VITENSKAPELIG HØYSKOLE
Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and Society

Buddhism and tourism

Looking for Lived Religion in Zhi Yun temple

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MF Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and Society,

AVH: Thesis for master in Religion in Contemporary Society (60 ECTS), spring 2021

Word count: 34228

Acknowledgement

My gratitude to all the hard working and enthusiastic staff at MF who created this inspiring master's degree in Religion in Contemporary Society. I believe passing on and creating new knowledge about religion is more and more important in this age where technology make information more easily available, but at the same time creates more distance between people. I see religion as how people have always tried to look for meaning and fellowship and following this still living historic trail means learning about humanity.

I would like to especially give thanks to my supervisor Marielle Stigum Gleiss, as I am very sure I would not have been able to complete my thesis without her.

Abstract

The main topic for this thesis is the mixture of Tourism and Buddhism in China, to ask the question of what takes place when a tourist visits a Buddhist temple. Can sightseeing also be a religious experience? Resulting in the research question: How does a group of Chinese tourists experience a Buddhist temple and in what ways can their experiences be interpreted as spiritual using the approach of Lived Religion? In order to understand the dynamics at play here, this master thesis includes the historic backdrop and current situation for religion in China, especially Buddhism, as well as rural tourism which includes a special focus on ethnic minorities whose religious heritage at times are used as a part of the tourist industry. The field work consists of eight interviews with tourists at a Buddhist temple, Zhi Yun. This temple is located close to a tourist hot spot, Lijiang old town, but has until now been out of the tourist spotlight, so mainly only catering to religious activities. The findings were analysed using the concept Lived Religion as a frame for understanding spirituality. Several of the interviewees partook in religious practice, and many described an experience more related to spirituality or religiosity then to sightseeing activity. Despite this, no participants identified as Buddhist. The serenity and scenery, together with the religious tropes and symbols can be said to be the emotional activators, by what Riis and Woodhead would call emotional regimes.

Abbreviations

UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
CNTA	China National Tourism Association

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1 Introduction

1.1 Aim, motivation and research question

This master thesis concerns the topics tourism and Buddhism in China, and the dynamics between the two.

Tourism is a major influence in today's society. Not only as economic power force, but also as a large part of people life, for both the consumer and the provider. For some a holiday represents a once in a life opportunity, to others it is the highlight of the year. It is a meeting place, a place for dialogue between cultures, including all the good and bad nuances of who we are as a community. While traveling, we mostly follow a certain set of social rules specifically for this setting, and we choose our journeys often based on popular trends or our inner desires. Therefore, studying tourism can reveal different layers of culture and social relations.

The choice of focusing on Buddhism is based on that it is probably the largest religious group in China, and there for an important part of the religious landscape to explore and most importantly, in my experience it is much more likely that a Buddhist temple will be a part of a typical tourist itinerary. This can be explained by seeing a temple as a part of rural tourism, which will be one of the topics in this thesis. Moreover, Buddhism is within practical reach as is it as a less sensitive issue as far as religion goes in China.

When first hearing the combination of the two words 'tourism' and 'Buddhism' the next perhaps most logical association is religious tourism. One only needs to think of the massive scale of pilgrimage to Mecca, the Vatican, Jerusalem, or the new-found interest in modern society towards for example hiking the Camino del Santiago or yoga retreats, and so on. Religious tourism as a part of religious practice is an interesting area to explore as part of the field in sociology of religion. However, this thesis concerns religious experiences when they are occurring in regular tourism, by trying to see what is happening beyond the surface when a Chinese tourist visits a Buddhist temple on vacation.

When first considering this topic, my immediate thought was that tourism at a religious site can be an interruption to the religious life at a temple since its purpose is to serve as a religious institution and not for entertainment. However, I realized that when a tourist enters a

temple this event could be creating its own religious content, one that should not be overlooked simply because the person in question is not a devotee or a member of a religious group. Religious experience does not come in one shape only and can be important to the individual regardless of source. For can this encounter, even if it was perhaps only a very brief encounter with religious spaces, be meaningful as a spiritual experience to the tourist? There are also other interesting issues related to this question, as in is the tourist sometimes stepping out of their role as purely an observer, and cross into a religious practice? Can seeing such places inspire a sense of awe comparable to spiritual emotion? Is the role of a tourist making it more socially acceptable to seek out a spiritual experience, as daily life in a modern world sees secularism as the norm?

In afterthought, I found that the core of these questions lays in how individuals experience a religious site, and in how to interpret these experiences when related to religion. This is where the concept of Lived Religion comes in. The purpose of Lived Religion is to dwell on 'the everyday thinking and doing of lay men and women (Hall, 1997), and even though being a tourist is not an everyday occurrence, it is a part of everyone's life at some point. The perspective on religion as applied by Nancy T. Ammerman (2014) and Meredith M. McGuire (2008) means understanding that religiosity can be found in every part of our lives. In their research there is an openness in the approach to spirituality as a religious experience. This word 'spirituality' has different meaning to different people, and instead of limiting it by a definition Ammerman (2014) tried to map and make an overview of what it meant to the public, then group the most frequently replied answers to create categories for analysis. These categories are also the ones I will adhere to in this thesis, as explained later in the theory chapter. To me personally, spirituality simply means an action and/or feeling that are connected to something we cannot explain with science and can both be related to a specific religion or not.

The research question is as follows:

How does a group of Chinese tourists experience a Buddhist temple? In what ways can their experiences be interpreted as spiritual using the approach of Lived Religion?

Looking into this topic I will attempt to go by the key concepts of Lived Religion but also explore its validity in a non-western setting.

When trying to understand religion's role in an everyday context, I still need to understand the historical background and the current political climate that could influence the participants experience at the temple. As it is, domestic tourism has had an enormous boom in China. The main reason behind this is an economic growth that lifted more than 800 million people out of poverty, thereby creating financial leeway for ordinary people to travel leisurely. Secondly, understanding how a tourist experiences a temple can provide an insight into more than tourism, it can also cast light on some of the many aspects of the situation for religion in today's China. As known, religious activities and communities were persecuted in China for more than a decade during the Cultural Revolution. Society was gradually opened up from the end of 1970ties and religious activities flourished. But until now are still facing limitations set by the state. For example, a party cadre cannot have any religious affiliation, not even when retired, and any venue for religious activity must be state-approved. These kind of control mechanisms appears to be more flexible in the touristic setting, making tourism and interesting point of view for understand the blurred lines in religious freedom.

The case study is based on Zhi Yun temple. It is located outside of Lijiang, a town in Yunnan province which is one of the top touristic destinations in China, although not well known among international travellers. Zhi Yun temple is about six kilometre outside this town. This is a very well preserved 300-year-old authentic Tibetan esoteric and the entrance is lined with huge old oak threes claiming similar age. The name Zhi Yun figuratively translated means the pure white cloud temple. This temple recently added a new temple complex at the hill above the original. Situated solitarily next to a shallow lake and with a golden coupe it is visible from afar. The lake is highly protected by government regulations because of the rare migrating birds that flock here at winters, so coincidentally the temples vicinity is safe from development.

The major point of touristic interest in Lijiang is the ancient market town, placed beautifully under a horizon of Himalayan Mountain tops. Historically this caravan and trading town served as a meeting point for several ethnic minorities in the area, where Tibetans were one. The majority ethnic group living here, then and now, is the Naxi people. This group adhered to their own religious practices and world view, but you will also find Buddhist and Taoist temples here. It appears the religious differences did not divide the local communities, as one temple has the original murals intact displaying a mix of religious symbols from Buddhism,

Taoism and local religion. The latter, a shamanistic religion, is today well known although the religious dogma is not. How so? Because of their unique pictorial writing system. These hieroglyphs had supposed magical qualities and are now being mass printed as a form for decoration on anything from walls, buses, souvenirs or clothes for tourists, which makes for an interesting side note on how tourism can have a big influence in a short time span on religious symbols. As Zhi Yun until now has been outside of the radar of mass tourism, the temple can be an interesting case to follow in the future as the new expansions could mean there will be more focus on it in the tourist market.

