

## Religious Space and Place in Modern China

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**Abstract:** This article looks at the intersection of modern Chinese and traditional Chinese sacred spaces through the analysis of two case studies: Yuyuan Garden and Tourist Area and Huanglong Scenic and Historic Interest Area. The article lays out a brief history of religion in China, the effects of modernization and globalization in China, the creation of sacred space within China, and the role tourism has played in preserving sacred spaces. Furthermore, this article examines how both sites dealt with and continue to deal with the question of religion in China, and how each has been worked into the tourist industry of China, either through choice or design. By becoming a part of the tourist industry, these sites have gained renown and interest because of what they offer, and thus illustrate that the blending of the sacred with the secular can be positive, especially within the context of modern China.

*Key Terms:* China, modernization in China, globalization of China, Durkheim's definition of sacred, sacred space, tourist attractions, tourism, Yuyuan Garden and Tourist Area, Huanglong Scenic and Historic Interest Area

### Introduction

*Waiting in line on a side street just off a main road in busy Shanghai, eagerly anticipating buying our tickets and entering the temple, it does not occur to me that something strange is happening or that I am engaging in "tourism." The tickets purchased, we step over the raised threshold (there to keep evil spirits at bay) and in awe, marvel at the open courtyard, the massive incense burners, and the sound of chanting and mumbled prayers. Venturing further inwards, we come to the main display room that the different gods of this temple inhabit, before continuing onwards to the tearoom off to one side of the temple to enjoy some sweet green tea, engage in conversation, relax; the outside world has been forgotten, the noise of the city seems barely audible, we have immersed ourselves in the temple's world,*

*blurring the distinction between the sacred and the profane, the traditional and the modern, the private and the public, without even knowing it. (Author, personal memory)*

The rapid modernization of China has brought countless opportunities and advances to the country, including improved international connections, better public services, increased standards of living and new ideologies. Of course, it has been argued that such rapid modernization and “opening up” of China has not been equally advantageous to all (for example, the increasing gap between rural and urban sectors or between the rich and the poor). This is also true when it comes to the question of religion (*zongjiao wenti* 宗教问题) (Gossaert & Palmer, 2011, p. 2).

In China, a basic answer to this question would be that while “the Chinese Communist Party, in keeping with the tenets of Marxism, is atheist and requires its members to reject religious belief... Chinese law officially supports religious freedom for its populace at large, though only in sanctioned channels” (Zhou, Jinghao, 2009, p. 1880), recognizing that to do otherwise would be foolish. Equally, it would be impossible to enforce, as evidenced by the “emergence [and growth] of religious movements in the Chinese world [and the world as a whole] and their impact on... domestic and international politics” (Gossaert & Palmer, 2011, p.2). Moreover, with the revival of religious ideology, along with an increased sense of nationalism, there has been the realization that religion continues to play an integral role in defining and legitimatizing social realities (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2004, p. 386). The realization of the falsehood of the secularization theory has led to acknowledgment of the need to understand the role of religion within modern China.

China’s relationship with religion has been volatile, particularly within the past century. After the decline of the Qing dynasty in 1911, during the power struggle between the Nationalist and Communist parties, and with the desire to modernize, China’s traditional religious affiliations suffered greatly, as “religious practices [were relegated] to the domain of the quaint customs of a rapidly fading past and the lofty platitudes of ancient sages... never considered to have much bearing on the real life of Chinese society” (Gossaert & Palmer, 2011, p. 1). Worse yet, under the Communist leadership, religion was viewed as the opiate of the people and a key source of China’s backwardness and weakness. These negative attitudes towards religion within Chinese society lead to the One Hundred Day reforms (*wuxu* 戊戌) of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. During this period, temple property was seized and either destroyed or converted to secular use, an attempt to devalue

and abolish religion, while practitioners were targeted through violent means (Gossaert & Palmer, 2011, p. 44-50).

