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The Nation-State, the Contract Responsibility System, and the Economy of Temple Incense: The Politics and Economics of a Temple Festival on a Landscaped Holy Mountain

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民族国家、承包制与香火经济： 景区化圣山庙会的政治-经济学

岳永逸

Abstract

Belief practices in mainland China have been subject to contracts as a result of a combination of factors: politics, economic growth, cultural development, and historic preservation. Thanks to the investigative reporting of the media, “contracting out belief” has lost all legitimacy on the level of politics, culture, religion, administration, and morality. The economy of temple incense has been relentlessly criticized for the same reason. In recent decades, Mount Cangyan, in Hebei, has changed from being a sacred site of pilgrimage to a landscaped tourist attraction. At the same time, the Mount Cangyan temple festival, which centers on the worship of the Third Princess, has gained legitimacy on a practical level. Conventional and newly emerged agents, such as beggars, charlatans, spirit mediums, do-gooders, and contractors of the temple, are actively involved in the thriving temple festival, competing, and sometimes cooperating, with each other. However, it is for the sake of maximizing profit that landscaped Mount Cangyan under the contract responsibility system has been re-sanctified around the worship of the Third Princess along with other, new gods and attractions. The iconic temple festival on this holy mountain has influenced other temple festivals in various nearby

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communities. The leading temple festival on Mount Cangyan entails a complicated social morphology and human geography. The economy of temple incense centering on belief in the Third Princess, i.e., the contracted out belief, has become a major part of local tourism and is intertwined with grand narratives such as pursuing national prosperity. The dialectics of the contracting and the contracted involve multidirectional interaction between individuals, local society, the state, and the temple and its deity. This article investigates the contracted and landscaped temple festival on the holy mountain of Cangyan in the context of everyday life and changing society.

Keywords

temple festival, economy of temple incense, contract responsibility system, the Third Princess, holy mountain

摘要

在政治建构、经济发展、文化建设、文物保护的合力下，“被承包的信仰”早已成为普遍的社会事实。受从果到因的逻辑推理的规训，媒介写作中的“被承包的信仰”完全丧失了政治、文化、宗教、行政管理以及道义等层面的合理性、正当性，香火经济也成为口诛笔伐的对象。近三十年来，圣山的景区化建设与管理使得原本作为信仰中心地的苍岩山旅游风景区的景观色彩日渐浓厚。与此同时，以三皇姑信仰为核心的苍岩山庙会也具有了事实上的合理性、合法性。乞丐、江湖术士、香头、行好的和庙主等新、老行动主体纷纷参与其中，竞争也妥协，庙会热闹而红火。为求利益最大化，承包制经营管理的模式使得景区化的圣山苍岩山更加倚重三皇姑信仰，从而使得景区化的圣山被再圣化，并滋生出新的神祇、景观。图像化的圣山庙会历时性地呈现出复杂的社会形态学和人文地理学特征，统括着圣山上下形态各异、或生或灭的大小社区型庙会。最终，围绕三皇姑信仰的香火经济——被承包的信仰——事实上成为地方旅游经济的龙头，并与兴国兴邦的民族国家发展的宏大叙事一道携手前行。呈现出承包与被承包多重辩证法的景区化圣山庙会也就有了在生活之流，尤其是社会之流中研究的应然与必然。

关键词

庙会、香火经济、承包制、三皇姑、圣山

From Cause to Result: The Starting Point and Methodology of My Research

The Political-Economic Approach to Temple Festival Studies

Historically, in rural China temple festivals were not the same as temple fairs. On the whole, temple festivals were a spiritual affair while temple fairs concerned mundane, material existence (Yue, 2016a). Temple festivals centering on worship were not only a holistic representation of everyday life and “rural religion” (Yue, 2014a; 2014b: 51–53, 83–88, 307–16; 2015a: 199–200, 213–17), but also a widespread celebration involving the cultural icons and collective mentality of a region’s politics, economy, culture, tradition, and landscape where community members were usually involved actively or passively. In recent years, studies of contemporary Chinese temple festivals have taken either a political or an economic approach. There have been studies of the internal dynamics of temple festivals with respect to

the restoration and revival of such festivals since the Reform and Opening-up. There have also been studies of the transformation and reform of temple festivals under the market economy and rational choice, which echo the national policy of prioritizing economic development. The latter are in fact a continuation of social function analysis.

Studies of the dynamics of temple festivals emphasize the process and the interaction between state and festival. Aside from focusing on various deities, researchers have also focused on professionals, such as human-deity mediators, monks, Daoists, spirit mediums, and common followers. Heterogeneous forces such as the nation, government, academia, media, business, folk, clans, religion, superstitions, habitus, urbanization, new rural area development, gender, power, education, ecology, publications, modernity, law, space, time, citizens, and tourism have become topics of research. In this context, a new way of studying temple festivals that focuses on the process and interaction of “doing,” “making,” “building,” and “negotiating” various agents has emerged (Chau, 2006a; Ashiwa and Wank, 2009; Poon, 2011: 93–116; Hua, 2013, 2016; Yue, 2014b, 2010: 50–260). Things that had been manipulated and presented by people in rituals are becoming actors with agency, i.e., “actants amassing,” or “the convergence of a multitude of actants in the same time-space” (Chau, 2012: 206). Similar research on things such as offerings in temple festivals has also appeared in Chinese publications (Yue and Wang, 2015).

Compared to research on the dynamics of temple festivals, research on the functions of temple festivals has been less fruitful. Most Chinese scholars who have studied the economic functions of temple festivals have done so from a historical perspective and have thus generally investigated temple festivals in the past (Zhao Shiyu, 2002; Zhu, 2002). Since the Reform and Opening-up, the economy of religion has attracted more attention among scholars than the economy of temple festivals due to the trend of landscaping holy mountains to promote tourism.¹ Not only Chinese scholars but also foreign researchers have started to pay attention to the relation between the tourism economy and Chinese religion and temple festivals (Oakes and Sutton, 2010). Some foreign scholars (Yang and Tamney, 2005: 63–190; Chan and Lang, 2011) have viewed religious sites as a kind of corporation and discussed how they conduct business. In a sense, their writings about such things as “the red, black and grey markets of religion” and “the shortage economy of religion” under Communist rule (Yang, 2012: 85–158) are political interpretations of Chinese religion in the name of the market and economy from a Christian point of view. Such views are valuable for their postmodern, political interpretations. However, in spite of their call for religious freedom, human rights, and justice for minorities, these writings are based on a simple, unquestioned assumption

¹ A search for the key term “temple festival economy” on CNKI between 1994 and 2012 returned 87 publications of which more than 60 were from newspapers. Although the earliest traceable item on “religious economy” only dates back to 2006, there are now 24, most of which are academic studies recorded in CSSCI. Similarly, five papers can be found on cqvip.com using the keywords “temple festival economy” and 41 using the keywords “religious economy” (accessed Nov. 18, 2012).

that the Communist Party persecutes everyone and everything. Even though they have moved beyond unilinear evolutionism, which simply regards China as “backward” and the Orient in general as a mirror of the “advanced” West’s past, these interpretations have continued the antagonism of the Cold War and stigmatized all Chinese experience.

There are few studies of how the modern management of landscaped holy mountains (and sanctified tourist sites) and temples have interacted with religion and temple festivals. Of course, landscaped holy mountains are essentially tourist sites, but there are still temple festivals from time to time in those sites that attract numerous pilgrims. In a sense, studies of the dynamics of temple festivals are all based on the assumed dualism of discourse hegemony, which pits political forces, which discourage temple festivals, against the agency of the public. However, following the logic of economic development, the government in contemporary China no longer opposes but encourages temple festivals. Studies of the economy of temple festivals that adopt Max Weber’s approach hold that religion has been secularized so that there is no sincere religion in China. Yet as Weber (2005) showed, pursuing profit and other rewards is almost inevitable in every religion. Therefore, it is unfair to condemn the commercialization of folk culture or deny the inherent emotional aspect in Chinese religion, let alone consider the impact of pursuing economic development as the overriding political aim in contemporary China.

In other words, both approaches to studying Chinese temple festivals are biased and Orientalist. But a political-economic approach that combines the two is productive. This combination avoids discrimination against Chinese politics, religion, and especially ordinary religious followers and views temple festivals for what they are. This article uses the two approaches as a new research orientation. I chose the temple festival of Mount Cangyan, located in Jingxing County in Hebei Province, as an example to analyze temple festivals centering on religious activities in contemporary China. The temple festival of Mount Cangyan is a folk event where few religious professionals aside from spirit mediums can be found. Spirit mediums are also called “incense heads” 香头 because the ritual through which they directly communicate with the gods is always linked with burning incense.

Misunderstanding “Contracted Out Beliefs”

In Chinese history, temples were economic entities. According to Liu Yongxi (2015: 17–19), monks in China had been borrowing and lending money since the Northern and Southern dynasties. There were profit-seeking financial institutions in temples in the Sui, Tang, and Song dynasties. There was a tradition of managing temple properties and even temples themselves by contracting them out to another party. This form of management was common in the Republic of China. For instance, in 1926 a new board of directors was established in Shanghai to manage temples there. The board rented out the temples and stalls around the Temple of the City God 城隍庙 and most of the income was used for charity and education (Yu, 2014: 149–70).

In more contemporary times, the household contract responsibility system has enjoyed great success because it has actualized the old utopian goal of “land to the tiller.” Other economic reforms such as private ownership and a joint stock system together with collective ownership have also greatly enhanced economic development in China. In this light, it is reasonable that China’s holy mountains have been landscaped for the sake of developing the tourism economy. On Mount Cangyan, various temples and tourist attractions based on the belief in the Third Princess 三皇姑 have been managed in various ways. Managers have been recruited by public bidding. They have been responsible for their own profit and loss. On this basis, the tourism economy in this area has been booming. However, this mode of management has faced a crisis because its legitimacy has been called into question.

In its February 2012 issue, *China Newsweek* 中国新闻周刊 reported on “contracted out belief” with a huge title printed on its cover. The reporter expounded in great detail on how visitors were cheated out of their money in various temples such as that on Mount Tai under contracted management (Liu Ziqian, 2012). The report caused a stir among the public. At that time there had already been several scandals involving the listing on the stock market of other religious sites such as the Shaolin Temple, Mount Putuo, Mount Jiuhua, and Mount Wutai. There was an urgent call for standardizing the management of religious sites. The State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) and nine other national agencies jointly issued a regulation on the management of religious sites on October 8, 2012, which forbade “any money-making activity in the name of religion,” including leasing and contracting out temples.² A month later, *Renmin ribao* published a feature article in which making money in the name of religion was severely criticized followed by appeals to prevent temples from becoming listed companies and to fight against fraudulent religious professionals (Lu, 2012).

In fact, SARA had issued a regulation on the construction of religious sites on October 20, 1994, explicitly prohibiting religious professionals from raising money to construct illegal religious sites, cutting ribbons at illegal religious constructions, and using the joint-stock system and contract system for temple management.³ Several other regulations on religious activities concerning money have been issued after that. In June 2009, the National Tourism Administration and four other national agencies jointly issued *Opinions on Further Standardizing the Activities of Burning Incense at Religious Tourist Sites*. This regulation banned inducing tourists to burn overly expensive incense at religious tourism sites. In March 2010, the National Tourism Administration and five other national bureaus jointly held a television and telephone conference and required strengthening special treatment and joint inspection of incense burning at tourist attractions and temples.

These regulations themselves are not problematic considering the mutual construction of nation-state/government and religion/superstition (Brook, 2009; Nedostup, 2009; Poon, 2011). However, the real problem of religious sites is more

² See <http://www.sara.gov.cn/xwzx/xwj/17145.htm> (accessed Dec. 20, 2012).

³ See <http://bbs.chizhouren.com/thread-351442-1-1.html> (accessed Dec. 21, 2012).

complicated than making money. It involves the perception of concepts such as faith, superstition, temple festivals, temple fairs, tourism, tradition, worship, rites of passage, and relaxation and how such perceptions interact with empirical evidence. Are the “contracted out faiths” reported in the mass media real? Are all belief activities at religious sites contracted out? Does “contracting out faiths” involve nothing more than making money? What is the relationship between belief and economy? Why has this contracting out of beliefs been so popular since the Reform and Opening-up?

A simple explanation is to put all the blame on the “complicated profit chain” and decentralized authority. The former involves individualism, the latter politics, especially the lack of clarity in administration. This is the simplest yet the most useless explanation. Pursing profit is simply part of human nature. And decentralized authority is still authority.

A better explanation can be found by exploring actual outcomes. In other words, we must focus on a constantly changing process. It is in this dynamic of “Spiel” (or, play) (Elias, [2000] 2007: 79–120) that actors with agency became the subjects of my analysis. With this approach, attention turns away from corrupt “superiors” to the silent deities, temples, and landscapes, to ordinary pilgrims and tourists, to the charlatans who aim not to make a fortune but only to make a living, and to the beggars, incense heads, and local villagers. In this way the nature of rural religion, temple festivals, tourism, worship, religious site management and exchange become clear. I began my research by looking at how money is entangled in religious sites, but that is not the issue I address in this article.

Instead, this article investigates the Mount Cangyan temple festival from a political and economic perspective. Mount Cangyan is not only a famous scenic spot but also a holy mountain with a long history. Its temple festival, with the worship of the Third Princess at its core, is held from the first to fifteenth day of the third lunar month and the “main day” 正日子 is the third day of the third lunar month. This article has four aims. First, to give a thick description of the Mount Cangyan temple festival on the basis of my almost ten years of fieldwork in the area, and second, to point out the commonalities and complexities of economic activities connected to religion after the Reform and Opening-up and to propose that temple festivals are a cultural system. In other words, the temple festival on this holy mountain has a complicated social morphology and an evolving human geography because various actors have changed the character of the holy mountain and visualized it in terms of the Third Princes, a changing god. Third, to give a diachronic analysis of the function of charity in the economy of temple incense and to illustrate the inevitability of the booming of the economy of temple incense. Furthermore, to represent the complex relationship between the political context, religious practices, the economy of temple incense, tourism, management, and consumers—in short, the multiple dialectics of the contracting and the contracted. Lastly, to re-evaluate conventional approaches to temple festivals and rural religion and to propose a new, political-economic approach.