1.2 Research design

In this qualitative study the overall arch is Buddhism, tourism and the experiences at a temple. In any case a researcher must set a limit for practical reasons, but in this context I also consider the likelihood for a regular person to visit a Buddhist temple as a tourist in China much larger than for example a Christian Church, thereby having a potential larger position of influence in general society. This way I could also draw upon the resources and knowledge from having lived in a village close to such a temple for several years and visiting several times a year. Being a master's student, learning the process of research is a very important part, so I also wanted to practice my ability to conduct interviews in mandarin (Putonghua). Not to forget, using one-on-one qualitative interviews is a logical choice of research in Lived Religion, since this concept's focus is understanding religion's role in society and everyday life from the individual's perspective. In total I proceeded to interview eight Chinese visitors at Zhi Yun temple.

In order to analyse the idea of religious experiences as a part of tourism, I wished to use the concept of Lived Religion as a theoretical frame, and previously used analysing methods for studying Lived Religion. One valid reason would be that one of the critiques of Lived Religion is the scarcity of research in a non-Western hemisphere, making this thesis a small contribution to adjust this imbalance. However, the main reason why I chose Lived Religion as my main frame for analysing is because it, in my understanding of the theory in Lived Religion, provides a common theoretic base for seeing religion as an integrated part of daily life, a part of life that is not so easily observed by for example looking at more objective ways

of measuring religiosity in a society by level of Church attendance or membership. It means seeing religion as having a fluctuating but still an influential role in people's lives, so that in order to understand society we should not underestimate the role of spirituality, and even in a seemingly secular society like China it is important to not ignore the place of religion or spiritual world views and practices of everyday people that are still 'living' on today.

From early on when working on the research question the idea was to use Lived religion as a concept in China. This was because religion and expressions of religiosity in China is less observable in modern urban public life, and the perspective on looking for religion in everyday life in Lived Religion could help uncover it. The challenge this field presented was to find a way to observe and analyse less religiosity in a seemingly secular setting, so when learning about the perspective of Lived Religion it seemed to be a good fit for this purpose. However, later in the process when comparing the interviews, it became more and more clear that I needed some other perspectives in order to understand correctly the correlation of what the participants felt and experienced, and the place itself. For this I chose Riis and Woodhead (2012) ideas about religious emotions while benefiting from especially Massey's (2005) term 'Here and There' and McGuire's (2016) approach on embodiment in religious experiences, while Knotts work on spatiality and religion was also very helpful.

When looking at context, tourism and Buddhism touches upon several aspects. For millions of tourists in China encounter Buddhism when visiting a temple as a tourist in rural areas and as part of rural tourism. Chapter 3 begins with tourism and the historic development behind the sector, before getting into the topic of rural tourism in 3.1.1. The next section talks about Buddhism and its special position culturally and socially, making this religion more generally accepted by the political powers (Jones, 2010, p. 10. Rural tourism has used ethnic minorities as a drawing point, something which again is based on the perception of ethnic identity in modern day China. Therefore it is necessary to be aware of the contact points between tourism and ethnic identity and their religion in China, as per 3.2, since ethnic minorities' role in rural tourism and tourism marketing agenda creates a possible arena for experiencing or practicing religion in China. As section 3.3 explains the historic and current background for the current religious landscape in China and the special position of Buddhism compared to other religions, it is also important to consider how tourism and politics could influence

Buddhism. Chapter 4 takes on the theoretic frame of Lived Religion, explaining the background and usability.

In order to catch a glimpse of this crossing point between tourism and lived religion I will use Zhi Yun temple in Lijiang as a case study, see chapter 5. The result of the interviews will be found in a continued line under 5.1, before the topical issues in the findings are discussed in chapter 6.

2 Methods

Starting with the plan on a practical level, this chapter will explain the process behind this thesis step-by-step, including ethics and positionality.

2.1 Planning and choosing

The research questions were as mentioned, how does a group of Chinese tourists experience a Buddhist temple? In what ways can their experiences be interpreted as spiritual using the approach of Lived Religion? When explaining an experience on an individual level and explore spirituality as part of a touristic experience, I saw Lived Religion's open approach to spirituality and religion as a looking glass. There is not too much research to be found concerning my chosen geographical area, neither on Lived Religion or Buddhism. In the field of tourism there were more to choose between, but mostly related to nature conservatory efforts. Therefore, doing the basic groundwork on location by interviewing and observation seemed like the most logical choice. Unfortunately, what really became the main practical issue of working on a Master thesis in 2020/2021 was the global covid pandemic. The suffering and tragedy in the wake of this event makes worrying about the effect it would have my thesis seem very self-centred. Still, among the many practical consequences of the pandemic, it brought with it a challenge to find new ways to work under new conditions. My choice of solutions will be explained further in this chapter.

Originally, when first choosing the design, the practical issue of finding tourists to interview seemed like the smallest. Because in my experience it is very easy to get in contact with people in China, at least compared to Scandinavia where small talk with strangers is not so day to day. Instead, I became as millions of others stranded in another country then according to plan. In my case, my country of birth, Norway. Coincidentally my Chinese husband was only separated from me and our children for little more than half a year, which made getting though this time much easier. As the strict control of the Covid 19 contagion situation and society's return to relative normalcy came about much earlier in China then in Europe I therefore saw it as realistic to be reunited with my husband in his home country, a country I still felt was home, already in the fall 2020. That wish has yet to be fulfilled.

To my advantage, since China had gotten the pandemic under control it became likely to find tourists visiting Zhi Yun temple again. Although I would presume the worldwide slowdown in tourism in general could influence who and how many would visit. Possibly, since the number of people travelling is lower than normal, the people who visited at such a time could be representing a section of the population who are more interested in Buddhism than the average citizen. This is not possible to prove or disprove under the circumstances, but it is worth to keep in mind when working with the material. When enrolling the participants, one might call it a combination of purposed sample and strategic *sample (Hennink et al)* meaning the target was to keep the selection as random as possible, while trying to reflect the average of the span who were there. By visiting at different days and different time of the day, the selection should be a fair representation of that span.

The necessary familiarity with the temple and its residents, and thereby the grounds for making these interviews, were as mentioned my long stay in the nearby village where I had my guest house. As the only non-Chinese resident in this area, I am known to most in the vicinity including the local village leaders and administration. However, since I was not able to be present at the time, the only feasible option was to include the help of my Chinese husband who had at that time returned from Norway. He is among other things a press and art photographer, so he has much experience and an ease for meeting and getting in touch with strangers. With him on ground, the idea was to conduct the interview by phone, and using a loudspeaker and digital recorder.

When working with the semi-structured interview guide, I understood the role of the participant as a tourist and tried to imagine what that would usually mean on a very practical level. Then I reversed the role and imagined how I can make them retell the experience without any notice of me looking for any spiritual aspect of the visit. The questions were very simple and general: What did you do first? What did the other guests do? What did you take a photo of? What did you expect before you arrived? Etc.

2.2 Process

By the help of my husband, who helped me recruit by waiting for visitors by the resting area right outside the main gate, I managed to proceed with eight interviews. These interviews

were taken over five days at different times of the day, but mostly in the afternoon after lunch. Then the questions were conducted over phone by me, on loudspeakers in my private home and using a separate digital voice recorder for storage. In this day and age meetings online by videos are more and more normal, unfortunately software and data security issues became a hindrance. As the recruitment of participants were spontaneously on location immediately after their visit, I had no elbow room for expecting them to prepare by downloading an app such as Zoom or similar. Many Apps in China are off limits by being connected to Google and therefore blocked by state regulations. The most common App for video-chat and other social media is WeChat (Thomala, 2021), which is also very user friendly. Unfortunately, this App is not considered secure by the data safety regulations in Norway. So, in other words the solution to conduct phone interviews was the only option as far as I could see.

