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Spatial Struggles: Postcolonial Complex, State Disenchantment, and Popular Reappropriation of Space in Rural Southeast China

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The state is consolidating on a world scale. It weighs down on society (on all societies) in full force; it plans and organizes society "rationally," . . . imposing analogous . . . measures irrespective of political ideology, historical background, or the class origins of those in power. . . . This modern state promotes and imposes itself as the stable center . . . of (national) societies and spaces. As both the end and the meaning of history—just as Hegel had forecast—it flattens the social and "cultural" spheres. It enforces a logic that puts an end to conflicts and contradictions. . . . Is this social entropy? Or is it a monstrous excrescence transformed into normality? Whatever the answer, the results lie before us.

In this same space, there are, however, other forces on the boil, because the rationality of the state, its techniques, plans and programmes, provokes opposi-

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tion. . . . These seething forces are still capable of rattling the lid of the cauldron of the state and its space, for differences can never be totally quieted. Though defeated they live on, and from time to time they begin fighting ferociously to reassert themselves and transform themselves through struggle.

(Lefebvre 1991, 23)

Introduction

In 1998 a township government in rural Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province, on the coast of southeastern China, approved the erection of a "cultural palace" (*wenhuagong*) on the site of a dilapidated elementary school. Cultural palaces date back to state socialist days when the state sought to provide workers with halls for healthy and uplifting leisure activities such as chess and drawing classes. The township government intended this palace to be a place for old people to gather and while away their waning years. The local villagers all readily assented to donate money and help in the building project. A local elder told me that as far as the villagers were concerned, they were helping rebuild the temple to Chen Shisi Niangniang, the goddess Chen Jinggu, whose temple had originally stood on this site. It had been torn down by the new Communist government in 1950 in order to build the elementary school and was never returned to her. In the 1980s, when it was possible to worship her openly again, people constructed a makeshift shrine next to the school and burned incense to her image. Local elders concluded that the only way that the government would agree to erect a new building on the spot was if it thought that the building was a cultural palace, and that is how the building was presented when it was completed in 2000. It just so happened that its traditional architectural style, with its shiny green-tiled roofs curved upward, fantastic mythological wall paintings, and opera stage bore all the hallmarks of a deity temple.

Mr. F. Wang, an old construction worker and Party member, told me with a mischievous grin in 2001, "we have Niangniang's image ready and other gods too, but now is not the right climate to bring her out, or else they will be taken and destroyed" (interview, October 25, 2001). He was referring to a just-completed temple-destruction campaign by the Wenzhou city government. "We have stashed them away in a place that I'm not at liberty to reveal. We've already chosen the spot for the altar and the statues in the cultural palace. We're just waiting for the right time to place them there." In fact, they had already built the statue alcoves, and I watched craftsmen put the finishing touches to the curved tiled roofs shading the alcoves. Pointing to a row of giant posters of the revolutionary fathers (Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Mao, and Deng) on the lower level of the split-level hall, he added conspiratorially, "we will put her on the level *above* those posters because she is a goddess," and he chuckled at this bold sacrilege toward another sacred order.

What does this microstruggle over space, repeated in many rural Chinese communities today, tell us about the project, strategies, and subversions of modern spatialities of power? What can be discovered about the definition of modernity and its power effects in the tearing down of this goddess temple, and what counter-movement of power is expressed in its rebuilding? Although severely curtailed, these furtive sacred spaces of the gods can still operate without a proper space of their own. This secret plan of local villagers bears out what Michel de Certeau wrote about a "tactic": "[A] calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus. . . . The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain

imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power. . . . It takes advantage of 'opportunities'" (1984, 37). Without its own proper place, the goddess temple is a cunning temple in waiting, "poaching" on the alien territory of the cultural palace, biding its time until a change occurs in the political winds. Time will eventually conquer the strategies of space.

This article takes up some ideas of modern space propounded by two French theorists, Henri Lefebvre and Michel Foucault. In his book *The Production of Space* (1991), Lefebvre shows that we cannot treat space simply as an inert and neutral container for people, events, and social institutions. He urges us to think of space as an ongoing social production of spatial structures and conceptions as well as bodily incorporations of space, whose contours actively produce and transform social relations and whose historical development must be examined. We must conceive of social agents, whether persons, groups, or social institutions, as inseparable not only from their positioning *in* space but also from their strategic deployments *of* space. For Lefebvre, the greatest and most systematic deployment of space in modernity is capitalism. Michel Foucault is also attentive to the imbrication of power and space. Focusing not on capitalism but on the increasing logic of preserving, monitoring, and managing human life, Foucault theorizes modernity as the expanding spaces of "disciplinary" and "governmental" regimes that create enclosed spaces, such as hospitals, prisons, schools, factories, and insane asylums, for optimizing surveillance, producing individuals, and providing care and social services to a population (1979, 1984, 1991). Governmental spaces are a hallmark of modernity in that they transcend differences of political apparatuses in the modern world (capitalist democracies, state socialisms, and dictatorships), cross over national boundaries and cultures, and insinuate and expand themselves into every modern institution. This article will engage with their ideas by examining the modern experience of a certain kind of space that was not primary in their theoretical concerns: spaces of the sacred or divine, of what modernity calls "religion."

Lefebvre is mainly preoccupied with the emergence of "abstract space"; the expanding space of homogeneity created in the wake of capitalism's global spread; and its suppression of differences of local culture, history, and natural landscape. These modernist spaces are divided into grids of private property, dependent on abstract labor power, expressed through the exchange value of land and buildings (real estate) as commodities. Abstract space is also instrumental, quantitative, repetitive, and predictable, based on a conceived knowledge and rational Cartesian logic; it increasingly takes over the bodily production of lived space. It tries to reduce "the practico-sensory realm, the body, and social-spatial practice" to the mathematical logic of mental and conceptual space and submits space to a product of a "hypertrophied analytical intellect" (Lefebvre 1991, 200, 308). Formations of modern space become interchangeable and are replicated in different natural and cultural terrains. Thus, the conceptual plan and exchange value of space soon override the differential meanings and autonomy of places based on older distinctions of ritual polities, community boundaries, and corporeal distinctions of sex, age, language, and kinship, creating the uniformity of modernist spaces around the globe (48–52).

Although Lefebvre focused on capitalist space, he also ventured to ask: "Has state socialism produced a space of its own?" (1991, 54–55). He concluded that despite its distinctive ideological and political apparatuses, socialism produced no architectural innovation of its own and accomplished no real revolutionary transformation of life. In other words, for Lefebvre, the revolution and socialism did not challenge but merely extended capitalist abstract space. Although state socialism and Western-style

capitalism are both sibling offspring of the Enlightenment and state socialism has now embraced capitalist strategies, their considerable differences must also not be overlooked. They trace two different historical paths to modern abstract space, producing two distinct forms of abstract space. Although socialist space also partook of what James C. Scott calls the "high modernism" of modern state visions (1998) and its planned economy also emphasized spaces of production at the expense of any other social usage, there were many departures from capitalist deployments of space. State socialist abstract space did not resort to commodification of land and infrastructure, nor did it rely on the initiative of private capitalist forces, but on direct coordination and control of space by a centralized state. Socialist space was produced through the tightening of administrative lines that extended across the country into local communities, lines that created a hierarchy of administrative spaces and connected far-flung places back to the center in Beijing. Here, the Foucaultian approach is better able to account for how socialist space was much more concerned about state security and surveillance through spatial arrangements, as seen in the total institutions of urban work units (*danwei*) and rural communes, brigades, and production teams that monitored and evaluated their members' political and private behaviors and made them totally dependent on them for subsistence and welfare.

Unlike capitalist strategies which focused on the building up of urban space, in a place of late industrialization such as China, state socialism paid equal if not *more* attention to the development of rural space. Whether they figured as the sites of revolutionary progress where urban people were sent to be reeducated, as in the Maoist era, or are now seen as backward areas dragging the country behind, rural spaces have been central to state projects bent on speeding up modernity. The post-Mao developmental state now harnesses the principles of capitalist development and aims to rapidly urbanize the rural. Like capitalism, Maoist state socialism and the post-Mao developmental state both have sought to corrode place-based cultures as obstacles to progress (Dirlík 1999, 168). Zhang Li shows how, in the post-Mao era, an enclave of rural Wenzhou migrants in Beijing, which asserted their place-based ethnic identity and organizational autonomy from state, proved intolerable to the municipal and central governments. This site was summarily razed to the ground by bulldozers (L. Zhang 2001). Diverging from capitalism and most pertinent to this article, however, in China the dissolution of local places and the reestablishment of centralized state power were tied up with a zeal for the eradication of older spaces of the sacred and divine. The state penetration and deterritorialization of the religio-magico-cosmological community placeness of an ethnic minority people in rural Yunnan Province throughout the Maoist period is eloquently described by Eric Mueggler (2001). This compulsion for destruction must be linked to several factors. First, spirits, deities, and ancestors were generally anchored to local places or were tutelary guardians of local ritual jurisdictions; thus, their sovereignty must be displaced. Second, because of semicolonialism, Japanese imperialism, and the civil war, temporal state sovereignty suffered such traumatic blows that in overcompensation for its losses, its return was all the more awesome. Finally, the new sovereignty established by the revolution was founded not by absorbing the traditional discourse and iconography of the divine, as in American civil religion (Bellah 1967), but by the radical rejection of divine authorities as competing powers threatening a fragile new sovereignty.

The question of religion is a thorny issue for a state revolutionary discourse of atheism (*wushenlun*) and materialism (*weiwu zhuyi*). Although the revolutionary state championed the common people by instituting a radical economic egalitarianism, it did not support their attachment to popular religion and ritual but sought to root

out these practices. Ethnographic and historical work in rural southeastern China and Taiwan reveals systems of ritual territoriality dating back to late imperial times (see Lin 1989; Katz 1995; de Groot 1900; Dean and Zheng 2000; Wang 1995). Village communities, kinship groups, and deity cult followers gave geographical form to their common identities and community life by performing their collective rituals in local deity temples, ancestor halls, and at tombs. Collective rituals, whether making sacrificial offerings in temples and halls and carrying gods in annual ritual processions to mark out community boundaries or celebrating festivals and deity birthdays, ritually demarcated the land into a patchwork of community territories that often did not correspond to state administrative boundaries. While ritual territoriality persisted through the modernizing process in Taiwan (Weller 1987; Allio 2000; Dell'Orto 2000; Sangren 1987), it was labeled "feudal superstition" and was systematically dismantled in the revolutionary process in Maoist China. It did not reappear publicly in mainland China until the 1980s (Dean and Zheng 2000; Feuchtwang 2001; M. Yang 1996; Anagnost 1994; Kipnis 2001). In fieldwork in three rural Wenzhou townships from 1991 to 2001, I encountered some ongoing struggles over space as rural residents sought to channel some of their newfound wealth from the market economy of small household industries into building or restoring sacred sites for community rituals. To the frustration of an adamantly secular state, both national and local, rural Wenzhou's post-Mao modernization has stubbornly not borne out the Weberian thesis of the disenchantment and rationalization of the modern world. Thus, the work here can contribute to what Talal Asad calls an "anthropology of the secular" (1999, 193) by examining modern state suppression of local sacred places and rural residents' attempts to re-enchant space.