The Third Princess, a Changing God

Mount Cangyan, which covers an area of 63 square kilometers in the Taihang Mountain range, is about 30 km south of the seat of Jingxing County and 70 km south of the city of Shijiazhuang, Hebei Province. It is famous in North China for its unique landscape and for the worship of the Third Princess goddess. As the soul of Mount Cangyan, the Third Princess is hugely influential in the local area, just like her fellow goddesses, such as Avalokiteśvara (Guanyin), the Eternal Mother, and Mazu, in other places in China (Sangren, 1983). The Third Princess, sometimes also called the Third Grandmother, the Third Aunt, or the Aunt, has numerous followers in Beijing, Tianjin, Shandong, Henan, Inner Mongolia, and elsewhere. Shijiazhuang, Xingtai, and Yangquan are three major centers of the Third Princess belief. Although followers in these three areas may not make the pilgrimage to Mount Cangyan every year, many of them have a shrine for the goddess at home or in their own villages. Almost every village in these places has a pilgrim society or at least a remnant of one.

The history of the worship of popular deities such as the God of Literature 文昌, Guan Gong 关公, and Avalokiteśvara in China is infused with interaction between officials and the people. Thus, Hansen (1990) called them “changing gods.” Moreover, there were ups and downs in the worship of several goddesses, such as the Queen Mother of the West 西王母, Grandmother Tai 泰山奶奶, and Granny Wang 王三奶奶, all of whom are related to fox worship (Kang, 2005: 141–47). Between 1925 and 1929 the image of Granny Wang worshipped on Mount Miaofeng was transformed from a plain middle-aged woman to an elegant Bodhisattva (Zhou, 1929). Although the Third Princess has officially been identified with Princess Nanyang of the Sui dynasty, the identity of the goddess has always been dynamic because of followers’ needs, the interaction among different religions, and the changing nature of local society.

Inscriptions, local chronicles, and folk tales provide other identities for the Third Princess. For instance, she is said to have been the daughter of the Northern Zhou emperor Ming, the daughter of the Sui emperor Wen, the daughter of the Sui emperor Yang, the Bodhisattva with a thousand eyes and hands, or the daughter of an ordinary man without any titles (Yue, 2014b: 252; JXM, 1986; JXKM, 1989: 67–105; SJZS, 1989). The variant of the Third Princess being the daughter of Emperor Wen, however, was the mainstream from the Song dynasty until the Tongzhi reign of the Qing dynasty. The life story of the princess became increasingly detailed in later inscriptions and literature. In general, it is said that she had tinea which nothing but spring water from Mount Cangyan could cure. After she was cured, the princess was enlightened and decided to become a nun.

There is no official record of this daughter of Emperor Wen. The essay *On Rebuilding Bridge-Tower Hall on Mount Cangyan* 重建苍岩山桥楼殿记 (1701 AD) says, “it is said the princess was the daughter of Emperor Wen of Sui. She suffered from illness when she was young. She heard that there was a spring on Mount Cangyan, the water of which could cure her disease. She then bathed in the spring and was cured. Finally, she became a nun and passed away here. The Fuqing

Temple was built for her in the Tang dynasty. Chang'an, the capital of the Sui dynasty, was not far from here. The story of the princess might be true, yet no one has investigated." This doubtfulness preconditioned the later account of her being Princess Nanyang. Also this essay says, "If the princess truly can bring fortune and disaster at will, then why were her country and family destroyed? She witnessed it but could do nothing to prevent it."

During the Guangxu period (1875–1908), the local gentry disagreed with the interpretation of the princess as the daughter of Emperor Wen and proposed that she was Princess Nanyang. In 1870 the White Lotus Society uprising in this area caused the local gentry to turn their attention to Mount Cangyan and the Third Princess (Fu, [1934] 1976: 498, 935, 962). In 1896 Yan Jiaju 言家驹, an official in Jingxing County, wrote an inscription in which he distinguished Mount Cangyan from Fragrance Hill 香山, the Goddess of Mercy temple, and contended that the Third Princess was the daughter of Emperor Yang of Sui, namely Princess Nanyang. He praised her filial piety and efficacy. Local gentry also chose both Bianque 扁鹊 (407–310 BC) and seven other famous doctors and model women in the biographies of the *Suishu* 隋书, such as Lady Cui, the wife of Zhao Yuankai in the Sui dynasty, to be worshipped alongside the princess. Earlier, in 1893, the court conferred the title Bodhisattva Ciyou upon the princess. Unlike in official chronicles (Wei et al., 1973: 1798–99) that have the princess becoming a nun after the Sui dynasty was overthrown, in folk legends Princess Nanyang became a nun because she resented her father's tyranny. The righteousness and filial obedience of Confucianism, the Karma of Buddhism, and the practice and efficacy of Daoism are clearly expressed in these legends.

It should be noted that the royal families of the Northern Wei, Sui, and Tang dynasties were of the Xianbei 鲜卑 ethnicity (Chen, 2012: 4–38). The history of the exiled princess that has gained respect from the common people is also the history of the decline of Xianbei culture and its fusion with Han culture.⁴ Buddhism played an important role in the fusion of Hu 胡 culture and Han culture, which is clearly reflected in the evolution and localization of the Third Princess legends and belief.

Other evidence of Buddhist influence is the equation of the Third Princess with the Bodhisattva with a thousand eyes and hands. Many folktales and legends collected in Jingxing and nearby areas since the 1980s indicate that there is a link between the Third Princess and the Bodhisattva with a thousand eyes and hands. Aside from the regional features of Mount Cangyan, the plots in these tales are similar to those of tales of the Bodhisattva with a thousand eyes and hands.⁵ The

⁴ Recently, a legend among Manchu people in Xinbin County, Liaoning Province, has been discovered and compiled. The legend has it that a princess in the late Qing dynasty exiled to the Forbidden City opened a mine to benefit the local people. The story is very similar to the story of the Third Princess of Mount Cangyan, which also suggests that the Qing princess is in the process of being deified (Zhang Lizhong, 2009).

⁵ For tales of the Bodhisattva with a thousand eyes and hands, see Mantuoluoshi zhuren, 1997; CCRHLC, 2005; Dudbridge, 1978; Yü, 2001; Han, 2004.

similarities include testing the princess three times, the burning of Baique An 白雀庵 (a temple in the city of Xiangtai, Hebei), riding a tiger up Mount Cangyan, occupying Mount Cangyan wisely after defeating a male god, and being the Bodhisattva with a thousand eyes and hands, etc.

The Third Princess has become a unique, highly influential regional goddess as a result of the interaction of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism. In North China, she is worshipped alongside other goddesses such as Bixia Yuanjun, the Eternal Mother, Avalokiteśvara, and Jiulian Shengmu 九莲圣母. Although there are temples dedicated to Avalokiteśvara and the Bodhisattva with a thousand eyes and hands on Mount Cangyan, the most prominent temple has always been the Holy Mother Hall 圣母殿, halfway up the mountain, which is dedicated to the Third Princess.

The identification of the Third Princess as the daughter of Emperor Yang of Sui has overwhelmed others. It appears in booklets and other publications, tour descriptions, and websites, all of which have adopted materials from folktales collected and compiled by local elites in the last century. Cheap booklets sold at Mount Cangyan are now important media for transmitting legends about the Third Princess. The fragmented and diverse oral tradition in regard to the Third Princess has become standardized in tour descriptions (Zhao and Yue, 2014), a phenomenon common in contemporary oral tradition transmission in China. In addition, legends about the Third Princess are the core of the system of deities and the distribution of temples on Mount Cangyan. As traditional culture is being transformed into cultural heritage, intangible cultural heritage, cultural capital, and the culture industry, new legends are being created based on the old ones and oral traditions are being concretized in the media and the landscape. In certain cases, modern visitors' sensory participation in temple festivals, for example watching and listening quietly, can be endowed with rituality and sacredness.

A popular motif in legends concerning holy mountains in China is the victory of a female deity in competition with a male deity for the mountain (Zhang Chengfu, 2005; Wu, 2006). From a structuralist point of view, these legends may indicate the dialectics between Buddhism and Daoism, male and female, host and guest, exotic and local, elegant and vulgar, official and non-official, yin and yang. There are legends of the Third Princess competing with the Daoist Zhigong 志公 and Guan Gong over Mount Cangyan (JXM, 1986: 10, 29–31, 126). Similarly, legends like this hint at the complex relationship between Buddhism and Daoism. The newly emerged worship of revolutionary CCP leaders such as Mao Zedong (1893–1976), known as “red worship,” has added a new layer to the already complicated belief system regarding Mount Cangyan. However, the Third Princess has always been the core. Although temples on Mount Cangyan have been contracted out in order to maximum profits, contractors have been adjusting and producing the landscape according to the Third Princess legend. The tiger and the monkey, two animals that helped the princess according to legend, have also become key symbols

(Ortner, 1973) in the process of the re-sanctification of the landscaped holy mountain.

Iconography: The Landscaped Holy Mountain and Its Re-sanctification

In the past two decades, there has been a great deal of development in terms of tourism to Mount Tai and Mount Jिंगgang—mountains that respectively represent traditional and modern holy mountains in China. The booming of tourism to Mount Tai is directly related to it being a symbol of national identity, which has been encouraged by the government (Dott, 2010). By the same token, Jिंगgangshan, a sacred place in the Chinese Communist revolution, has become a religious holy mountain of sorts (Luo, 2010). The government intended to make Jिंगgangshan a site for education in nationalism, but many visitors, including officials, come to Jिंगgangshan as pilgrims and worshippers and pray to revolutionary pioneers for their blessing and for good fortune. In Jिंगgangshan, moral education and leisure seeking go hand in hand with worship in accordance with the “capitalism-ization” of revolutionary culture and the “human-god” principle in rural religion (Baptandier, 1996; He, 2011; Wu, 2012; Wang Yao, 2014; Yue, 2014b: 166–70; Song, 2015).

Unlike in Jिंगgangshan, on Mount Tai efforts to add a socialistic element to tourism—such as paying homage to Lei Feng 雷锋 (1940–1962)—have been unsuccessful. Perhaps the difference arises from the fact that Jिंगgangshan defies the older generation of revolutionaries. In any case, both places share a common feature in the landscaping of holy mountains: a combination of worship activity and leisure seeking for the sake of cultivating nationalistic, patriotic, healthy, and cultured modern citizens. At the same time, there is another trend—sanctifying traditionally non-religious tourist attractions for the sake of tourists instead of local residents, such as the construction of the Xiuzhen Guan 修真观 Daoist temple by a tourism company at Wuzhen, in Zhejiang (Svensson, 2010), the Bixia Yuanjun temple in the Acrobatics World in Wuqiao, Hebei, and the Third Princess temple in the Kongshan Scenic Area in Lincheng, Hebei. Even in the Tianchi 天池 Scenic Area, Xinjiang, two temples—Niangniang 娘娘 and Divine Light Temple 灵光寺—dedicated to the Queen Mother of the West have been built.

Landscaping the Holy Mountain

Printed on the back of the admission ticket to the Mount Cangyan Scenic Area is an introduction to its landscape:

The hills are steep, the rocks in the valley are rugged, birds tweet among sandalwood trees, footpaths wind up the mountainside. Cypressess grow on the mountain top, bridges link the north and south. Ancient temples are hidden on the mountain. The natural landscape is picturesque. The cultural attractions are sophisticated.

Men of letters have grouped the scenery of Mount Cangyan into 16 scenic spots, such as the Academy of Classical Learning in the Shade of the Verdant Tree 书院午荫, the Stele of a High Official 尚书古碣, Dangerous Preaching Platform 说法危台, Pavilion in Seclusion 虚阁藏幽, and Graceful Cypresses Halfway up the Mountain 山腰绮柏. Because of its scenic beauty and connotations connected with it, Mount Cangyan has been chosen as a shooting location for many films and dramas such as *The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor* and *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*.

Despite its remoteness, Mount Cangyan has gained great fame thanks to the local government's policy of developing the tourist economy in the 1980s and 1990s. The Jingxing County government has been constructing Mount Cangyan as a tourist site since 1987 and received special instructions from the State Council on February 17, 1995.⁶ The ancient structures on Mount Cangyan such as Fuqing Temple had been listed as national and provincial conservation sites long before that. According to the *Inscription and Preface of Newly Built Fuqing Temple on Mount Cangyan by Dahua Villagers* written by Qi Pengju, the Fuqing Temple was built no later than the Sui dynasty. Bridge-Tower Hall 桥楼殿, the major part of Fuqing Temple, is one of the most breathtaking hanging temples in the world and one of the three symbols of Mount Cangyan (the others being rare sandalwood and strange cypresses).

The impoverished town of Cangyanshan, in which Mount Cangyan is located, and which consists of 19 villages and has a population of over 10,000, was officially opened as a commercial tourist site in May 1980. The Jingxing County Tourism Bureau was founded in 1991 on the basis of the Mount Cangyan Administration, which was re-established in 2010. There was always an official on Mount Cangyan during the temple festival. All these efforts transformed what had been a traditional holy mountain into a successful modern tourist site. In 2005, the Fuqing Temple festival was listed among the first batch of intangible cultural heritages of Shijiazhuang, but it has not been elevated to a higher level of recognition, probably because it is not the core of the temple festivals on Mount Cangyan.

A parking lot has been built outside the entrance to the mountain. There are also new hotels, restaurants, stalls, and cable cars. There is even a new temple—the Longyan Temple 龙岩寺, outside the entrance gate. There are 18 temples and tourist attractions from the entrance gate to the Old Mountain Stairs 悬磴梯云 halfway up the mountain, including the Red Memorial 红色纪念 (dedicated to Mao Zedong and others). There are 19 temples and tourist attractions from the Old Mountain Stairs to Tongtian Dong. Above Tongtian Dong, at the top of the mountain, are several temples including the Princess Nanyang Temple 南阳公主庙. The Princess Nanyang Temple was completed in 2001. The inscription outside the temple gate describes the temple as “a Buddhist cultural, historic, folk tradition and leisure resort.”