Now, there are many issues with this solution, especially the lack of personal contact when interviewing over phone. In my view one such issue is that when being in an interview with anyone, an important component is a mutual trust. Being face to face can help create a personal connection between interviewer and interviewee, making room for creating such trust. Especially if asking somewhat personal questions, it would be hard to do without being present. This was part of the reason why I ended up deciding to not ask too direct questions related to faith. As an alternative I chose to open up the question format and asked more about the visit and their experience at the temple. The goal was to make room for topics or words with spiritual or religiously connected meaning to randomly appear in the conversation, and in part to avoid asking too leading questions that could result in creating an enlarged amount of religious content in the findings. So, I tried to make the interview feel like a day-to-day conversation. There were also other reasons for why I did not want to ask straight out about anyone's identification related to religious belonging. As Leamaster and Hu's research shows (Leamaster & Hu, 2014, p 252) many who practice Chinese religion will categorize themselves as Buddhist, as it has higher legitimating status. I worried this would obscure the findings, by making the participant feel they had to answer the questions as "a Buddhist", and not as their natural self. In my impression giving a black and white option, like by giving a simple yes or no question about religious belonging, can subdue the view of the grey landscape I wish to uncover.

Actually, to not be there in person could also have some positive effects on the interview situation and result. Hennink et al (2020, p 19) described how a researcher who by personal choice would dress in a way that signified someone of deep faith resulted in that his interviewees had responded by exaggerating their own religious standpoint. I interpret this as revealing how we all subconsciously want to appear likable to the person we are facing. At least the more anonymous setting of over phone could minimize this effect. Also, anonymity could take away some of the possible social distance that my foreign appearance could generate.

Originally, since the interviews were intended to be made during a sightseeing visit, I felt it was necessary to keep the interviews short in order to not interrupt their holiday schedule at about 15 to 18 minutes. The selection of interviewees was going to be as random as possible, representing the average span of the visitors while trying to include a larger variation of the population in age and gender. The search for participants were made at different times of the day over different days of the week. Securing the interviews was not difficult, as about 3 out of 4 people asked were willing to participate. However, men were overrepresented in the group of interviewees with six out of eight. The reason for this was that the number of men visiting the temple at this special time surpassed women. This could be, as mentioned earlier, a result of the pandemic and the overall slowdown in tourism. So perhaps more men than women will travel to this kind of off the beaten track place at a time when fewer people in general travel. I mention this because before the pandemic, when visiting this temple and others in China, I have not observed there being a significant difference in gender among the people present. The most noticeable at those times was that there were more elderly than young present. One of the possible reasons for that could merely be based on a practical issue since retired people would have more time and therefore opportunity to visit.

Finally, a highly important part to reflect on in this setting is the issue of language and translation since the interviews I would conduct are done by speaking Chinese (mandarin). Translating is originally a profession and a skilful artform that takes years to develop. For in order to translate someone’s meaning one needs more than a dictionary and knowing the grammar. Translating is not as easy as changing sentences word by word, especially when the words belong to a culture different to your own. How can I make sure that what I heard was what the participants truly wanted to say? Living a decade in a country does not make anyone

as proficient as a native speaker, even if I had the special circumstance of living in an only Chinese speaking surrounding, and in a guest house that literally provides the grounds for meeting and socializing, getting to know the culture from different perspectives. However, I think the best way to face this problem is to prepare for meeting difficulties and so not be overly confident. Therefore ahead of the interviews I practiced by example staging an interview with a friend. Secondly, by having audio records of the interviews it allowed me to check, check and check again. Lastly, to be fair communication can and will error even between people who both speak in their native language. Perhaps the challenge of working in another language can instead help the researcher to stay extra alert and avoid such misunderstandings.

As it turned out, the language barrier was not too much of an issue during the interviews. It did at times prevent me from asking follow-up questions because I had already too much focus on the task of understanding, but sometimes the lack of follow-up was also based on personal chemistry during the interview and whether or not I felt that they were at ease and open in the situation.

I then transcribed the interviews, and when meeting with a translation issue I consulted with my husband about a certain word or phrase without identifying the participants. At some stages I will explain a word more thoroughly in order to capture the cultural essence when I felt it necessary.

2.3 Analyzation

The arch of this thesis is Buddhism and tourism, and the topic is spirituality as part of a touristic experience. The ideas of everyday religion and spirituality as part of the concept Lived Religion according to the work of Ammerman (2014) made the foundations for how to understand spirituality in this setting, and when looking for the spiritual in the data I also went by the categories that defined spirituality in her book. These were, as I will return to later in the theory chapter: Theistic, Extra-Theistic and Ethical Spirituality. The findings did reveal signs of spirituality, especially in the emotional part of the experience. Since I was going by a thematic theoretic analysis, these categories meant I had the codes preprepared in accordance with Ammerman's "Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes" (2014). In practical terms this meant

finding descriptions in the interviews that could be related to these categories of spirituality. After observing and interpreting these, as I was looking through the data other thematic groups stood out. A theme, as Braun and Clark writes (2006, p 82) captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set. These themes were related to the experience at the temple itself, place and authenticity, but also new questions arose concerning cultural differences, prayer and belief, intention and introduction. My findings showed a need to dwell on spatiality and emotional responses as a part of the experience. The concept of Lived Religion was still crucial in the understanding of spirituality, but McGuires (2008, 2016) thoughts on embodiment and Riis and Woodhead (2012) emotional regimes became important pieces in the puzzle.

2.3.1 A photo to remember

When designing the interview guide, I made a plan to ask the participants to take a photo with my camera, of any object at the temple that felt special to them, as a way to open up the dialogue and allow some reflection through action. Instead, by doing the interview from a far, I optioned out and instead asked them about the photos they had already taken. Why? Because when we take photos, we make a choice about what we would like to bring with us further down the road, or how to present ourselves in our social media profile. At first, it seemed like their photos did not let me know more about their experience as most would say the buildings. Then taking a step back, I realized most of them included what they had photographed when recounting what made the deepest impression or what they will remember the most. This shows that taking a photo perhaps makes us more easily remember what we experienced, even without looking at the photo. The most often object of the photographs was as mentioned the buildings, the buildings ‘style’. Only Mr Hong said he preferred not to take photos, so that he could be more present in the experience itself. Miss Hui had a little bit of a different reply, as she was especially occupied with two kittens playing. This was also what she said she will remember the most clearly in the future.

2.4 Research quality and ethics

Now, the field work of this thesis changed significantly to how I imagined it beforehand, and perhaps also the working methods are a bit out of the ordinary. Or perhaps not, I assume the 'gatekeeper' as the person who can help a researcher recruit potential participants are sometimes called, would be a person already present in the field of case study (Hennink, 2007, p. 108). The difference in this case is that the gatekeeper is someone I am very familiar with, to say the least. What would be the precedence in having one's husband help with finding interviewees? I did consider asking other Chinese friends to help me out, just to avoid any possible issue. However, as a photographer his daily schedule is flexible, and it would be asking a lot of a friend to donate so many hours as a favour. Instead, I considered the possible outcome. Would his presence influence the selection? No, they were strangers to him as much as they would be to me. Could I protect their anonymity? Yes, since he was not taking part or listening to the interviews. After handing them his phone, he would step away, so he would not be able to connect the content of the interview to the names in the signature. By this plan, the application was approved by the Norwegian Centre of Research Data, as the interviews might reveal sensitive information on religious views I could not have proceeded without their consent. The findings were presented by using fictional names, and only I have the code for access to their stored interviews.

Now, concerning the recruitment, to make himself more approachable my husband would take his more than 50-year-old camera (based on his own artistic preference in art photography) and shoot some photos there. This meant a way of passing the time when waiting for possible interviewees, but it also makes it easier to get in touch with others on site because the unusual camera creates interest and curiosity. When introducing himself, he would also mention his nearby guest house and his Norwegian wife to familiarize himself to the possible participant, and early on ask if they could possibly participate in an interview. At this part of the process, I was anxious about the consent form. Not the content, but the signature. Intuitively, maybe because the digitalization process in handling documents until now is less used in China, I feel that the act of giving a signature is more significant, hinting at a bigger commitment. In the end it did not prove to be a big hindrance, and I provided my email address as a contact form for withdrawing consent. According to my wish he would show them the interview guide beforehand to put them at ease. I think seeing the questions

before agreeing to the interview can probably influence the response a little, as compared to a more spontaneous reply. However, I feel that since religion can be a sensitive subject it would be better if people knew as much as possible about what they agreed to participate in.