Modern Chinese nationalism was not built upon familiar religious narratives, as in the incorporation of Christianity and Hinduism into nationalism in modern Britain and India, respectively (van der Veer 2001), but on cultural iconoclasm. This hostility to religious and ritual life in the name of modernity and science must be seen as a product of Western colonial discourse, whose missionary traditions regarded Chinese popular religion as "heathen," "uncivilized," and "superstitious" and whose Marxist materialist evolutionary discourse portrayed it as the "opiate of the people." Before the modern period, the term "religion" (*zongjiao*) did not exist in the Chinese vocabulary (Schipper 1993, 2–3), and imperial state structures were just as ritualized as popular religion.¹ The early Western missionaries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries introduced to China the distinction between a legitimate or true "religion" (understood in the Western sense of a formal institutionalized church, text-based doctrine, and a clergy) and popular "superstition" (*mixin*) (Schipper 1993, 16; van der Veer 2001, 5; Cohen 1994),² a distinction that remains central in Chinese state and intellectual discourse today (Central Committee 1989; Feuchtwang and Wang 1991) and informs state policy and action in rural localities.

In China much of abstract space was produced under conditions of postcoloniality. Although China was never fully colonized by the West or Japan, its modern project

¹See Angela Zito's (1997) study of the seasonal imperial sacrifices to the major deities conducted by the emperor in the capital and his officials in the provinces.

²See Thomas 1971 for a history of how the Reformation, in its emphasis on the direct relationship between the individual and God, ended the medieval Catholic Church's role in dispensing magical cures, charms, and exorcisms to the populace, thus drawing a dividing line between religion and magic or superstition. See also Hildred Geertz's (1975) criticism of Thomas for assuming the point of view of modern Christianity on the necessity of the decline of magic.

of revolution was borrowed from the West and its postrevolutionary reconstruction was propelled by an intense desire to catch up with the advanced material developments of the West. The Western intrusion and display of material superiority was a humiliating one that left a deep imprint on the collective Chinese psyche. According to Shu-mei Shih (2001), unlike colonialism in India, semicolonialism in China was marked by the absence of direct Western colonial administration or territorial occupation on the one hand and the colonization of elite consciousness on the other. The strength of "May Fourth Occidentalism" and the absence of a critique of modernity led to a deliberate destruction and alteration of native culture by Chinese elites. Along with Prasenjit Duara (1995), Shih suggests that in China it was difficult for Chinese to recognize and identify the complex operations of this fragmented and multilayered semicolonial knowledge and consciousness; thus, nativist resistance did not develop to any great extent. Modernity was treated not as a Western colonial imposition, but as a desirable Chinese project. Throughout much of the twentieth century, Chinese elite and later state discourse were propelled by a desire for China to regain its rightful place in the world. Enlightenment discourse—whose elements included evolutionism, progressive linear history, nationalism, the binary categories of advanced (*xianjin*) and backward (*luobou*) (M. Yang 1988, 1996; Duara 1995), and Marxist or liberal discourse—was incorporated in the drive to modernize and strengthen China.⁵ In the eagerness of modern Chinese intellectuals to embrace the Enlightenment in their nationalist self-strengthening and self-critique, they did not see that this very embrace enabled the extension of semicolonial power.

This alienation of the Chinese cultural self by the internalization of the Western Other introduces the problem of what I call a "postcolonial complex," in which the imperialists are thrown out but their denigrations of the collective self and models of modernity leave a deep imprint on the collective psyche. Here, I am taking the liberty of extending the psychoanalytic term "complex" (as in Sigmund Freud's notion of Oedipus and castration complexes and Jacques Lacan's weaning and intrusion complexes) (Evans 1996, 27; Laplanche and Pontalis 1973, 73; Grosz 1990, 67–74) from its original sense of the formation of individual subjects in primary family experiences of childhood to a notion of collective subject or psyche. Like the complexes guiding individual psychic formation, a collective complex shaping collective psyche is the product of earlier social structures and the negotiation of major psychic crises, which forms a "script" for later life so that "new situations are unconsciously identified with [those past primary] ones; behavior thus appears to be shaped by a latent unchanging structure" (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973, 73). Thus, a collective experience of the trauma and crisis of Western colonial denigration and subordination of Chinese culture leaves such an imprint that its structure of emotions (May Fourth Occidentalism and iconoclasm) and its assignment of role performance (elites pulling the backward people forward) are repeated unconsciously in new contexts.

Having been absorbed at a deep psychosocial level, the postcolonial complex in China has led to the violent purging, rather than reform, of native forms of culture in the twentieth century. It differs from what Edward Said (1979) alluded to as the

⁵Yan Fu, Chinese translator of Thomas Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics*, introduced biological and social evolutionism to China, reshaping them into a powerful discourse of the necessity for the wealth and power (*fuqiang*) of the nation-state in the global struggle for survival (see Schwartz 1964). Duara (1995) has shown how modern Chinese nationalism was predicated on a progressive linear history imported from the West and how it came to displace alternative histories and projects of modernity, such as federalist schemes which harkened back to an ancient decentralized social order predating the Qin empire.

"self-Orientalizing discourse" of the Others of the West in that the postcolonial complex is much more productive or creative. It is not simply a passive assumption of Western binaries but also an active working through of and a creative elaboration on these terms, as well as the adoption of nonbinary (r)evolutionary schemes of development and narratives of nation-state. Self-positioning does not remain in the passive position of the weak part of the binary, but actively imagines an eventual overcoming of the West through the elimination of "backward" elements of the Self. As Duara has pointed out, since China was not fully colonized, modernity was a nationalist Chinese project and therefore did not produce its own critique of modernity. In contrast, in fully colonized India, the continued strength of traditional religion provided a resource for a critique of colonial Western modernity (1995, 205–27). This denial of the Chinese cultural self in terms of a discourse of linear evolution and scientific progress is a key thread of continuity from Republican to Maoist and post-Mao periods. In rural Wenzhou, it continues to inform spatial struggles between urban and rural people, the educated and less educated, and the state and what can be called an emerging rural self-organizing "civil order."⁴

The Transformation of Space and Place in Rural Wenzhou

Henri Lefebvre outlined three dimensions of space (1991, 33; see also Harvey 1989, 218–19). "Spatial practices" are physical and material constructions of space, or flows and interactions of people and things that both occur in space and impart social order to space. "Representations of space" are the knowledge, cultural sign systems, and codes of social order imposed on space which allow and limit the consciousness, discussion, and manipulation of space. These representations are authoritative and dominating discourses that shape, mobilize, and delimit spatial practices. "Representational spaces" are more elusive than the other two dimensions of space, being symbolic spaces or imaginary landscapes that are clandestine and underground. As lived experiences which are ignored or even suppressed by reigning representations of space, representational spaces present new possibilities for thinking about and using space. These three dimensions are not a typology of different kinds of spaces, but describe different aspects of space (often of the same space) and are thought of as corresponding to the perceived, the conceived, and the lived or imagined space. This multidimensionality of space avoids the familiar problem of what Donald Moore (1997) has criticized as theories which assign a separate, autonomous, a priori site of resistance beyond the reach of power. Rather, this multidimensionality is a vision of spatialized power as flowing through, constituting, and defining sites within

⁴I would have to disagree with those who find the Western notions of "civil society" and "public sphere" of no relevance to modern China (Wakeman 1993; Dean 1997). The categories of civil society and public sphere emerge out of an experience of modernity. Since China, no less than the West, has experienced tremendous modern transformations, including the radical expansion of the state and the governmentalization of everyday life, these categories are pertinent to China even though the configurations and discourses of civil society will differ (see M. Yang 1999). Nevertheless, I concur with Chinese historian Yang Nianqun's call to avoid grand narratives of universal categories of "state and civil society" (2001, 34) and attempt an anthropology of the microstructures of this modern power dynamic and its particular indigenous lines of social tension in local history.

its domain and encountering resistance at different points. Since there must be power to produce resistance, resistance operates within rather than *outside* the space of power and the same space can be the site of contestation between two or more orders or logics of power.

The representations of space that have guided the transformation of modern Chinese space have been informed by the postcolonial complex of modernizing discourses discussed above. Although their general contours remain constant, such as the necessity to create the unified space of the new nation-state, the importance of rapid economic development, and the conversion of space to areas of production, they have shifted in emphasis historically. During the Maoist era, rural spaces were valorized as a space where urban people could go to renew their experience of poverty and replenish their revolutionary zeal and solidarity with peasants. In the post-Mao period, under the slogan of building a socialist market economy (*shehui zhuyi shichang jingji*), however, the new commercial real estate (*fangdi chan*) development of shopping malls, condominiums, and new factories are more valorized. Urban spaces come to be thought of through the imaginary of modernity, islands of progress leading the surrounding countryside forward, zones of enlightenment setting an example for the "ignorant" (*yumei*) peasantry. These knowledges and discourses of space in the twentieth century have led to a "state de-territorialization" of space (Deleuze and Guattari 1987) in China, from dispersed local communities to the sovereign and cohesive unity of a nation-state territory administratively oriented to the central space of Beijing.

With regard to spatial practices, rural Wenzhou in the Maoist era experienced increasing state administration and centralization of production and social life through collectivizing agriculture and eliminating the old class order. This process entailed confiscating and gathering up private land and dwellings and progressively dismantling familial space. Markers of familial space such as kitchen gods, family graves, the spirit tablets and portraits of immediate ancestors at family altars, and resident Earth Gods and Goddesses (*tudi gong, tudi niangniang*) were banned as superstitions. During the Great Leap Forward, an extreme point in the reduction of familial space was reached with eating meals in mass canteens and the long hours of collective labor. The period of the 1950s through the 1970s also saw the state confiscation of collective lands and buildings of lineages, deity temples, Buddhist and Daoist temples, and Christian churches, converting them into the fields, factories, or warehouses of socialist collectives. Rural marketplaces were also greatly curtailed. New buildings in rural Wenzhou during this period housed state offices, schools, and state- and collective-run factories. Thus, virtually all space became enfolded with the single space of the state, a space devoted to production, ideological inculcation, and surveillance.

To be sure, this was not the first state centralization of space in China. The imperial state—with its maps, administrative divisions of the realm, its fiscal and taxation policies for local areas,³ its licensing of temples and monasteries, its imperial decrees, its canonization of local gods and deities into a centralized pantheon, and its suppression of local sectarian cults—was able to appropriate and dominate the space

³See Wang 1995 for a rich analysis of how the Ming-dynasty government instituted an administrative/geographical system of wards or precincts (*pujing*) in the city of Quanzhou, Fujian Province, for militia organization, surveillance, and better integration into local and imperial administrations. Wang shows how these governmental wards were transformed by local people into territorial festivals and ritual circuits.

of far-flung regions. It never penetrated so deeply into local life as the modern state, however, and localities displayed a far wider range of architectural differences, local deities, community rituals and customary spatial practices. The abstract space of state socialism was much more homogeneous than was imperial spatialization. Although such space fixes people in space, it attempts to dematerialize "place" and to play down place-based identities. It substitutes a uniform hierarchical order of space through vertical and centripetal state administration. The national space is divided and classified in terms of a hierarchy that ranks localities in a vertical scheme of the center, the province, the prefecture, the commune (later the county), the production brigade (later the township), and the production team (later the village). The household-registration system (*bukou*) introduced in the mid-1950s drew sharp lines between urban and rural spaces, citizenship, and standards of living, severely curtailing the flow of people, goods, and information across space. Building on earlier imperial techniques of statecraft such as the *baojia* system of organizing households into groups of ten for mutual surveillance (Fu 1993, 87–93; Hsiao 1960) as well as modern Stalinist and Western governmental technologies, household spaces and work sites (*danwei*) also became sites of state penetration and mutual surveillance.

