

The Local Politics of Festivals in Hangzhou, 1850–1950*

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Abstract

The article examines the large public festivals in late imperial Hangzhou, notably the processions of major gods such as Marshal Wen and the Emperor of the Eastern Peak, and their place in local religious culture. It argues that, while the Buddhist pilgrimage attracted large numbers of people from outside the city, the Hangzhou local religious landscape was more deeply framed by Daoist rituals. It then explores the successive policies towards the festivals by the late Qing and Republican regimes, and looks at how they transformed the festivals, aimed some specific types of religious practices rather than others, and thus reshaped the local religious landscape over the course of one century.

Keywords: Hangzhou, festivals, Daoism, pilgrimages, politics

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A series of recent publications have shed much new light on the ways in which state management of local society and religion began to change by the turn of the twentieth century in China.¹ Historians have shown how a late imperial model of local officials engaging with and attempting to reform local cults and customs gave way to a new model of eradicating “superstition,” creating a separate and controlled realm for “religions,” and enforcing a top-down program of scientific progress. Yet, we still know very little about how this played out in terms of local social life, and how politics mixed with other factors (including socio-economic change and urbanization) to stimulate complex evolutions in local communal life—evolutions that are still going on today. One sure way to help clarify this evolving scenario is to examine data on large-scale temple festivals over time at a specific site.

Based among other sources on the very rich (and now digitized) descriptions of local festivals in newspaper reports, this article will attempt to trace the modern history of festivals in Jiangnan. My primary focus is on Hangzhou 杭州, but I shall also occasionally draw on data concerning other sites in Jiangnan by way of comparison. I shall first provide an overview of Hangzhou festivals in the mid-nineteenth-century, divided by three types of patronage: territorial cults, voluntary associations, and pilgrimage groups. After setting the scene, so to speak, I shall turn to a discussion of press reports pertaining to policies of the late Qing officials, who tried to reshape festivals in the wake of the reconstruction of the city after the widespread devastation caused by the Taiping war

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¹ Rebecca Nedostup, *Superstitious Regimes: Religion and the Politics of Chinese Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009); Vincent Goossaert and David A. Palmer, *The Religious Question in Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011); Poon Shuk-Wah, *Negotiating Religion in Modern China: State and Common People in Guangzhou, 1900–1937* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2011).

(1851–1864). In closing, I shall take up policy changes that emerged following the 1898 movement to confiscate temples, and the Republican-period anti-superstition campaigns. Along the way, I shall look at how local society adapted to these evolving policies while trying to maintain its communal festivals. I shall concentrate on festivals featuring processions of the gods and rituals in open spaces, which drew large crowds on the streets, not only from local communities but also from distant sites as well. The most common term used in modern sources to denote such festivals in Jiangnan is *saihui* 賽會 (other terms include *shenghui* 盛會, *chuhui* 出會, *shenhui* 神會). I shall pay much less attention to New Year celebrations and Lantern festivals² and to the seventh-month ghost festivals, even though they were also crucial to local social life.

The *saihui* are discussed in local gazetteers 地方志, anecdotes 筆記, and works on local customs. Such sources have been used by historians in a historical-anthropological perspective, to understand the place and role of festivals in local society.³ For our present purpose, one particularly important source is *Hangsu yifeng* 杭俗遺風, “Traces of Hangzhou customs,” a loving description of the city published during the Taiping war, against the backdrop of the massive destructions the war caused in Hangzhou—the city was taken by the Taiping armies in December 1861 after a horrific three-month siege, and was not retaken until March 1864, after hundreds of thousands of deaths and huge destruction. This work

² On the regulation of the New Year celebrations, see Chen Hsi-yuan 陳熙遠, “Zhongguo ye weimian—Ming Qing shiqi de yuanxiao, yejin yu kuanghuan 中國夜未眠——明清時期的元宵、夜禁與狂歡,” *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology Academia Sinica* 中央研究院歷史語言研究所集刊 75.2 (2004): 283–329.

³ A pioneering (but very outdated) work is Wu Cheng-han, “The Temple Fairs in Late Imperial China” (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1988). More recent works include Jiang Bin 姜彬 ed., *Wu Yue minjian xinyang minsu: Wu Yue diqu minjian xinyang yu minjian wenyi guanxi de kaocha he yanjiu* 吳越民間信仰民俗：吳越地區民間信仰與民間文藝關係的考察和研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1992) and Wang Jian 王健, *Libai xiangguan: Ming Qing yilai Jiangnan Susong diqu minjian xinyang yanjiu* 利害相關：明清以來江南蘇松地區民間信仰研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2010). On festivals in Republican-period Hangzhou, see He Shanmeng 何善蒙, *Minguo Hangzhou minjian xinyang* 民國杭州民間信仰 (Hangzhou: Hangzhou chubanshe, 2012), chapter 4.

provides a very detailed description of various aspects of Hangzhou culture, including a whole first section devoted to festivals. It was further annotated during the 1920s by Hong Yueru 洪岳如, who detailed which aspects of the city life had continued between the 1850s and the 1920s, and which had declined or disappeared altogether.

While it provides an overall view of the city festivals, *Hangsu yifeng*—like similar accounts of local customs—does not allow us to understand their historical change other than over the long term. Such an understanding focused on short term change requires us to look at other sources, notably newspaper reports. The *Shenbao* 申報 (1872–1949) in particular offers the advantage of continuous reporting over a period comprising the last four decades of the Qing (starting eight years after the end of the Taiping war) and the entire Republican period; I have so far identified and read some 350 articles on Hangzhou festivals (and over a thousand more on Jiangnan religious life). *Shenbao* articles are anonymous, but we know that journalists were, during the late Qing, lower degree-holders among whom a variety of views on religion could be found.⁴ They were often hostile to exuberant popular religious practices but nonetheless evinced a traditional Chinese elite religiosity, at least until 1900.

Indeed, the nature of the *Shenbao* reporting changes to a considerable extent over time. The late Qing period *Shenbao*, even though it is often (but not systematically) extremely critical towards local religious life, provides numerous detailed descriptions of both the festivals and their management by local officials. By contrast, after 1900, temples and festivals largely disappear from its pages and get discussed only when major conflicts between local religious activists and officials break out or when major incidents happen. In spite of this, I hope the data used here can help us sketch the trajectory of festivals in the complex world of late Qing and Republican local politics in the Jiangnan area. I shall argue that,

⁴ On *Shenbao* reporting on religion, see Vincent Goossaert, “Anatomie d’un discours anticlérical: le *Shenbao*, 1872–1878,” *Extrême-Occident* 24 (2002): 113–131.

due to political and social changes, certain types of festivals, notably the pilgrimage (largely but not exclusively associated with Buddhism) continued to thrive while territorial processions and communal Daoist rituals sharply declined.