⁶ See http://www.34law.com/lawfg/law/6/1187/law_251689433409.shtml (accessed Oct. 18, 2010).

Before Tongtian Dong was constructed, visitors had to return to Bridge-Tower Hall once they reached the Holy Mother Hall and take another route to the top of the mountain. Since Tongtian Dong's completion, mainly for the sake of safety, the originally bidirectional mountain path has been made unidirectional. Several temples on the summit were expanded, and the safety of visitors during the temple festival was enhanced.

Iconography and the Key Symbols in the Re-sanctifying Landscape

There are two kinds of interactions between temples and legends of the Third Princess in the developing tourism economy on Mount Cangyan. First, there is the construction and improvement of temples and sites concerning the Third Princess, for example the Water Curtain Cave, the Holy Mother Hall, the Princess Nanyang Temple, and so on. Second, there is the construction and improvement of temples and sites concerning animals and deities who, according to legend, helped the Third Princess, for example the Monkey Hall, Tiger Cave, Riding Tiger and Climbing the Mountain, and the Guan Gong Temple. These new constructions have added not only a sense of mystery and holiness to Mount Cangyan but also concreteness to the intangible oral tradition. Thus, Mount Cangyan as a holy place for the Third Princess has been reinforced while temples and sites on the mountain compete with and complement each other.

When making statues of deities, artisans typically use relatively fixed samples (Wang Shucun, 2008). In contrast, icons of the Third Princess are multidimensional and dynamic, which is clearly seen in the competition between the Princess Nanyang Temple and the Holy Mother Hall.

In legends and *baojuan* 宝卷 (commonly called *fo* 佛 or *jing* 经), sacred animals such as the monkey and the tiger and deities like the Jade Emperor, Queen Mother of the West, Taibaijinxing 太白金星, Buddha, and Guanyin (Avalokiteśvara) are frequently depicted as helpers of the Third Princess, but the most frequently cited helpers are Guan Gong, Chang E 嫦娥, the Dragon King, and the Eight Immortals, all of whom are familiar to people. Because of their relation to the Third Princess, these deities are also worshipped in temples on Mount Cangyan. The Third Princess is so prominent that there are even several halls dedicated to her in the Longyan Temple.

Since the 1980s, worship of the Third Princess has become worship of three princesses. Two more statues were put in the Holy Mother Hall. This is another example of visualizing and landscaping the intangible oral tradition of the Third Princess. Of course, having three instead of one princess in the Holy Mother Hall means there may be more donations. Similarly, three statues and three coffins belonging to three princesses were put in the newly built Princess Tomb 皇姑坟 in the Princess Nanyang Temple. The manager claimed that the stone statue between the first and the third princess was the original statue of the Third Princess from the Sui dynasty, discovered in 1998.

As a form of hierophany, the graphic reconstruction of oral tradition not only reinforces the sensory feeling of pilgrims but also allows them to relive the original

event (Eliade, 2002: 1–31). The image narrative of *bianwen* 变文 stories has been a disguised form 变相 associated with *bianwen* and *baojuan* since the Tang and Song dynasties. However, the relationship between legends, the *fo* or *jing* of the Third Princess, and *bianwen* and *baojuan* is very complicated (Lin Xin, 1999). Therefore, it is very common in temple festivals and rural religion in North China to visualize legends of deities so as to add authenticity to them. For instance, since 2002, in Changxin, a village in Zhao County, Hebei, the villagers have enshrined images of Liu Xiu 刘秀 (5 BC–57 AD), Emperor Guangwu of the Han dynasty, according to legends of the emperor (Yue, 2004). In the village of Xiucaying, not far from Changxin, the shrine of the Third Princess consists of five huge paintings depicting how the princess became a goddess (Yue, 2014b: 252).

The physical distance between belief groups and their sacred sites may result in differences in their sacred narratives. For example, Xiucaying is over 100 km from Mount Cangyan and over 150 km from Baique An, where the Third Princess first became a nun according to legend. There is only one reference to Baique An in the pictures of the Third Princess Shrine. On the other hand, in the village of Liujiashuang, in Ren County, Hebei, only 30 km from Baique An but more than 200 km from Mount Cangyan, there are more references to Baique An than to Mount Cangyan in “the images of the Third Princess as an immortal” worshipped by the Huahuahao 花花好, as the followers of the Third Princess in the village are called (Shi, 2012: 61).

In other words, these graphic icons vary according to both verbal narratives recited by worshipers and human geography and religious social morphology. It is understandable that murals presenting legends of the Third Princess displayed in the Holy Mother Hall are centered on Mount Cangyan. Murals on the north wall created in the Ming dynasty portray the life story of the Third Princess. These stories are “etiquette, meeting with a misfortune, tonsure, practicing Buddhism, apparitions, blessing people, and making rain fall through magical power.” Moreover, the stories are basically the same as the pilgrims’ *fo* of today. Murals on the south wall painted in 1893 show posthumous miracles of the Third Princess, namely the local elites asking the imperial court to recognize Nanyang as a goddess and the goddess bringing rainfall with her spiritual power.

In the same vein, there are clay sculptures in the new Third Princess Practice Hall illustrating famous events from legends of the Third Princess. Sculptures, with descriptions alongside, are exhibited in glass cabinets. The themes depicted include sprinkling millet and punting the boat, persuading father, deliberately putting obstacles in the Third Princess’ way three times, the burning of Baique An, riding a tiger and ascending the mountain, and so on. On the surface, these stories are almost identical to legends of the Bodhisattva with a thousand eyes and hands. Yet the individuals are real historical figures: Princess Nanyang and her father, Emperor Yang of the Sui dynasty. For example, the first sentence of the “court life” description is “Emperor Yang of Sui, Yangguang, was on the throne one thousand and four hundred years ago.”

In addition, various versions of official tour guide descriptions have all addressed at great length the relation between the Third Princess and the mountain, especially the filial piety and efficacy of the Third Princess.⁷ Compared to other Chinese legends, such as the legend of Nezha and Maudgalyayana concerning the parent-child relationship, legends of the Third Princess not only express filial piety and mercy praised by Confucianism and Buddhism respectively, but also indicate Chinese women's pursuit of subjectivity and the subject position (Sangren, 1996). Perhaps this is why the Third Princess has attracted more female than male followers.

The tiger, which in legends was ridden by the Third Princess when she ascended the mountain, has also become a key symbol in the process of landscaping the holy mountain. The symbol of the tiger can be seen in many places in the temple festival of Mount Cangyan. A small temple has been built at the foot of the mountain and the legendary tiger lair outside Dongtianmen 东天门 has been restored. Inside this new temple is a statue of the Third Princess riding a tiger. Because few people visited the tiger cave, the contractor put a tiger sculpture outside Dongtianmen during the temple festival and said it was there to bless visitors. Furthermore, many photo-taking stalls had tiger sculptures as props. The tiger icons during the temple festival are an important part of the iconography of the Third Princess.

Historically, Mount Cangyan had little connection with renowned revolutionaries. However, the monument to martyrs—soldiers who died for the country—outside Dongtianmen, which was erected at the end of the Second Sino-Japanese War, has been prominently featured in official tour guides. The government has also officialized Mount Cangyan by turning to contemporary intellectuals and artists. Many famous artists such as Li Kuchan 李苦禅 (1899–1983) and Huang Zhou 黄胄 (1925–1997) were invited to Mount Cangyan in the 1980s in exchange for their paintings and inscriptions for the mountain. The Red Memorial, Lingyan Ge 凌烟阁, and the Buddhist Sutra Depository 藏经楼 all hosted intellectuals and artists 20 years ago.

Unlike the government's effort to add official elements to the mountain landscape purely to develop the tourism economy, the worship of revolutionaries such as Chairman Mao among common people is a combination of piousness and playfulness—so-called “spiritual smuggling” (Li Xiangping, 2010: 106–15). Like Chairman Mao as the God of Wealth in the Pule Temple 普乐寺 in renowned Dazhai, the god-making logic of rural religions applies here as well: there were icons of Chairman Mao and his wife, Yang Kaihui 杨开慧 (1901–1930), described as the “Real Buddha and Holy Mother,” and miniature statues and badges of Chairman Mao were sold as amulets. Of course, these new deities were insignificant compared to the Third Princess. Revolutionary leaders were worshipped side

⁷ See <http://www.docin.com/p-325088809.html> (accessed May 18, 2011).

by side with traditional deities such as the God of Wealth, the God of Roads, and Avalokiteśvara in the Red Memorial for the purpose of drawing more visitors and worshippers.

Moreover, new legends in line with modern mainstream values have been invented in Mount Cangyan. A new bell bought from Shanxi was installed in the Buddhist Sutra Depository—which was part of the restoration project of Mount Cangyan—known as Ringing the Alarm Bell 警钟长鸣. Together with the nearby landscape, Dangerous Preaching Platform and the Path Winding through High Peaks 峰回路转 constitute a tourist attraction that has intellectual meaning, namely to remind high officials to be cautious. It is said that Ye Liansong 叶连松 (1935–), the former secretary of the Hebei CCP Provincial Committee, visited Mount Cangyan and quickly comprehended this meaning when introduced to the three spots.

The Goddess Does Not Illuminate What Is Near: The Livelihood of the Locals

The term “belief circle” refers to a voluntary regional religious organization dedicated to a certain deity by its followers (Lin Meirong, 1988; 1989). So far there has been no study of the different degrees of piousness within belief circles. However, the saying “the goddess illumines what is distant, not what is near” 照远不照近—meaning she cares for those who are far away, not those who are close by—in part explains the different degrees of piousness in belief circles. The connotation of this common saying varies by region and even within the same belief circle. For the belief circle of Laoniangniang, i.e., Bixia Yuanjun, of Mount Miaofeng in Mentougou District, Beijing, “Laoniangniang does not illuminate what is near” embodies the differences between the village of Jian Gou at the foot of Gold Summit of Mount Miaofeng and urban and suburban Beijing. It also reflects the difference between Beijing and Tianjin in the late Qing dynasty and the early years of the Republic of China. Moreover, it helped believers in Beijing and Tianjin form their respective self-identity at that time (Yue, 2014c: 121–22).

Similarly, the expression “the Third Princess does not illuminate what is near” has been very popular in her belief circles for a long time. The saying implies that, for instance, villagers in Sinao, at the top of Mount Cangyan, and Hujiatan, at the foot of the mountain, hardly worshipped the goddess while pilgrims often came from far away in the past. In the memory of the local people, Sinao villagers did not worship the Third Princess in the bustling temple festival of Mount Cangyan. Hujiatan was only a temporary resting place of pilgrims and a stage where pilgrimage societies publicly worshipped the goddess, especially the Bodhisattva Society 菩萨会 of the “owner” 山主 of Mount Cangyan, Jingzhuang 景庄. The development of tourism and the change in management have exacerbated the differences in Third Princess belief circles. Pilgrims from far away, such as Jiajiakou village in Ningjin County, Hebei, are still pious worshippers, making or redeeming vows,

while villagers of Siao and Hujiatan are busy doing business, recycling and even sometimes consuming offerings in the temple festival.

Compared with nearby villages, Sinao has less cultivated land and poorer natural conditions. Yet it has been the wealthiest of the nineteen villages in the township of Cangyanshan due to the revival of the temple festival and the development of the tourist economy since the Reform and Opening-up. There could be nearly 10,000 visitors daily during the fifteen-day temple festival. Therefore, there have been many opportunities for making money. Villagers from Sinao opened eateries and B&Bs, set up stalls, helped in temples, built temporary toilets, transported visitors with private vehicles, and even begged. Each villager also received up to 5,000 RMB a year from contracting out their village temple, Yuhuang Ding.

The Sinao villagers used to rely on agriculture for a living. However, their livelihood is now based on providing services, as described in the common saying “If you live on a mountain, you live off the mountain.” In other words, their livelihood is an important link in the chain of the economy of temple incense of Mount Cangyan. As a result, they have tried their best to keep the temple festival booming. They appear not as pious as their customers—pilgrims from far away—since they are busy conducting business during the temple festival. Furthermore, villagers seldom worship the Third Princess in temples or at home and only burn paper money and offer sacrifices in the Holy Mother Hall on New Year’s Eve and New Year’s Day.

As in Sinao, most Hujiatan villagers do not worship the Third Princess at home. Villagers go to burn incense in the Holy Mother Hall only on New Year’s Day and the Lantern Festival because they believe “to ask for God is easy but to send God is difficult.” Up to now, the proverb people often mention is “everyone in Hujiatan does business at the temple festival in the third lunar month.” In fact, doing business at the Mount Cangyan temple festival is the norm for Hujiatan villagers.

Villagers from Hujiatan have opened eateries and B&Bs in their households since the revival of the temple festival. There were five B&Bs in 2011. They sold what they claimed were free-range eggs, tadpoles, badgers, and pheasants, which were seen as green food by urban tourists. The village temple of Sinao, Yuhuang Ding, was contracted to a Hujiatan villager for an annual fee of almost one million RMB. Apart from that, villagers of Hujiatan have invested in a new temple, Pusa Ding, on the top of Mount Cangyan. These commercial activities have changed the relation between Sinao and Hujiatan. So far, Sinao villagers only have small business while Hujiatan villagers have managed to make it big. The relationship of hiring and being hired between the two villages is complicated.