Unlike many other places in China, especially northern China, Wenzhou managed to keep much of its "placeness" throughout socialist state deterritorialization. Since Wenzhou was located in a potential war zone on the coast with Taiwan, it received few state investments of infrastructure or industrial development, resulting in very few state-owned production sites. This meant that the second-class status of collective-owned factories, farms, and rural enterprises predominated in rural Wenzhou. Wenzhou's marginal status, its geographical isolation (it is ringed by mountains on three sides and the ocean on the fourth), its undeveloped economy, and its unique language which is incomprehensible not only in the rest of China but even in Zhejiang Province all meant that Wenzhou was not fully integrated into nation-state space. Thus, its native culture remained more intact and autonomous than native culture did in other places in China, and although traditional ritual spatial practices declined during the Maoist era, they remained poised to reemerge once state restrictions were relaxed.

Spatial practices in 1980s and 1990s Wenzhou were tied in with the economic explosion of a market economy based on household production. This growth has catapulted Wenzhou from a remote and impoverished backwater in the 1970s into a zone of prosperity, whose inhabitants have fanned out across China with their small businesses. These new Wenzhou migrants have not only established themselves in other areas of China, but have also gone abroad to Italy, France, eastern Europe, and New York City. At the same time, Wenzhou has also become a destination for labor migrants from poorer interior provinces such as rural Sichuan, Anhui, and Jiangxi.

Five kinds of spatial practices have produced dramatic physical transformations of space in rural Wenzhou. First, this new connectedness with the outside world is realized in the physical infrastructure of transportation and communication. Whereas in the 1970s and 1980s there was only a narrow mountainous road that linked Wenzhou with the nearest urban center of Hangzhou (with a nauseating winding thirteen-hour bus ride), the mid-1990s saw a new airport with connecting flights to major Chinese cities, including Hong Kong; a new train station linking to Hangzhou and Shanghai; an improved highway, trucking, and bus system to all parts of China; and coastal ferry service to Shanghai and Xiamen. Due to rural household industries' commercial linkages with other parts of China, most households have long-distance telephone services and virtually all have televisions. Beginning in 2000, the first

Internet bars (*wangba*) opened for youths in downtown Yong Zhong, my research area's largest town. Second, sites for industrial activity proliferated in the 1980s and 1990s, built by individual families or joint-stock enterprises. These sites ranged from brick and tile kilns and printing factories to shoe factories and metal pipe and valve manufacturers. A third kind of building activity was commercial establishments in the local towns. Whole new streets were built with rows of storefronts for family-run shops selling anything from Hong Kong–Canton-style clothing and herbal tonics to electric appliances and popular music CDs and Hong Kong film VCDs. Also included in this private economic sphere are hotels, restaurants, private medical clinics, and even some clandestine private banks. A fourth type of frenzied building activity was family residences, ranging from modest cement dwellings which surpass landlord houses of the 1940s to multistory mansions owned by wealthy peasant entrepreneurs. This expansion of the familial sphere is expressed not only in the return of ancestor portraits and rituals of the Kitchen God and Earth God to home interiors but also in the fact that households now serve as the dominant units of production and factories are often housed within or near people's homes. I will not expound on these four spatial practices, since they are fully encompassed by the dominant representations of space, discourses on how a socialist market economy produces economic prosperity, rapid industrialization, and the budding of local towns for socialist modernization and material civilization.

What I would like to examine is a *fifth* kind of new spatial practice, which is best described by Lefebvre's dimension of representational spaces.⁶ Although they take the form of sites that are public and visible, they provide lived spatial experiences not recognized by the reigning representations of space. These buildings and sites are lineage ancestor halls, ancestral tombs and graves, deity temples, Daoist and Buddhist temples, and Catholic and Protestant churches—all sacred places for the enactment of public rituals. They produce new forms of collective identities that diverge radically from the national and class identities that the state has stressed. They can be described as new *civil spaces* of grassroots organization, kinship regrouping, fund raising for the public good, local community building, and reconstructions of the terrain of ritual politics. They shelter ritual practices that tap into an alternative cosmos of powerful divine forces. They allow for the spatial anchoring of earthly existence into a larger cosmos and the embedding of the present into the mythological time of ancient deities housed within their walls. These new spaces nurture place-based identities and practices: many temple deities are worshipped only in the Wenzhou area or coastal regions; lineage genealogies trace the history of their settlement in the local area; and these organizations gather local communities for public rituals, charity, and public-works projects. However, these spaces are not only islands of resistance and freedom, for they exist only with the permission of state sovereignty, but are also host to state hegemonic efforts to inculcate state values. Thus, they are at once sites granted and tolerated by state sovereignty, targets of governmentalization, and bases for an ongoing contestation and active decoding of the space of the state. The religious

⁶For Lefebvre, representational spaces are based on a more archaic absolute space, whose origins were fragments of nature, sites chosen for their special qualities of sacredness such as caves, mountains, springs, and rivers. Over time, historical forces take over these sites and build monuments, sanctuaries, and sacrificial altars, controlled by administrative, military, or priestly classes. Thus, absolute space was religious and political in character (1991, 48), and its present fragments assume the form of tombs, temples, and churches, places addressing not so much the intellect but the body and appealing to the emotions (236). Absolute space has not disappeared but survives as spaces of religious, magical, and political symbolism.

imaginary in these popular reterritorializations of space is not a sign of what state discourse called "feudal remnants" (*fengjian canyu*). Rather, as Dipesh Chakrabarty has pointed out, in understanding subaltern forces, we must resist Western historicism and "the logic of secular-rational calculations inherent in the modern conception of the political." Instead, we must "[stretch] the category of the political" to include "the agency of gods, spirits, and other supernatural beings" (2000, 12–13). That these spaces represent a popular politics can be seen in the fact that they are sites of struggle between local communities and families and state agents and discourses.⁷

Tombs and Gravesites

Since 1959 in Wenzhou and elsewhere across the country, the state has tried to promote the replacement of earth burials (*tu zang*) and funeral and coffin interment (*bin zang*) with cremation (*huobua*), ostensibly to save space for the living.⁸ The state has been only partially successful at this. According to Wenzhou government records, although a Funeral and Burial Department was established in 1959, only 2,287 corpses were cremated from September 1959 to June 1963 in the city, most of them children (Zhang 1998, 2278). In 1967, in the midst of the chaos of the Cultural Revolution, irate peasants resisting government-imposed cremation seized the opportunity to burn down the city's only crematorium located in the rural suburbs. After the crematorium was rebuilt, the cremation rate of corpses in the city only reached 30 percent in the period 1972–78. After a new Funeral and Burial Reform Office was created, the cremation rate climbed to 40 percent in 1979. In the 1980s, Wenzhou society gave rise to "a new wind of restoring ancestral tombs and building new ones," which was quelled somewhat in 1987 with the new Office of Changing Winds and Simplifying Customs (*Yifeng yisu bangongshi*). The harsh penalties that the office meted out to violators of the cremation-only policy for city dwellers resulted in a 56 percent cremation rate in 1990 (2278). While families residing in the city of Wenzhou now mainly practice cremation, coffin burials and funeral processions in rural areas continued to proliferate with surprising energy and monetary resources into 2001.

In rural Wenzhou, the traditional structure of tombs was shaped into what are called "sofa tombs" (*shafa fen*) or "chair tombs" (*yizi fen*) made of stone (see fig. 1). In the 1980s, when Wenzhou was declared a model of successful economic development by the party-state in Beijing, journalists and cadres from around the country descended on Wenzhou to learn from the Wenzhou model (*Wenzhou moshi*). Struck by the proliferation of white stone tombs in the hills, they criticized Wenzhou culture for still practicing earth burials, and they published condemnations of Wenzhou's "whitening of green mountains" (*qingshan baibua*). They pronounced burials and

⁷See Jun Jing's (1996) rich account of the local reconstruction of a Confucian temple in 1991 in Gansu Province, which he also interprets as an expression of political protest against the trauma of state-enforced dislocation and resettlement of the local people.

⁸See Whyte 1988 on the socialist Chinese state's efforts to convert earth burials to cremation and elaborate funerary rituals and processions into scaled-down secular memorial meetings emphasizing the participation of work-unit co-workers and superiors of the deceased and minimal expenditures. Whyte concludes that the main outcome of these efforts was to draw a sharp line between urban and rural funerary practices (cremation in urban areas, traditional funerals and burials in rural areas), compared with the relative lack of distinction in the prerevolutionary era, when many urban dead were shipped to rural hometowns for burials.



Figure 1. Rural Wenzhou sofa tombs with excellent *fengshui* siting near moving water (photo by author, 1993).

funerals a waste of money and asked how Wenzhou could have such an advanced economy but retain such feudal customs. Wenzhou's local officials were very sensitive to such criticisms, and feeling that Wenzhou's national reputation was at stake, they mounted a "remove habits and change customs" campaign (*yifeng yisu*) in 1987. The first measure taken was the building of public tombs (*gong mu*) by local governments. This was a compromise measure, because there was strong resistance from the people to the government's prohibition of burials and tombs and existing graves could not be destroyed due to the notion that harming the bodies or corpses of one's parents or ancestors was to commit the transgression of not being filial (*bu xiao*). Fearing a rebellion among the people, the local government at first did not dare destroy the tombs or remove any bones by force. These public tombs allowed for burying intact bodies; at the same time, they reduced land use by stacking coffins on top of each other. Another solution was planting trees around tombs, so as to have the branches cover the graves and render them less visible from afar. A third, more drastic measure was leveling tombs (*ping fen*), which consisted of dismantling or sawing off the backs of the sofa tombs. Yet another solution was to relocate the tombs (*yi fen*) to less conspicuous sites by digging up the bones and building another tomb elsewhere. In 1989, alarmed at the accumulation of 118,725 illegal tombs on both sides of a major highway due to the site's propitious *fengshui* properties, the Wenzhou government dismantled 120 tombs by force, "straightened out" 14,000 other tombs, moved tombs and returned 126 *mu* of land (one *mu* is about one-sixth of an acre) to agricultural use, collected 655,000 yuan in "tomb management and greening fees," and planted 3,200,000 tree saplings to cover over tombs (Zhang 1998, 2279) (see fig. 2). By far the most absurd step taken by some village and township officials was to order people to paint their tombs green to make them blend in with the hillside grasses.



Figure 2. Local government propaganda sign condemning earth burials: "Smash feudal superstitious thought. Let's follow the new wind of civilized funerals and burials" (photo by author, 2001).

In January 2001, a middle-school teacher told me that the city government had mounted more campaigns in 1998 and 1999 against burials—boldly altering, sometimes destroying, and relocating tombs and graves—even on hills and mountains. When I commented that hills and mountains are not needed for agriculture and industry, she said that city officials thought tombs unsightly and "not civilized" (*buwenming*) because they are anxious to build up a modern city and modern cities in the West do not have these eyesores. City officials ordered that, beginning in 2001, rural areas must also abide by the cremation regulations, and they banned the coffin-making business. Sure enough, all the coffin-maker shops that I had noted before in my fieldsite had disappeared, and the local fengshui consultants complained that there were fewer graves to site.