I. Festivals in Late Qing Hangzhou

On the basis of descriptions found in both *Hangsu yifeng* and the *Shenbao*, as well as other sources, I would like to summarize and classify Hangzhou festivals during the late Qing under three broad types as follows:

First, **territorial cults**. Festivals at territorial (neighborhood) temples clearly formed the bedrock of Hangzhou social and festive life. References to territorial communities (literally: all those under the authority of a given Earth god, *shexia* 社下) abound in *Shenbao* descriptions of urban life, and always in connection to temple activities. Most temples clearly had a well-defined territory, and were supported by levies on all inhabitants. I have been attempting to show in my ongoing work that the religious organization of modern Jiangnan society (of which Hangzhou is of course fully part) is characterized by a very close integration of the territorial dimension of local society and Daoist ritual.⁵ For that reason, festivals of neighborhood territorial gods involved of course theater, music, banquets, and sacrifices within the temple, and a procession around the territory, but also a visit to higher-up divine authorities, either to a central Daoist temple (City God temple 城隍廟, Eastern Peak temple 東嶽廟, or the equivalent) or to an open-air space where the god engaged in a ritual of submission to Heaven, *chaoque*

⁵ Vincent Goossaert, “Bureaucratie, taxation et justice. Taoïsme et construction de l’État au Jiangnan (Chine), XVII^e-XIX^e siècles,” *Annales HSS* 4 (2010): 999–1027; “The Heavenly Master, Canonization, and the Daoist Construction of Local Religion in Late Imperial Jiangnan,” *Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie* 20 (2011): 229–245; “Qingdai Jiangnan diqu de Chenghuang miao, Zhang Tianshi ji dao jiao guan liao ti xi 清代江南地區的城隍廟、張天師及道教官僚體系,” *Qingshi yanjiu* 清史研究 1 (2010): 1–11; “Daoism and Local Cults in Modern Suzhou: A Case Study of Qionglongshan,” in *Chinese and European Perspectives on the Study of Chinese Popular Religions* 中國民間宗教、民間信仰研究之中歐視角, ed. Philip Clart (Taipei: Boyang wenhua, 2012), 199–228.

朝闕 (a human impersonating the god would hold the audience tablet and perform the 三跪九叩 rite)—a journalist noted in 1896 that this was never forbidden by officials.⁶ The close integration of territorial cults and their festivals with imperial and Daoist bureaucracy is repeatedly evidenced in reports. For instance, in 1890, when the Zhejiang 浙江 governor had secured a state canonization for a Hangzhou local god, Jinhua jiangjun 金華將軍, the temple leaders went in procession to a Daoist temple to thank the Jade Emperor 玉皇大帝, and then to the Wanshou gong 萬壽宮 to thank the human emperor, before touring the temple's territory.⁷

Second, city-wide festivals organized by **voluntary associations**. These associations operated supra-local networks often integrating territories and other groups in higher-order structures. Two major temple festivals built on such networks got the lion's share of reporting throughout the period covered by *Shenbao* and clearly were the largest festivals in modern Hangzhou: the Old Eastern Peak temple (Lao dongyue miao 老東嶽廟) festivals, in a suburban neighborhood west of Hangzhou, and the Marshal Wen 溫元帥 (aka Wen Qiong 溫瓊) processions. The first is being studied in great detail by my colleague Fang Ling, and I will simply refer to her work here.⁸ The largest of several Eastern Peak temples in Hangzhou, the Lao dongyue miao organized a procession for the divine emperor's 東嶽大帝 birthday (3/28)⁹ and an even larger festival, called "audience and judgment" (*chaoshen* 朝審), on 7/1–15, when hundreds of thousands of devotees came from all over Jiangnan. These devotees were all formally registered as the servants of the divine emperor,

⁶ "Saihui xiansheng 賽會先聲," *Shenbao* (Shanghai: Shenbaoguan, daily, 1872–1949), 1896.07.04. Dates for *Shenbao* articles are given in the Western Gregorian calendar.

⁷ "Jinhua shenghui 金華盛會," *Shenbao*, 1890.07.23. On state and Daoist canonizations in late imperial Jiangnan (and their being intertwined), see Goossaert, "The Heavenly Master."

⁸ Fang Ling 方玲, "Hangzhou Lao dongyue miao de bianqian 杭州老東嶽廟的變遷," *Xianggang zhongwen daxue Daojiao wenhua yanjiu zhongxin tongxun* 香港中文大學道教文化研究中心通訊 12 (2008): 3–4, and "The Old Eastern Peak Temple in Hangzhou," in *Temples and Daoists in Modern Chinese Cities*, ed. Liu Xun and Vincent Goossaert (work in progress).

⁹ Dates in the traditional calendar are provided as month/day.

and organized in a bureaucratic way to fulfill all the roles and functions of the emperor's divine administration.

The Marshal Wen cult has been explored in great detail by Paul Katz, who has traced its history and described the celebrations in both Wenzhou 溫州 and Hangzhou. He has shown that the god's primary role was fighting plague through controlling and expelling the demons of pestilence.¹⁰ The two cults were very intimately connected—Marshal Wen was a divine general under the orders of the Emperor of the Eastern Peak, and his temples were considered subordinate 下院 to the Eastern Peak temples.¹¹ In Hangzhou, Marshal Wen's birthday was celebrated on 5/18, and a mammoth procession traveled all around the city on 5/16, with all the city's territorial temples (over eighty in all) sending delegations.¹² As Paul Katz noted, Daoists nowhere feature prominently in descriptions of the Marshal Wen festival, but it remains that they managed his temple, and that the cult was embedded in a Daoist liturgical framework.