This mindset was further developed with the introduction of superstition discourse, which viewed traditional beliefs, such as ancestor worship, as little more than a fear of the unknown. The superstition discourse was then contrasted with the Western notion of science, making reconciliation between Chinese religiosity and modern ideals impossible (Gossaert & Palmer, 2011, p. 44-50). For a time during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, aspects of Chinese religiosity were treated as superstitions, causing them to become suppressed while other aspects were maintained as religious or cultural, including Confucianism, but not including Chinese popular religion (Gossaert & Palmer, 2011, p. 53).

During this turmoil, what needed to be destroyed and what needed to be preserved to ensure that China was “strong, rich and a modern country” (Gossaert & Palmer, 2011, p. 63), was constantly in flux, with the final realization that it was more beneficial to allow religion to flourish; the benefits outweighed the possible negatives. A key positive trait was that religion was seen as a source of international and national curiosity, with tourists wanting to travel to religious sites to engage with the cultural elements that these provided. The recognition of this appeal led the government to develop tourism beginning in the early 1990s by building infrastructure that now allows millions of tourists to visit (Oaks & Sutton, 2012, p. 103).

The use of religious sites as tourist attractions may at first seem incongruous due to the blending of the sacred and secular, the private and public, but James Robson (2010) said it best in his article “Faith in Museums: On the Confluence of Museums and Religious Sites in Asia,” when he

urges us to think more carefully about how religion has conditioned the formation and function of museums and their collections everywhere...modern museums do not function in exclusively religious ways, and religious sites have not all become like museums, but each kind of institution has been able to adopt the other role with little alteration in infrastructure or content (p. 128).

Before further discussion, it is important to understand how the terms “space” and “place” are used in this paper. On one hand, space is the imagined or felt interpretations imbued in a place. It is engaged with on an emotional, psychological level. A place, on the other hand, is the physical and lived locale people engage with. Working together, space and place create a site. The confluence between

religious sites and modern museums as tourist attractions is the focus of this paper, and through the analysis of two sites in China, this article demonstrates that such a confluence is not negative, but rather can, and does, have positive effects for religious sites, particularly within the modern, globalized context.

### **Creating Sacred Space**

In order to understand the purpose of this paper, we must first know what “sacred” and “sacred space” means within the Chinese context. The sacred has been defined by a multitude of scholars and intellectuals; I draw on Emile Durkheim’s definition of the sacred, as it lends itself to adaption, and Roger W. Stump’s definition of sacred space. Durkheim defines the sacred (and the profane) as

Essential parts of any religious system: *sacred things* are those isolated and protected by powerful interdictions; *profane things* are those which, according to those interdictions, must remain at a distance from their sacred counterparts; *religious beliefs* are representations which express the nature of sacred things... [and] *religious sites* are rules of conduct which prescribe how one should behave in the presence of sacred things...[to Durkheim, religion is] a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things... which unite into one moral community (Jones, 2011, para.7).

I have chosen this definition as my framework because of its collective nature – the unified system of beliefs and practices – as it best fits the collective nature of religion within China, which tends to place an emphasis on the whole community rather than individuals. From this, sacred space maintains sacred material goods so as to separate out the sacred from the profane (anything not associated with the sacred, particularly everyday necessities or material goods), furthering the special quality of the material goods held inside the space, as well as making space sacred. To Stump (2008),

sacred space is considered ... as space understood in explicitly religious terms by the believers who recognize and use it. [It] bears a direct connection to the superhuman entity or entities postulated to exist within a religious system, or that is directly involved in the interactions between humanity and such entities (p. 25-26).

Stump (2008) also notes that sacred space is created in a variety of forms and for a variety of reasons, providing a categorical list of types including:

- The cosmological (a crucial location, real or imagined)
- Theocentric (continual presence at a location of the divine or superhuman)
- Hierophantic (setting for a specific religious apparition, revelation, or miracle)
- Historical (association with the initiating events or historical development of a religion)
- Hierenergic (access to manifestations of superhuman power and influence)
- Authoritative (centre of authority as expressed by major religious leaders or elites)
- Ritual (repeated usage in relation to an atmosphere or sanctity) (p. 302).