Regarding my absence, I realized I could see my bad luck in timing with a different perspective. Because, I was in the rare position to have had been to the temple several times over the years, and in different seasons. Sometimes taking friends or customers, or just as a natural stopping point on a bike ride around the lake. To be clear, I do not have any commercial relationship or similar to the temple. The monks did not approach me when I was there, the temple does not charge admission, and at times I did not run into anybody except a handful other visitors when being there. To sum it up, the previous visits became the foundation for my knowledge of this temple, although it was not a plan at the time.

Another necessary consideration is to look at how discussing this subject matter could be harmful to the participants. As mentioned, religion faces limiting regulations in China. Pews research centre's findings shows China scoring high on the rank of countries regarding government hostility to religion (Pew, 2018). As an example, working in the military or in politics cannot be combined with religious practice or expressing personal faith. Therefore it could be necessary to be especially cautious when dealing with religious matters. While considering this, as discussed in the section 3.3.1. 'Buddhism in China', Buddhism can be said to have a more favoured position since it is considered a more appropriate choice among religions, one that is more in line with nationalistic values and /or explained as a scientific philosophy. Combining research of tourism with religion would also probably make the topic less controversial, seeing as for example tourism to Lhasa or Putuo Islands is on such a large scale I assume it must be considered commonplace. Neither is the focus aimed on government restrictions, but instead on the openness specific to tourism, so all in all I consider it a less sensitive subject to explore both as an outsider or insider.

When it comes to reliability and validity there are several concerns to consider. I feel that, as the topic is regarding such a large country as China, interviewing eight people does not immediately seem like a good prospect. However, the research question was not 'if most people have a spiritual experience at a temple', but instead to explore more about the experience at an individual level. Interestingly, since the eight strangers were mostly from

different areas and had different socioeconomic backgrounds and still revealed a high amount of similarity it allows for perceiving the findings to likely have general value compared to society as a whole. Although it should be noted that all of the participants were financially able to travel, and at a time period that was outside the window for when most people travel, namely spring festival or the golden week so they are not a representation of the most average people. As previously mentioned, the field of study of Lived Religion in Asia is limited (Ammerman, 2016), but compared to the Allison Denton Jones study of Buddhists in Nanjing there are no large anomalies.

2.4.1 Positionality

Looking through previous works within the field of Lived Religion a sentence resonated with me, as the researcher states she will provide 'a view of the religious field as seen from the relative position of the informants' (Kupari, 2016, p 17). In my opinion this sentence describes in a nutshell the problem and opportunity of Lived Religion. My aim is to correctly retell the experiences of my participants from their perspective, or one might say "view". When collecting their views, I am using my view on them and the topic, a 'view of their views'. This signifies that the researcher can grasp an individual's subjective perception on their everyday life religious experiences, which again are analysed by the researcher who might be inserting their own subjective world view on the findings. Looking at this makes the goal of objectivity seem like only an impossible ideal, because how can my view of another person's view be neutral? If something is this impossible, then why even try? Instead, I would say reflecting upon my view of other views is even more important since the researcher him-/herself is such a central part of the process in Lived Religion. Then again, if no-one could say anything about something, unless one is one hundred percent objective, no one could say anything at all.

My point of view is that of an expat, who has lived in Lijiang for most of her time in China since first arriving in 2008. Or, in fairness, I lived in a small village outside the tourist hot-spot that Lijiang old town has become. This meant having some of the comforts of big city life within reach, while enjoying life in a serene country setting where time in many ways had stood still the last fifty years. In a way I have as few others had a special chance to experience

both the new and old China. Here I was managing and living in a guest house, albeit a not very successful one because of the distance to the old town, which allowed me the time to socialize with guests from all walks of life. Something which of course also benefitted my Chinese speaking proficiency. This experience hopefully has given me enough intuitive knowledge to guide me when researching this topic, whilst being a foreigner can perhaps give me the benefit of having the necessary mental distance to be able to notice what insiders might not.

As Ammerman has pointed out (Ammerman, 2016, p. 95), is that there is a lack of research within Lived Religion outside the Western hemisphere. By focusing on China, I hope I can make a small contribution to amend this, however I am humbly and respectfully aware that I am not Chinese, and so by definition lacking the insiders benefit while dealing with a subject that requires deep knowledge of the society where signs of Lived Religion enfold within. Working in this field, in this part of China, I do however feel like an outsider that have grown to be a part of the scenery, like I am partly describing my own life experience. When considering positionality in qualitative research an often-used tool is to go by the categories of outsider-insider, terms originally used in anthropology. Kim Knott Kim Knott (2009, p 262) re-presented these for religious studies as:

Complete————Observer————Participant————Participant

observer as participant as observer

These categories can be used as a tool to identify and clarify your role in relation to the focus group, thereby making yourself more aware of your own role. Am I in the group but not taking part in the activity, as ‘participant as observer’? Or someone standing from afar watching, the ‘complete observer’? Would the group see me as one of them, a ‘participant’? Personally, I feel like a participant as observer, because I have been a visitor there myself several times. However, my focus group is Chinese tourists in China, and for practical reasons I limited that group to tourists visiting Zhi Yun temple in Lijiang. This area draws tourists from all over China, but even though I have been a tourist in many places in China and therefor been in similar situations, I am not seen as an insider nor participant to them. To be a bit blunt, no matter how long I have lived here, when I am seen in China my appearance as a blond Caucasian will always place me in the ‘box’ as a foreigner, a visitor. Besides, this case

study is focused on how touristic activities can be related to everyday religion for Chinese people, who have grown up and are living in different conditions for religious fellowship and practices compared to me. Therefore I place myself as a complete observer.

So how does my position interfere with my data collection and analysis? How does me being objectively different, an obvious foreigner, interfere with conducting interviews at a temple in countryside of China? It is hard to say how much, and in what way since the comparative result is merely an abstract thought. I would however say that there are both positive and negative aspects to it. Perhaps my distance as an outsider can give clarity, as in the same way many things related to my own culture, as for example the conditioned normative social rules in society, only became apparent to me after moving to another country. Because when culture is subconsciously applied, the surroundings are less obvious to the insider. Another positive is that in my experience, the "otherness" of my appearance usually makes it easy for me to get in contact with people, as many are curious about my backstory and reason for being there.

Finally, I need to investigate my own value system related to the topic. What about my inner view on this topic? The answer is that I am not starting out with a neutral stand. I see everyday life's spirituality and Buddhism in a positive light. On top of this I have a deep fondness for China. After all, I was not born in this country, but chose to spend a third of my life there just for want. However, the awareness of my mindset means making sure to avoid adding agenda, possible favouring or projecting of my own opinions on my findings. As according to the Weber ideas of 'value-free', self-awareness is the key (Sharlin, 1974, p. 337). Knowing one's own preferences should drive a researcher to be even more critical of the observations I make at every step of the process. To sum it up briefly, I have a positive outlook on both China and religion and need to keep this in mind.

3 China context

Considering this research question, there are several dynamics at play in the background. In this chapter I will try to give an introduction of tourism, ethnic minorities and religion in China.

3.1 Tourism

The current situation for tourism in China today can be traced back to 1978. This was a watershed year for all of China, when the implications of having a new leader in Deng Xiaoping meant the start of a huge turnabout process of steering the country's ideological core truths from 'political struggle to economic modernization' (Airey and Chong 2010, p 296). This new reform can be illustrated by his forever famous quote "Poverty is not socialism. To get rich is glorious". This would have been an unimaginable phrase only a generation ago, in the beginning of the newly forged communist state. Today, after a meteoric rise for the nation's economy it echoes in the mind, as China has taken the place as the world's second largest economy according to the Worldbank (Worldbank, 2021). Back in 78, when the leaders were making plans for rebuilding the country's financial future, one of the many components was expanding the tourism industry. This sector was not given just a minor part on the side-lines but was seen as an important part of this turnabout. This was proven by how Deng Xiaoping himself mentioned it in his speeches six times that year, and in so doing not only put it on the agenda but also gave the tourism sector political leverage. Bringing back the tourism industry was according to Airey and Chong (2010, p. 295) possibly so important because it is both an economic generator in itself, but also a means to obtain more foreign currency while hopefully simultaneously improve and encourage the relationship and cooperation with other nations.