Mentioned alongside the Eastern Peak and Marshal Wen festivals, another major festive occasion was the birthday of Zhenwu (Xuántiān shàngdì 玄天上帝) on 3/3, celebrated at his temple at Xiaoheshan 小和山, also in the Western suburbs but further away from downtown than the Old Eastern Peak. Apparently, guilds played a prominent role in organizing the associations, *xianghui* 香會, that went to Xiaoheshan.¹³ Yet another important city-wide festival was that of the City God, who, like all City Gods, traveled thrice a year from his majestic temple to the altar of suffering ghosts, *litan* 厲壇, outside the city walls. The

¹⁰ On the Hangzhou festival, see Paul R. Katz, *Demon Hordes and Burning Boats: The Cult of Marshal Wen in Late Imperial Chekiang* (Albany: SUNY, 1995), 159–166. On Marshal Wen's festival in Ningbo 寧波, see “Jinzhì shénhuì 禁止神會,” *Shenbao*, 1895.04.30.

¹¹ “Hang yan 杭諺,” *Shenbao*, 1894.04.27.

¹² “Chijin chuhui 弛禁出會,” *Shenbao*, 1882.07.07; “Saihui xiansheng 賽會先聲,” *Shenbao*, 1896.07.04. The detailed description of the Marshal Wen festival in Fan Zushu 范祖述, *Hangsu yifeng* (Prefaces 1863, 1864, with additional notes by Hong Yueru, Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1989, 14–17), has been translated by Katz, see *Demon Hordes*, 163–164, 209–213.

¹³ *Hangsu yifeng*, 10–11.

temple, which housed the provincial, prefectural, and county (for the two counties, Renhe 仁和 and Qiantang 錢塘, based in Hangzhou) City Gods, was located atop Wu shan 吳山 (the hill within the walled city), itself an impressive complex of shrines that featured prominently in all descriptions of Hangzhou urban life. The Wu shan City God temple (along with some twenty other adjoining temples on the hill) was run, like most Daoist temples in Hangzhou before 1911, by an alliance of Zhengyi 正一 Daoist lineages.¹⁴ Although the City God festival was not as prominent in Hangzhou as in other cities (such as Shanghai 上海 and Suzhou 蘇州), it was nonetheless a major event.¹⁵

The social basis of these festivals was voluntary groups, of which we can distinguish two types. First, performing groups—music, theater, stilt-walking, martial arts, portable floats (*taige* 台閣), and penitents¹⁶—generically called “ancillary associations,” *zhuhui* 助會, and formed to participate in processions, with some joining several distinct festivals. Second, groups of registered servants of a god (serving as runners, ushers, secretaries, attendants, etc.) were called *banhu* 班戶; those of the Old Eastern Peak temple were particularly numerous and famous, but the City God temple also had some.¹⁷ Typically, a festival was organized by the *banhu*, who formed the core of the procession, followed by the “ancillary associations” that followed them, adding spectacle and excitement. The two festivals of the Eastern Peak and Marshal Wen were so widely admired that

¹⁴ Quanzhen 全真 Daoists rose to prominence in the city only during the Republican period.

¹⁵ “Chugong shenghui 褚公盛會,” *Shenbao*, 1885.08.31. On City God festivals in Jiangnan, see Chen Hsi-yuan 陳熙遠, “Liji yu guijie—shilun youyi zai tan yu miao, guan yu min zhijian de Shanghai sanxunhui 厲祭與鬼節——試論游移在壇與廟、官與民之間的上海三巡會” (Paper for the “The Modern History of Urban Daoism” International Conference, Tainan, 13–14 November, 2010); Vincent Goossaert, “Managing Chinese Religious Pluralism in the Nineteenth-century City Gods Temples,” in *Chinese Religions in the Age of Globalization, 1800 to the Present*, ed. Thomas Jansen, Thoralf Klein and Christian Meyer (Boston: Brill, forthcoming).

¹⁶ On penitents in temple festivals, see Paul R. Katz, *Divine Justice: Religion and the Development of Chinese Legal Culture* (London: Routledge, 2008).

¹⁷ “Qingbo zazhi 清波雜誌,” *Shenbao*, 1885.11.17. On associations of registered servants of the gods, see Goossaert, “Bureaucratie, taxation et justice.”

they served as model for other festivals, which imitated their elaborate bureaucratic organization and rituals.¹⁸

Yet another type of festival organized by voluntary groups was the nine-day prayers to Doumu 斗姥, the Mother of the Dipper, on 9/1–9 (often called the Nine Emperors 九皇 festival, celebrating Doumu's nine sons, who are in charge of the seven visible stars of the Dipper 北斗, plus two other stars). Stable associations, apparently led by members of the Hangzhou upper class (rich merchants) set up altars, *doutan* 斗壇, in temples or other open spaces every year, invited Daoists to perform rituals (including a passing-the-destiny-gates, *guoguan* 過關, on 9/7) which attracted huge crowds. There apparently were up to thirty such celebrations in various parts of the city, with Wu shan being the number one spot.¹⁹ The Dipper associations could also organize ad hoc rituals, notably offerings (*jiao* 醮) in times of fire or epidemics; in one such case, in 1895, a Dipper association organized a large-scale ritual to ward off an epidemic, together with daily processions of Marshal Wen and a final boat-burning.²⁰

Third, **pilgrimages**. Unlike the neighborhood or city-wide festivals discussed above, the pilgrim groups coming to the city during the two major pilgrimage seasons, *xiangshi* 香市 (around New Year, and for the first of the three Guanyin 觀音 birthdays, on 2/19; and the sixth month²¹) mostly involved out-of-towners, both people from the surrounding countryside and from more distant cities, such as Shanghai and Suzhou, whose leaders, *xiangtou* 香頭 chartered pilgrimage boats, *xiangchuan* 香船. This is still the case today (buses having replaced the boat), with the pilgrim groups touring the eight major Hangzhou temples during the New Year period (1/1–15) being mostly made up of villagers. Such groups tend to visit several temples (including the Quanzhen Daoist Fuxing guan 福星觀 atop Yuhuang shan 玉皇山 that emerged as a major

¹⁸ “Yingsai mishen 迎賽米神,” *Shenbao*, 1887.08.09.

¹⁹ *Hangsu yifeng*, 23–24.

²⁰ “Xiling rangyi 西泠禳疫,” *Shenbao*, 1895.09.14.

²¹ The second Guanyin birthday is on 6/19. The third, on 9/19, drew fewer out-of-town pilgrims.

temple during the 1870s), but in earlier days the major cult was that of Guanyin, focused on her temples, notably the Upper Tianzhu si 上天竺寺 (also called Faxi si 法喜寺) and the nearby Lingyin si 靈隱寺. A historical and anthropological study of this pilgrimage has been conducted by Yü Chün-fang;²² I would just like to point out here that whereas Buddhist monasteries thrived on the Jiangnan-wide pilgrimages (and were richer than Daoist and local temples), the city's own religious fabric and festive life was still closely linked to Daoist ritual.