Each of these types of sites are used by a religious group as a means to miraculous occurrences, associate with a religion's history, or assert a religion's identity and control, thereby allowing a religion to territorialize secular, or public space. Territorialisation is achieved by appropriating or claiming control of local social space as a means of "[integrating] religious belief and religious practices into the structures of daily existence...as a form of resistance to hegemonic practices" (Stump, 2008, p. 24). Sacred sites within China, particularly the ones dealt with in this paper, tend to be cosmological, in that the sites are considered to be built in important locations; theocentric because the sites are home to the deities worshipped there; and hierenergic and ritual since the sites are where, through rituals, practitioners can come in contact with the divine. There are also some authoritative sites, though these are not as common, given the diversity within Chinese religion.

In China, a sacred space tends to be typified by its architectural features, creating a distinction between its sacredness and uniqueness within the landscape, particularly in an urban setting. Sacred space in China, particularly the temple, is distinct with roofs that are more than just for protection from the elements. They are deeply symbolic with their curved corners which are believed to prevent evil spirits from landing and entering the sacred space. Temples are also typified by their red colour, as well as having other brightly coloured designs, extensive sculptures and a plaque over the entrance bearing the name of the temple. All of these features make Chinese temples stand out against the landscape, particularly when a temple is a part of a compound and is thus enclosed behind an outer wall, furthering the divide between it and the profane.

Sacred spaces within China also consist of Buddhist pagodas that are tiered, multi-leveled, vertical, round or octagon buildings, which tend to have the main function of housing sacred items. Temples, on the other hand, were used as places of worship, meditation, ritual, and education, housing not only the figures of deities but also providing space in which believers could come in contact with those deities (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2009, p.389).

Architecturally speaking, a Chinese temple is striking, with “places of worship [having] distinctive physical elements that “summon” the believer ‘with symbols’” (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2010, p.389). The physical elements create the place, whereas the symbols establish the space within. Furthermore, following Durkheim’s definition, the architectural features of a site allow for the distinction between that sacred within and the profane outside to be established and maintained. Without the special features bolstered by powerful interdictions, that isolate and protect the sacred as understood by the religious community, the blending of sacred sites with the tourist industry would be far more damaging. However, people’s inherent understanding of what is sacred, what is not, and both members of the religious community and tourists knowing how to act in the presence of the sacred, allows for such a blending to occur. Moreover, a sacred space within China is further typified by its ability to engage each of the senses:

the believer “sees” the sacred sites (temples/churches, relics, icons, monuments); he/she “hears” the sacred sounds (church and temple bells, drum beats, chanting, singing, the call to prayer), “touches” the sacred artifacts (icons, deities, texts); “eats” special food (such as consecrated food); and “smells” specific aromas (incense, fresh flowers) (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2009, p.389).

A key ritualistic element which makes a place sacred is the lighting and burning of incense, joss sticks and joss paper (or spirit money) as offerings to the deities, ancestors or spirits. It is understood that it is on the smoke of an offering that an individual’s prayers are carried up the heaven, or with which the spirits and ancestors are placated by ensuring they are provided for financially in the afterlife. This ritual makes a significant mark physically, not only because there are large incense burners which hold the incense and joss sticks, but also because of the powerful, lingering scent that shrouds the temple, distinguishing it from the rest of the world.

One can feel a connection to the site by touching the wooden framework of the temple, by holding incense while praying on a cushioned kneeling stool in front of the housed deities, through holding offerings of plastic food and other goods, or

by feeling the spirit money in one's hands and the sensation of lighting the paper, and feeling the warmth of the flames before tossing it into the incense burning. All of these sensations further the connection between the individual and the sacred space. The sense of sound is also used in a variety of ways, including the banging of gongs, the chanting of prayers, the clicking of prayer beads, the playing of music (either live, or more commonly now through a sound system), and the chatting of visitors. Stump's categories are highlighted, especially the theocentric and hieneregentic (making offerings to the deities understood to be present), as well as the ritual by following prescribed actions. Furthermore, Durkheim's definition of the sacred is highlighted by the separation of the sacred, within the site, and the profane outside. Finally, here the distinction between space and place is firmly established, since it is the actions of visitors that imbue a physical place with feelings that make it a special space.