Fengshui, literally "wind and water," is an ancient art or technology which tries to improve people's physical and spiritual life by aligning the buildings in which they live and the graves in which their ancestors are buried, to harmonize with and tap into the flow of the "primordial energy," or *qi*, of the earth (for English treatments, see Lip 1992; Weller 1987, app.; Feuchtwang 1974; Bruun 2003). The banning of earth burials in this rural area was a serious loss for local people. Through proper fengshui siting of the graves of the dead, they provided a good afterlife for their deceased and ensured that contented ancestors would protect them and their descendants. Since tomb building involves fengshui expertise, the ban on earth burials

narrowed an important arena for a fengshui production of space, where human corporeality is positioned in harmony with the pulses of larger cosmic forces running through the cosmos and the veins and contours of the earth. This archaic practice of aligning bodies, families, and lineages with space found its most important expression in the siting of burials. One of the earliest extant classics of fengshui, the *Book of Burial Rooted in Antiquity* (*Jin dai bi shu*) written by Guo Pu in the Jin dynasty (265–420) states:

In burial one takes advantage of vital *qi*. . . . When the vital *qi* circulates in the earth, it ferments and gives life to the myriad things. [Human beings] receive [their] form from [their] parents. [Their] basic frames obtain *qi* and the forms [they are] given accept it and harbor it there. Life is the gathering of *qi*. What coagulates and solidifies becomes bones which are the only remainder upon death. Therefore, in burial, *qi* is returned to within the bones in order to protect the way which gives life.

(Guo n.d., 1)⁹

While attending a Daoist funeral in 2001, I found that an informal compromise had been reached between the Wenzhou government and the people of one township. In this transitional period from burial to cremation, the government was flexible and allowed those families who had already purchased a coffin before the ban to put the cremated ashes into the coffin and still bury the coffin. This compromise in essence incapacitates both state and community ritual productions of space, since no land is saved and *qi* needs to work on bones, not ashes.

The state discourse and campaigns today against earth burials and fengshui practices cannot be taken at face value as merely an effort to save productive land from burial sites, since most tombs are sited on nonarable land and hillsides. They must be seen against the backdrop and as a continuation of earlier Western colonial discourse which set the standards for what is considered modern civilization defined by science. An otherwise keen ethnographer of nineteenth-century Chinese folk customs and rituals, Dutch scholar J. J. M. de Groot, wrote this sweeping indictment of fengshui:

Feng-shui is a mere chaos of childish absurdities and refined mysticism, cemented together, by sophistic reasonings, into a system, which is in reality a ridiculous caricature of science. . . . It fully shows the dense cloud of ignorance which hovers over the whole Chinese people; it exhibits in all its nakedness the low condition of their mental culture, the fact that natural philosophy in that part of the globe is a huge mound of learning without a single trace of true knowledge in it.

(1900, 3:938)

Such condemnations of Chinese traditions were no doubt conveyed in so many ways by nineteenth- and twentieth-century Western missionaries, scholars, and merchants to Chinese of all walks of life, and we see that they have been internalized by the modernizing Chinese elite and later the modern Chinese state toward folk practices.

In taking up Western denigration of Chinese traditions, Chinese intellectuals in the early twentieth century engineered a shift in the terms of the discourse. They accepted the superiority of modern science and the West, but instead of essentializing Chinese inferiority, they condemned Chinese and traditional religious practices for

⁹I thank Michael Paton for kindly providing me with this citation from his translation after his lecture on fengshui at the University of Pennsylvania, April 25, 2001.

holding China back. An antireligious tract published in 1922 in the radical leftist journal *Xian qiu/Pioneer* exemplifies the strident self-righteous call of many Enlightenment intellectuals to obliterate religion. Chi Guang, the author of this particular tract, castigated Zhou Zuoren, brother of Lu Xun, for defending the freedom of religious belief. Chi accused Zhou of furthering religion as a mystifying mind-numbing "magic potion" (*mibuntang*) that prevents China from becoming a modern nation. Borrowing the words of another intellectual, Qian Xuantong, Chi declared: "Youth! If you want to be a respected human being in the twentieth century, if you want China to be considered a nation in the twentieth century, . . . then hurry up and gather up your courage. Resolve to eliminate these barbarous evil cults (*xiejiao*) and these nonsense demons and monsters!" (Chi 1922, 1). Thus, in the Chinese nationalist revision of Western ethnocentrism, abolishing traditional religion was not so much the affirmation of the West as it was the liberation of China and the founding of the nation-state.

For Lefebvre, the practico-sensory realm must restore or reconstitute itself against the reductionism of modern representations of space which are based on a mathematical spatial planning that does not take into account the autonomy and creativity of the body, and he has called for an "uprising of the body" (1991, 201). Whereas abstract space treats the body as an object to be positioned and manipulated, "bodied space" (or spatial embodiments) allows the body itself to *produce* space. He blamed a combination of Judeo-Christian tradition and capitalism for the domination of abstract space: the loathing of the body as pollution and sin for one and the fragmentation of the body by Taylorist principles of minute division of labor for the other (204). Both contributed to the detaching of the body from the direct production of space in modernity, which is taken over by the rational mind and representations of space.

In the Chinese experience, the modern state divested itself of the whole imperial ritual complex that had aligned and restricted state power with the heavenly patterns inscribed in the cosmos. This subsuming of state power to a ritual order had been accomplished by the ritual movements of the emperor's body, those of his officials, and the spatial/architectural layout of ritual centers in imperial state rituals (Zito 1997). Released from the encumbrances of ritual control, the modern state set to work constructing spaces of state rationality and modernity—that is, a new, rationalized, expanding nation-state space, alert to external invaders and internal enemies, committed to reconstructing subjectivities, and devoted to the production and strengthening of the nation. Commitment to abstract ideas of nation-state, socialism, and modernization engendered efforts to detach the body from space making, so that space could derive directly from these abstract ideals. Modern ideologies are generally disembodied processes, abstract causes that dislodge social structuration from the rhythms of the body, ideals that discipline and break bodies in labor rather than work *with* bodily forms and capacities. Whereas capitalist Taylorism fragments and reduces the body to an object for maximizing machinic efficiency, the abstract space of the state punishes the body and denies it agency to extract labor for its monumental projects. Thus, modern abstract space aims to rid the new nation of those powerful old spaces produced by bodies, such as subterranean bodies in graves and tombs exerting the forces of fengshui. The resurgence of earth burials and tombs in the 1980s can be seen as a popular movement of rural culture to reembody space, a "revolt of the body."¹⁰ This resurgence is a retrieval of space from the domination of ideas

¹⁰Falungong, a new religion that emerged in the 1990s, with its breathing exercises and ritual regimens of bodily calisthenics, can also be seen as an explicit "revolt of the body."

and Faustian drives of the modernizing state back to the material groundedness of bodies. The temporality of these bodies is the reproductive and natural cycles, rather than an unchecked linear progression: bodies are born, grow, age, and die, to dissolve back into the earth, where their bones link up with the flow of *qi* of the earth. Unlike Mao's body in his mausoleum in Tiananmen Square or "tombs of the unknown soldier," these hundreds of millions of bodies scattered across the land below the earth carve out and empower the spaces of families, lineages, and local communities and engage in a ritual reterritorialization of space.

Ancestor Hall: A Ritual Site or a Museum?

In the early 1980s, village and township officials of Yongchang Township, where most members of the Wang lineage reside, had the idea to dismantle the imposing Wang lineage ancestor hall dating back to 1542 CE and the equally old town wall that their ancestors built. The officials thought that the hall and town wall obstructed new roads that could lead into the village and thus held up the economic development of the village. Faced with the destruction of the most important physical monument to their shared kinship and history, several (male) Wang activists joined together to form the Team for the Preservation of the Wang Lineage Ancestor Hall Archaeological Relic (Wang Jia citang wenwu baohu dui). Adopting this title was the only way that they could justify to the government their existence as a collective social entity. They could not describe themselves as a lineage, since such backward things belonged to the feudal past and were to have no place in modern socialist structures. These Wangs argued that the hall belonged to the Wang lineage members, and major decisions on its structure could not be made by the town leaders themselves. They quickly collected donations from lineage members to renovate the hall with their own funds and successfully petitioned higher levels of government to have their hall recognized first as a Wenzhou City cultural relic and then as a provincial historical relic which needed state protection.

The first time that I entered into the imposing hall in 1991, there were schoolchildren jumping rope in the central courtyard; in the Republican era, local state authorities had turned the hall into an elementary school. On the walls of the main inner hall, two incongruent sign systems competed with each other for attention. In large red characters were familiar state slogans for the students' edification such as "Without the Communist Party, there would be no new China" (*Mei you Gongchandang, jiu mei you xin Zhongguo*) and "Let's build up a socialist spiritual civilization" (*Jianli shehui zhuyi jingshen wenming*). Some of these slogans were partially covered by hanging scrolls, paintings of somber-looking men in late imperial official robes and caps. These were recently painted portraits of the most illustrious ancestors in the Wang lineage (those who had become officials) hung up in preparation for the revived annual spring ancestor sacrificial ceremony to be held in the hall on the twelfth day of the first lunar month. The lineage had been trying to convince the government to move the school out, so that they could reclaim the hall for lineage rituals. The second time that I went to the hall was in 1992, after a typhoon had damaged parts of the ceiling, the Wang preservation committee was trying to gather funds for its repair.

The next time I went back, in 1993, the local government insisted that I be accompanied by an official from the prefecture's Cultural Relic Museum, who would provide me with the *historical* details of the ancestor hall. They warned me that I was to regard the hall as a historical monument of the *past*, not as the hall of a living or ongoing lineage. I could study the hall's architectural changes and its history of

renovations but not its functions in the present because it had none, other than as a "museum" (*bowuguan*) or "cultural relics site" (*wenwu guji*). The official read me some impressive historical records, such as the name and biography of its builder, the invasions of the town by Japanese pirates in the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), the years when the Wang lineage built their different sublineage halls and the transportation canals in the region, and the years in which renovation of the hall took place. He had nothing to say about how the hall was or is used. He explained that the government set aside funds for the latest renovation of the hall, *not* as an ancestor hall (*citang*) but as a fine example of an ancient construction (*gu jianzhu*) to educate future generations about Chinese history. I was not permitted to attend or shoot a video of the revived ancestral ritual held in the hall that year.

On my visit to the hall in the summer of 1998, I discovered several changes. The first change that I noticed was on the stone plaque which formed the imposing main stone gate in front of the building complex. Above the original Ming dynasty characters saying "Wang Lineage Ancestor Hall" (*Wang shi zongci*), there hung a new wooden plaque under a bright red bow and ribbon, with the characters saying "Yongchang Township Museum" (*Yongchang bowuguan*). Below the gate was another new sign saying that this was a Base Area for National Defense Education. Inside the gate was another innovation: two young women lounging on chairs were charging entrance fees to see the "museum." Inside, along both sides of the main open-air courtyard, were museum exhibits: on the right was an exhibit of old pottery, wooden utensils, and coins dating back to the Ming and Qing dynasties; on the left was a pictorial exhibit of the history of China's national defense, from ancient to modern times, with an emphasis on modern armaments of war, such as those from the Opium War, the civil war of the 1930s, and the War of Anti-Japanese Resistance. There were pictures and photos of various national war heroes and revolutionary martyrs and photos of the Nanjing massacre by Japanese soldiers in 1937. Also depicted were local battles of town residents in the Ming dynasty against Japanese pirates who raided the coast in the sixteenth century. One of the ticket sellers said that teaching national defense made sense here because the Wangs honored their ancestors who bravely fought for their homeland against the Japanese pirates in the Ming dynasty. Inside the main hall at the front, on either side of the main altar for the ancestor tablets, were more exhibits of patriotic wars, including a pictorial exhibit of military hardware, such as American fighter planes, Soviet warships, and Chinese tanks. There were no signs of schoolchildren in the hall now.