II. The Politics of Festivals in the Post-Taiping Context

The post-Taiping regime and high-ranking officials in Jiangnan in particular engaged in a policy of reforming local society and bringing festivals and other aspects of local religion under much tighter control than had been the case before the 1860s. Reasons for this policy were many (and will not be elaborated on here), including pragmatic concerns for social order (with large vagrant populations and demobilized soldiers sometimes creating trouble, and anti-Christian mobs) and more religious aspirations to improve moral standards and atone for the collective sins that (in the view of many members of the elite) had brought heavenly punishments in the form of the Taiping war.

Of course, *saihui* festivals had always been theoretically banned.²³ But in actual practice outright bans on local festivals were quite rare. Officials mostly tried to negotiate with local temple leaders by focusing on specific issues, notably the participation of

²² Yü Chün-fang, *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteśvara* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 360–369; Wang Jian 王健, “Ming Qing yilai Hangzhou jinxiang shi chutan 明清以來杭州進香史初探,” *Shilin* 史林 4 (2012): 89–97.

²³ Wei Wenjing 魏文靜, “Mingqing yingshen saihui lüjin buzhi yu shangyehua—yi Jiangnan yingshen saihui jingji gongneng wei zhongxin de tantao 明清迎神賽會屢禁不止與商業化——以江南迎神賽會經濟功能為中心的探討,” *Lishi jiaoxue* 歷史教學 14 (2009): 27–34. Wang Liqi 王利器, *Yuan Ming Qing sandai jinhui xiaoshuo xiqu shiliao* 元明清三代禁毀小說戲曲史料 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1981) has collected a large amount of material on bans against festivals.

women, even while using the threat of violence to get their way.²⁴ Officials and journalists alike often reminded their readers that whereas *saihui* were banned by the Qing code, this did not apply to “spring and autumn prayers to the Earth god” (read: village and neighborhood temple festivals), how to draw the line between the two being anyone’s guess. An 1867 imperial edict had banned the rebuilding of non-official temples destroyed during the war, except for territorial temples, *shemiao* 社廟.²⁵ In Hangzhou, local people routinely gave the name of neighborhoods and wards to their ritual associations in order to bypass the bans on festivals.²⁶

Furthermore, most of the major *saihui* in Hangzhou (and this is typical for large parts of late imperial China) took place in temples that were on the official register of sacrifices, *sidian* 祀典 (including the contentious Jingde guan 旌德觀 that organized the Marshal Wen procession²⁷), thus blurring any distinction between “popular” and “official” religion. One prominent case I have explored in other publications is that of the City God festivals and processions,²⁸ but there were other examples. The mammoth rituals for the salvation of the victims of the Taiping wars were among the largest in 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s Hangzhou, with tens of different Buddhist and Daoist clerical troupes performing at the same time: they took place at officially sponsored shrines, such as the Zhongyi ci 忠義祠 and with full-fledged participation by officials, yet they also featured collections of spirit-money among the whole Hangzhou population, piling them up around the temple in awesome amounts and burning them through the night—the kind of practices officials tended to object to.

However, the politics of festivals in Hangzhou, as in large parts

²⁴ Vincent Goossaert, “Irrepressible Female Piety: Late Imperial Bans on Women Visiting Temples,” *Nan Nü: Men, Women and Gender in China* 10 (2008): 212–241; “The Destruction of Immoral Temples in Qing China,” in *Institute of Chinese Studies Visiting Professor Lectures Series II* (Hong Kong: Institute of Chinese Studies, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2009), 131–153.

²⁵ “Fohui yijin 佛會宜禁,” *Shenbao*, 1878.02.08.

²⁶ “Hangzhou dengshi 杭州燈市,” *Shenbao*, 1897.02.23.

²⁷ For example, “Liupu naliang ji 柳浦納涼記,” *Shenbao*, 1896.07.08.

²⁸ Goossaert, “Managing Chinese Religious Pluralism.”

of Jiangnan, took a new turn during the post-Taiping period. First, temple destructions during the war and subsequent population decline and loss of corporate property caused many festivals to be discontinued independently of any government intervention. Many temples took 15–20 years to be properly rebuilt, while some had to wait until the late 1880s; most festivals could not be restarted until the temple was at least partially rebuilt. An 1876 report about a neighborhood temple tells us that its formerly famous festival did not take place between 1861 and 1876, when it was restored, on a huge scale.²⁹ Key actors in the revival of festivals were the guilds that controlled vast resources. One of the major festivals in Hangzhou, the Zhusheng hui 助聖會 (organized by the Zhusheng miao 助聖廟, the main deity of which was the Tang-period official Chu Suiliang 褚遂良), was sponsored by the powerful textile guild that threw in its weight in 1887 in order to transform a lackluster festival into a major one.³⁰ Thus officials tried to some extent to prevent festivals from being resuscitated while the city's economic elites did the very opposite. Similar reports abound from other parts of Jiangnan, where guilds were also instrumental in reviving large festivals during the late 1870s.³¹

Reports on policies to curb festivals that appear in the *Shenbao* very rarely mention the local territorial temples, the Dipper associations, or the Guanyin pilgrims. The Jiangsu 江蘇 governor Tan Junpei 譚鈞培 (1828–1894) tried hard to ban pilgrimages in 1880 and 1881, blocking the canals so that pilgrim boats from Jiangsu could not reach Hangzhou,³² but this was an exceptional measure and I have not seen any evidence of sustained policies against the pilgrims by Hangzhou-based officials. Before 1911, local officials actually did go to the Tianzhu si on Guanyin birthdays, thus participating in the pilgrimage.³³

The prime target of the policy in Hangzhou, as applied by a

²⁹ “Saihui jisheng 賽會紀盛,” *Shenbao*, 1876.04.12.

³⁰ “Hangcheng saihui 杭城賽會,” *Shenbao*, 1887.09.06.

³¹ “Jingkou saihui 京口賽會,” *Shenbao*, 1879.06.06, about the Dushen hui 都神會 in Zhenjiang 鎮江.

³² For instance, “Xiangshi shengse 香市生色,” *Shenbao*, 1882.04.20.

