenes and activities

becomes the key in dealing with "the hermeneutical problem of reconciling the disparities among the different teachings attributed to the Buddha". See Digital Dictionary of Buddhism via http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?q=方便, accessed on February 28, 2022.

discussed above, out of a pragmatic concern to sustain itself. This narrative, while seemingly providing a coherent perspective for us to understand the everyday life at the Daci Temple, cannot do full justice to the idiosyncrasy and complexity that are contained in the daily encounters among touristic pilgrims and *shixiongs* within an evolving environment. To reach a comprehensive account that details every aspect of the temple in the everyday life along an open-ended chronology is beyond the goal of this study, provided that such realities cannot be accurately and integrally grasped merely by words and images. If accuracy and integrality only exist in relative terms, this thesis so far has at least attempted to visualize the constantly evolving religious life in contemporary China.

In the last two chapters, I have documented my findings from a four-month long fieldtrip in Chengdu from 2021 to 2022. I analyze three spots within the Daci TCA and suggest how people's movements across these microgeographic locations are epitomes of their everyday life. Furthermore, their movements in transcending the spots also create a modality of "doing religion", the *shunbian* pilgrimage. As I argue extensively in the last chapter, *shunbian* pilgrimage not only suggests the vibrant religious life at a tourist-oriented Buddhist temple, but also informs how the temple is managed and administered in its everyday encounters with tourists. Thus, I aim to complicate the image of the temple as commercialized and commodified.

Conclusion

The Daci TCA as an epitome of post-reform (re)development in urban China has demonstrated traits of "global modernity" in which the market logic, cultural turn in space production, as well as transnational consumer-citizenship transformed almost every aspect of social life in Chinese cities. While these transformations are driven by ongoing trends of globalization that are debatably led by Euro-American superpowers, China has not only claimed but also proven that it aims to seize these trends adaptively into local development with "Chinese characteristics".

As is discussed in Chapter One and Two, policymaking at the national level and implementation of planning at the local level indicate the interplay of market force and state administration. While the state administration is a complex matter in itself, government at different levels adhere to the use of markets for economic benefits while they maintain and monitor the marketization at a controllable degree. The construction of the Daci TCA is a case study that suggests how, following a desirable political-economic climate for urban restructuring, local governments cooperated with real estate developers to regenerate the CBD region for economic development and city branding. Instead of granting full autonomy to the market, local governments remain in a crucial position to implement regulations and the overall scheme for development. The constant negotiations and contestations witnessed in the interplay of market and administration not only point to a "Chinese Way" of reconciling

ideological conflicts, but also testify to local attempts that correspond to a national agenda in managing urban (re)developments.

In addition to their manifestations in the process of project construction, as Chapter Three and Four illustrate, "Chinese characteristics" are also embodied in ways in which the urban culture is narrated, propagated, perceived, felt, and imagined in the everyday life of Chinese urbanites. In the Daci TCA, the urban culture being advertised is a product of the nostalgic re-emergence of locally defined memories and the creative making of deliberate contradictions such as traditional vs. modern, spiritual vs. mundane, and tranquil vs. chaotic. With the Daci Temple situating at the geographic center, "touristification" of visitors within the Daci TCA gives birth to a modality of "doing" religion based on their *shunbian* pilgrimage. *Shunbian* pilgrimage not only attests to the vibrant religious life in contemporary Chinese cities but also informs how an urban Buddhist temple is managed and administered in its everyday encounters with pilgrims. In studying the agency of pilgrims, tourists, and temple community, this thesis complicates the image of the Daci Temple as commercialized and commodified, and argues that what is lived and practiced in the realms of everyday life and embodied experience simply resists categorization.

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