Later during lunch with Wang lineage members at their home, I asked everyone whether this patriotic exhibit was their idea or that of the government. They said that it was the township government's idea. I asked whether they liked the exhibit. One person said that he went to persuade the government not to do it because it had nothing to do with their lineage and ancestor hall. I pressed further with questions, but nobody wanted to talk about it. I suspect that this was a sore point with them, that they lost this spatial struggle to the state. They found consolation, however, in telling me that the government is now more lenient and allows their lineage organization to gather openly in the hall, in a room which now serves as the lineage office. Furthermore, they had finally succeeded in removing the school from the premises.

One can see here a graphic struggle over the use of this space. The township government insists that the hall serve as a state museum, not a living ancestor hall. The arrangement and decoration of this space, the definition of what this site stands for, and how it is to be used are all contested issues in an ongoing tug-of-war. The

museum or hall becomes a place for the competitive display of national sacrifice versus adherence to local kin and community, of national anti-Japanese martyrs versus ancestor heroes who built and defended the town. To the local government, the lineage and the hall should be regarded as artifacts of history enshrined in the space of a museum, its temporality firmly in the past tense. Although there were gentry collectors of antiquities in imperial China, the public museum as an institution was introduced from the modern West. According to Shelly Errington (1998), it developed from the private Renaissance *Wunderkammern*, or "curiosity cabinets," collecting exotic objects from foreign lands into full-fledged public institutions for the display and inculcation of the emerging modern system of classification and evolutionary knowledge in the nineteenth century. Theodor W. Adorno recognized the tomblike features of a modern museum: "The German word, 'museal', . . . describes objects to which the observer no longer has a vital relationship and which are in the process of dying. They owe their preservation more to historical respect than to the needs of the present. Museum and mausoleum are connected by more than phonetic association. Museums are like the family sepulchres of works of art. They testify to the neutralization of culture" (1967, 175). Not only do museums house the already dead, but often its very display of objects is part of the process of extinguishing a living culture as well. When the object is removed from the everyday ritual or economic uses of a living culture and is inserted into the space of a museum, it is taken out of the stream of social life to become a metonym for a culture or period regarded as extinct, whose memory needs preservation. Its very existence and value in the museum is predicated upon the cultural death of its producers and users (see Idzerda 1954, 25, 24; Baczko 1989).

The modern museum not only helps launch but also maintain and renew modernity in the West, as James Clifford has shown in his analysis of several exhibits in the 1980s of tribal art in New York City, where one would think modernity has already been securely established. Clifford found that "the concrete, inventive existence of tribal cultures and artists is suppressed in the process of constituting authentic, 'traditional' worlds or appreciating their products in the timeless category of 'art'" (1988a, 200). That is to say, the emphasis on the "authenticity" of the tribal art object leads to the screening out of hybrid cultural forms produced by living native artists. This art of the living, of native peoples in the present, who are both renewing and revising traditional cultural resources to engage with modernity and the Western world, cannot be allowed into most museums, since museums are redemptive spaces for preserving the vanished tribal past (202; 1988b, 228). Thus, in the dominant classification system of museums, a rarefied space of decontextualized non-Western cultures is preserved, often at the expense of the contemporary societies which are denied what Johannes Fabian (1983) calls "co-evalness" with modernity.

Instead of providing a space for the fetishizing of art, which derives from the fetishism of commodities, as in museums of the capitalist West, the space of the Yongchang Museum seemed to be in a state of confused tension. At the heart of the main hall, behind the giant altar and protected by locked wooden doors, stand the spirit tablets of the three most prominent Wang ancestors, with the first ancestor in the middle. The doors are opened to reveal them, and incense and candles are lit for them on ritual occasions when the lineage community gathers in the hall, such as the annual spring sacrifice. They are surrounded by other items, however, that are alien to the idea of ancestor halls. In the first courtyard inside the imposing front gates stands a giant white statue erected in 1997 of two Wang brothers, Wang Shuguo and Wang Shugao, who built the town wall and led the local defense against

marauding Japanese (and Chinese) pirates in the Ming dynasty. Unlike statues of deities in local temples, which are executed in traditional folk art styles, this one was in the stiff muscular official style of modern public statuary of national heroes. Thus, they perfectly encapsulate the convenient conflation of honoring lineage ancestors with paying homage to patriotic heroes who resisted foreign invasions of national space. There are conflicting understandings of what the museum space should be; it is at once a museum of architectural history, a state educational exhibit of national defense and patriotism, and a lineage ancestor hall where rituals are conducted.

On my visit in 2001, when I found out that the front office of the hall had been turned over to a new group of hall managers, I feared that the lineage elders who had done so much to renew the lineage and recuperate the hall had been driven out and replaced by outsiders selected by the government. The new organizational committee numbered eight people receiving regular salaries from the township: Mr. Wang, the person in charge, a middle-aged man with a high-school education; a secretary; an accountant; a dispatcher; three groundskeepers; and a woman librarian for the new public library added in the rear of the hall. Only three out of the eight were not members of the Wang lineage. The military defense exhibit was still there, drawing busloads of schoolchildren to visit the hall. In fact, the Yongchang Museum had been elevated in status to the Zhejiang Provincial National Defense Scientific Education Base for Education in Patriotism. In conjunction with this role, their hall was visited by officials of the Provincial Military District, the Nanjing Central China Military District, and the State Council General Office in Beijing. The new committee proudly told me that their museum has been designated as "Zhejiang Province Bright Pearl of the East Ocean," a new sort of state-designated tourist attraction. The prefecture government gave them six hundred thousand yuan for winning this designation and also sixty mu of additional land to the west of the hall, which they plan to turn into a recreation center (*yule zhongxin*) for playing chess, billiards, and video games.

Upon further probing, I revised my initial conclusion that this was a unilateral state appropriation of ancestor hall space; it was more complex and multifaceted. Mr. J. Wang himself was a lineage member and was very dedicated to the enhancement of the lineage. His enthusiastic volunteer work was displayed during the revision of the genealogy, and later he was elected by the lineage members to head the new committee. He told me that the Wang lineage members themselves thought up the idea of making the hall into a museum. Since the hall had been subjected to repeated threats by local officials to dismantle it, the desire to preserve the hall was on people's minds. The idea of the museum emerged as a strategy to protect the hall and prevent it from being torn down. Most important of all, he reasoned, becoming a museum would bring a wider reputation to the hall and more glory to their lineage. Their lineage used to be closed and isolated (*fengbi*). Now nearly everyone has seen their hall and learned of its venerable history on the news on Zhejiang television and Wenzhou television, and people from afar come to visit. They have plans to set up a Web site for their hall to spread its fame further. He even initiated the project of winning for their hall the designation of "national treasure" (*guojiaji guobao*). Three high-ranking delegations from Beijing came to visit their site: five archaeologists from research institutes, two vice-bureau-chiefs of the National Cultural Relics Bureau, and the Provincial and Municipal Cultural Relics Bureau chiefs. The township government gave them four hundred thousand yuan for their attempt to acquire national cultural relic status, which they used to send six people to Hangzhou, the provincial capital, and two people to Beijing to argue their case. Their bid was successful, and the Wang

lineage shared the celebrations of their national relic status with the local government in 2001.

The museum idea was propelled by two very different interpretations. One, on the part of the state, in a top-down imposition of meaning, the museum was meant to house artifacts of an extinct culture of the past for the distant gaze of viewers to contemplate the unfamiliar practices of people long faded from ongoing history. In this state logic, the museum was also a convenient public site for state inculcation of patriotism. Two, on the part of the bottom-up understanding of many Wang lineage members, turning their ancestor hall into a museum was a strategy to seek higher-level state protection for their hall from the depredations of local authorities and business interests. It was also a way to broadcast to the world their existence and to bring fame and glory nationwide to their hall. Two contrasting wills fueled the spatial practice of establishing the museum: one is an insistence on the death of a culture and the other is an insistence on the survival, renewal, and expansion of a culture. These wills coexist in an uneasy state of cooperation, tension, and interpenetration. In their efforts to win state support, the current lineage leadership often adopts the state discourse of national sacrifice, which dilutes a much older language of ancestor sacrifice. Unlike tombs and burial grounds, state power here no longer seeks to obliterate the space of the ancestor hall but, rather, to reinterpret its social significance, redirect its social usage, and deterritorialize (Deleuze and Guattari 1987) local kinship space. Thus, the space of the hall harbors and gives play to both state territoriality and its need for historical sites to give expression to linear progressive history, as well as another desire to reestablish the space of a ritual kinship polity.

Shrines, Temples, and Churches

During my fieldwork in 1991 and 1992, everywhere I saw small shrines sitting along the roadside, set into walls, and perched alongside agricultural fields. Many of them were only waist high and three feet wide, while others were larger, about the size of kiosks, but too small to be called temples. Inside the shrines sat one or more gods or goddesses, with remnants of burned incense or candles in front of them. When I asked about them, the local people discouraged me from inquiring too deeply, saying simply that they were minor gods or "Earth Gods or Goddesses," who guarded a certain space outdoors or the inner space of a home. These small gods blocked evil spirits from passing through the area (*bi xie*). One former peasant said that even gods have different levels and statuses (*you dengji*) and that these were lower gods that the government always tried to eradicate. In 1993 and 1998, all the smaller shrines had disappeared in public areas. I saw many of the larger shrines, but quite a few were abandoned, padlocked, or damaged. In 2001, however, I was excited to discover a brand-new two-by-two-foot Earth God shrine nestled discreetly in a wall alongside a canal.

I learned that since 1994 the central government (the Bureau of Religious Affairs in the State Council) started requiring all religious sites of worship, whether temples or shrines, churches or mosques, to be registered (*dengji*) with the government. Licenses (*dengji zhen*) were only granted to those who had successfully passed a government evaluation to determine whether the size and history of their organization, the number of worshippers, the history of religious activity, the religious leadership and management, and so on, warranted government recognition (Wenzhou Minzu Zongjiao

Shiwuju 1997).¹¹ Those smaller temples or shrines which could not pass the government test for registration were banned from any religious activity and their existence was to end.

The requirement to register temples is not a new state procedure. Historians of China have long written about how the late imperial state had a system to register temples and monasteries, control their numbers and their building expansion, and also limit the size of the Buddhist or Daoist clergy associated with them (de Groot 1900, 2:107–9). Poring over Qing-dynasty legal statutes, sociologist C. K. Yang found that in the seventeenth century there were 12,482 temples and monasteries in the empire founded with imperial approval but 67,140 *without* official permission (1961, 188). That 84 percent of temples were actually illegal in the Qing dynasty (not including smaller temples in localities), shows that although the central government had the will to control, infrastructural limitations and neglect by local state agents prevented this from being fully realized.