Unlike Sinao and Hujiatan, which rely on the holy mountain for a living, the village of Jiajiakou in Ningjin County thrives on manufacturing cable. However, quite a few Jiajiakou villagers believe in the miracles attributed to the Third Princess. They not only piously worship the goddess in daily life but also make the pilgrimage to the holy mountain of Cangyan in the third lunar month. The

difference in the degree of belief in the Third Princess is not limited to Sinao, Hujiatan, and Jiajiakou alone, but also characterizes other places, such as Shijiazhuang, Xingtai, and Yangquan. The different degrees of piousness are due to the differences in traffic conditions, economic conditions, and lifestyles between residents of urban and rural areas. Significantly, the Third Princess belief in urbanized villages and suburban villages is stronger than in their rural counterparts because of convenient access via roads and a high degree of industrialization and urbanization. In recent years, there are several merit monuments beside the Holy Mother Hall and the Princess Nanyang Temple. These merit monuments belong to the Avalokiteśvara's Hut Buddhist Society 观音棚佛会 of Ningjin Chengguan 城关, an area just outside the county seat.

On April 24, 2010, namely the eleventh day of the third lunar month, Avalokiteśvara's Hut Buddhist Society rented sixteen buses to bring a total of 786 people to Mount Cangyan, under the leadership of 87-year-old Sun Wenhai. The association donated 16,936 RMB in the Holy Mother Hall. But Sun was not satisfied because he had expected more than 20,000 RMB. In 2008, only 470 members of the pilgrimage society made the pilgrimage to Mount Cangyan and donated 14,000 RMB in the Holy Mother Hall. The next year, 580 pilgrims of the association donated 18,000 RMB in the Holy Mother Hall. The Holy Mother Hall contractor accepted the money specifically to allow the pilgrims to fully express their piety. Their wishes involved all aspects of life such as health, peace, happiness, having a large family, praying for a son, favorable weather, a bountiful harvest, profits pouring in from all sides, and contented people living in a peaceful country.

The Social Morphology and Human Geography of the Mount Cangyan Temple Festival

Merit, a keyword in rural religion, refers to that which accumulates as a result of good deeds, acts, and thoughts. It provides a simple channel for ordinary people who are able to give nothing more to the gods than the sincere practice of their religious beliefs to share sacred values. It also promotes the long-term stability of the reciprocity between heaven and man (Yang Derui, 2009: 134). However, in the worship of the Third Princess, ordinary believers and even incense heads emphasize the "goodness" of moral self-discipline and "doing good" 行好 (Yue, 2014b: 56–57) in daily life. The Third Princess has become a symbol of perfection because she donated her own hands and eyes to save her father, a licentious monarch, and eventually became an immortal or a Buddha and blessed all beings. As a result, Mount Cangyan itself has also become a sacred mountain. People do good deeds with all their heart and long for both the goddess, the incarnation of perfection and mercy, and the holy mountain. For hundreds of years all kinds of virtues have pointed to the holy mountain from all directions.

However, the Mount Cangyan temple festival in the third lunar month not only attracts good deeds but also radiates temple festivals beyond the holy mountain. In other words, the temple festival of the holy mountain, in a broad sense, includes a variety of temple festivals with the Third Princess worship at Mount Cangyan as the core and has a special space morphology and human geography. In a sense, the holy mountain temple festival is an assemblage of practices transmitted from the past and various types of temple festivals in different places. Certainly, the core is the holy mountain temple festival itself, namely the temple festival of the holy mountain in a narrow sense. Furthermore, the relationship between the temple festivals in the same set is both reciprocal and mutually encompassing.

The Ignored Temple Festival in the Written Tradition

Like other temple festivals on holy mountains, in the past the Mount Cangyan temple festival included a spring festival 春香 and an autumn festival 秋香. It is said among contemporary pilgrims that pilgrims in the past offered light clothing to the Third Princess in the third lunar month and winter clothing in the tenth lunar month. One can find a reference to the tenth-lunar-month offering in a stone inscription, the *Rebuilding Temples on Mount Cangyan Stele* 苍岩山重修殿宇碑记, inscribed in 1831. In the first half of the twentieth century, the spring temple festival on Mount Cangyan lasted for a whole month while the autumn festival, which stopped a few years ago, was much smaller. Nowadays even local residents are not sure about the dates of the autumn festival.

Like the inscriptions on Mount Cangyan, the Jingxing County chorography of Emperor Yongzheng (r. 1722–1735), Emperor Guangxu (r. 1875–1908), the Republic of China, and the 1980s all describe the scenery, the holy mountain's cultural relics, and the legends and identity of the Third Princess, but there are hardly any records of the old temple festivals in local chronicles. Even where there is, they are often full of contempt, referring to the temple festival as disdainful of the state and superstitious. For instance, in *On Rebuilding the Cangyan Temple Bridge* 苍岩寺重修桥碑记 (1597) the author calls pilgrims “foolish men and women.” However, such writings also describe how spectacular the temple festival was several centuries ago.

On Rebuilding the Bridge-Tower Hall on Mount Cangyan 重建苍岩山桥楼殿记, written in 1701, says: “The Princess has been worshipped here for about a thousand years. Her followers are so pious that nothing can dissuade them.” *On Rebuilding the Small Tower-Bridge Hall* 重修小桥楼殿碑记 also says: “Devout men and women from all corners make the pilgrimage to the holy mountain every year.” The *Rebuilding Temples on Mount Cangyan Stele* records that the Third Princess had the power to work miracles, responding to every prayer and “the incense burning on Mount Cangyan was extremely popular.”

In addition to these general descriptions, some inscriptions unconsciously recorded the believers' actions in the temple festival in order to highlight the contributions of local elites. For instance, the 1738 *Rebuilding the Stone Balustrade on*

Mount Cangyan Stele 重修苍岩山石栏杆记 mentions in particular that the pilgrims often slipped, tumbled down, and died on the hillside in front of the Holy Mother Hall.

It is said that those who fell from the mountain were not sufficiently devout, and therefore were punished by the goddess. No one pitied them. Thus pilgrims have become even more devout and the goddess better-known. . . . It is easy to fool the common people. . . . The goddess is worshipped by people from far and near. Their belief is so strong that it seems nothing can stop it.

Variants of the Temple Festival of the Third Princess around Mount Cangyan

Studies of temple festivals in China have often been influenced by Western discourse, confined within binaries such as the divine and the mundane, and the carnivalesque and the quotidian. Temple festivals have often been seen as separated from daily life instead of as a condensed representation of it. Similarly, apart from a very few studies (Zhang Qingren, 2013: 147–69; Yue, 2014c: 304–6), the majority of research on pilgrimage and temple festivals on holy mountains focuses only on activities from the periphery to the center that is the holy mountain and have ignored worship activities in the areas around holy mountains as well as the diversity of the forms of temple festivals (e.g. Sangren, 1987; Naquin and Yü, 1992). In other words, if we look beyond the temple festival on holy mountains, it is clear that there is an aggregation of temple festivals, each one an intertext to others, all centering on holy mountains.

However, we can still depict the outlines of the complex social morphology and human geography of the Mount Cangyan temple festival based on my fieldwork and that of others in this area over the past decade. In Hebei there are several temple festivals outside Mount Cangyan in the aggregation of holy mountain temple festivals, for example, the Bodhisattva Festival of Jingzhuang, Jingxing County, known as the Communicating with the Gods Festival 神通会, the Pilgrimage Festival 朝山会 of Caozhuang, Zhao County, the Carriage Festival 驾会 of Maqiu, Gaocheng County, and the Staff Festival 杠会 of Qinghengzhuang, in the Jingxing mining area.

Mazi 马子, the spirit medium in the Taihang Mountain area, is unlike spirit mediums in other places in North China (Li Wei-tsu, 1948; DuBois, 2005: 76–82; Li Xiangzhen, 2011). The Mazi often uses a sharp weapon to mutilate himself, but the wounds are quickly healed when he is possessed by a deity. This still occurs in one of the national intangible cultural heritage sites, the temple festival of Yanghai-Lishan, Hongdong County, Shanxi (Yao, 2010), although the official report has never mentioned the Mazi. In fact, the Mazi, who is possessed by E-huang and Nüying, has been the core of the temple festival and the focus of attention of almost everyone in the temple festival in the third lunar month, such as policeman, temple heads, pilgrims, investigators, journalists, and others. On April 19, 2007—the third

day of the third lunar month of that year—dozens of policemen stood outside the temple on Lishan in order to disperse the crowd and prevent the Mazi from hurting pilgrims accidentally while several temple bosses accompanied him.

Jingzhuang, as we have mentioned, was called “the owner of Mount Cangyan” 山主 at the end of the Qing dynasty and in the early years of the Republic. The Communicating with the Gods Festival of Jingzhuang continued for the entire third lunar month and its core was also the Mazi possessed by the Third Princess. The Carriage of the Third Princess, a palanquin containing a statue of the goddess, was carried to the main street of the village from the village temple in the afternoon of the twenty-ninth day of the second lunar month. Believers kowtowed, burned incense, made offerings, recited *fo*, beat drums, and danced in front of the carriage. Some people accompanied the goddess all night. The carriage began to cruise through every village nearby Jingzhuang on the first day of the third lunar month and ended up on Mount Cangyan on the twenty-ninth day of the third lunar month.

On that day, the statue of the Third Princess would be crowned with a phoenix coronet and placed in the palanquin. There would be a sharp knife and a long linen whip on the tribute table in front of the carriage. When the carriage arrived at the entrance of Hujiatan, the Mazi possessed by the Third Princess would run as fast as possible to kneel before the carriage. The head and the General Blue Flag Officer 总蓝旗官 of the association, who were waiting for the Mazi beside the carriage, would immediately take hold of the Mazi and dress him in a red-tasselled hat, blue tunic, red trousers, and thin-soled shoes. Usually before the dressing was finished, the Mazi would involuntarily seize the knife in his left hand and grab the whip with his right, and would snap the whip and brandish the knife, cutting his own face. It would be pointless to stop the Mazi from doing this. After stabbing himself three times, the Mazi’s face was often covered with blood. The head and General Blue Flag Officer of the Bodhisattva Festival would take yellow paper from the tribute table and cover the cuts on the Mazi’s face. Usually the bleeding would stop immediately. Then, the mighty Mazi would sprint straight to the Holy Mother Hall on Mount Cangyan. Brandishing the long whip, he would run back and forth three times from Hujiatan to the Holy Mother Hall for the carriage climbing the holy mountain.

As soon as cannon fire from Hujiatan was heard, the abbot and monks of Fuqing Temple came to the northern entrance of Hujiatan to welcome the carriage of the Third Princess only because the “owner” of Mount Cangyan had made the pilgrimage. The carriage was moved to the main street after the monks visited it in order for the pilgrimage association of each village to worship the carriage in turn and for pilgrims to kowtow and burn incense. This was followed by performances supposedly enjoyed by the Third Princess, such as the yangko, wielding the “iron fork,” shaking the imperial staff 颠皇杠, etc. Where there was a tribute table there would be a performance, from Hujiatan to the Holy Mother Hall.

The carriage went straight to the Holy Mother Hall after everyone had an opportunity to worship it in the main street of Hujiatan while each performance team also converged on Fuqing Temple. Nuns and believers knelt and burned incense again as soon as the carriage entered the Holy Mother Hall. And the abbot offered up the crown, phoenix robes, jade belts, several pairs of lanterns, etc., to the Third Princess. The Bodhisattva Society of Jingzhuang finished their pilgrimage and came back home as darkness fell. The temple festival of Mount Cangyan thus ended and, on the thirtieth day of the third lunar month, the gate to Mount Cangyan would be closed.⁸

There are a few writings about the difficulty and joy of pilgrimages in China (Feng, 1929; Naquin and Yü, 1992; Dott, 2004; Ye, 2009). Unlike the Jingzhuang villagers, who enjoyed the convenience of being close to a temple festival, the journey of pilgrimage associations and pilgrims from far away was much more difficult. Zhaochun (b. 1931, in Jiajikou, Ningjin County), a female believer of the Third Princess, clearly remembered how her grandmother and mother went to Mount Cangyan:

In the old days, my grandma wore cloth shoes and took her own food when she made the pilgrimage to Mount Cangyan. If she saw an ox cart on the way, she would hitchhike. If there were no ox carts, she would walk. It could take several days to get there. Her shoes would be worn out. I didn't go then. At that time all pilgrims were doing good. Even my mom took her own food to Mount Cangyan and went by ox cart.

When she started make pilgrimages after the Reform and Opening-up, she was able to go by tractor.

About seventy years ago there were many pilgrimage associations in the villages on both sides of Mount Taihang. These associations were also called “tea hut societies” 茶棚会, because they provided free gruel and tea and a resting place for pilgrims. Generally speaking, there was an association head 会首, a gatherer of offerings 敛首, and dozens of common members 合会 in a pilgrimage association. On the banner of the tea hut society of Caozhuang, Zhao County, which was made in 1884 in commemoration of the pilgrimage to Mount Cangyan in that year, the names of the association head, gatherer of offerings, and 18 common members were clearly written from right to left in addition to the four characters 万善同归 (All Good People Will Come to the Buddha).

There were two types of tea hut societies, “mobile huts” 行棚 and “stationary huts” 坐棚. The former built a hut on their way to Mount Cangyan and the latter built one in their own village or a believer's home because of weather, war, or lack of money, and so on. There was always a statue or image of the Third Princess in the hut. Tea hut societies had their own relatively fixed location on the pilgrimage

⁸ http://travel.hebei.com.cn/hbhsly/lyztk/hbmhy100129/201001/t20100130_1114843.shtml (accessed Feb. 18, 2010).

roads. The paraphernalia of mobile huts, such as bowls, pans and pots, were usually buried when the Mount Cangyan temple festival was over and were dug up the following year.