All of the senses are activated to encompass the individual fully into the world of the sacred space, even if only for a short while, attempting to allow the visitor to forget the world beyond the temple walls, focusing on the experience inside, and the "inner tranquility and peace, [provided by] an oasis of spiritual calm in a frenzied world" (Mazumdar and Mazumdar, 2010, p. 389). All of this creates the sacredness of space, but it is only through the socialization of individuals within a specific tradition that the sacredness of a place is fully realized. When an individual is not socialized within a particular tradition, they may have a sense of the sacredness, but the reality of the sacredness is never fully realized.

### **Tourism within China**

To examine how a connection with a sacred place is used in tourism within China, I draw on Mazumdar and Mazumdar's (2010) exploration of the idea of the necessity of socialization. Emphasizing that one of the key goals of drawing people to a sacred space is to have tourists experience what local believers see, feel, smell, hear and experience, does not mean tourist experiences are on the same level as locals. Through using sacred spaces as tourist attractions, believers are able to ensure that they fit within modern ideals while maintaining their traditional roles and beliefs.

Tourism is the action of traveling for the purpose of visiting specific destinations understood to be desirable locations to visit, in order to spend time at, and spend money toward that goal. Despite being in place since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Ding & Noel, 2009, p.2297-2300), tourism is still a relatively new phenomenon in the world, and has been amplified by globalization and Western-driven modernization. Without globalization, cross-cultural exchange, and the infrastructure created as a part of globalization, such large-scale tourism would not

nearly be as prevalent. This is particularly true in modern China. Prior to 1979 and the reopening of China, tourism barely existed within China, even among the local population; and, even after the open door policy was introduced and implemented in 1979, the tourist industry was slow to start (Ding & Noel, 2009, p.2297).

In the past, travelling generally occurred for business, academic, health or religious reasons, not for leisure; however, travel and tourism have now become fashionable and even desirable (Ding & Noel, 2009, p.2297-98). The word for tourism in China is *luyou* (旅游), which literally means a trip or a journey, and a tourist is someone who is a *youke* (游客) or travelling visitor, implying that eventually the person will move on at some point. While infrastructure, and new vocabulary, was introduced to support local tourists, it was not until the early 1990s that tourism really took off in China, both nationally and internationally. National tourism was helped along through increased annual incomes, improved transportation, and, most importantly, the introduction of the Gold Weeks holiday policy (introduced in 1999), which extended the three major public holidays (Spring Festival, International Labour Day and National Day) into a week-long holiday, thus allowing for tourism to flourish (Ding & Noel, 2009, p.2298).

Leisure travel, now available to all and not just the wealthy, rapidly changed the mindset of the Chinese. While the focus is on the leisure elements of travel, an increasing focus has been to visit cultural sites (i.e traditional temples or natural sacred sites) by both national and international visitors, along with the push to have certain locations listed as United Nations World Cultural Heritage sites. With the increase of national tourism, there has also been an increase in international tourism, with Chinese travelling out of the country for leisure, and foreigners rushing to China to visit its cultural heritage sites. North America is a good example; it was the first to receive Chinese tourists at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Ding & Noel, 2009, p.2300). During all this, the tourist industry has brought about “knowledge of other languages, lifestyles, and ideas as well as the chance to share...culture with others [all the while] many of these people have begun to adopt the language, clothing, and cultural values of tourists” (Ding & Noel, 2009, p.2300).