In the twentieth century, the state has been very successful in radically reducing the number of sacred spaces throughout the country, aided first by a modernizing secular intellectual elite and then in the second half of the century by the revolutionary fervor of the Red Guard youth. While several periods of the Maoist era saw active persecution of religion and traditional ritual, since the 1980s there has been a shift in state strategies toward those more reminiscent of late imperial China. State Council Document No. 188, promulgated in 1980, set forth the provisions for the return of temple and church properties seized during the Cultural Revolution (Guowuyuan Zongjiao Shiwuju 1980).¹² The state's intervention now takes the form not so much of prohibition or attack, but of a regulatory power which controls, limits, and rechannels, as represented in the rule of registration. In this milder climate, the local people of rural Wenzhou have ingeniously availed themselves of this new window of opportunity, actively petitioning the authorities to allow the restoration or building of temples and churches. After a period of almost riotous growth in the 1980s, the state tightened its regulations in 1994 and even resorted to some smashing again. As for the local people, they are patient and bide their time. After a while, they quietly rebuild the dismantled temple. I was told of a local deity temple which was the victim of a government raid in which the statues of the temple's gods were smashed in 1986. After an appropriate period of lying low, temple members stubbornly erected new gods in the temple. When a fire set off by a candle burned down the temple in 1992,

¹¹I have not been able to get a clear picture of exactly what sorts of evaluation are used in determining whether to grant a license to a temple or church. My interviews with an official of the Bureau of Religious Affairs in the State Council in Beijing and with a representative of the National Daoist Association in Beijing produced only vague discussions of what the state judged to be grounds for not registering a religious site. The State Council's "Regulations on Registration of Sites for Religious Activities" (mid-1990s), which I was able to obtain from a local Wenzhou temple, is also vague (Wenzhou Minzu Zongjiao Shiwuju 1997). Most likely, the specific guidelines are transmitted orally from the center to the provinces at official meetings and conferences of religion bureaucrats not open to the public or in documents even more restricted from public circulation than the ones that I obtained.

¹²According to an official of the State Council Bureau of Religious Affairs whom I interviewed in Beijing on January 17, 2001, the criteria for the repatriation of temples and churches were the following: (1) need—worshippers need the place back for worship; (2) time of occupation or confiscation—basically the state will only return those sites which existed and were registered after 1949 and not those destroyed or seized before, thus mainly those taken during the Great Leap Forward or Cultural Revolution; and (3) presence of reputable religious leaders or monks to manage the site.

the people gathered funds to rebuild it, expanding the temple size and land. The government fined them ten thousand yuan for expanding into space which did not belong to them but allowed them to continue, and the fine was paid off with another fund drive.

Grassroots religious energy indeed seems to express itself through the establishment and expansion of religious space, from small shrines to larger temples. Take the case of Xuan Ling Temple in Yongxing Township, which honors the god Zhou Xiong, born in the Ming dynasty. The temple was established through a process of "dividing incense" (*fenxiang*) from a temple in Jinhua Prefecture in Zhejiang Province to the Wenzhou area two hundred years ago. At liberation in 1949, this deity temple did not even exist in their village. The one hundred households in the village would periodically "pick straws" (*chouqian*) to determine which household would have the privilege of housing the god in their home and receiving good luck. In 1953 the villagers put together enough money to build a small temple, but it was destroyed in the "Smash the Four Olds" (*po si jin*) campaign during the Cultural Revolution in 1966. In 1967 the central government issued a government directive (*wenjian*), saying that all temples which were thirty square meters or larger could be protected, so they seized this opportunity to build a new temple of sixty square meters. When I visited the temple again in 2001, they had received another strip of land about two meters wide from the village government in 1998, so they knocked down the north wall and built a new one to accommodate this extra space. They also received permission to expand their southern wall into what is currently wasteland, and this land would cost them nothing. They also have designs on an abandoned factory building to their west, which they plan to purchase if granted state permission.

A small Catholic church in one township was first built in 1920, when Western missionaries were active in the area. It was converted into a factory storage space during the Cultural Revolution. In the late 1980s, church members drew a map of the original site, had the local government land bureau confirm that the total area of the site was 3.9 mu, and applied for the return of the site to the church. The township and village governments approved this in 1988 but only awarded them a little over 1 mu of land on another site, citing difficulties of convincing local residents living on the old site to move. Church members built the existing church in 1991 on the awarded land. In 1994 they were awarded another mu of land abutting the new site, so they built a new two-story cement building. The downstairs area serves as dining commons for church members to feast and socialize after celebrating Mass on special occasions. The upstairs serves as church offices and dorm rooms for elder worshippers traveling from afar to rest and say prayers. In 1997 they wrote to the government again to remind them of the 1.5 mu that they were still owed, but as of 2001 they had not received a reply. A church member told me that whereas in the 1980s the church was packed with worshippers every Sunday, nowadays members of the "underground church" (*dixia jiaotang*) who refuse to join the government-controlled church, stay away from church and attend Mass at home services. This move has resulted in a huge decline in church membership, from about fifteen hundred in 1988 to about one-third of that number in 2001, emptying out the church that they had worked so hard to rebuild. Here, we see that the underground Catholic resistance to state infiltration of sacred space is much stronger than in deity temples or ancestor halls.

Although small temples have ambitions to expand their space and their constituencies, most of them are not as successful as the Palace of the Heavenly Immortal (Tianxian gong). This temple is devoted to a goddess of the Song dynasty known as Sacred Mother Lu (Lu shengmu), who is worshipped only in the Wenzhou area. On



Figure 3. Tianxian Gong (Palace of the heavenly immortal) prior to restoration (photo by author, 1993).

my visit in 1993, it was a small wooden temple with peeling paint (see fig. 3). It was rebuilt twice, the first time in 1993 into a structure about four times its original size and the second time in 1996 after a fire destroyed the new building. The present structure is an impressive cement building much larger than the original, with a shiny green-tiled roof (see fig. 4). Inside, at the front of the temple is a large array of different gods on both sides of the goddess, each with an altar for offerings. A large, sunken courtyard is covered by a high-arching ceiling of corrugated plastic to shelter the large number of worshippers and the candles, incense, and paper money that they burn on festival days. The temple offices are on the second floor, which flanks both sides of an open and spacious main hall with high ceilings. There is a large stage for free opera performances in the second and ninth months of the lunar calendar, each time for as many as ten days. This temple was very popular, and the God of Literature, Wenchang Gong, was especially efficacious (*ling*) in granting aid in examinations and entrance into higher education. Around him hung a large number of red felt pendants and banners, expressions of gratitude from those whom he had assisted. In fact, after receiving 113 pendants in 1997, the temple had to issue a request to families not to donate any more pendants due to lack of space but, instead, to contribute money to building the Educational Advancement Pavilion (*Shengxue ting*) outside the temple. In 2001 the temple devised an ingenious solution of taking photos of each new pendant and displaying them on the walls. The temple's success is attributed to the active voluntary labor and organizational skills of its temple committee members, dedicated old men and women.

Lefebvre was acutely insightful when he observed:

Groups [or] classes . . . cannot constitute themselves, or recognize one another, as "subjects" unless they generate (or produce) a space. Ideas, representations or values which do not succeed in making their mark on space, and thus generating . . . an



Figure 4. Tianxian Gong (Palace of the heavenly immortal) after renovation and expansion (photo by author, 1998).

appropriate morphology, will lose all pith and become mere signs. . . . [W]hatever is not invested in an appropriated space is stranded, and all that remain are useless signs and significations. Space's investment—the production of space—has nothing incidental about it: it is a matter of life and death.

(1991, 416–17)

Although the outlines of a new class structure are increasingly visible in rural Wenzhou, the underclass of migrant laborers from poor interior provinces have not yet organized themselves as a recognizable subject through staking out a place for themselves. They live scattered in the homes of their employers or in abandoned or low-rent buildings rather than large squatter zones. Unlike the Filipino maids of Hong Kong who fill downtown public parks on Sundays, migrant laborers here have as yet no public gathering places. Due to their ethnic and regional diversity (they come from the provinces of Sichuan, Jiangxi, Henan, and Anhui), they may not recognize their class identity for a long time. The collective subjects in rural Wenzhou who are actively producing space are not so much classes as they are ritual and kinship communities who define themselves based on local geography and shared ritual activities conducted on rebuilt sacred sites. Their struggles over space are acts of asserting their collective subjectivity to themselves and others.

Discussing the types of rituals conducted on these sites is beyond the scope of this article. The nature of ritual deserves some reflection here, however, because ritual involves the movements of bodies in space. Whether the ritual is a Daoist priest leading his members in walking a figure eight or a *Book of Changes* hexagram on the floor or a Catholic mass, worshippers standing before incense and candle containers and kneeling at deity statues or the revived territorial ritual of carrying the city god on a palanquin in a long procession to inspect and patrol the boundaries of the ritual

community, rituals propel bodies to spatialize and cause space to be embodied. Rituals are ways in which bodies mark out meaningful social patterns and configure and leave their social imprints on space. At the same time, they enable bodies to absorb sacred meanings embedded in the physical qualities and layouts of space. Thus, the local people of rural Wenzhou are actively working to retrieve and expand the domain of representational spaces, which are based on fragments of historical absolute spaces of bodily practice and ritual politics. These exertions are countermovements against the encroachments of state socialist abstract space and the increasing space of capitalist commodification.

The Campaign to Dismantle Temples and Churches, 2000

In Beijing in 1998, I visited the White Cloud Daoist Temple (Bai yun guan), which houses the national headquarters of the Daoist Association, a quasi-state-religious organization whose local Wenzhou branch oversees many of the deity temples that I visited. When I inquired about the 1994 policy to register temples, two staff members told me officiously: "Our country is so large, and there are so many temples. China is a country without much land, so we cannot allow people to build temples at will. In China the land does not belong to private people, but to the state. The people only have the right to *use* the land (*zhi you shiyong quan*), they do not have the right to *own* it (*meiyou suoyou quan*), so people do not have a right to build temples indiscriminately" (interview, August 17, 1998). They told me that State Council Document No. 145 lays out clearly what is required for a temple to qualify for registration: they consider the size and scope of operations, the history of the site, and a record of land rightfully used or taken by the temple. In rural Wenzhou, I found State Council Document No. 145 posted up inside one-fifth of the temples I visited, with its title: "Regulations Concerning the Management of Sites of Religious Activities" (Guowuyuan Zongjiao Shiwuju 1994). Like the regulations for temple registration, these were also vague. Besides affirming the independent management of religious sites and the protection of rights to practice religion, the poster also stated that "no one is allowed to use a site of religious activity to damage the unity of the country, the solidarity of the different ethnic groups with each other, the security and stability of the society, the health of the citizens, or the state educational system."

In 2001 I found two new regulations pasted up on a local temple wall with more detailed guidelines. One was a directive given out by the Wenzhou Daoist Association, which included the provision that within Daoist temples the following activities were forbidden: spirit possession (*tiao shen*), exorcism (*gan shen*), fortune telling through physiognomy (*kan xiang*), fortune telling through divination sticks (*suan ming*), fortune-telling through analysis of Chinese characters (*ce zi*), fortune-telling through Yi Jing (*ba gua*), fengshui, and other feudal superstitions (Wenzhou Daojiao Xiehui 1999). Although the post-Mao state now granted the right of existence to churches and temples and the conduct of religious activities in them, it still sought to control the type of ritual activities conducted on these sites. The other regulation was from the Wenzhou City Religious Affairs Bureau, warning of impending suppression for temples without official registration (Wenzhou Minzu Zongjiao Shiwuju 1999).

A Wenzhou scholar told me that the campaign of December 2000 to smash unregistered temples and churches was a reaction by Wenzhou officials to a highly

critical exposure of illegal religious activity in the Wenzhou area on a national television show called *Focus Interview* (*Jiaodian fangtan*). This was a very popular television news show similar to *Sixty Minutes* in the United States, exposing illegal activities and cadre corruption by reporters on the scene, and was watched across the country on weeknights on the Chinese Central Television Station (CCTV) after the national evening news from Beijing. The show exposed how village cadres in Yueqing County in the Wenzhou area, including the party secretary, contracted with a shamaness (*wupo*) and spirit medium (*shenban*) from Fujian to split the profits from their lucrative spirit possessions and exorcisms (*tiaodashen*) in a local temple (Kang 2000). The temple became extremely popular, as people flocked there to commune with the spirits. The local officials were all arrested and sentenced. As a result of this embarrassing exposé, the Wenzhou government went overboard in their backlash against popular religion. According to this scholar, to protect their "black silk official headdresses" (*wushamao*), or official positions, they had to appear very "revolutionary," so they started a campaign to dismantle unregistered temples and churches. This angered the local people, who in some cases tried physically to protect the temples from destruction. Only the Wenzhou area conducted the campaign, and the rest of Zhejiang Province and the country were not affected.