According to Liu Xiaobian (b. 1930), the head of the Caozhuang tea hut society, in the past the tea hut society set out for Mount Cangyan on the eleventh day of the third lunar month and arrived at Wangcun, Yuanshi County, about 40 km from Mount Cangyan, the next day. Wangcun was also a collection and distribution center of pilgrimage societies to the east of Mount Cangyan. After arriving in Wangcun, some stayed and worshipped the goddess in different huts, while others went on a pilgrimage to Mount Cangyan itself. The pilgrimage association of Caozhuang had built a simple house in Wangcun before 1937. People would burn the carriage of the Third Princess, a portrait of the goddess, and bury paraphernalia that was inconvenient to carry on the sixteenth day of the third lunar month before they returned to Caozhuang. The pilgrimage to Mount Cangyan stopped in 1937 and the building that housed the Caozhuang tea hut society in Wangcun was abandoned. Pilgrimage to Mount Cangyan became possible again after the Reforming and Opening-up. However, Caozhuang villagers did not make the pilgrimage because the admission fee to Mount Cangyan and the cost of transportation was too great. Instead they built a hut in a believer's home to worship the Third Princess on the fifteenth day of the third lunar month each year (Yue, 2007: 67–72).

There were quite a few carriage festivals in the villages and towns surrounding Mount Cangyan, such as Wangcun, because many tea hut societies and pilgrims gathered there and the pilgrims would burn the carriage of the goddess when the temple festival was over. There was a large carriage festival in the town of Meihua, Gaocheng County, before 1949. The carriage festival in Maqiu, a village in Meihua, which was held between the nineteenth and twenty-fourth days of the third lunar month, has been restored since the 1980s. These days, after building a hut to worship the carriage, which contains a statue of the Third Princess about two meters high, three meters long, and one meter wide, made of bamboo and colored paper, the statue is burnt on the twenty-fifth day of the third lunar month. However, before 1937, people took the carriage to Meihua to burn it on the twenty-fourth day of the third lunar month. The goddess carriages in many villages near Meihua were burnt in Meihua on the same day. In the past, every family along the road from Maqiu to Meihua would kowtow and burn incense in front of their own doors when the carriage passed by and then people would go to Meihua, following the carriage.

The term pilgrimage society refers to two different things: the first is a secondary group that originated from the belief in the Third Princess, namely a belief circle; the second refers to a space used for worshipping the Third Princess, such as a temple, in which there is the statue or image of the goddess, i.e., the carriage, and pilgrims doing good, such as burning incense, offering up sacrifices, reciting the goddess's story, helping other pilgrims, and praying for themselves, their family, their village, even the state. Undoubtedly, the carriage as a hierophany is a key symbol of pilgrimage societies. Like the do-gooders who hold temple festivals in

their own homes in the area of pear production, Zhao County, Hebei (Yue, 2014a: 83), pilgrimage societies are very flexible and can, to a certain extent, expand and shrink according to the external circumstances of the key symbol, the carriage. As a result, the Mount Cangyan temple festival with the worship of the Third Princess as its core has never been completely interrupted but, in the context of anti-superstition movements since the late Qing dynasty, has quietly continued among thousands of families.

The ancient temple buildings, statues, and stelae on the holy mountain were damaged to varying extents during the Cultural Revolution. Believers retreated to their homes to do their worshipping. However, since the Reform and Opening-up, believers have stepped out of their homes in one village after another and the temple festival of Mount Cangyan has gradually been restored and has become more and more prominent. In this context, the revival of the Staff Festival of Qinghengzhuang, in the Jingxing mining area, which also involves belief in the Third Princess, shows the complicated social morphology and human geography of the Mount Cangyan temple festival from a temporal perspective.

The stele *Travelogue of Mount Cangyan* 游苍岩记 (1588) by Xu Shiyong 许时雍, says that “The Original Face Hall 真容殿 of the princess of the Sui dynasty is on the summit of Mount Cangyan. The hall is very busy on the eighth day of the fourth lunar month every year.” This is different from the mainstream idea that the spring temple festival was in the third lunar month. Coincidentally, before 1949, the Staff Festival of Qinghengzhuang was held in the fourth lunar month, but, as recorded by Xu, was on the fourth rather than the eighth day of that month. Villagers of Qinghengzhuang believed the Third Princess’s birthday is on the fourth day of the fourth lunar month and hence held the Staff Festival on that day. Moreover, villagers say the Staff Festival originated from the imperial staff of Yang Lin 杨林, a fictional hero in the *Tales of the Tang* 说唐全传. It is said that he paid tribute to the Emperor Yang of the Sui dynasty but was waylaid by Cheng Yaojin 程咬金 (589–665). Thus the Staff Festival is often called the “robbers’ staffs.” Actually, the latter name also derives from the fact that people could take timber from any village household without the householder’s permission or fell favorite trees on the way to Mount Cangyan. The team performing the Staff Festival was part of the pilgrimage procession to Mount Cangyan. Both the performance enjoyed by the goddess and the treasure in the staff boxes were gifts of Qinghengzhuang villagers dedicated to the goddess.

In 1987, when villagers spontaneously resurrected the Staff Festival, the festival committee made a special trip to the Holy Mother Hall on Mount Cangyan to worship the goddess. After receiving the goddess’s consent, the date of the festival was changed to the twenty-fourth day of the first lunar month. The huge success of the Staff Festival in 1987 established a positive interaction between the government and folk society. The traditional Staff Festival was related to farming. According to older people, the celebration was held twice every three years to thank the Third

Princess for the favors she bestowed. However, after the reorganized Staff Festival in 1987, the festival was held once every three years.

It is worth noting that further investigation is needed to clarify the social morphology and human geography of the Mount Cangyan temple festival. In fact, various old temple festivals of Mount Cangyan have been disappearing for a number of reasons, including a lack of convenient transportation, the landscaped construction and management of the sacred mountain, and urbanization. At the same time, because of the needs of leisure tourism, the pilgrimage now is often finished in one day.⁹ These changes entail new connotations in the social morphology and human geography of the holy mountain temple festival.

Contemporary Pilgrimage Practices

Although officially the temple festival starts on the first day of the third lunar month, for the past decade pilgrims have arrived as early as the twenty-sixth day of the second lunar month. In 2010, there were about 10,000 visitors every day from the first to the fifteenth day of the third lunar month (see Table 1). The mountain gate opened at 3 a.m. and the box office was open almost all the time. The first and third days were busier than usual, as were Saturdays and Sundays, an adaption to the rhythm of modern urban life. According to box office statistics, there were more than 10,000 visitors on the second day and over 16,000 on the third and sixth days. Considering there were people who sneaked in without buying a ticket, the actual number could have been higher.

The official website claimed that on average there were around 20,000 visitors each day in 2011 and 2012, which seems credible. Day-trip visitors often arrived

Table 1. Pilgrims at the Mount Cangyan Temple Festival in 2010

Lunar / Solar calendar	Number of people	Lunar / Solar calendar	Number of people
1st day, 3rd month / April 14, Wed.	8,028	8th / April 21, Wed.	9,221
2nd / April 15, Thurs.	12,261	9th / April 22, Thurs.	13,162
3rd / April 16, Fri.	16,367	10th / April 23, Fri.	13,361
4th / April 17, Sat.	13,646	11th / April 24, Sat.	14,336
5th / April 18, Sun.	9,545	12th / April 25, Sun.	13,764
6th / April 19, Mon.	17,102	13th / April 26, Mon.	7,500
7th / April 20, Tues.	10,357	14th / April 27, Tues.	2,663

⁹ In the studies of the modernity of China, Dong (2006) emphasized that what makes popular tourism today different from excursions in historical times is that, since the late Qing dynasty, elites have constructed modern civilization based on Western values.

early because they wanted to avoid the peak-hour crowds. People started to gather outside the mountain gate before 5 a.m. and it would not be until 2 p.m. that Mount Cangyan became quiet again.

There used to be many taboos surrounding the pilgrimage to Mount Cangyan, such as avoiding meat, scallions, garlic, and sexual activities for three days before the pilgrimage, bathing the night before the pilgrimage, not making the pilgrimage if a family member had died within a year. Nowadays only the elderly still observe these taboos.

Over the past century, in general the schedule and details of the pilgrimage have fundamentally changed as a result of the development of new modes of transportation. A single-day pilgrimage by coach has become a new tradition, and hence resurrecting the “mobile hut” is unlikely. Furthermore, many former challenging routines have disappeared: pilgrims carrying a saddle and crawling up the mountain; holding a brick and kowtowing, turning the brick over again and again; wearing the red clothing of a galley slave and climbing carrying a chain; and so on (Jin, 1936: 15–16; Yu, 2014: 102, 179–81). Naturally, a few pilgrims have done some unusual things, such as kowtowing every three or five steps up Mount Cangyan. However, it is still popular for pilgrims to scramble to be the first to burn incense in the Holy Mother Hall at 12:00 a.m. on the first day of the third lunar month. These days, on a few holy mountains the price of the first incense can be hundreds of thousands of RMB. People who burn the first incense at 12:00 a.m. on the first day of the third lunar month in the Holy Mother Hall are often local elites and even local officials.

There are more female pilgrims than male pilgrims, and more middle-aged and older people than young people. Pilgrims from the same village, street, or work place often take the same coach. Sometimes pilgrims are led by an incense head. Pilgrims from different places might depart at different times. For example, pilgrims from Xingtai and Handan often departed around midnight and arrived at Mount Cangyan around 4 or 5 a.m.

There are three Buddhist Recitation Societies 念佛会 in Jiajiakou, Ningjin County, that make the pilgrimage to Mount Cangyan. We investigated the recitation society in western Jiajiakou in 2010 and 2011. The leader of the association, Xiao Bo, was a young male incense head who was born in 1976. Xiao informed the members of the date of the pilgrimage, the cost of transportation, and other fees in the first lunar month that year. The society often set out at 12:00 a.m. of the appointed day. People burned incense and worshipped the Third Princess for a safe journey before departure. People recited the *fo Climbing West Mountain* on the bus and again prayed for safety. West Mountain refers to Mount Cangyan because Jiajiakou lies to the east of the holy mountain. The society got off to worship when they arrived at the original site of the Town God Temple of Ningjin. After that people recited *fo* intermittently on the coach.

People would recite *fo* again when they arrived at the gate of Mount Cangyan. This was usually about 4:30 a.m. After buying and distributing tickets, Xiao Bo

would walk ahead of the team, holding a red flag bearing the name of the society and the village. The members of the society preferred to stick with Xiao in the hope that he would help them to burn incense, make offerings, and communicate with the gods. Both pilgrimage associations and pilgrims selectively entered the temples on both sides of the road according to their own habits and wishes. The Jingxing County Tourism Bureau has strictly defined the route of travel in order to reduce accidents. The route covers all the main temples on Mount Cangyan, such as the Ten Thousand Immortals Hall 万仙堂, where pilgrims report their arrival to the Third Princess; the Holy Mother Hall; Fuqing Temple; Princess Nanyang Temple; and Yuhuang Ding.

Pilgrims kneel, burn incense, make offerings, and donate a certain amount of incense and oil money 香油钱 in the main temples. When a pilgrim does not enter a particular temple, he or she would bow from some distance away, and just throw some cookies or other offerings into the cardboard box that acted as a simple merit case 功德箱 near the doors of temples. Usually, pilgrims would redeem a vow to a god in the temple where they had made the vow to the same god in the preceding year. It is self-evident that most pilgrims have made and redeemed vows in the Holy Mother Hall for many years. There are various ways to redeem a vow, including kowtowing, burning incense, making an offering, burning paper, changing the robe on the statue of the god, offering a play (that is, inviting a theatrical troupe or a folk artist to perform for the god), giving money or food, offering one's own car (private cars have become a way for pilgrimage associations to get to Mount Cangyan), serving the god 当差, repairing the statue of the god, and repairing and even rebuilding the temple for the god. Xiao Bo often loudly reported offerings 报供 to the goddess for some pilgrims, a special requirement in the Holy Mother Hall. There is a relatively fixed content to reporting offerings: the name of the god; the name of the village of the pilgrim; the amount of incense, paper, offerings, and money donated. Pilgrims also balance this through devotions related to daily life by praying for a good fate (*shì'er* 事儿) or protection from disease (*bìng* 病) (Yue, 2014a: 64–69).

The colorful carriages that are offered to the Third Princess in the Holy Mother Hall in recent years are often eye-catching. These carriages are also known as granny carriages or Niangniang carriages. The carriage, which is actually a palanquin, is about 1.5 meters high and is made of wood, bamboo, fabric, and paper. The top of the carriage is decorated with yellow, blue, green, red, and purple tassels and colored paper, and both sides are decorated with red paper lanterns and with some pasted-on papercuts of the phoenix and other auspicious symbols. Inside the carriage is a sheet of yellow paper on which is written “Granny’s Tablet” 奶奶之位 and three pairs of paper lotus shoes and singular shoe-shaped gold ingots and silver ingots made of paper are placed in front of the tablet. The incense head would symbolically invite the Third Princess into the carriage in the Holy Mother Hall. Then the carriage, together with the incense and paper objects, would be burned in the large Auspicious Censer 吉祥炉 just outside the Holy Mother Hall.

After entering through the mountain gate, many pilgrims would do a good deed, for example scattering millet and cookies on both sides of the road for the wildlife, giving alms to beggars, and so on. Nowadays, since only the Princess Nanyang Temple and Yuhuang Ding have a relatively spacious courtyard, there are fewer performances than in the past. Yangko, beating the fan drum, and reciting *fó* were performed only in these two temples. Xiao Bo and his followers improvisationally performed the *Lahua* 拉花, a Jingxing yangko, in the Princess Nanyang Temple, and the play *Eternal Mother Begs on the Street* 老母叫街 in Yuhuang Ding on the fifth day of the third lunar month in 2010. The latter was so moving that many pilgrims wept.

Pilgrims returned from Yuhuang Ding to Dongtianmen and then to the Tiger Cave. Everyone took the coach home at the appointed time and place. There was no activity on the way back and weary pilgrims often fell asleep. The next day Xiao Bo would lead a few pilgrims to redeem a vow to the Third Princess in his home because they had made a vow for a safe journey. After that, the pilgrimage of that year was over.