From 1978, and in those first following years, tourism as a commercial industry in China had a slow start. Then it slowly gained ground and sped up, by 1997 it had increased almost four times over to a share of more than 4 percent of the nation's GDP. In the next decades it has only continued to increase, reaching 11,3 percent of the GDP in 2019. Considering that China today is as mentioned the world's second biggest economy, it is safe to say that tourism has a major position of influence as an economic power in Chinese society.

Tourism was at first heavily aided by the government through tax reforms and other policies, (Airey & Chong, 1994, p 302) although I would say the probably largest influencing factor behind the success in the tourism sector is the overall economic growth in China that caused big changes in normal people's lifestyle. According to World Bank statistics, a formidable number of more than 850 million people have been able to take a step up the socio-economic ladder and out of poverty since 1978, a development that is incomparable with any other country. (World Bank, 2021) Though, to be clear, the World Bank defines poverty by having less than 3,1 dollars to live for per day. This number is comparatively quite low considering what it would take for someone to have the financial access to leisure travel. So, in order to hopefully illustrate better the large and fast changes in the spending ability let me present a few statistical examples related to daily life. In 2009 there were about 46 million cars in private ownership in China. By 2019 there were 229 million. While on the smaller scale of consumerism, the Starbucks chain, could show over the same period of time 2009-2019 an increase in their amount of officially franchised cafes in China from 470 to more than 4000. As known, a coffee at this global brand cafe costs more than the 3 dollars that the World Bank has set as threshold for being able to cover a person's daily needs. Not to mention, the Chinese market share for luxury fashion brands is the world's third largest today (Danziger, 2020). Lastly, just as the growth in consumerism show how there is an increased opportunity for the tourism industry, so is the growth in tourism itself a telling sign of the changes in private economy. In this last decade there has also been a steep increase of Chinese partaking in international travel, an activity which can entail a cost that surpasses domestic travel. For example, 1,58 million Chinese arrived in Germany in 2018, and Chinese tourists accumulated in total a little more than 3 million hotel nights in this one country alone (Textor, 2020).

3.1.1 Rural tourism

One of The People's Republic of China's biggest challenges today is the socio-economical divide between rural and urban areas (Giroir, & Liddel, 2007). For as the economy grew, the rural areas remained poor while the big industrial cities raced ahead. This inequity causes social issues such as the now well-known case of the 'left behind children' as in how the children of millions of migrant workers are being raised by grandparents in the village while the parents are away working in the big cities (Gu, 2021). Therefore domestic travel could

possibly kill two birds with one stone, by keeping the spending within national borders and at the same time help alleviate poverty through employment and increased income opportunity in the tourism industry. Rural tourism has been promoted heavily by the China National Tourism Administration (CNTA). Their first rural tourism campaign started in 1998, a year that was named China Urban and Rural Tourism Year by the aforementioned CNTA. Then the next year was set to be China Eco-tourism Year, as known eco-tourism concerns conservatory efforts and nature, which would most often be found in rural areas. Followed by Chinese Life Tourism Year in 2004 and lastly the China Rural Tourism Year in 2006. It could be difficult to measure how well these campaigns functioned, but they do however reveal the importance of the topic to the CNTA. The name 'rural tourism' is often used, but what exactly does rural tourism entail? The definitions differ both in and among different countries so in this paper I will adhere to Xiao's (2001) definition as translated by Wang LinGen et al:

> *Rural tourism takes the rural space as the basis and regards the unique rural production activities, folk customs, forms of life, countryside, rural housing and rural culture as objects, and develops them into products, such as sightseeing, tours, entertainment, leisure, vacations shopping etc. (Wang et al, 2013, p 118)*

Among other underlying factors within this targeted market area, such as the need to improve infrastructure and service technology in the rural areas, this new focus on the countryside holiday in China would issue a special cultural challenge. Why? Because rural life in general until recently was looked upon as a burden to escape, and 'farmers' was used as a negative moniker for low class citizens (Xue, Kerstetter & Hun, 2017, p. 172). However, today's situation proves that the efforts to promote rural tourism has been effective, or at least that the mindset has changed somewhat. It has been difficult to find a statistical overview, but the prediction made by The National Rural Tourism Development Program for the period from 2009 until 2015 claimed that the number of rural tourists within this time period would reach 771 million people. (Wang et al, 2013, p 117) The newfound interest in the rural areas is of course not only due to central state led marketing efforts as there could be many reasons for why urban dwellers wish to get out of the cities in their holidays. As Wang (2013) definition shows, rural tourism will focus on 'unique rural production activities, folk customs, forms of life, countryside, rural housing and rural culture as objects' (Wang et al, 2013, p 118). These folk customs/forms of life, as I will discuss further in the section 3.2.3 "Culture, Not

Religion", would sometimes include religious practices and/or objects associated with religious traditions. This interest in their own nations ethnic minority cultures includes even creating ethnicity theme parks, with staged villages for presenting different ethnicities living customs, with the extra draw of daily musical shows (Zhao, 2000, p. 27) as in for example the "Yunnan Nationalities Village" (www.ynmzc.cc). However, this marketing strategy can also be related to how the majority perceives the minorities, something I will look into in the section "3.2 Ethnicity". Many of the minorities live in rural areas, so rural tourism and ethnicity are linked. In order to understand the relationship between religion, minorities and tourism, one also need to examine how ethnicity is understood in China.

3.2 Ethnicity

In this section I will address the 're-branding' of spiritual activities as 'cultural'. This is a key concept for understanding the link between rural tourism, ethnic identity and religion in the marketing of rural tourism in China.

3.2.1 Ethnic historic context

In order to understand ethnic identity and how it plays out in society, we also need to take a look at the swift changes through recent history in the role for ethnic identity in China. After the end of the last emperor dynasty in 1911, the first republic leaders downplayed the size of the non-Han population to promote the idea of a unified nation and expected assimilation as a natural effect of the ethnic groups small proportion (Attane & Courbage, 2000, p. 258). So less like a salad bowl, more like a stew. From 1949, at the beginning of the new communist republic, the self-image turned towards the idea being legitimized as a unified multi-national entity (Frangville, 2006, p.10). A process started for identifying in order to officially recognize the different ethnic groups. By 1956 the total number of officially recognized groups added up to 36, but over the years more groups were added and today the current number is 56. This is including the Han, who as the majority make up about 91 percent of the population. The official approval for being a minority group were a sought-after identification for the groups themselves, considering that minority groups would receive beneficial policies.

One such benefit is how every group are guaranteed a representative in parliament. Other examples are preferential treatment for university admittance, being allowed to have more than one child, tax alleviation etc. At first 400 groups applied for the recognition as a separate unique group, so when the government counted only 36 of them as deserving approval it showed how self-identification and administrative recognition can differ. According to Gladney (1996) the approved groups are identified by sharing a language, an area, an economic way of life, a culture and having an awareness of belonging to the same group. As mentioned, ethnic identity can also be attached to the process of creating national identity, as in how the new communist government wanted to promote China as an international nation. At different periods of time the ethnic groups were highlighted in propaganda posters, in order to underline the state's ability to unify different nationalities who successfully benefitted from believing in the same ideology (Frangville, 2006, p.10). However, for example when the Cultural Revolution broke out in 1966 uniformity became a larger demand. It has been difficult to find source material about ethnic minorities in that period, but the swift changes in society at this time can perhaps be compared with the new take on gender roles. This abrupt societal change came to be in part because Mao Ze Dong threw the country into a production race with the rest of the world. So ultimately it was necessary for women to fully partake in the work force. The new slogans and Mao quotes informed the people that" The era is different, (and) the men and the women are the same!". In 1968 came the ever-famous line "Women hold up half the sky!". Education and expectations for working outside the home for women were now suddenly the new normal (Tang, Zhao & Chen, 2013, p 482). Still, it was more than merely a win for feminism, it was also similar to a sudden imagined elimination of gender. Women were expected to behave, look like and be treated exactly like men. Even the formal political party organization for women 'All China Women Federation' had to stop their activities for some years. Ideologically, the socioeconomic differences could and should be nullified by the dawn of this new Marxist age. People were to eat the same, live at a similar level of comfort, dress the same, and so on. For the minorities this included learning standard Chinese and training the village leaders in the ideology of the new government. There was also a more direct approach to the assimilation process by transferring groups of Han people to live in previously homogeneous minority populated areas (Attene & Courbage, 2000, p. 259).