³³ *Hangsu yifeng*, 8.

succession of Zhejiang governors, was the Marshal Wen festival. This prohibition was not directed at Marshal Wen's cult in itself—some neighborhood temples had their own Marshal Wen side shrines and took him in procession within the temple territory in case of need, and this was accepted³⁴—but at the sheer size, effervescence, and city-wide organization of the Marshal Wen festival. Let us take a brief overview of that festival's late Qing history.

Prior to the Taiping war, the center of the Marshal Wen festival was the Jingde guan, a large temple within the walled city. Before the 1850s, the festival was fully supported by all the city's numerous *yamen* 衙門.³⁵ This temple's procession was formally banned just after the end of the Taiping war by governor Yang Changjun 楊昌濬 (1826–1897, *zi* Shiquan 字石泉, Zhejiang provincial administration commissioner ca. 1865–1869, and then governor 1869–1875); the governor's edict to that effect was even carved on a stele erected at the gate of the Jingde guan. As a result, a smaller and less central temple, the Yongning yuan 永寧院 (one of six Marshal Wen temples in town) took over, organizing a yearly procession, but on a smaller scale.³⁶ At the same time the three-day procession of the Eastern Peak 東嶽會 on 3/28 was also banned for some twenty years (but, not the even larger “audience and judgment” on 7/1–15).³⁷

In 1876, a group of gentry activists lobbied local officials (maybe the prefect and/or the two country magistrates) asking for the ban to be lifted, and got their way; they argued that the procession was needed to dispel a current bout of sickness from the city. The associations immediately prepared the floats and other equipment, with the help of other associations from neighboring villages and townships (where presumably the ban was not effective, and the procession regularly organized). At the last

³⁴ “Sanzhu zhongsheng 三竺鐘聲,” *Shenbao*, 1896.09.03.

³⁵ *Hangsu yifeng*, 15.

³⁶ “Hulin jishi 虎林紀事,” *Shenbao*, 1888.06.29. “Wulin huijing 武林會景,” *Shenbao*, 1893.07.06, compares these different processions.

³⁷ “Hang yan 杭諺,” *Shenbao*, 1894.04.27.

minute, however, the governor (who had never agreed to that lifting of the ban) arrived on the scene and prohibited all outsiders from taking part, allowing only the insignia of the god and temple leaders to go out in procession.³⁸ The same sequence of events was repeated the following year, when the god did not go out but crowds of penitents nonetheless went to the temple, all the while saying that the ban would only cause the epidemic to claim more lives.³⁹

The same argument was used again in 1887 and 1888, with members of the gentry requesting a lift of the ban to stave off an epidemic, and this time it worked; both the Yongning yuan and the Jingde guan conducted their processions, in succession and in coordination.⁴⁰ The lifting of the ban proved durable, for reports from the following years talk of magnificent processions, with the entire city decorated.⁴¹ But in 1891, the procession was again banned, this time because tensions with the Christian community were coming to a head, and the governor thought the crowds rallied for the Marshal Wen procession could easily turn on the churches. The leaders ignored the ban, and went on with the procession.⁴² The tit-for-tat game continued; the governor won in 1892 and 1893, when pleas for an authorization to have the procession to cure an epidemic fell on deaf ears,⁴³ but not in 1894, when a procession was organized by the Yingxian guan 迎仙館—yet another Marshal Wen temple.⁴⁴ In 1895, in the tense atmosphere following the Sino-Japanese war (ended by April), the Yingxian guan leaders themselves asked the “ancillary associations” not to

³⁸ “Xunfu jin shenhui 巡撫禁神會,” *Shenbao*, 1876.07.17.

³⁹ “Jinshi saihui 禁止賽會,” *Shenbao*, 1877.06.26; “Wulin jinwen 武林近聞,” *Shenbao*, 1877.07.14.

⁴⁰ “Hulin jishi 虎林紀事,” *Shenbao*, 1888.06.29; “Hangyuan saihui xushu 杭垣賽會續述,” *Shenbao*, 1888.07.02; “Saihui xiansheng 賽會先聲,” *Shenbao*, 1889.06.11.

⁴¹ “Saihui zhisheng 賽會誌盛,” *Shenbao*, 1889.06.25; “Hangyuan jinyu 杭垣近語,” *Shenbao*, 1890.07.02.

⁴² “Xianshi yufang 先事預防,” *Shenbao*, 1891.06.26; “Xiling xiaozhi 西泠小誌,” *Shenbao*, 1891.06.29.

⁴³ “Santan yuese 三潭月色,” *Shenbao*, 1894.06.19.

⁴⁴ “Leifeng xizhao 雷峯夕照,” *Shenbao*, 1894.06.17; “Xiangren nuo 鄉人儺,” *Shenbao*, 1894.06.27.

join the procession. However, the festival leaders in the townships outside of Hangzhou did not care to restrain themselves in such a way, and the downtown associations went to join their procession instead; the city people had to content themselves with celebrations restricted to the temples.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, new processions of Marshal Wen were started in neighborhoods that never had one (with the help of the downtown temples and associations), showing how fluid the situation was.⁴⁶ An 1895 description of a neighborhood temple procession also mentions that since processions were less common than they used to be people all flocked to see this one.⁴⁷

The more serious any actual epidemic was, the less officials were willing to restrain processions. 1895 was a bad year for sickness, and ad hoc processions, notably of Eastern Peak and Marshal Wen took place on a huge scale.⁴⁸ The governor did decline to authorize them, but they took place nonetheless, and presumably he thought it wiser to look the other way.⁴⁹ The downtown Jingde guan procession restarted in 1896;⁵⁰ in 1897 the ban was respected in most of the city (with guards being posted at temples' gates, and the two magistrates issuing particularly explicit threats), but not everywhere;⁵¹ the ban was also mostly observed in 1898.⁵² Then, in 1899, because an epidemic had claimed the lives of many soldiers, the chief officer of the Hangzhou garrison himself pleaded with civil officials to authorize the procession, which

⁴⁵ “Sanzhu zhongsheng 三竺鐘聲,” *Shenbao*, 1895.07.07; “Xiling qiulang 西泠秋浪,” *Shenbao*, 1895.08.16.

⁴⁶ “Wulin zazhi 武林雜誌,” *Shenbao*, 1895.08.23; “Yuanshuai xunjie 元帥巡街,” *Shenbao*, 1895.08.24.

⁴⁷ “Gaoqiao shenghui 高橋勝會,” *Shenbao*, 1895.10.31.