Marginalized Key Figures: Incense Heads, Beggars, and Charlatans

Nowadays the head of a temple, namely the contractor, often plays different roles in temple festivals. Contractors are employees of the county Tourism Bureau, managers of the temple, protectors of the relics, servants of the deity, service staff for the pilgrims, defenders of order and safety in the National Scenic Area, etc. All these roles might have made them key figures in temple festivals, whereas in reality they are marginalized because worship activities in temples are still embarrassingly linked to so-called feudal superstition. Similarly, incense heads serving the gods, beggars, and charlatans dressed as monks or Daoists are all marginalized due to the tag of “superstition.”

Incense Heads Serving the Gods

There are a few studies of communications between incense heads and gods, ceremonial practices, and the relationship between incense heads and temple festivals in North China (e.g., Kang, 2002; Chau, 2006b; Yue, 2014a; 2014b: 107–71). The Holy Mother Hall incense head often proudly claimed that he was serving the goddess, a duty known as “accompanying the palace” 陪宫, when asked by friendly outsiders. He said he had been urged 催功 to come to the goddess and finish the work she had assigned. The incense heads in other temples had made similar statements. Each incense head had a relatively fixed temple and the god possessing him. Generally speaking, the temple provided free accommodations for its incense head. However, most incense heads brought their own blankets and food and slept on the floor of the temple at night during the temple festival. It was easy to see that incense heads were passive and controlled by the goddess while she was active. Furthermore, the

Third Princess decided the length of time an incense head stayed at the Holy Mother Hall. Some incense heads did not want to make the pilgrimage, but the goddess urged them, so they had to come. Some incense heads were already on their way home and thus had to come back to serve the goddess at her urging.

The services incense heads provided the goddess varied. They changed the cloaks and crowns on the statue, cleaned the temple, arranged offerings, cleared up the residue of incense, instructed novices on how to worship the goddess, reported offerings for the pilgrims, and presided over rites such as praying for a son, and, in particular, “reading incense” 看香 for pilgrims. Reading incense, in Hebei, is also called “watching incense” 瞧香 or “igniting incense” 打香. That is to say, the incense head possessed by a god in front of the shrine prophesies disaster or good fortune according to the shape of a bunch of burning sticks of incense (Yue, 2014a: 72–77; 2014b: 146–55) or three incense sticks (DuBois, 2005: 70–71).

Of course incense heads also recited *fo*, performed the *Lahua*, and quizzed each other on master-apprentice relationships 盘道 in their spare time, especially in the middle of the night. Most incense heads enjoyed the trust of pilgrims. A temple would attract more pilgrims if there was an incense head there, especially if he was considered efficacious and had a good reputation among pilgrims. Like Sun Wenhai and Xiao Bo, they were both incense heads and the leader of a pilgrimage association. They usually did not “accompany the palace” but nonetheless were welcomed and well received because they generated donations and had good relations with the contractor.

Pilgrims generally believed that incense heads were more capable than themselves in terms of conveying their wishes to the deity. Moreover, there was a reciprocal relation between the incense head and his temple. As mentioned above, an efficacious incense head could enhance the popularity of a temple and its god. On the other hand, an incense head often took advantage of this opportunity to hand out his business cards—imprinted with his name, phone number, and address—to pilgrims. Eventually, multiple reciprocal relationships were forged among incense heads, the gods, the contractors and managers of the temples, pilgrims, and the relevant local officials. The complicated circular relation also became an important structural factor that was concealed behind a veil of hegemonic discourse involving attention to such things as the scenery, cultural relics, tourism, intangible cultural heritage, development, and so on.

Incense heads were often very busy before 3 p.m. during the Mount Cangyan temple festival. At night, they recited *fo*, knelt holding burning incense 跪香, beat the fan drum, performed the *Lahua*, communicated with each other, and so on, according to the will of gods in order to enhance their supernatural ability to serve the gods. But the majority of incense heads, like temple contractors, were low-key, or, when dealing with strangers or people they felt were unfriendly or threatening, even denied they were able to communicate with the gods. As a result, incense heads not only marginalized themselves but also enjoyed an anonymous and

invisible presence in the crowd because their clothing was no different from that of any ordinary person.



Complacent Beggars

The work on the functions of the 三巡会 of the City God Temple of Shanghai in the Republican period by Yu Zhejun (2014: 164–67), and field investigations by Feng Kuan, Gu Jiegang, and others on temple festivals in the past on Mount Miaofeng (Gu Jiegang, 1928; Feng, 1929), make one thing clear: both large and small temple festivals in rural China, responding to the ethical imperative that one good turn deserves another, were responsible for performing much of the function of providing charity and welfare for all of society. The rich donated money, goods, and food, and the poor contributed their labor and time to repair bridges and roads, and so on, all in the name of serving the gods and doing good. Surrounding the gods in temple festivals was a harmonious, anti-structural “communitas” (Turner, 1969: 94–165). In this community, the boundaries and taboos that separated the rich and the poor, men and women were blurred. Many actions that were usually not allowed were normal in temple festivals. For instance, villagers could steal incense oil, lights, and offerings in the temple and poor children could openly steal pilgrims’ offerings in the Xu Zhenjun temple festival of Huangwugan, in Jiangxi (Xiong, 1997: 75–76). Men might touch the bulging breasts of beautiful women, and even tear off their clothes in the Silkworm Goddess temple festivals around Hangzhou (Gu Xijia, 1991: 180–82). It was not at all unusual that villagers gambled together and idlers stirred up trouble and fought each other in temple festivals in Hebei (Yue, 2014b: 276). Thus, the carnivalesque and the quotidian, the holy and secular have become two of the classic interpreting paradigms of Chinese temple festivals.

Pilgrims were usually generous to beggars in temple festivals regardless of whether the beggars were truly destitute. Hence, begging was a common scene in traditional Chinese temple festivals. Nevertheless, there has been little record of beggars in temple festivals and no academic study of this subject until now. There is some movie footage in the Duke University Library of beggars at the Mount Miaofeng temple festival in the 1920s. And a report on the Fangyan Temple festival in Yongkang, Jiangxi, contains some information on beggars (Hu, 1991).

According to older people, in the past there were many beggars at the Mount Cangyan temple festival. They included people not only from nearby villages but also from hundreds of kilometres away who gathered at Cangyan because the temple festival was long. Although there are still beggars at the Mount Cangyan temple festival today, the number has dropped and most of the beggars are villagers from nearby. In the temple festivals in 2010 and 2011 there were around 30 beggars each day scattered along the mountain footpath from Tongtian Dong to Yuhuang Ding. The beggars thus were conspicuous participants in the temple festival.

Nowadays most beggars come from the village of Dujiashuang, which is on the far side of Mount Cangyan. Some older beggars are from Sinao and Hujiatan. Most have no disability and seem contented. Only a few are disabled and dirty. Even

schoolchildren, on orders from their parents, come to beg on Saturdays and Sundays. Most beggars were silent, but a few disabled beggars wail pitifully. In fact, as a tradition, local older beggars often chat merrily and watch pilgrims passing by. Begging children play when there are not many pilgrims. Non-local beggars are equipped with a microphone, headset, and amplification equipment for singing, which makes them in some ways like itinerant performers.

Although begging had been banned by the Mount Cangyan management office, the number of beggars has not fallen greatly. Local villagers are familiar with the beggars and often chat with them. They even have selflessly looked after disabled beggars. Administrators, who are often from the local area, have not really taken any steps to drive off the beggars. Pilgrims, following tradition, always carry some small change and cookies for beggars. Therefore, begging has in fact been tolerated and accepted by villagers, administrators, and pilgrims in the name of tradition, which has made it one component of the modern Mount Cangyan temple festival.

Charlatans Showing Their Special Prowess

Since the gods are often unable to respond immediately to pilgrims' entreaties, there is ample scope for charlatans, who are good at reading people. Charlatans were another important participant in traditional temple festivals and remain so today. It is difficult to deny them a role in temple festivals because of the complementary relationship among gods, incense heads, and charlatans. Even though charlatans operate under the shadow of being illegal and manifestations of superstition, many temples on Mount Cangyan have opened the door and provided business space with tables and chairs for charlatans in the temple festival in order to meet the diverse needs of pilgrims and keep the temple thriving. Some charlatans dress like Daoists while others look like Buddhist monks. They claim that they are from Mount Wudang, Mount Wutai, or some other famous mountain. There were about fifty stalls and over one hundred charlatans in the Mount Cangyan temple festival in 2010. In the past decade charlatans have become an important part of the Mount Cangyan temple festival scene.

Charlatans can be categorized into locals and outsiders according to where they come from. Outsiders make a living by going to different temple festivals and only stay on Mount Cangyan during the temple festival. They usually rent rooms in nearby villages and rent simple stalls either in temples or in temporary tents put up by local villagers. The stalls usually contain a table, several chairs, and a bamboo tube with dozens of lots on bamboo slips used for divination. Some charlatans also put up a colorful advertising banner with words such as "Fortune Telling," "Practicing Divination," and "Drawing Lots." An image of the Buddha and the taiji 太极 pattern are key symbols in the stalls. Outsiders are often charged more than they spend on their own daily needs (such as transportation, room and board, a booth, and so on). Hence, outsiders often shouted, "the Buddha only takes big denominations and does not accept change." Unfortunately, some

outsiders had to go home in the middle of the temple festival because business was bad or the managers evicted them.

Local charlatans usually wear casual clothes and set their stalls alongside foot-paths. Some do not have tables or chairs but squat beside the path. The bamboo tube with dozens of lots was the most common form of advertising. Perhaps because they knew many local people, most local charlatans often confessed that they only understood a little about divination and just provided warm words to cater to the psychological needs of pilgrims. Naturally, they do not charge much and they are satisfied with what they receive. They also cooperate with law enforcement because they know each other. They would continue their business as soon as whoever was responsible for enforcing the law left. Actually, both the low-key demeanor of locals and the high profile of outsiders imply that charlatans in the current temple festival of Mount Cangyan have a marginal identity.

Red Fire: The Temple Incense Economy under the Contract System

The Economy of Magical Power and the Economy of Temple Incense

As mentioned earlier, the economic approach to the study of temple festivals, guided by principles such as secularization and modernization, has been fruitful. Using economic terms such as exchange, production, consumption, etc., Chen Weihua (2008) has analyzed the logic of the economy of magical/spiritual power in his research on rural religion in contemporary Taiwan. His work has a strong social-psychological flavor although at first glance it seems to be a religious study from the perspective of economics.

Modernity and secularization have changed some features of rural religion in Taiwan and new phenomena have emerged, for example the marketization of religion in symbiosis with its privatization, a crisis in the authenticity of magical power accompanied by rationalization, and refashioning temple activities into cultural festivals to fit with electoral politics. Thus, Chen has proposed that temple management is a field of exchange and the “exchange activities and their logic” in rural religion are an “economy of magical power” (2008: 68). Furthermore, he has argued that the magical power of gods produced by people involves a process of mobilization of resources as the consequence of the management of social relations (100). Moreover, since the measure of magical power is social and public, the estimation of whether a god is efficacious or not appears to have an objective basis, namely the accumulation of money and worshipers. Hence, the consumption of magical power is the production of it as well, but the consumption here involves what Bourdieu termed “euphemization,” consecrating and glamorizing secular behavior (91–95). The economy of temple incense in mainland China after the Reform and Opening-up is different from the economy of magical power, although its core is still the management of temples.

There is not much difference in the management of different temples. The economy of magical power and the economy of temple incense consist of the production and consumption of spiritual power and the production is itself consumption. The aim of the temple manager is to “enhance the ability of the gods” (Chen Weihua, 2008: 69), instead of maintaining the status quo. Wang Jiahua, using this perspective on the magic power economy, has analyzed the Yuwangtai Temple festival in Weifang, Shandong (2013). The Yuwangtai Temple was also contracted out and hence the belief associated with it was privatized. However, the marketization and privatization of rural religion in mainland China are obviously one-sided or partial, unlike the full marketization and privatization of rural religion in Taiwan. In Taiwan, a temple’s managers and believers have control over the religious rites and the technics of temple management. In contrast, in mainland China, in the shadow of so-called superstition, the final authority over a temple and its religious practices is always the government and the “official-media elites” (Yue, 2015a: 70–71).

Secondly, there is an obvious difference in the fracture and euphemization of the trinitarian relations among followers, offerings, and gods, namely the “alienation of the mind” 心意的异化, in the process of the production and consumption of spiritual power. The alienation in Taiwan is partial, especially among opportunists who participate in religious activities in order to win votes (Chen Weihua, 2008: 76–77), whereas it is comprehensive in mainland China. The landscaped holy mountain and sanctified scenic area described above are manifestations of this alienation of the mind and this euphemization. Specifically, apart from the pious incense heads and pilgrims, this alienation and euphemization appears among official-media elites, artists, contractors of the temples, beggars, charlatans, some journalists, and so on. Furthermore, it is possible that the true and the false interchange.

It is crucial to recognize that the economy of spiritual power focusing on the mind and euphemization cannot explain all social facts concerning temples contracted out for economic development in mainland China since the Reform and Opening-up. In Taiwan, the secularization of rural religion is the result of internal developments in the process of modernization. But the revival and reconstruction of rural religion in mainland China is closely related to top-down deregulation. In other words, in mainland China, the management of contracted out temples, apparently pointing to spiritual powers, has gone far beyond the category of religion itself. It involves not only believers, the contractors of temples, and incense heads but also many heterogeneous groups and represents the policies of the country and the politics, economy, and culture of local society.

Therefore, the economy of temple incense encompasses not only the economy of spiritual power but also of official governmentality, such as the conditional investment in holy mountains, temples, and so on, and people’s corresponding counteractions. There is no doubt that the change in the mode of production of

spiritual power reflects the change in the management of social relations, but this is not unidirectional. It is the logic of the production of spiritual power and rural religion that has led to various changes in modernization in mainland China, revealing many possibilities and uncertainties, rather than the modernization in mainland China that has brought about the changes in rural religion.