By the time of my 2001 visit, news of this campaign had been reported to the outside world by Agence France-Presse on December 12, 2000 ("China Blows up Churches and Temples in Religious Crackdown," December 12, 2000; "Up to 1,200 Temples Destroyed or Closed in Chinese Crackdown," December 13, 2000). This report resulted in a testy public statement from the U.S. State Department that the United States was "appalled by this, particularly coming at the eve of the celebration of Christmas" ("U.S. 'Appalled' at China Church Closures before Christmas," December 14, 2000), despite the fact that Christian churches were not the only ones affected by the campaign. The glare of international spotlights had alarmed the Wenzhou authorities, so they refused to allow me to interview either the city's Religious Affairs Bureau or the Wenzhou or Ou Hai Prefecture Daoist Association. Based on an interview with a local official, Agence France-Presse reported that a total of 1,200 places of worship in the Wenzhou area were destroyed, closed down, or blown up. In Ou Hai Prefecture, 239 unregistered religious facilities were shut down and 210 temples and churches were destroyed ("Up to 1,200 Temples Destroyed or Closed in Chinese Crackdown," Agence France-Presse, December 13, 2000). I did not personally see any destroyed sites because I made a decision *not* to go looking and asking for them to safeguard my acquaintances and the rest of my research. As far as I could tell, the temples in my area that I saw in 1998 were still standing in 2001, although I did see one temple that was locked and had been abandoned recently. Based on my discussions with two local Wenzhou officials (February 6, 2001) and a Beijing official (January 17, 2001) at the State Council Bureau of Religious Affairs (Guowuyuan zongjiao shiwuju), however, I gathered that the state had a policy of not registering anymore new temples and churches after 1994. Although some new sites in Wenzhou did manage to get registered, they were the exceptions to the rule. One local elder told me that those temples hit by the campaign were actually refused registration by the government (interview, February 12, 2001).

In a discussion with elders at a temple, I found that they had learned of the campaign on the local news on Wenzhou television, which showed tearing down temples as an example of the government "protecting" the people from those who would cheat and mislead them. Not many temples in my area of study were destroyed, as most were registered. They knew of one temple in Long Wan District where the local

people tried to protect their temple. When the wrecking crew of laborers (*mingong*) came, they defiantly sat inside the temple and refused to leave. The standoff lasted several days, until officials from the city came to negotiate with them. They told the people that they would hold a discussion with them and convinced them to come out of the temple. This was a trick, and by this point it was too late to halt the destruction of the temple with sledgehammers wielded by a crew of migrant laborers. In Wu Yan Township, there was a very big temple which cost over one million yuan to build. This did not stop the authorities, however, and the temple was blasted with dynamite. Several temples and churches were converted into storage rooms or old people's pavilions. I earnestly asked the old men whether anyone had tried to convince the authorities not to destroy temples, to explain to them why temples are good for the people. One man replied: "It is best for the common people (*laobaixing*) not to speak too much. The common people always lose out (*chikui*). Those officials should spend time down at the grassroots level and understand the situation here" (interview, February 12, 2001). They said that the worst thing was that those temples which could give a lot of money to the Daoist Association were protected, while those which could not were cast off to fend for themselves in the campaign. In discussing the event, I was struck by the general lack of emotional or rebellious response. Most people reported the event in a matter-of-fact tone, as if observing an occasional turn of the weather into a destructive storm. The tone of their response was as if an act of nature is beyond human control; there was nothing to be done about it but pick up the pieces, wait out the storm, and begin again. One young Buddhist monk did report, however, that the old women at his temple cried a lot over the destructions (interview, February 14, 2001).

Lin Guangsheng, a Wenzhou scholar, told me that the people become very upset after their temple is smashed, since it is a source of protection and the gods residing within shield the people from ill fortune and disaster. Around the time of the temple-destruction campaign of 2000, he went back to his hometown and had a reunion dinner with his old high-school classmates, many of whom are now township-level cadres. In a tense and spirited debate with them about the smashing campaign, he told them three things. First, religion is *not* the opiate (*yapian*) of the people; rather, it teaches people to be moral and virtuous, so it saves the government a lot of propaganda work and is more effective among the people nowadays than is party propaganda. Religion offers the people a spiritual anchor on which they can depend (*jingsheng jituo*), because people need to know answers to the meaning of existence. Second, he told them that peasants are not party members; rather, they have a different way of thinking, and one cannot expect them to think like party officials. "Just like you have your own beliefs, they have theirs," he said. A third point that he made was that by attacking their religion, the cadres brought a lot of trouble for themselves. Incurring the resentment and anger of the people will drive them to oppose the government in everything. Some of his friends refused to accept his suggestions, retorting: "Peasants are ignorant and backward; we need to guide them." He replied pointedly: "Who is really ignorant—the people who build temples or the people who tear them down?" (interview, February 3, 2001).

I also had a tense lunch in a fancy restaurant with some township officials in 2001. I felt strongly about the smashing campaign and all the other state measures to curb popular religion in the area, yet I also needed their support for my continuing research there. At the end of the meal, I ventured that religion and science can coexist; as Western modernization has shown, the state did not have to extinguish Christianity. One official, Mr. Tan, replied: "It is different with Christianity, which respects

science, and science is even an outgrowth of Christianity. It's different with our own religion. It's backward and teaches people to believe in superstitions, magic, and devils. It tells people that this and that is bad luck. And, religion is used by people as a pretext for making money (*pianqian*). It's this bad segment of religion that we have to attack" (interview, February 6, 2001). I asked him whether he was being too worshipful of the West. The idea that the West is civilization and everyone else is backward in evolution was a Western idea from the nineteenth century, I insisted, becoming agitated at his postcolonial complex. "There are actually many lines of development, and each culture must find its own route based on its particular traditions. If you suddenly take culture away from people, then they have nothing with which to orient themselves in a fast-changing modern society," I continued.

Another official, Mr. Long, came to Mr. Tan's rescue. "The West and even Japan," he said, "started modernization very early; we only started after liberation, about one hundred years later. So, we have a lot of catching up to do. We must educate the public to believe in science" (interview, February 6, 2001). In this statement, I sensed the deep impatience of the Chinese state, whether that of the central government or that of the township officials, to attain the dream of a rich and powerful modern society able to compare with the West. I also felt the poignancy of how this state and nationalist discourse could only counteract Western hegemony by resorting to a postcolonial complex. This uncritical acceptance of Western goals and terms of measurement was often at the cost of turning their backs on their own heritage and their own rural people. At the same time, I also shared the anger and helplessness of the local people at the repeated injustice and havoc wreaked upon their efforts to gain a better footing in the modern world. After sustaining so much cultural destruction in the twentieth century, they have been struggling to rebuild their local communities by securely anchoring them to ritual and sacred space, which unfortunately have no place in state modernist representations of space.

According to Mr. Zhang, a local Wenzhou historian, in late imperial times, there were also many small temples and halls labeled "illicit cults (or halls)" (*yin ci*) and heterodox temples housing "evil gods" (*xie shen*), which the state sought to dismantle (see Katz 1995, 28–29). The nineteenth-century Dutch scholar J. J. M. de Groot lists a number of reasons for the late imperial state's banning of certain temples: temples were thought to own too much land, much of it given by the "ignorant folk," and this land "yields no profit to the people" (1900, 2:107); temples were thought to hide fleeing criminals wanted by the authorities; and some temples were accused of promoting heterodox doctrine by preaching the unity of the Three Religions, placing statues of Buddha and Laozi together with Confucius, thus polluting the orthodox state Confucian doctrine (2:108–9). There was also a concern that diviners and spirit mediums housed in temples would give unofficial readings of portents and divine the future so as to stir up popular discontent. Finally, since temples were "societies" (*shehui*), in the original sense of that Chinese term for social organizations, they were also often conflated with politically inclined religious sects which took a deity as an icon for their rebel organization (2:253–58).

Today, said Mr. Zhang, the government destroys small and unregistered temples for three reasons. First, the temples are seen as just wanting to take the people's money; they promise medical cures but only cheat people. Second, party doctrines of socialist materialism (*shehui zhuyi weiwu zhuyi*) and atheism (*wu shenglun*) compel the state to control and limit religious development, even though it cannot completely wipe out religion. Third, since the state crackdown in 1999 on Falungong, the state has become even more vigilant against the "superstitious" and "anti-science" spirit of religion and

its dangerous capacity to organize and mobilize vast numbers of people in potential rebellion. Here, we see that the fears of sedition are shared by both late imperial and modern states. However, we can also detect a modern shift. Although the late imperial state feared religious heterodoxy and the organizational abilities of rebellious sectarian religious movements, the very structure of state practices was also embedded in the same sacred cosmos that encompassed the sects. That is to say, the late imperial state shared with sectarian religions a similar appeal to divine authority, and state rituals sought to align the movements of the state with cosmic rhythms. The emperor conducted seasonal sacrifices on behalf of the people to the royal ancestors and superior gods and consulted oracles on affairs of state. The imperial state did not dismiss the divine authority to which sectarians appealed; it merely sought to monopolize access to it and ban heterodox appeals to it. Thus, it did not stand *outside* what in the twentieth century came to be called neologically "religion" (*zongjiao*). The imperial state never questioned the *necessity* but only the *propriety* of popular rituals, temples, deities, and festivals; it sought to impose its own orthodoxy of divinity. What is a new departure for the modern, radically secular state is that it is structured in a relationship of *exteriority* to the spirit world, divine authority, and the sacred forces of the cosmos.

The campaign of 2000 in Wenzhou against popular religion is only the latest in a long line of similar efforts in twentieth-century China. The Hegelian "end of history" narrative, which seeks a radical rupture from the past to establish "the modern self-conscious subject as the telos of History" (Duara 1995, 85), was launched in early twentieth-century China. Prasenjit Duara shows how "the realm of popular religion turns out . . . to be a reef upon which the Enlightenment project in China repeatedly crashes" (86). Duara lists three phases of the campaign against popular religion in which temples were closed or converted to schools or local government offices, their properties became new sources of revenue for an expanding state, deity images were desecrated, festivities and rituals were banned, and monks and nuns were imprisoned or lost their livelihoods. The period 1900–15 focused on the northern China plain and was led by the new central government administration of Yuan Shikai and the rural elite. The success of this campaign can still be felt today, as seen in the relative impoverishment, both economic as well as religious (they are intertwined in peasant culture), of north China as compared with the south. The second phase was conducted by the Guomindang from 1927 to 1930 in the lower Yangzi River valley of Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Anhui Provinces. Duara's third phase is "the present," the Communist period, culminating in the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976. A sad postcolonial irony for China is that the powerful Western paradigm of evolutionism and linear narratives of history and progress was not only imposed by the West on its colonies but was also eagerly adapted by anticolonial and nationalist movements. Having fueled the Euro-American rise to global power, this paradigm of knowledge now served to wrench a "backward" peasantry mired in "superstition" into Chinese elite intellectual and state modernizing projects.