⁴⁸ “Xiling rangyi 西泠禳疫,” *Shenbao*, 1895.09.14; “Saihui liangzhi 賽會兩誌,” *Shenbao*, 1895.09.18.

⁴⁹ “Sanzhu zhongsheng 三竺鐘聲,” *Shenbao*, 1895.09.20. “Qianjiang qiuxun 錢江秋汛,” *Shenbao*, 1895.09.16, explains that the Zhusheng hui that year was authorized in order to help fight the epidemics, but on a limited format (just the insignia of the god, and a rite of worshipping Heaven).

⁵⁰ “Saihui xiansheng 賽會先聲,” *Shenbao*, 1896.07.04.

⁵¹ “Wushan lima 吳山立馬,” *Shenbao*, 1897.06.12; “Hangzhou huijing 杭州會景,” *Shenbao*, 1897.07.12.

⁵² “Jingfeng xiandai 驚峰夏黛,” *Shenbao*, 1898.07.08; “Wulin zalu 武林雜錄,” *Shenbao*, 1898.07.12.

actually visited the city's various *yamen* (as was typical for Jiangnan processions).⁵³ The two processions (Jingde guan and Yingxian guan) took place again in 1900, under the watchful eyes of the military, and with some limitations on dressing up as ghosts and other hellish figures that had been agreed on beforehand.⁵⁴ In 1901, the post-Boxers situation had prompted a ban (that was observed) but members of the gentry obtained an authorization for 1902.⁵⁵

The story of the Marshal Wen festival in Hangzhou fits into a more general late Qing pattern where bans on local celebrations were usually relaxed after some time. Bans were accepted within local society as emergency measures under special circumstances but not for the long term. For instance, around 1875, governor Yang Changjun banned all theatrical shows in temple festivals (following a brawl during a performance at a temple), a ban that apparently had some effect for about two years before one gentry group invited a troupe in a temple, then another one, and everybody quickly followed suit.⁵⁶ A common response to a ban on *saihui* was to organize them nonetheless but to reduce the scale.⁵⁷ Self-regulation was the rule; procession organizers themselves occasionally banned certain types of processional shows in order to avoid incidents.⁵⁸

To sum it up, late Qing officials tried to curtail the largest city-wide festivals and processions, but with limited success. In spite of the fiery rhetoric from some journalists opposed to any form of popular religion, one gets from the press reports the impression that large segments of the Hangzhou merchant class and the gentry supported the festivals,⁵⁹ and in such conditions, it was extremely difficult for officials to maintain a ban. Repeated pleas for lifting the bans are not unique to Hangzhou; similar reports exist for Ningbo, where the mammoth Eastern Peak procession and festival

⁵³ "Xihu zhaoge 西湖樺歌," *Shenbao*, 1899.07.31; "Qianjiang liuhuo 錢江榴火," *Shenbao*, 1900.06.11.

⁵⁴ "Shenghu bilang 聖湖碧浪," *Shenbao*, 1900.06.27.

⁵⁵ "Wulin rangyi 武林禳疫," *Shenbao*, 1902.08.06.

⁵⁶ "Taixi chijin 臺戲弛禁," *Shenbao*, 1878.06.06.

⁵⁷ "Nanping xiaozhong 南屏曉鐘," *Shenbao*, 1896.07.23.

⁵⁸ "Nanping wanzhong 南屏晚鐘," *Shenbao*, 1896.09.01.

⁵⁹ "Lingyin songtao 靈隱松濤," *Shenbao*, 1891.06.16.

(also called Yongchang hui 永昌會) and the Dushen hui 都神會 festival evolved through a similar trajectory.⁶⁰ So the common pattern was negotiation; whenever a major festival coincided with a public service examination (when crowds of students were in town), a crisis (military threat), or a national celebration (mourning for a member of the imperial family), temple leaders and officials often negotiated a new date for the festival. And, during the disastrous North China famine in 1876–1879, and again in 1896–1897, when calls were made to seize temple and association funds and direct them toward famine relief, many festival organizers voluntarily made donations to charities, and scaled down the celebrations.

Negotiation was based on the idea that the vast majority of these festivals were legitimate; officials allowed for activities within the temple (sacrifice, banquets, maybe music and theater, and rituals performed by Buddhists and Daoists, which were rarely questioned), and possibly small-scale processions with limited numbers of participants and no “ancillary associations.”⁶¹ For instance, Jiangsu governor Tan Junpei could not ban the City God processions (they were part of official liturgy) but forbade other gods to take part.⁶² On this basis, parties haggled over interpretation, margins of tolerance, and benign ignorance, or over specific limits. For instance, many officials insisted the processions be finished by nightfall. Specific items under negotiation included the participation of female penitents, the presence of gambling dens, and the collection of informal taxes on all inhabitants. Officials sent their runners to control festivals, but these runners typically were part of the festival organization, and thus were clearly not bent on enforcing any ban. Constables under the authority of the gentry-

⁶⁰ “Yongjin Dushen hui gaoshi 永禁都神會告示,” *Shenbao*, 1883.09.14, where the Ningbo prefect allows a procession (otherwise banned) in times of epidemics; and “Huaiyang shenghui 淮揚盛會,” *Shenbao*, 1883.09.14, where the local gentry in Yangzhou 揚州 twist the officials’ arm and obtain the right to have the pestilence-expelling procession.

⁶¹ 1872–1906 *Shenbao* reports on the Hangzhou City God processions show that sometimes “ancillary associations” could join and sometimes were barred from joining, resulting in an alternation of “successful” and “dull” processions.

⁶² Goossaert, “Managing Chinese Religious Pluralism,” quoting sources from the *Shenbao*.

run Baojia bureaus 保甲局 were somewhat more reliable, but it would take the organization of the post-1901 new police forces to ensure that law-enforcers were fully on the side of anti-festival policies. Before that, officials determined to enforce a ban had to resort to soldiers (themselves often organizers of their own festivals⁶³), with the agreement of the military officials (who were not under the direct orders of the same-level civil officials), and they did not do this very often.⁶⁴

III. The Post-1898 Politics of Festivals

The politics of local religion changed dramatically beginning in 1898, which marked the beginning of the movement to confiscate temple properties, and changes further accelerated after the fall of the imperial regime. The history of festivals during the Republican period has not been much explored yet, but from the scattered available evidence, the decline of festivals in urban contexts is clear. The giant processions of the City Gods stopped in many cities where the related temples were expropriated; even in Shanghai, where the politically powerful temple management committee supported the festivals to a certain extent, the thrice-yearly procession was discontinued from 1912–19, from 1927–34, and again after 1937⁶⁵—even though during that period, the devotional associations' leaders managed to have a ritual performed at a cemetery, with Daoists officiating, in lieu of the full procession and sacrifice to wandering ghosts.⁶⁶ I unfortunately do not have information on the Hangzhou City God festival during that period (the temple itself remained opened until 1949).