Performance under the Contract System

There is a close relation between rites of passage, such as praying for a son and reporting a death, family duties, and the booming (or, “red fire”) of the Mount Cangyan temple festival (Hua, 2016). However, rites of passage and family duties are just one of the many reasons why the Mount Cangyan temple festival has flourished. In fact, there is a closer relation between the booming of the temple festival and the system of contracting out temples. Both pilgrims’ consumption, such as making vows, and contractors’ production have promoted the vigor of the temple incense economy on Mount Cangyan. In a sense, the attraction of what contractors have produced is more important. The contract system has played a key role in making the production of spiritual power enticing. The contract system was adopted at Mount Cangyan in 1992. People bid for the right to contract via open tendering. For the next three years, contractors were in charge of the temple and had sole responsibility for its profits or losses. The contractors’ profits did not depend solely on the booming of the temple incense economy, but were also closely related to the economic attraction of Mount Cangyan’s scenery and the Jingxing County government’s revenue.

In 2011, the Jingxing County Tourism Bureau widely publicized three measures for increasing the income of the Mount Cangyan scenic area to above 10 million RMB. One of the measures was “performance evaluations” 绩效考核, which aimed to fully mobilize the enthusiasm and income generated by various departments and posts by requiring government employees to sign a letter of responsibility and promising to amply reward them for achieving the goals set in the evaluations.¹⁰ Obviously, a temple contractor is not merely an agent of the performance evaluation; rather, the contractor plays a key role. Making money is both an economic and a political task. The temples in the core area, such as the Bridge-Tower Hall, Fuqing Temple, and the Holy Mother Hall, are properties of the Jingxing Tourism Bureau, and are only contracted to formal employees of the bureau. Temples at the foot of the mountain may be contracted to others even though they may be inside the mountain gate. The cost for the contract for the Holy Mother Hall was 600,000 RMB in the contract period of 2010.

Although the mountaintop land belongs to Sinao, the temples built on it belong to and are managed by different parties. The Princess Nanyang Temple and Pusa Ding are now privately owned buildings. The former will be returned to the

¹⁰ <http://121.28.35.251/content.jsp?code=000270027/2011-01463&name=商贸、海关、旅游> (accessed Nov. 28, 2012).

Jingxing Tourism Bureau and the latter will be turned over to Sinao in 30 or 40 years. Yuhuang Ding had been the location of Sinao's primary school until the 1980s because of the movement since the late Qing dynasty to use temple property to expand education (Tai, 1929; Nedostup, 2009: 67–149). According to the *Stele on Rebuilding Yuhuang Ding on Mount Cangyan* 苍岩山玉皇顶重修碑记 outside the temple, villagers decided to rebuild the temple on its original site in 1991, and the Urban and Rural Construction Bureau of Jingxing County, which was the poverty alleviation unit of Sinao, raised 300,000 RMB for Sinao for the rebuilding. Yuhuang Ding was opened in 1993. After that the Sinao village committee has managed Yuhuang Ding and has contracted it out. The cost for the contract was 950,000 RMB from 2010 to 2013. But for the previous contract period, it was only 600,000 RMB. Huge revenue from contracting out has become an important source of income for Sinao villagers.

The Temple of the Reclining Buddha, which is about 100m from Yuhuang Ding, was built in 1994. According to the *Stele on the Temple of the Reclining Buddha on Mount Cangyan* 苍岩山卧佛寺碑记 outside the temple, the Urban and Rural Construction Bureau of Jingxing County rented the land from Sinao, and, together with the government of the town of Cangyanshan, raised funds to build the temple. Of course, it was approved by the Jingxing's Communist Party Committee and the government. The goal of building the temple was also to “solemnize the homeland, to purify the mind, and to develop tourism.” The Jingxing County Urban and Rural Construction Bureau will return the temple property and the right to manage it to Sinao in 2024. For now, there is a plaque reading “Buddhist Association of Jingxing County” hanging above the temple gate.

The contract system has led to many changes in the management of the holy mountain and the temple incense economy. Consumption by pilgrims—for example, travel, tickets, offerings, accommodations—is the core of the temple incense economy. Unlike traditional offerings, it is the accommodations, entrance fees, and tickets to scenic spots that are new parts of the temple incense economy of the landscaped holy mountain. The price of tickets to Mount Cangyan is halved during the temple festival and people over 70 enter for free. However, ticket prices in 2010, 2011, and 2012 were still 22, 25, and 30 RMB. Hence, many pilgrims from far away chose not to make the pilgrimage to Mount Cangyan because it costs at least 100 RMB per person per day. Tourism brought Jingxing County only 80 million RMB in 2011. But in 2011 and 2012 there were respectively 220,000 and 300,000 people who made the pilgrimage to Mount Cangyan and the tourism income generated during the temple festival was more than 5 million and 9 million RMB respectively.¹¹ In other words, the incense economy of the Mount Cangyan temple festival is not only the basis of the tourism economy of Mount Cangyan, but also the cornerstone of tourism in Jingxing County.

¹¹ <http://121.28.35.251/dept.jsp?deptid=307> (accessed Nov. 28, 2012).

Ironically, the booming of the temple incense economy is only possible because it promotes the tourism economy. The construction of roads, hotels, parking, and other infrastructure by the government provides a solid material foundation for the economy of temple incense. Here, politics is economy and economy is politics. The mutual reinforcing of politics and economy directly serves the Mount Cangyan temple festival pilgrimage. Of course, tourism promotes the local economy and cultural tourism has overwhelmed and masked the politics and religion in official discourse. As a result, the tourist economy and the temple incense economy interact as both cause and effect, although the scenery and the temple festival of Mount Cangyan are more a matter of labels than reality.

All direct and indirect participants, such as managers, investors, contractors, incense heads, pilgrims, villagers, charlatans, beggars, tourists, businesspeople, drivers, and cooks, have gained prestige and wealth, some more and some less, in this ambivalent relationship. This contradictory relationship of being more about names than reality and gaining both fame and wealth is prevalent in most of the holy mountain scenic areas. Many of new scenic spots have been deliberately added to various temples and sacred objects to consecrate the scene and generate money for the landscaped holy mountain, as in the case of Mount Tai. For example, Acrobatics World in Wuqiao, Hebei, was built by the Wuqiao County government and CITS of Hong Kong in 1993 in order to draw in tourists. At the same time, several temples as well as the "Eighteen Hells" man-made landscape were built. Acrobatics World won recognition as a national 4A class tourist destination in 2001 and has since taken in over 10 million RMB in revenue. Several years later, the Eighteen Hells was renamed "the Haunted Mansion" to cater to tourists and eye-catching archways were added to the Puji Temple and the temple of the God of Wealth.

During the Mount Cangyan temple festival, temple contractors and their employees are busy cleaning, receiving pilgrims, preventing fire, and serving the gods—all to enhance revenue. Naturally, contractors take all kinds of measures to bring in money. The contractor of a new temple either emphasizes the god's difference from the Third Princess, or, alternatively, emphasizes the similarities. The contractor of an old temple may discard the old god and replace it with some new gods if it seems that might increase revenue. Every temple claims to be the "Real Hall" 正殿, and displays an eye-catching red banner, often emblazoned with the words "So and So's Real Hall" in yellow or white. Moreover, red strips of cloth, about a meter long and five cm wide, called "peace red" or "auspicious red," are sold to pilgrims for at least one RMB.

The Mount Cangyan temple festival was prosperous and lively because of management's measures and techniques mentioned above. Following are some basic characteristics of the gods of the main temples on Mount Cangyan in the process of the production of spirit power. First of all, the same gods are worshipped in different temples. In addition to the Third Princess, the Road God, the Goddess of Mercy, the God of Wealth, and so on are worshipped in many temples. Therefore, there have been many disputes over the question of what is old and what is new,

what is true and what is false, and which banners proclaiming the “Real Hall” can be believed. Actually, both the temple manager and pilgrims refer to the Holy Mother Hall as the “Real Hall of the Third Princess.” The Bridge-Tower Hall has been called the “Real Buddha Hall” and the Yuanjue Hall 圆觉殿 has also been dubbed the “Real Fuqing Temple Hall.” It has even been claimed that the Red Memorial is the “Real Chairman Mao Hall.” Secondly, the function of gods has been increasingly diversified. The Third Princess now can bless everything—marriages, male offspring, careers and fame, health, peace, and so on. Moreover, the Road God, the God of Literature, and Guan Gong have become almighty gods. Thirdly, the combination of the gods is random. Guan Gong, Bigan 比干, and Zhao Gongming 赵公明 all coexist in the temple of the God of Wealth. Zhou Cang is also worshipped there because he was a follower of Guan Gong. In addition, in many temples both the traditional gods and Chairman Mao are worshipped.

At the same time, the business around the gods has become more and more diversified. Pilgrims making offerings to the gods and making donations, incense heads “accompanying the palace” and “reading incense,” charlatans practicing divination, the sale of “peace red” strips—all these, and more, contribute to one extent or another to the prosperity of temples. Furthermore, contractors have taken advantage of special resources through income-generating projects. For example, a building in the Princess Nanyang Temple in the Sui-Tang style was remodelled into shops which were rented out. Many temples have also added new landscape features—“wishing trees,” “shaking money trees,” good luck bridges, and so on—to draw in money. Several hundred stelae commemorating donations have changed the landscape of Mount Cangyan. Many contractors or employees often beg for offerings, yelling “Please express your good intentions! 表个心意呗。” Their shouting has become a part of the Mount Cangyan temple festival and affects the sensory world of all pilgrims.

Between the years 2000 and 2011 about 300 merit monuments were set up on Mount Cangyan. Most of these were in the Princess Nanyang Temple and Pusa Ding, on top of the mountain, since there was open space there. In the year 2000, for a pilgrim to get his or her name engraved on a stele cost 20 RMB. By 2003, the price had risen to a bit below 30 RMB. Similarly, in recent years there has been a price tag attached to having one’s name engraved at the Holy Mother Hall, the Princess Nanyang Temple, Pusa Ding, Yuhuang Ding, and the Temple of the Reclining Buddha: donating more than 30 RMB gets one’s name engraved on a merit stele; more than 1,000 RMB entitles one to a single monument; and over 10,000 RMB gets a large monument engraved with dragons. Moreover, to encourage donations, contractors give donors a receipt and a certificate of honor as soon as a donation is made. Some contractors at the temple festival even broadcast an advertising loop over loudspeakers: “Benefactors, benefactors, openly donate while the gods bless you quietly. Both heaven and earth will bless you with happiness and peace. A donation not only guarantees that you will be venerated by your descendants but also that your reputation will be everlasting!”

All this does not seem very pious to old pilgrims because they compare the old monuments, hundreds of years old, at the foot of the mountain with the hundreds of new merit steles which, for a price, bear the names of pilgrims cum donors and their villages. However, in a sense, the new merit monuments are still focused on the sacredness of Mount Cangyan and the spiritual power of the gods, especially the Third Princess. At the same time, these new merit stela, as a symbol of the efficaciousness of the goddess and the prosperity of this scenic spot, are evidence of the booming of the local culture, the development of the local economy, and people enjoying themselves.

Some researchers have paid a great deal of attention to the symbolic sounds involved in the temple festival in addition to the sounds of ceremonies. The echo of church bells, the blast of loudspeakers of the village committee, and the sound of the morning bell and evening drum vividly show the game that is current rural religion of China (Huang and Yang, 2005; Yue, 2015a: 213–26). The sound of the Mount Cangyan temple festival is also a game—for instance, although church bells ring out, there is no church. The management committee of the scenic area often broadcast both “things that visitors should pay attention to” as well as light music such as “Moonlight on Spring River” and pieces by the new-age band Bandari. The temple of the Reclining Buddha often broadcast the Mantra of Guanyin Bodhisattva, and the Red Memorial broadcast classic revolutionary songs, such as “The East is Red” and “Sailing the Seas Depends on the Helmsman.” All the high decibel sounds echoed on the mountain during the temple festival. The other sounds during the festival—such as reporting offerings to the god, reciting *fó*, the business being conducted in the stalls and shops around temples, the beating of drums, the cry of beggars, and so on—have become the bass section of the symphony that is the temple festival. In this deep and rich bass section, the shout of “Please express your good intentions!” is particularly intriguing.

The crying of “Please express your good intentions!” was a common way for temple contractors and managers to ask pilgrims and tourists to contribute to the temple. This cry accompanied pilgrims virtually throughout their journey on Mount Cangyan. The wording implied that there were no detailed requirements regarding donations in this situation. Obviously, this kind of low-profile soliciting was a supplement to the engraving of names on merit stela—both were inevitable outcomes of the temple incense economy. At the same time, that temple managers scrounge for money also shows there were many people who did not donate anything to the temples. In other words, there has been more and more homoplasy between scenic spots and sacred holy land and between taking a trip and making a pilgrimage. In short, the boundary between pilgrims and tourists has become increasingly blurred in the Mount Cangyan temple festival. In fact, the same is true of the Mount Miaofeng temple festival (Wang and Yue, 2016).


Today, cookies have become the most common offering in the Mount Cangyan temple festival because they are small, cheap, and convenient to buy. Hence, it has become common for visitors to throw cookies into the merit collection boxes. In

2011 the temple festival management put up a sign reading: "A tip: Please do not to throw money and food into the merit boxes from a great distance. That is not reverent." The notice, of course, was posted for the sake of managing the scenic area, but it also implied that random donations were universal. How much is not important nor is the specific location where the donation is made. What is important is the action of making a donation.

It is interesting that beggars often kept the cookies they got by begging at the temple festival and put them into gunny bags. At the same time, some people picked up the cookies and millet pilgrims had scattered on both sides of the road and sold them to hawkers and nearby villagers. Some beggars also sold cookies at a few RMB per bag to hawkers each evening during the temple festival. The pilgrims who came the next day would buy these, and give them to the gods and beggars. Hence, cookies, as offerings to the gods and alms for beggars, were recycled in the Mount Cangyan temple festival. Moreover, incense and paper and other items were similarly recycled, becoming "actants amassing" (Chau, 2012) at the Mount Cangyan temple festival (Yue and Wang, 2015).