Despite the repeated invocations of "science" and other Enlightenment liberationist discourses, we must examine carefully how power operates in modern China. Although the modern Chinese state and its revolutionary institutions encompassed the whole of life and sought to take care of the welfare of the population, its strategies of power in rural areas were quite different from what Michel Foucault described for Western governmentality. In a key passage in an interview on space, Foucault said that in its later liberal phase in the nineteenth century, Western governmentality was no longer a matter of the police penetration of the territory and the control of its

subjects. The discovery of a self-regulating mechanism called "society" meant that governmentality's aim was not to overcontrol, but to act according to scientific understandings and measurements of the independent regularities of society (1984, 242). The campaigns against popular religion in the Republican, Maoist, and post-Mao eras show that society in China was/is not seen as having much autonomy of its own, but was/is regarded as a territory whose subjects need(ed) state penetration, guidance, and reform. The notion of a self-regulating mechanism of society that cannot be tampered with without scientific reflection and expert advice came to China recently, only with the revival of Western social science in China in the 1980s. Although many social science institutes and journals have been established in cities in the past two decades and academic knowledge of religion is fed into central government policy machines, local governments still intervene constantly into social processes without passing through Foucault's knowledge/power complex which is so central in the modern West. Although "science" was invoked in these campaigns, science in rural China is mainly a slogan of power; it does not provide the very techniques of power in that power is largely not exercised through knowledge, but through state rationality and violence.

State power does not figure centrally in Foucault's (1991) understanding of governmentality because his model was Western liberal government. He presumed that governmental spaces traversed both the state and civil society of modern Europe and that private micropower structures such as schools, hospitals, orphanages, psychology clinics, and so on, were just as much agents of governmentality as was the state apparatus (Gordon 1991, 27, 36, 37). In China, after a paroxysm of painful rebirth in the first half of the twentieth century, the state radically expanded in the second half to swallow up and neutralize an already weak civil society severely damaged by foreign invasion, civil war, famine, poverty, and state antisuperstition campaigns. Thus, just as Giorgio Agamben (1998) provides an important corrective extension of Foucault by showing how sovereign power does not simply decline or disappear with the expansion of modern governmentality and biopower but also explodes onto the scene in totalitarianism (e.g., in the Nazi and Soviet regimes) and continues to extend its horizons in more subtle and subterranean ways in liberal democratic scientific regimes today,¹⁵ so must we be attentive to the exercise of sovereignty in Chinese modernity. We could say that in modern China state sovereignty has been more highly visible, central, and potent than governmentality. It exercises its power both on what Agamben called "bare life" (as in the radical collectivization and rural industrialization of the Great Leap Forward, which resulted in a massive rural famine, and in the 1979 birth-control policy) and also on political/ideological/social life (as in its Maoist campaigns to change subjectivities and in the current molding of consumer subjects

¹⁵Elaborating on what Foucault called "biopower," Agamben notes that the most visible displays of sovereignty or "the growing inclusion of man's natural life in the mechanisms and calculations of power" were to be found in the great totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century (1998, 119). Although different in many respects from both Nazism and the Soviet system, the Maoist period in China was comparable in that raw human life was both fostered and snuffed out systematically on an unprecedented scale, based on political classifications of inclusion and exclusion. Spaces of concentrating the segments of population subject to the state bans were also the camps, whether the antirightist camps or the smaller and dispersed "cow pen" (*niupen*) enclosures for class enemies of the Cultural Revolution, the terminology of the latter indicating how its occupants had been recategorized as beasts. Following Agamben's demonstration of the continuities between totalitarianisms and democracies, a study of the continuities of sovereignty and biopower between Maoist totalitarianism and the introduction into China today of a discourse of "human rights" and science has yet to be made.

for capitalism). The assertion of sovereignty over life, both natural and social life, has involved the dual movement of the extension of abstract space and the radical loosening of the hold of sacred and divine forces on life. In China the forces of science are still relatively undeveloped, and the state has concentrated its forces on weakening "religion." In the post-Mao era, although nonstate organizations have been allowed tentatively to reemerge, whether they be traditional lineages and deity associations or high-school and college alumni associations, they are still too weak and tentative, and their agency is still too restricted to be important vehicles of governmentality. Thus, Chinese governmentality was and continues to be much more centralized in the cultural-institutional complex of the state than in the West, and state apparatuses are both the initiators and final arbiters of modern abstract space in China.

This inquiry into state deterritorialization and the ritual reterritorialization of space in rural Wenzhou has not delved into the commodification of land¹⁴ because the vast majority of temples, churches, and ancestor halls built or restored in the last two decades of the twentieth century were not acquired through market purchase, but through petitioning local government bureaucracies to return or allocate sites. Only in the last few years have these civil organizations had recourse to the real-estate market to acquire land or buildings, and they continue to be hampered by state restrictions on religious construction. Recent commodification has not benefited sacred spaces but has actually confronted them with new threats to their existence, as commercial-industrial interests seek to encroach on their space (Guowuyuan Zongjiao Shiwuju 1993). Since local governments usually favor such interests when dispensing land-development permits and many real-estate development agencies are actually local state or semistate agencies themselves, commodification of land would seem to represent a new spatial strategy of state power, extending rather than curtailing it. This suggests that Henri Lefebvre's theoretical apparatus and all others based on examining Western capitalist production of space, such as those of David Harvey (1989, 1996), Doreen Massey (1994), and Edward Soja (1994), must not be unproblematically imposed on China. Although such apparatuses become much more relevant with the reentrance of capitalism in the post-Mao period, ownership remains in state hands and the state continues to be imbricated with the ongoing reintroduction of capitalism. Thus, any theoretical language used to understand modern China must deal with China's long history of a centralized imperial state sovereignty (which long preceded capitalism) and this sovereignty's modern rebirth.

Conclusion: The Revenge of the Gods

Despite the continued expansion of state abstract space now joined by capitalist forces, there are many signs of the stubbornness and creative ingenuity of these alternative sacred spatialities. When I first went to this area in 1991, a newly restored, bright yellow Buddhist temple called Qian Yuan Si (Heavenly and primal temple) sat regally in the midst of vast green rice-paddy fields. On my trip in 2001, I discovered that it had recently fallen victim to the rapid urbanization program of the Wenzhou city government. There was now a cement road running right outside its

¹⁴Space considerations prohibit a detailed discussion of the process of the commodification and shifts in ownership of land in rural Wenzhou and the city government's push to urbanize the countryside. This theme will be developed in a separate publication.

front gate, and it was overshadowed on one side by a brand-new pink six-story apartment building and across the street by another one. What was more, the temple was now enclosed tightly within a high front wall, whereas it had been open and unobstructed in front before. The monk inside told me that the local government had ordered the wall in order to protect the property values of the new buildings around the temple. The real-estate developers had not considered the local people's respect for temples and the power of the deities and Buddhas housed within. No one, the monk said with a grin, wanted to buy or rent the new apartments because they would be exposed to the force of the Buddha within. They felt that they did not have the power to withstand (*danshou buliao*) such prolonged exposure to the powerful force of the Buddha, especially right across the street from the front gate of the temple (interview, January 29, 2001). The temple is also the site of many funeral rituals in which the clothing of the deceased is ritually burned on the temple grounds, and this proximity to symbols of death might bring bad luck to those living nearby. As the apartment buildings continued to stay empty, their value fell from thirty thousand yuan per square meter to just a few hundred yuan, especially for the building directly in front of the temple entrance. In desperation, the township government allocated ten thousand yuan for the building of the front wall to enclose the Buddha power within, and the temple itself had to shell out an additional ten thousand yuan because the allocation for the wall was not sufficient. When I left the area, the apartment buildings were still empty.

At my lunch with them, local officials had also mentioned the financial problems caused by this Buddhist temple as an example of how "religion holds back modernization" (interview, February 6, 2001). Mr. Tan said: "The local people do not want to be in the path of a Buddha or be in a building that is higher than the temple. So if we allow too many temples to be erected, this town would soon be deserted and all property devalued." Another way to understand this property devaluation is to see that even the combined strength of the state-capital complex, with recourse to the strategies of both administrative commands and exchange value in real estate markets, could not easily deter the stubborn will of religious and kinship identities to claim their rightful places in modernity.¹⁵ Having almost been eradicated by the revolutionary state, popular divinities have been revived and show signs of cunning adaptation and challenges to the new spatialities of the state-capital power alliance. Although the state intends these ritual spaces to continue inculcating state values and dismantles those that stray, these sites are the battlegrounds for the reappropriation of space by local communities. In these spatial havens, people construct new alternative identities and come together through pathways not forged by state administration. Here, they conduct rituals in which bodies mediate between earthly and divine realms, helping dispel the monopoly of state-capital abstract space. They also experiment with new forms of organization and decision making,¹⁶ the production of community spaces, and collective acts of resistance. Of course, these civil/sacred spaces also have their own problems of gender and class privilege, such as in the patrilineal lineage

¹⁵As the example of Taiwan shows, economic development does not have to lead to a decline in temple building, but if the political conditions are right, it can lead to a creative modern explosion of religious growth, albeit also the commercialization of religion (Weller 2000).

¹⁶Most of these organizations emphasize group discussion and debate, versions of elections, and limited terms of office. These organizational features will be dealt with in a separate work.

spaces, where women are now allowed entrance but are still not accorded active roles. At the same time, in rural Wenzhou the high status and influence that the wealthy sometimes exert in civil spaces are somewhat mitigated because they can only exert this through their generosity in donations (M. Yang 2000).

For Lefebvre, segments of agro-pastoral social space composed the cradle of a primordial absolute space, which were later transformed into the primordial sacred ritual space of temples, monuments, tombs, and churches. Wenzhou sites such as ancestor tombs, deity temples, churches, and ancestor halls are all examples of such archaic spaces which have a role to play in modernity but are excluded from dominant representations of space. Here, the critique of spatial theorist Doreen Massey, who has taken issue with Marxist geographer David Harvey, can shed light on the assertions of popular spaces of divinity in rural Wenzhou. Harvey sees place-based politics as dangerous and reactionary, as attempts to halt the unsettling movement of history by resorting to cultural memories of a once stable and secure world (Massey 1994, 135–43). Instead, Massey approaches places and place-based identities as constructed relationally with other localities and with the larger power structures transcending their boundaries; they are thus dynamically engaged with history. Similarly, the assertions of place and popular reappropriation of space in rural Wenzhou are far from reactive attempts to freeze or rewind history. Rather, they are active engagements with larger historical forces of power to deflect and reterritorialize both state abstract space with its postcolonial complex as well as global capitalist abstract space (see Yang 2004). These furtive sacred spaces operating in a hostile terrain answer to a higher alternative sovereignty than that of the secular state, with its telos of progressive history. They seek divine sanction from ancient deities, mythological humans, buddhas, Christian divinities, and the “primordial energy” (qi) of the earth. They represent counter-movements of indigenous bodies and grassroots communities asserting themselves and carving out their own lived and embodied rather than conceptual space.

Despite the modern expansion of state and capitalist abstract space in China, these sacred spaces quietly continue to hold their ground. In a long-distance telephone call between Cambridge, Massachusetts, and rural Wenzhou in February 2004, Mr. Wang, the old construction worker, informed me triumphantly that the local people had now placed the statues of the goddess Chen Jinggu and other gods into the alcoves of their new deity temple. It is no longer a temple in waiting, masquerading as a “cultural palace,” but had asserted itself as a public site for gathering the local ritual community and the center of local ritual territory.

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