⁶³ Soldiers in the Hangzhou garrison organized their Ziwei shangdi 紫微上帝 procession, on a large scale, but without “ancillary associations”; it was said to be very well controlled: “Nanping xiaozhong 南屏曉鐘,” *Shenbao*, 1897.02.21.

⁶⁴ “Jinhui rucheng 禁會入城,” *Shenbao*, 1882.11.05, on a festival in Ningbo when soldiers blocked the city gates, creating much tension in the city.

⁶⁵ Yu Zhejun, “Volksreligion im Spiegel der Zivilgesellschaftstheorie: Gottbegrüßungsprozession in Shanghai während der Republikzeit” (Ph.D. dissertation, Leipzig University, 2010).

⁶⁶ Chen Hsi-yuan, “Liji yu guijie.”

Other processions were affected as well. Outright police bans were often ignored by temple leaders; for instance Ai Ping and Yu Zhejun's studies of processions in Republican-period Shanghai suggest that in spite of political leaders' stern determination to abolish all processions, police forces were too few to effectively enforce the ban and when they tried, leading to shootings and casualties, all parties had to come to compromises.⁶⁷ And while special efforts at enforcement were undertaken in 1912–1915 and 1927–1931, they were followed by periods when police forces were mostly resigned to letting processions go in spite of the bans.

The case of Suzhou is very revealing. In that city, many processions had stopped in 1912, if not a few years earlier, including those of the four City Gods (for the Suzhou prefecture and the three counties based in the city), which were famous throughout Jiangnan for their magnificence (yet often said in the *Shenbao* to have never recovered their pre-Taiping splendor). By contrast, in the countryside around Suzhou the processions continued through 1937. However, a severe drought in July 1934 created a whole new situation in which the local government, wary of igniting riots in a tense social situation, let people organize rain-making rituals and processions on an ever-increasing scale until it actually rained, and then a few days afterwards processions took place all over the city to thank the gods. Many of these processions, which had not been held for twenty years, resumed and most of the time included a visit to the Suzhou central temple, the Xuanmiao guan 玄妙觀. The four City gods also resumed their procession, led by the Daoist in charge of one of their temples, followed by the neighborhoods' Earth gods.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Yu Zhejun, "Volksreligion im Spiegel der Zivilgesellschaftstheorie," chapter 10; Ai Ping 艾萍, "Minguo jinzhi yingshen saihui lunxi: yi Shanghai wei gean 民國禁止迎神賽會論析：以上海為個案," *Jiangsu shehui kexue* 江蘇社會科學 5 (2010): 216–221.

⁶⁸ Shen Jie 沈潔, "Fan mixin yu shequ xinyang kongjian de xiandai licheng—yi 1934 nian Suzhou de qiuyu yishi wei li 反迷信與社區信仰空間的現代歷程——以1934年蘇州的求雨儀式為例," *Shilin* 史林 2 (2007): 44–63. See also Nedostup, *Superstitious Regimes*, 136–137 on the massive rain-making *jiao* at the Xuanmiao guan.

Factors other than brute force played against the *saihui*, however. To return to Hangzhou, even townships around the city proper had mostly stopped their largest *saihui* by the 1930s because of political pressure, with KMT activists present at every festival propagandizing and threatening local leaders,⁶⁹ and because the traditional elites living from the silk industry that supported these festivals were largely ruined by the severe downturns in the rural economy and silk exports (and the lack of new industries in the city).⁷⁰ We have seen how the economic climate was crucial to festival organization in the late Qing (bad years for trade led to much reduced festivals) and how guilds were important in their funding; these proved to be major factors behind the Republican-period decline. Although details are lacking, the Marshal Wen festival seems to have been permanently discontinued by the 1910s. The Old Eastern Peak temple, which drew devotees from throughout the region, maintained itself better, but was affected by a series of bans, especially from 1927 on (more on this in Fang Ling's work).⁷¹ By contrast, pilgrimages to the Hangzhou Buddhist monasteries (much less dependant on corporate property than processions were) continued to take place on a major scale through the Republican period,⁷² and again today.

Hong Yueru, commenting on the *Hangsu yifeng* during the

⁶⁹ For a detailed discussion of how the KMT activists managed to disrupt the massive processions of village temples to Daoist central temples in townships around Suzhou during the 1930s, see Xiao Tian 小田, "Shequ chuantong de jindai mingyun: yi Suzhou 'Qionglong laohui' wei duixiang de li'an yanjiu 社區傳統的近代命運：以蘇州「穹窿老會」為對象的例案研究," *Jiangsu shehui kexue* 江蘇社會科學 6 (2002): 141–147.

⁷⁰ Li Xuechang 李學昌 and Dong Jianbo 董建波, "Ershi shiji shangbanye Hangxian yingshen saihui shuailuo yinsu qianxi 20 世紀上半葉杭縣迎神賽會衰落因素淺析," *Huadong shifan daxue xuebao (Zhaxue shehui kexue ban)* 華東師範大學學報 (哲學社會科學版) 39.5 (2007): 49–53.

⁷¹ He Shanmeng, *Minguo Hangzhou minjian xinyang*, 91–97, discusses how the *chaoshen* organized at a downtown Dongyue temple after 1945 was banned but actually continued when temple leaders obtained an authorization to have the festival not as a *saihui* but as "ordinary worship" (*putong shaoxiang* 普通燒香). This is one instance among many of negotiations to mitigate a ban through skillful rhetoric.

⁷² See the descriptions for 1947 in "Hangzhou xiangfan nongbao lei—shi'er ri Hangzhou xun 杭州香汛農胞淚——十二日杭州訊," *Shenbao*, 1947.03.17.