Such a rapid increase in national and international tourism presents difficulties and setbacks; I have personally experienced the heartache that can happen while travelling as a tourist, particularly during the Gold Weeks. The epigraph at the beginning of this article, my personal recollection, gives you a sense of what can be expected when visiting a tourist attraction in China. Not only can it take a long time to reach the intended destination, there are usually long line-ups and crowded streets, noisy street vendors, flashing cameras, admission issues and at

times unexpected closures, all leading to frustration and disappointment. As Ding and Noel (2009) pointed out, there are mixed opinions around the question of the value of tourism within China and the issues regarding the sites that are visited, particularly sacred sites. One example is the Dunhuang Caves, a United Nations World Cultural Heritage site, whose century-old murals have been damaged from exposure to large numbers of people and a lack of proper safety and sustainability practices (p. 2999-3000).

In addition to the potential danger to the heritage sites, the government also recognized the inherent safety risks that the Gold Weeks posed for tourists (such as numerous deaths related to traffic incidents) and chose to revert the National Day and Labour Day holidays back into single day holidays in December 2007. Instead, the government introduced compulsory annual leave to ensure all workers received an opportunity to travel during times other than the Gold Weeks, thus ensuring that leisure trips within China would maintain a certain level of quality and enjoyment, which had been in the decline prior to these interventions (Ding & Noel, 2009, p.2300).

The growing importance of tourism among the Chinese, both nationally and internationally, cannot be denied because through the tourist industry, religious sites once persecuted, ridiculed and abandoned, have become desirable destinations for their cultural, historical, or aesthetic appeal, and have been transformed into living museums, thus maintaining a strong presence in modern China.

### **Case Studies: At the Confluence of Sacred Space and Tourist Attractions**

What follows are two case studies that intersect between modern China and traditional Chinese sacred spaces to investigate the question of religion in China, and how each has been integrated into the tourist industry of China, either by choice or by design. The first site is in an urban, highly commercialized temple and tourist attraction whereas the second site is rural and mixes sacred spaces, both natural and man-made, into a cultural and natural tourist attraction and is one of the forty-one UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

#### *Shanghai Yuyuan Garden and Tourist Area*

In the heart of Shanghai, amidst the busy streets filled with honking horns, bargaining buyers and vendors, laughing children, gossiping teenagers, and business people talking on their phones, is the Yu Yuan Garden and Tourist Area (Shanghai Municipal Government, 2009, p.430). It is a hub of tourism, business, and cultural (including religious) exchange and has been so for over four hundred years (Shanghai Municipal Government, 2009, p. 430). What began as a private garden to

please the father of the garden's original owner became public in 1587 after twenty-eight years of construction. The new, expanded garden designed by the famous garden architect, Zhang Nanyang, opened up and became a key social gathering place in Shanghai. The garden, characterized by its fifty-plus pavilions, terraces, and towers, as well as ponds, bridges, and trees within a quiet and beautiful atmosphere, exemplified the essence of Chinese culture and art, naturally drawing people to the garden (Shanghai Municipal Government, 2009, p.430). While the renowned garden still exists today, it has been expanded over time, particularly in relation to commercialization of the area, with multiple shops, restaurants, tea houses, and artisans conducting business.

Nestled within the Yuyuan Garden and Tourist Area is an all-important Daoist temple – the City God Temple, home to the City Gods of Shanghai. A city god, or *cheng-huang shen* (城隍神), occupies a place of considerable importance in Chinese religion, since city gods were given responsibility for the protection and prosperity of an appointed area by the local, human, government officials, and could be stripped of their title and responsibilities if the area came to ruin (Russell, 2009, p.1876). The city-gods are the result of increased urbanization during the Tang (618-907 CE) and Song (960-1279) dynasties and fit within an established hierarchy of gods (Russell, 2009, p.1876). This hierarchy refers to the order in which the deities would be approached for divinations, advice, and size of offerings, with the city gods holding importance within the area they were worshipped, but usually no further.

While the Cultural Revolution saw the disuse of the City God Temple and the destruction of its statues, with the gradual implementation of religious freedom in 1994, the City God Temple was restored and re-opened for public use (Shanghai Town God's temple overview). As part of the greater Yuyuan Garden and Tourism Area, it is now a National Key Cultural Heritage Site, bustling with life (Shanghai Municipal Government, 2009, p.430).