3.2.2 The case of Chuchong dances

Mueggler (2002) describes how a part of this assimilation process took place in the Yi community in Chuchong. This is an Yi ethnic minority autonomous administrated area within the Yunnan province. In Chuchong one of the consequences of the assimilation process was the abolition of communal ceremonious dances. The original symbolic content of these dances was important to the Yi community, but there were more to them than only providing religious practice and/or entertainment. As it happened there were also practical daily life benefits by performing the traditional dances. One such benefit was that the different ceremonial dances created communal cooperation experiences, another was how they maintained the social structures. The dances provided a natural meeting point for finding marriage partners outside the village, and so on. Despite the possible repercussions by authorities these dances were too important to defer from completely. Instead, a few local Yi-people secretly continued to arrange some of the dances over the years, while moving locations in order to avoid confrontation. (2002, p. 21) The potential in the tourist marked prompted the local government to reinstate the dances, however, this time as a strategic part of promoting their local area as a tourist destination. Mueggler details how the original myth and purpose behind these dances were altered in the new official information, and in the new version the spiritual aspects had been removed (2002, p. 15). In the tourist presentation the historical and religious dances were promoted as only a cultural clothing festival, saying it was a way for the local women to show off their skills in handicraft. This exemplifies how a possibly politically sensitive subject such as religion can be given a new 'packaging' in order to promote tourism in a rural area. This could be an interesting research topic in the future, examining how this will influence the remaining religious traditions, practices and beliefs among the ethnic minorities.

3.2.3 Culture, not religion?

Religious festivals and holy places becoming drawing points for tourism is not an occurrence happening in China only, it is a global phenomenon. Though I would assume that in other countries the religious actors are more often behind the organization and initiation of celebrating religious festivals, while that is not necessarily always the case here. One illustrative example is described by Ryan and Gu (2010), who writes of a new Buddhist

festival at a very sacred Buddhistic historical site in WuTaiShan. This festival was brought to life by different levels of government, but according to Ryan and Gu the event signified something other than the government being pro-Buddhist or wishing to reinforce the significance of the holy mountain. Instead, the project served the purpose of legitimating the provincial and municipal governments, who by setting up this festival could present themselves as taking an active role in creating economic and cultural benefits for the communities they serve. (Ryan & Gu, 2010, p. 173) Further on Ryan and Gu concludes that the festival itself, even if originally only made with the aim of increased income for the area, still provides an opportunity for the continuation of traditions. Albeit in a commodified and popular form (Ryan & Gu, 2010, p. 173). Adding that this festival offers the potential for a future rediscovery of the original and authentic, while for the performers themselves it is a statement of identities. So, in other words, although the underlying motive was economic and not altruistically intended, that does not eliminate the positive perhaps unintentional consequential effect in different areas.

In my personal experience I have witnessed other examples of this kind of re-packaging of religious activities for attracting tourists. For example, the revival of two historic festivals, likely as a part of a strategic commercial plan since they are taking place in areas that already are considered mainly a tourist destination. One of these is the "Fire Torch Festival" celebrated by the Bai ethnic group in Dali (this fire festival is mostly associated with the Yi ethnic group, but the Bai have their own version). This festival takes place over several days and involves, as the name suggests, carrying torches and dancing, wishing for a good harvest. (Goodman, 2018) Another one is the Wa ethnic group's 'mudmarking', the "MoNiHei" festival in Lincang. This festival might be more appealing to those who prefer to stay away from the combination of fire, dancing and high level of alcohol intake, as MoNiHei involves grappling around in mud for days with a free pass to fling mud on other participants. When I first visited the area 10 years ago the mud marking was performed by only leaving a mud mark on the forehead, representing giving each other a blessing for the coming year. Now in the media adverts and articles it resembles something more like a public mud fight (Silva, 2018). Perhaps this was inspired by the large tourist masses who flock to the Songkran festivals of Thailand, although instead of water in Lincang they have mud from the mineral rich turf during the rainy season. So, in sum both this fire torch festival and mud marking festivals have religious roots in the religion specific to these ethnic minorities and have to my

knowledge been celebrated in a more low-key form before the surge in tourism. The Bai and Wa are two very different ethnic groups who are both located mainly in Yunnan province, an area branded and marketed for years under the now well-known slogan “Colourful Yunnan”. The adjective ‘colourful’ here is reflecting both the landscape and the many ethnic minorities living there. Another example of religion as culture can be observed in how the Potala Palace in Lhasa has become a very popular tourist destination. This highly revered pilgrimage site is intrinsically linked with religion to this day, the name of the town means “Place of Gods” in Tibetan language. According to Tibetan Buddhism this site is a once a lifetime vested pilgrimage, one that should be reached on foot while for example prostrating every step of the way in order to pay off Karma debts and achieve a better next life. The town has about 280 000 inhabitants and received 19 million visitors in 2018 alone, with the palace itself as the major stopping point on the sightseeing itinerary. Noticeable, the Tibetan population in total only have about 6,5 million people. While these 19 million visitors will likely spend more than one night in the city and create the market for an array of related business as shopping, restaurants, taxis and so on. The local leader of Lhasa Tourism Development Bureau called the increase of tourists as the result of the effective marketing of rural tourism, which again were a benefit to the rural residents (Nyima & DaQiong, 2019). Interestingly, showing here that also tourism in a city the size of Lhasa is considered rural.

It can easily be imagined that such income possibilities can be an economical incentive for poor areas. Fisher (2008) went looking into the background for the rebuild of Buddhist temples in hard-to-reach areas and saw that the local motif for rebuilding temples were at times in the hope for outside interest and investment. The local leaders were welcoming non-local investments to Buddhist temples and promising land areas in return. This was possible since the law made allowances for building temples in the spot where there originally had been one. These temple remnants had often survived the earlier decades of political upheaval because they were in remote rural areas far away from urban development and political powers. However, the background of these big city investors was varied. Some were ardent believers for whom the rebuilding of a temple meant generating years of good karma, while for others it was purely business. (Fisher 2008, p. 152) Now, how to place this in the political landscape where religions apparently face hostility? As Xiao (2001, p. 122) states, the rapid development of folk custom tourism had a part of the blame for creating many new issues, such as the similarity and over-commercialization of folk and customs, pseudo-folk

experiences and the deterioration of relations between local residents and tourists. So, in my interpretation this means that the fast surge in tourism and the economy that goes with it created unforeseen changes, changes that the local political administration might only have an ad hoc response to. One of these changes could be that although proselytizing and religious activity in non-approved locals is not allowed, religious content is being processed through the tourism industry and therefore more easily available to millions of people.

3.2.4 Imagining ethnicity

As mentioned, especially in the Yunnan province many of the tourist areas are populated by an ethnic minority. In my observation, some ethnic groups in this area here such as the Wa in Lincang or the Muo of the Lugu lake can freely display religious content in media and shows, with dancing and similar actions that were originally connected with their traditions and religious heritage, in order to attract tourists. While people from larger religious groups such as Christians and Muslims do not seem to have similar opportunity for public display. This differential treatment can be understood as favouritism and/or discrimination towards different religions. However, as an possible alternative I will explain it also as a consequence of how ethnic minorities are perceived in China. Drew Gladney (1994) explains the relationship between the majority and the ethnic minorities with an interesting perspective, as he describes the modern generalization of ethnic minorities in China as a way to define the majority group by contrast. By making the minorities the exotic *other*, a contrast is made to a *normal* majority. This *other* is often displayed as more primitive culture, one that is without the self-constraint and strict social control that the Han are faced with in society, thereby for example making it necessary for example to allow the ethnic minorities more than one child during the years of one child policy (Gladney, 1994, p 93, 101). In this way one could assume that their alleged primitiveness would mean that their religion can also be seen as the characteristics of a simple and therefore unthreatening culture, compared to for example a fast-growing urban following of Christianity. Gladney's article includes an example of how ethnic religious symbols are mainstream, even to the extent of being included in the hugely important Spring festival New Year's show on television. This yearly show's position in society has more symbolic content than just being entertainment, it is also a major important medium for the government to the people about the current state of affairs. At this 1994

version one of the segments were showing Tibetan and other minorities dancers using scarves with religious connotation. This can be interpreted as a signal to demonstrate their belonging and loyalty to the multination state. Or as Mueggler (2002) and Ryan and Gu (2010) explained, the use of religious tropes could also be a part of a process re-presenting religion as culture, thereby making religious activities acceptable in a political sensitive way.