Thus, religious practice is, in a way, a form of entertainment and at the same time entertainment is also divine. The pilgrim is not only a worshipper of the Third Princess, but a comprehensive consumer of the Mount Cangyan temple festival, which is like a contemporary Chinese large comprehensive marketplace. On the other hand, the tourist, worshipping the goddess or not, is more or less like a pilgrim among the incense smoke that coats the mountain. In the temple incense economy the truth or falsity of the mind and merit are mingled, and the alienation and euphemization of worship are always a flowing and changing process.

The Third Princess with a Thousand Faces: The Dialectic of the Contracting and the Contracted

After the Opium Wars, Chinese elites went through a process from simply admiring Western civilization to reflecting on it and then looking for an independent development trajectory. This is the story of modernization in China. With globalization becoming much deeper in recent decades, the idea of a unique, independent Chinese nationality seems more appealing than ever. There is a great deal of tension involved in the relation between  economic development, social change, urbanization, and the transformation of lifestyles. New forms of nationalism such as "ethnocentrism," "national learning" 国学, and Confucianism have become hot topics. The meaning of a variety of newly coined phrases such as "traditional culture," "national folk cultural heritage," "intangible cultural heritage," "the industrialization of culture," and "indigenous culture tourism" has been repeatedly (re)interpreted by official-media elites. In the process of (re)interpretation, along with social experiments implemented by the government, these phrases have quickly become buzzwords. Naturally, China's multifaceted temple festivals have been repeatedly modified in the process of modernization (Yue, 2015b) and they in turn have

revealed the diverse possibilities of modernization. This is especially evident in holy mountain temple festivals.

After landscaping China's famous and not-so-famous holy mountains, management's next step has been to turn them into objects of cultural heritage and intangible cultural heritage. Many actors are involved in this process in the name of development, including elites and ordinary people, merchants and officials, the natural landscape and temples.¹² In 2008, dozens of holy mountain temple festivals such those on Mount Tai, Mount Wudang, and Mount Miaofeng were listed in the second batch of the National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage and were recognized along with many official sacrificial ceremonies 正祀 listed in the first batch, for example the sacrifice to Nüwa 女娲 and to Fuxi 伏羲, the first, the original ancestor of the Chinese nation, and the second, the creator of culture.

It was in this political context that the temple festival of Mount Cangyan was listed in 2005 in the first batch of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Shijiazhuang under the name Fuqing Temple Festival. This would not have been possible without the joint efforts of local government, the Cultural Management Office, and the Tourism Bureau. Although the temple festival failed to make it into the higher-level list of intangible cultural heritage, it has still benefitted from being recognized as a national park and from the policy of developing the tourism economy. The mountain's importance makes the worship activities there, which otherwise would have been deemed as superstition, somewhat legitimate. Bestowing the label "national park" and "intangible cultural heritage" essentially continues the strategy used by local gentry and the government in the Qing dynasty to transform local deities according to mainstream values and then to exploit the result. Though the former acts are done in the name of development while the latter were for the sake of maintaining local social order, it is inappropriate to simply attribute the former to purely economic objectives and the latter to political objectives.

In the past 30 years, as a holy place and tourist site Mount Cangyan has been endowed with an imposing infrastructure. It has been highly successful in terms of landscaping the holy mountain. It has been made more and more into a proper tourist attraction. The pilgrimage itself has also changed in that pilgrims spend less time on the trip to the holy mountain. Nowadays pilgrims can make the pilgrimage within a day. The morning hours are the busiest time in the temple festival. Concomitantly, activities aimed to entertain the goddess have been reduced.

The intrinsic motivation of temple managers under the contract system is to maximize profits, which is in line with the project to develop the tourism economy. For this purpose, pilgrims are destined to become consumers and the

¹² Two sets of figures can be used to demonstrate the close relationship between holy mountains and tourism, politics and culture. Eighty of the 180 sites in the first batch of Major Historical and Cultural Sites Protected at the National Level (MHCSPNL) announced by the State Council are religious sites. The majority of the first batch of 44 National Parks of China are holy mountains. See <http://www.sach.gov.cn/tabid/96/InfoID/16/frtid/134/Default.aspx> and <http://wenku.baidu.com/view/d4327f791711cc7931b71621.html> (accessed Nov. 30, 2012).

so-called tourism economy actually totally relies on the temple incense economy. The Holy Mother Hall has always been the most prosperous temple on Mount Cangyan and has become the signpost and motor of the economy of temple incense. In this process, the villagers of Sinao and Hujiatan have benefitted. Moreover, "small ventures" and "big business" have changed the pattern of the two villages and intensified the original meaning of the saying "the Third Princess does not illuminate what is near," giving it a new connotation.

For over a hundred years traditional Chinese social activities such as reading incense, fortune telling, drawing lots, begging, and so on, have been labeled superstition or evil habits. Therefore, incense heads, fortune tellers, and beggars have become marginal actors in the temple festival and have been officially banished from the scenic area by management and law enforcement. The landscaping of the holy mountain has only deepened their marginality. But it is often impossible to thoroughly carry out the ban because it sometimes clashes with the aim of maximizing the profits accruing from contracting out management. Naturally, the traditional atmosphere of the Mount Cangyan temple festival is still thick although the Communication with God Festivals, carriage festivals, and some pilgrimage associations have passed from the scene and the social morphology and human geography of the Mount Cangyan temple festival have also been changed. Moreover, the twin relation between the managers of scenic spots and holy mountain believers involves both rejection and compromise. In the game between the scenic area and the holy mountain, the temple incense economy is continuing to thrive and the holy mountain has attracted many urban tourists.

There is no official record of when the landscaped holy mountain contract system was first adopted. Neither is there any record of why Mount Cangyan turned to the contract system in 1992. In that year Deng Xiaoping declared that the pace of the Reform and Opening-up should be speeded up. In the song "A Spring Tale" 春天的故事, the year 1992 is described as another spring in China after the Reform and Opening-up. The metaphor suggests that Mount Cangyan chose to adopt the contract system at just the right time. That was a time when state-owned enterprises had no choice but to reform, a time when commercial activities were highly profitable and "jumping in the ocean" (resigning and going into business) was fashionable.

The word *xiahai* 下海 (jumping in the ocean) recalls the excitement of that era. Everything was new, everything was changing. And the future was bright. So much money was to be made. In such a context, promoting the contract system on the landscaped holy mountain was considered legitimate by all. It had all of society's support behind it. However, as this article has shown, there is no simple relation between the contracting and the contracted. Instead, what is involved are dialectics of multidirectional interaction between individuals, local society, the state, and the temple and its deity.

First, there is the dialectic at the individual level. From this perspective that temple managers must sign a contract, go through a performance assessment, and

guarantee a certain level of profits in order to get the position in the first place, then the temple, including the deity within it, are contracted to them. However, because of the interdependence between the deity and its human followers, it can also be said that the deity contracts the temple, its servants, incense heads, charlatans, devout pilgrims, and curious visitors.

Second, there is the dialectic at the level of local social institutions. Like the dialectic at the individual level, there exists a dialectic between the deity and the Tourism Bureau (and travel companies as well), logistics and security, and other departments. These functional agencies of local government are to some extent indirectly contracted by the deity in the sense that they provide services for pilgrimage associations and pilgrims, and supervise and assess temple managers.

Last and most important is the dialectic at the national level, i.e., the dialectic between, on the one hand, entities with nationalistic names such as Major Historical and Cultural Site Protected at the National Level, National Park, Intangible Cultural Heritage, and on the other hand, the deity.

As its drawbacks become increasingly clear, technology is no longer the only source of economic and social development. Soft power—religion, history, historical architecture, cultural landscapes, and so on—has become a new driver of social development and the operations of the nation-state. The landscaped holy mountain therefore becomes highly valuable since it is a concentration of politics, economy, culture, religion, art, and local products as well as a product of the mutual construction between past and present, officials and common people. In this light projects such as historical relics protection, national park construction, and folk cultural heritage and intangible cultural heritage protection throughout the history of the Reform and Opening-up become understandable. Such projects in every case have been initiated and managed by multiple official agencies. In fact, however, the policy behind these projects that promote the industrialization of culture for the sake of economic development has been criticized (Yue, 2016b: 35–36).

Tourist sites and temples without visitors are useless to local government. Therefore, temple festivals that attract numerous pilgrims or visitors are not suppressed. Moreover, it is local government that is often behind schemes to invent “new temple festivals,” especially the so-called grand live performances 大型实景演出 to entertain both the gods and the people, such as the sacrificial ceremony to heaven and earth on Mount Tai and the “Jinggangshan” on Mount Jinggang. Such events often cost millions of RMB and require the cooperation of famous directors, actors, and many local villagers and involve the newest technology. With the simple goal of attracting as many visitors as possible, the strategy of grand live performances has been widely adopted on holy mountains in the new millennia.

Unlike the unsuccessful tourism business in the hometown of Liu Shaoqi, Tanhuochong 炭火冲, the tourism business in the hometown of Mao Zedong, Shaoshanchong 韶山冲, is flourishing. Numerous visitors come here to worship the leader, and not only on special days such as the Spring Festival, Mao's birthday, or the anniversary of his death. Strikingly, administrators here have also joined the

grand live performance trend. In 2015, huge posters reading “Biggest Live Show on Earth—Mao Zedong in China” were put up on the side of roads to Shaoshan and in nearby tourist sites. The posters claimed that this was a “national epic created by a first-class team” and would be staged every week from Tuesday to Sunday. This grand live show of a “national epic” is the equivalent of a modern myth.

The dialectic between the contracting and the contracted at the national level is very subtle, involving technology as well as that which is beyond technology. Contemporary art seems to be more enticing for many Chinese because of the grand live performance (Yue, 2014d: 147–81). Thus, the political economy of temple festivals on landscaped holy mountains can also be regarded as the political economy of religion, culture and art, science and technology, and information media. Compared with “holding temple festivals at home” 家中过会 (Yue, 2014a), the temple festival on a landscaped holy mountain can in some ways more effectively display the big picture of the dynamics of change in contemporary Chinese society.

On Mount Cangyan, all the hustle and bustle is centered on the Third Princess. Every participant in the temple festival is part of the Third Princess phenomenon, regardless of whether they believe in the Third Princess, how devout they may be, or whether they speak of the Third Princess publicly. Although referring to Chinese rural religion as “an imperial metaphor” is problematic (Yue, 2010: 347–68), the phenomenon around the Third Princess can be regarded as an epitome and metaphor of modern China. The motivation for landscaping and re-sanctifying Mount Cangyan, of developing the economy of temple incense on Mount Cangyan, whether from a political or economic perspective, is inseparable from the Third Princess belief. The dialectics between the contracting and the contracted in religious belief is best understood through a political-economic approach to temple festival studies. Any simple explanation based on just one perspective on temple festivals on landscaped holy mountains in contemporary China is bound to be biased. In the Mount Cangyan temple festival, multiple elements—religion, politics, economy, and history—intertwine and mingle, making news coverage about “contracted out belief” partial and biased on several counts.

First, such a description ignores the basic facts of many religions. Although Martin Luther launched the Reformation in the hope of restoring direct communication between the individual and God, there remain to this day hierarchical systems in Christianity that buttress the relationship of contracting out and being contracted between religious professionals and God. Similarly, it can be said that to some extent Confucian scholars contract Confucianism, monks contract Buddhism, Daoists contract Daoism, and incense heads contract rural religion. The more responsible contractors are, the more duties they will take on, and the higher their achievements. Empirical studies (e.g., Kang, 2002; Chau, 2006b; Yue, 2014a) have shown that without the efforts of numerous religious professionals, the religious situation worldwide—not just in holy mountain temple festivals and the tourism economy in China—might be very different. In this sense, there are no rights or wrongs in the contract system in terms of missionizing and management.

Second, it ignores the common relationship between religion and politics in Chinese history. Unlike in the West, where politics had been controlled by religion and the two separated in the course of modernization, religion in China has always been subject to politics or at least has been involved with politics (Berling, 1997: 41–71). This difference resulted in the monopoly that Christianity once enjoyed in Europe and the diversity of religions in China. The coexistence of and interaction among different religions generated the inclusive, synthetic, dynamic, and utilitarian “folk religion” of the Han people (Watanabe, 1998: 232–39). As I have pointed out, money is not the only motive behind contract activities. Many other aspects are also involved: politics, the economy, cultural development, and the construction of the nation-state.

Third, contract activities have always been related to raking in money, a fact that throughout history has often been used as a basis for objecting to religion. The conflict between Buddhism and Confucianism in the mid-Tang dynasty involved not religious but political-economic issues. Temples were suppressed because they had amassed vast amounts of tax-free farm land and labor. The movement to use temple property to finance modern schools that began in the late Qing dynasty was for the purpose of enlightening the people and saving the country, but it also concerned the definition of religion and superstition. At that time, Zhang Zhidong 张之洞 (1837–1909) thought 70 percent of temple estates should be expropriated (Zhang Zhidong, 2014: 59). In fact, accumulating wealth by unfair means, like feudal superstition, has been the essential reason why, since the late Qing dynasty, incense heads have been condemned (Yang Nianqun, 2006: 203–42).

We should be clear that it is not the norm for religious professionals and temples contractors to abuse their social role in raking in money. As is the case in the Mount Cangyan temple festival, the majority of religious professionals and semi-professionals are sincere (Chen Weihua, 2008: 91–95). Pilgrims express their piousness through praying and making offerings even though they know the temple is making a profit through such activities. In other words, spiritual needs and emotional satisfaction are still foremost in this occasion. This is true in many holy mountain temple festivals (Zhao Zongfu, 2002; Ren, 2007; Zhang Lu, 2009). To equate “contracting out belief” with raking in money based on rare individual cases is unwarranted and may lead to serious consequences such as the improper enforcement of administrative law. It may also demonize the religious situation in China—which is in fact diverse, free, and balanced—and give rise to false claims, such as there are no human rights in China or China needs to be Christianized.

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