The interplay between the religious, cultural and commercial are present at the Yuyuan Garden and Tourist Area, especially after the Shanghai Yuyuan Tourist Mart Co., Ltd (SYTM) was established in 1992, at which point “the company built seven Ming-Qing-style commercial buildings... [which] together with the City God's Temple, Yuyuan Garden, Mid-Lake Pavilion, Nine-Bend Bridge and Lotus Pond...make the area more charming and enticing...the traditional recreational activities and business promotion activities [are] combined together” (Shanghai Municipal Government, 2009, p.431-2). Much of the emphasis at the Yuyuan Garden and Tourist Area is on commerce and tourism, nevertheless the religious and cultural aspects of the City God Temple (and the six other religions represented

on site) maintain a constant presence. The City God Temple holds public fairs and festivals celebrating the birthdays of the City Gods, Chinese New Year and the Lantern Festival (Shanghai Municipal Government, 2009, p.432) as well as having active Daoist monks and lay-believers practicing at the temple.

At Yuyuan Garden and Tourist Area, Durkheim's definition is most apparent, in that the all-important separation of the sacred, found within the City God Temple, is kept apart from the profane. While the sites are connected physically, the City God Temple has been permeated with a particular feeling of sacredness, which is not present in the commercial areas of the Garden, which draws out the distinction between the physical place and the religious space.

### *Huanglong Scenic and Historic Interest Area*

Located in north-west Sichuan Province is the Huanglong (Yellow Dragon) Valley which consists of snow-capped peaks and a diverse forest ecosystem with spectacular limestone formations, waterfalls, and hot springs. As well, it is home to a number of endangered animals, including the giant panda and Sichuan's golden snub-nosed monkey (*UNESCO World Heritage Centre. 2012*). A traditional, multiethnic pilgrimage site, Huanglong is located in Songpan County, south of the Amdo region on the eastern edge of the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau, and while it is home to multiethnic and religious identities, I will focus on the Han Chinese presence at the site.

The property lies along the southern part of the Min Shan Range and is approximately 150 km north of Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan (*UNESCO World Heritage Centre. 2012*). The region is characterized by frequent earthquakes and extensive calcite deposits, particularly along the 3.6 km Huanglonggou (Yellow Dragon Gully) which has led to several travertine pools filled with algae and bacteria that give the pools a range of colours from orange and yellow to green and blue. Huanglong is home to two important hot springs, the FeicuiKuang-quan and the Zhuizhuhu, both of which are said to have medicinal properties; in addition to the springs, the region is home to popular lakes and the Zhaga Waterfall (*UNESCO World Heritage Centre. 2012*). Huanglong was established as a natural heritage site in 1982 after heavy logging of its resources caused extensive damage to the ecosystem of the region. Now the area is a popular tourist area, receiving millions of local and international visitors every year (*UNESCO World Heritage Centre. 2012*).

While emphasis is placed on the natural beauty of the site as a tourist attraction, Huanglong is also an important religious site for Han Chinese lay Buddhists, Daoists, and Tibetan Bon. The history of the Chinese presence at Huanglong is unclear (Kang, 2009, p. 232), with the establishment of a military post

during the early Ming dynasty being the earliest reference known. What is known is that the Middle Temple at the site bears the date 1700; therefore the temples were built sometime prior to that date (Kang, 2009, p. 232-33). While originally there were three temples at the site, the Front Temple was soon in ruins, and today only the Middle and Rear Temples remain. The Middle Temple was the largest of the three, particularly during the late Qing and Republican periods with three lofty halls, double-eave, and multi-layered lofts, and was home to many Buddhist gods (Kang, 2009, p. 233). However, the Rear Temple is most famous today.