1920s, has interesting things to say about such changes. While he nowhere notes a decline in family religious practices, he does mention the decline of certain types of large-scale rituals. He observes that the pilgrimage to Buddhist (and a few Daoist) temples thrived (even when some of the temples were destroyed, other replaced them in the pilgrimage circuits⁷³), while community rituals, including the Marshal Wen processions and the Dipper Altars of the ninth month, had all but vanished. He also laments the demise of the festivals of the Fire God 火德真君 and Thunder God 雷祖 (on 6/23 and 6/24 respectively); the former, in particular, used to be celebrated in each neighborhood, and was a victim, among other factors, of a strict ban on theatrical shows in public spaces in the city.⁷⁴ In some cases, the decline of a festival is linked to the destruction of a temple (such as the Jingde guan), but not always. The Dipper altars were organized in open-air ad hoc spaces; their demise seems more linked to the decline of urban classes (silk merchants, *yamen* staff) that sponsored them.

Among the many reasons explaining the differentiated trajectories of various types of festivals during the late Qing and Republican periods, two seem to stand out. First, the pilgrimages fared much better, because they were organized by ad hoc groups based in the countryside and brought outside business to the city; by contrast, the urban network of territorial temples was much more impacted by anti-superstition policies and urban modernization. Second, festivals and other religious activities were much better tolerated in the suburbs and the hills (including the Old Eastern Peak) than in downtown (see Map 1). The walls that encircled the Qing city were dismantled soon after 1912, and the former Manchu garrison was flattened to make room for a new business and leisure district, Xin shichang 新市場, that caused a sharp decline of Wu shan as the center for ritual and entertainment, and the rise of a tourist industry on the lake shores.⁷⁵ As in other

⁷³ *Hangsu yifeng*, 13–14.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 18–19.

⁷⁵ Wang Liping, “Tourism and Spatial Changes in Hangzhou, 1900–1927,” in *Remaking the Chinese City: Modernity and National Identity, 1900–1950*, ed. Joseph Esherick (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2000), 107–120.

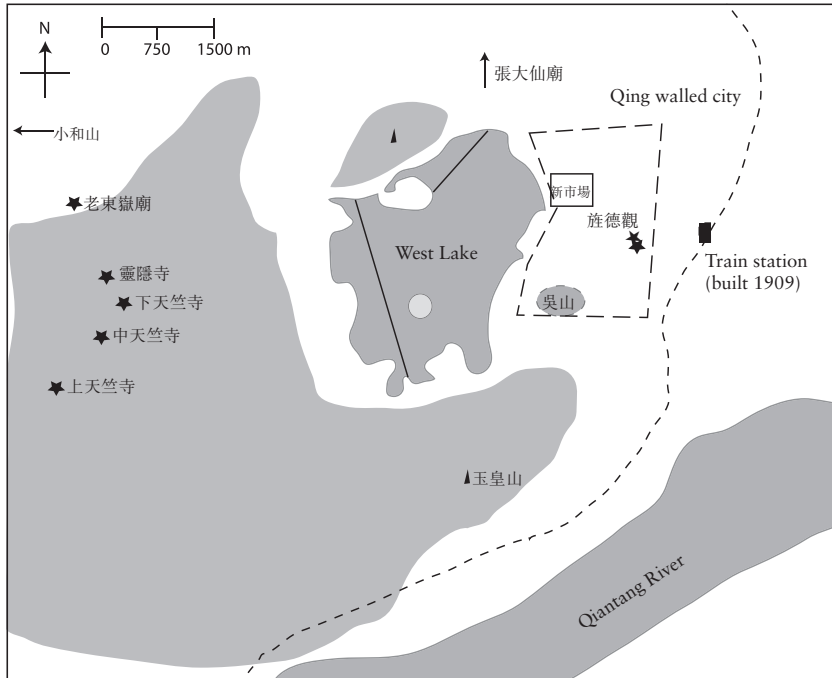
places, the local government focused its efforts at social and urban modernization in the city centers, relegating “superstition” to the outskirts. Somewhat paradoxically, then, the dismantling of the city walls did not reduce the gap between city center and suburbs. Tellingly, Hong Yueru explains that after the end of the Marshal Wen festival, local religious activists tried to develop new processions to take its place; one of these was that of Zhang daxian 張大仙, a local Daoist saint (who had actually lived there as a successful healer during the Guangxu period).⁷⁶ Zhang’s procession on 7/18 went around his temple at Gongchen qiao 拱宸橋, in the northern suburbs, but, he adds, it was not allowed to come into town.⁷⁷

Thus, the Republican period saw a growing divide between city center, and suburbs and countryside in terms of public religious life, and Daoism in particular, but memories of the place of *saihui* and Daoist ritual in urban life were still very vivid in the 1930s and 1940s. The politics of festivals over the late Qing and Republican period are marked by both continuities and ruptures. In terms of continuities, officials manifested a continued aversion to very large-scale processions and constantly feared public disorder, yet they could relax the bans in times of disaster (epidemics, droughts); they also attempted to channel resources spent on festivals to other uses. However, Republican-period officials differed from their late Qing predecessors in a number of significant ways: first they did not focus only on the largest festivals (such as the Marshal Wen procession), but they also aimed at the local neighborhood festivals, thus destroying the bedrock of local festive life. Second, they were not interested, as Qing officials were, in negotiating, drawing a line between licit and illicit rituals, but tried to ban all forms of temple celebrations. By tolerating the pilgrimages but clamping down on processions, they dramatically reduced the role of Daoist ritual in local social life. On the other hand, other forms of Daoism thrived,

⁷⁶ *Hangsu yifeng*, 16–17.

⁷⁷ Poon Shuk-Wah, “Thriving under an Anti-superstition Regime: The Dragon Mother Cult in Yuecheng, Guangdong during the 1930s” (forthcoming), discusses a similar phenomenon for Guangzhou.

such as the newly emergent Quanzhen temples, and the lay spirit-writing groups. As a result of urban modernization, however, the public face of Daoism and city festive life had radically changed within one century.



Map 1 Hangzhou major religious sites, late Qing-Republican period

杭州賽會與地方政策的變遷 (1850-1950)

高萬桑

摘要

本論文考察了晚清杭州的大型公眾儀式，特別是溫元帥和東嶽大帝等主要神明的賽會，以及他們在當地宗教文化中的地位。論文認為，雖然觀音的香市吸引了杭州城以外的大量信眾，但杭州當地的宗教圖景，在更深層次上是由道教儀式建構起來的。本文隨後探究了晚清至民國時期地方政府的歷年政策對賽會的影響，這些政策針對某些特定的宗教活動，從而在一個世紀內，重組了當地的宗教圖景。

關鍵詞：杭州、賽會、道教、進香、宗教政策