3.2.5 Harmony

Another perspective on the customizing of ethnic religiosity for tourism in recent years is by contemplating the topic in the light of one of the top political agenda by former president Hu Jintao, namely "Harmonious Society". Accordingly, the target was to create lasting stability and unity (China Internet Information Centre, 2005) after years of rapid development. Under this umbrella term there are many consequences in Chinese society today, both positive and negative. Especially concerning the surveillance of its own population there are many debatable points, one of the most noticeable one in daily life is the extended use of surveillance cameras in public areas or internet censorship (Mozur & Krolik, 2019, Lubman, 2017). Related to this, Harmonious Society can be interpretated as 'stability at all costs' (Feng, 2013). As controversial as this step might be, it is noticeably safe on the streets in even large cities. However, to understand the function of the word Harmony we need a deeper cultural understanding. The associations and concept of "Harmony" have long roots in China, Ryan and Gu (2002, p. 170) claim it is an ideal that presides 300 CE, one that they tried to transcribe the meaning of by describing the Chinese understanding of 'harmony' as something that requires a mutual relationship between people and nature within the context of 'enhancing in the right way' (Ryan & Gu 2002, p. 168). In my understanding, it can be imagined as enhancing while completing something in syncretism, as if adding the last stroke when painting a perfect circle. In relation to ethnic minorities and their religious traditions, this idea can perhaps translate to understanding that reshaping traditions or ethnic customs for commercial touristic activities are not perceived as altering and removing authenticity, instead it could be considered as improving them. This is a topic for future research, not just related to researching the changes to ethnic traditions, but also in the light of the fast rebuilding of ancient towns, or monuments such as the Great Wall, and temples. However, the new reshaping or perhaps some would say 'exploiting' of ethnic identities as part of rural tourism

are not necessarily unwelcomed by the local people. Xue, Kerstetter & Hunt (2017) researched the situation in Chongdu valley. Here the local farmers went from sustenance farming and barely getting by, to being able to buy second homes in the nearby small city. The second home was a steppingstone in order to access better education opportunities for their children. To illustrate the magnitude of changes in this area; by 2012 all of 95 percent of the people in the former agricultural society were working in the tourist service industry. Another very noticeable point of change was that their identity and self-image were also deeply affected, from low self-esteem to being able to consider themselves as equal to the urban visitors. In the beginning the local residents could not understand that the area had any appeal to outsiders, when becoming a popular destination the younger generations started to describe their rural way of life as happier than the urban counterpart (Xue et al, 2017, p. 175). In other words, commercialization of ethnic religious traditions even for political or economic gain could be welcomed by the minorities themselves who seek to improve their living conditions.

3.3 Religion

The focus of this thesis is on Buddhism and tourism, but in order to understand the position of Buddhism in China it is necessary to relate it to religion in China in general. This section also discusses the side-effects of tourism for Buddhism.

3.3.1 Religion in China, background and position

Looking at the role of religion in a country, one can often find that a specific religion plays a part in the building of a nationalistic myth, which validates the foundation of the nation itself. This can explain why a certain religion is the preferred choice by authorities in some countries (Pew, 2017). In China the phenomena most resembling this could be the wide recognition for the philosophy Confucianism which is seen as the source for universal values for all. Instead, one of the justifications for nationalism in China is built on the country's long history of culture (Zhao, 2000, p. 4). Alongside this ancient history of civilization, you will find a strong connection with a world view and religious practices that are often named Chinese folk

religion, or traditional religion. Behind this grouping lies a vast heritage of legends, myths and customs, which can vary in content and traditions from place to place in this large and culturally varied country. I often find the emphasize in the descriptions of this religion to be on the reverence for ancestors as a common denominator. However, there is so much to this religion beyond sacrificing to earlier generations. At a closer look you can find an enthralling world where people's daily life is a dimension transcended with an 'other world' of spirits, dragons, ghost and fairies and more. This other world can also intervene in ours regarding both big and small matters.

Many classical works in Chinese literature history incorporate a lot of this as material and like a time-capsule these classics provide insight to this large universe of legends and folklore. Two of these classics are "Journey to the West" and "Fengshen Yanyi" both written in circa 16th century. To be noted, these are as mentioned fiction novels, but we can learn much about both Buddhist and traditional dogma and ethics from them. In imperial China there was a non-exclusionary approach to religion, meaning one person could incorporate different religions practices (Denton Jones, 2010, p. 30) So, the writers behind the classics would naturally also use both religion's doctrine and imagery in their stories. Parts from these books live on in a new form today, through many popular films and tv-series. Especially worth mentioning are two quite recent movies, the cartoon version of the Monkey King inspired by Journey to the West, and the story of NeZha based on a character in Fengshen Yanyi. Both of these movies were enormous financial successes on the silver screen in China, with NeZha being the highest earning Chinese animated movie in history. (Wu, 2019 Sixth Tone). Although some might dismiss such products as only commercial pop culture, they also function as carriers of ancient wisdom, ethics and provides a connection with the nation's religious past.

Another possible modern-day source for the transfer of religious traditions are festivals. By a quick glance it seems most of the main festivals today in China are secular, such as May 1st and Childrens day 1st of June, both celebrated in a larger degree both in public and private. As well as "The Golden Week", which means days off work surrounding the National day October 1st. However, there are traditional festivities with more spiritual meanings that have survived to this day. Significantly one of these is also the most important one, the Spring Festival in January/February (the dates every year depend on a calendar correlating to the full moon). This festival and the "The Golden Week" are the busiest times of the year for tourism,

even though the Spring festival is also traditionally the most important time of the year for visiting one's family. Besides the Spring festival, other traditional festivals are for example the Mid-Autumn festival, the Tomb sweeping day and the Dragonboat festival. These festivals may have lost some of the significance and *renao* during the last part of the previous century. *Renao* is a frequently used Chinese word in daily life that directly translated would mean *warm noise*, conjuring up the mental image of the sound of many happy people together. That such traditional festivals phase out over time could perhaps only be a natural development or maybe because of the heavy poverty and struggles over the last century, as in civil war, famine and Japanese attacks. It is also easily imagined that originally religious festivals would not go hand in hand with a communist government.

Another related aspect within this topic is how to understand the categories popular, traditional or folk religion. These denominations are sometimes used indifferently and describe much of the same. As Knibbe and Kupari (2020, p. 163) writes this term has been criticized for being normative, insinuating it is just old superstition and in so doing making it seem like something lesser and therefore less valuable to study. Instead 'vernacular' has been suggested as a replacement to eradicate the high/low or official/unofficial idea about religion. This can bear some resemblance to what Leamaster and Hu (2014, p 252) described in their article by revealing that many people who still practice Chinese popular religion are also practicing Buddhism but prefer to identify as Buddhist. Noticeable, unlike traditional/popular Chinese religion, Buddhism appears to have a better status. This could be because it is viewed as a philosophy or a scientifically based religion and one that is in line with traditional values making it a more appropriate choice of religion (Denton Jones 2010 p. 10). A possible reason for this is the long history of Buddhism in China, meaning this religion does not represent a foreign element in the same degree as for example Christianity. Or that a certain self-constraint and self-censorship by the Buddhist association means Buddhism has found a way to be more accepted in the political landscape. (Jones 2010, p. 10) as will be discussed later in the section 2.3.2.1."Finance, flexibility and authenticity".