The Rear Temple, known as Huanglong si (Temple of the Yellow Dragon), closest to the Golden Lakes, is the “ultimate destination of the pilgrims attending the annual temple festival” (Kang, 2009, p. 234). The temple is named for the Yellow Dragon Perfected Man who is said to have cultivated the “Way” and is also identified with the Yellow Dragon, who assisted the great sage king Yu in taming the Min River; therefore the Rear Temple is mostly a Daoist temple, and has continuously been presided over by a succession of Daoist priests and lay believers, despite its remote location (Kang, 2009, p. 234). During the Cultural Revolution both temples suffered severely as religion became illegal and monks and nuns were forced to return to secular life, leaving temples, mosques and monasteries abandoned to either demolition or conversion for other uses. With the growth of tourism and the revival of religion that took place in the early 1980s, Huanglong and its temples became a popular tourist site, even though Huanglong was originally designated for its natural beauty rather than its cultural sites (Kang, 2009, p. 234-35).

When the local people were again allowed to practice their religion, they leapt at the opportunity, rebuilding the temples, and drawing on the increased interest of tourists to promote religious affiliations. This brought about economic opportunities for locals working in the tourist industry as waitresses, security guards, tour guides, motel or restaurant owners, street vendors, or drivers. Some even tapped into tourists’ desire for spirituality in the form of spiritual healing and fortune-telling (Kang, 2009, p. 234-36). Not only has the establishment of Huanglong Scenic and Historic Interest Area created economic opportunities and allow for the religious identity of the region to flourish, it has also allowed for this relatively secluded area to connect with the larger Chinese community and the global world as a whole. At the same time, many of the elements of religious practice at Huanglong have become commercialized with the Management Bureau of Huanglong fashioning ethnic culture for market consumption in a variety of forms and creating the “Huanglong International Cultural Tourism Festival,” a

spectacle to represent the four major ethnic groups and their unity (Kang, 2009, p. 242-243).

Certainly, there are artificial elements to the religious aspects of the site, nevertheless there has been, and continues to be, a revival of religion at Huanglong, and as Kang (2009) points out:

Tourism, along with a much more relaxed political and economic environment, has opened the region to the outside world. This has raised not only the standard of living of the local people but also their political awareness...these groups have actively sought to use the development of tourism and the presence of international agencies to their own advantage...they attempt to make use of the publicity about Huanglong generated by state power to defend their own religious cause and to reclaim the temples (p. 250).

Huanglong provides an excellent example of Stump's categories and further establishes the distinction between space and place. Huanglong is home to a multitude of deities from different religions, and it has historical and authoritative significance derived from its history in the region as the base for three main religions. More importantly, it is a key ritual site hosting the above mentioned festivals, which have been bolstered by the tourist industry. Huanglong also provides insight into the difference between a place and space, in that the buildings, while they have symbolic importance, are made more important by the feelings that have been established by believers. This creates a religious space within the physical surroundings.

### **Conclusion**

In China the question of what religion means and how it can and ought to be incorporated into modern society has been longstanding. While traditionally religion had a vital role within Chinese society, after the Republican period and the establishment of the Communist Party of China, the traditional role of religion in China was undermined and under-appreciated until recently when the question of religion was once again raised. This is particularly true when it comes to the intersection of modernization and globalization, along with the establishment of national and international tourism, causing the government to slowly rethink its stance on religion. This has in turn allowed religion to once more reassert itself to some extent because of its tourist appeal. The mixing of sacred and secular space at Yuyuan Garden and Tourist Area and Huanglong Scenic and Historic Interest Area allows for both tourism and religion to flourish because each helps the other. At first

this blending of the sacred with the secular appears to be in conflict with Durkheim's definition of the sacred in that the sacred is supposed to be kept separate from the profane and mundane. It has been argued that there is still recognition of what is sacred and what is secular, and that through using tourism, the sacred is preserved, and while it is not isolated, it is protected. The blending of the traditional with the modern, the private with the public, and the secular with the sacred is not the destroyer of the religion but rather the preserver, especially in the context of a modern, religious China.

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