Although, a less positive attitude to the traditional Chinese religion started before the foundation of the new state in 1949. How so? Because as Allison Denton Jones (2010, p. 32) writes, already at the beginning of the 20th century Chinese traditional religion started to be perceived by parts of the elite as an obstacle to progress. To them traditional religion meant

being bound to a way of life that was too anchored in old traditions and therefore hindering the reach of modern technology and holding the country's development back. Therefore, religion was blamed for being a part of the reason for why foreign nations had the technological upper hand giving them the ability to humiliate China through military campaigns that culminated in the destruction of the Summer Palace. (Zhao 2000, p. 4) This humiliation partly led to the Republican Revolution in 1911, followed by decades of internal unrest and suffering, which again made the country vulnerable to Japanese attacks. Ending in the hard won communist overtake and the foundation of a new state in 1949. This meant the end of the torment of civil war, but also the start of a total societal uprooting to a new system and way of life. As known, according to Karl Marx's communist doctrine religion was only an opium to the people, a way of keeping the suppressed subdued. Mao Zi Dong turned this the other way around and crafted a strong idolization cult around his image and his famous "Little Red Book". After experiencing some contest to his position of power he set off the Cultural Revolution in 1966, which only gradually phased out after his death in 1976. The object of this second revolution was to supposedly purify the state of the oppressors who held the country back from rising to its full potential, a premiss promised by the communist takeover. Religion and clergy belonged to one of the Four Olds and were thereby an enemy of the people. Many temples and important historical artefacts were destroyed in the cleansing, while clergy were imprisoned or sent to the countryside to work as farmers in order to be politically re-educated. Mao's death in 1976 opened for the major economic reform only two years later, granting a precarious green light to restart commercial activities and industry.

However, this gradual new breed of state-controlled capitalism soon picked up speed. The changes this crested in the everyday life of normal people implicated the once ideological accepted truths and way of life within Chinese communism. Gradually there was more openness in society in general, as seen in the world of literature, films, sexuality and youth culture, and in turn also towards religious matters (Goldman, 2011, p 150). The officially recognized religions by the state are Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Taoism. Islam is generally linked to the ethnic identity of some of the minorities, such as Hui and Uighur, so therefore their numbers remained at the same level of these ethnic minority populations. Whereas Christianity and Buddhism have grown quickly in numbers across the nation. An illustration of this can be seen by looking at one of the main Buddhist temples in China, Nanputo in Xiamen, which was closed from the early 60ties until 1979. Despite having been

closed for so long, by 2001 it had grown triple the size compared to right before the Cultural Revolution. Now the temple provided for around 600 clerics, a number that can be compared to about 30 people before it was closed (Ashiwa & Wank, 2006, p. 342). The numbers differ, but the estimates are that about 16-18 percent of the population are Buddhist. While the Christians, especially Protestants, have also multiplied in numbers. According to The Economist there are about 72 million Christians today in China. (China Section, 2020). As mentioned, religious activity was persecuted during the cultural revolution, so in theory one could count religious followers as none in those times.

Today the government is still openly regulating and limiting religious expression, although there is full religious freedom on paper. These regulations are especially strict regarding proselytizing and regarding the locales or meeting points for religious purposes. The former is illegal, and the latter must only take place in only state approved localities, organized at a certain way that makes the formal leadership in practice need a co-leader with communist party credentials. There are apparently millions that are still attending so-called House Churches at people's homes and similar, but that would mean partaking in illegal activity. Others are balancing the lengths of the law by joining online (China Section, 2020). The revisions to the regulations for religious affairs in 2018 showed an even harder stance towards religion, now implying that no religious organization were allowed to 'compel' others to their faith. This could essentially mean that diaconal projects like for example providing welfare services such as housing for the poor elderly were off limits. Another example of the political climate for religion, are the reports that the Bible has been edited to be more suitable for the government's taste (Ochab, 2019). While even retired cadre and political officials are banned from belonging to any religious community (Yang, 2016). Such circumstances as these mean Pew research centre has given China a high score on the ranking of state religious intolerance (Pew, 2018). Interestingly, although Pew's research found that the government is hostile to religion, unlike other countries where the situation is similar this hostility was not reflected in the normal people's general attitude towards religion, as seen by the low score on social religious intolerance (Pew, 2018).

From my perspective, I would like to suggest that perhaps these anti-religious sentiments are not primarily based on a mistrust of religion itself. Instead, the reason for the state's want for control over religious activities could be the latent power within religion for mass

organization. For with this power comes a potential threat for rallying against the state, and this could be what influences the political policies regarding religion today. This mistrust is also reflected in the increased supervision of their own population in public areas and on internet. These surveillance actions are legitimized by ensuring public safety for the citizens, something which the government have also been able to provide. The censorship of media, where China is ranked 177 out of 180 countries in the world by Reporters Without Borders, shows how another power source for potential challenge to state authority is kept under a tight grip (Reporters Sans Frontiers, 2021).

3.3.2 Buddhism in China

According to general belief Buddhism arrived in China during the first century BC. While spreading into new areas it was also incorporating some elements of and simultaneously influencing Taoism. To illustrate, one of the four most holy mountain areas for Buddhist pilgrimage in China are the Putuo Islands but originally it was an important site for Taoism. It was a place to cultivate oneself according to the Taoist doctrine and as legend goes it is the place where Taoist priest learned to create pills for immortality (Putuo Buddhist Associtation, 2021). However, the arrival of Buddhism did not mean the end of Taoism. As Jones describes there was a non-exclusionist approach to religion in imperial China, shown in how the elites would mix different religions practices as a way to achieve the best possible religious result (Jones, 2010, p. 30). As previously discussed in the chapter "3.3.1. Religion in China, background and position" all religions including Buddhism, was first seen as an obstacle to progress in the last century then suppressed for decades especially during the Cultural Revolution. Then in the 1980ties the gradually larger allowance for religious practices ensured a fast growth in activities. Today there are approximately 33 000 government approved Buddhist venues in China, according to the staff at the department for religious affairs' theory learning group in a comment in Phoenix news (Department for religious affairs' theory learning group, 2014). These numbers include about 5300 monasteries.

However, the number of teachers or clergy is not high enough to provide religious guidance to all those who wish for it, according to Allison Denton Jones (2010, p. 96). This lack of teachers could perhaps naturally limit the accessibility to new followers. The focus in her PhD

thesis was on Buddhists in Nanjing, and especially on their converting narrative. She describes how the low number of teachers, mainly monks, is a problem for both new and old followers. As Jones explains, the troubles under the cultural revolution created a gap in the transfer system of knowledge from the old masters to the next generation. In addition to this there are too few new Buddhist institutions. The scarcity of teachers compared to followers were especially concerning since the education level in the population has become higher, making the demands on a good teacher higher (Jones, 2010, p. 46).

There are Buddhist study groups etc on the internet, but by not meeting in person these forums could not provide the social structures and community that create a sense of belonging or uphold the interest. Adding to this issue, is that the Chinese population itself have been expanding, from about one billion in 1980 to 1,4 billion in 2019 (Textor, 2021). There are not any official statistics or census about faith and religious belonging, but according to Pew research centre in 2010 all of 18 percent of the population can be counted as Buddhist, which would bring the number of people to about 245 million (Pew, 2018). Pew does not specify their methods, but refers to "Estimates based on Chinese Census, public opinion surveys, church membership reports and estimates from the Chinese government" (Pew, 2018). Neither does Pew research centre reveal how they identify a Buddhist believer. While Leamaster and Hu's (2014) article claims that about 16 percent of the population considered themselves Buddhist. This was based on a questionnaire survey from 2007, with 7021 randomly selected participants. Interestingly, their study showed that being a Buddhist signified a much higher likelihood of also practicing Chinese popular (traditional) religion. In this survey Chinese popular religion had the common identifiers of: Having burned incense in the past year, prayed to the God of Wealth, the God of Earth, the God of Stove, etc., or ancestral spirits, belief in spirits, belief in ghosts, belief in sages, belief in the God of Wealth, belief in ancestral spirits, belief in destiny, believe God/gods is/are involved in personal affair, participated in ancestor veneration in the past year, having an ancestral tablet in respondent's home, making and fulfilling a vow in the past year, participated in fortune telling including palm reading/face reading (Leamaster & Hu, 2014, p. 248). In comparison the definition of a Buddhist was mainly a matter of someone self-identifying as one, and not by any kind of identifiers such as belonging to a fellowship or regularly going to a temple. Leamaster and Hu's (2014) article points out a very important factor, namely that identifying as a Buddhist were perceived as more legitimate than 'just' practicing popular religion. This could mean

that many who predominantly practice popular Chinese religion would identify as Buddhist, so depending on definition this statistics' number is variable.

Lastly, when looking at Buddhism in China, it is important to keep in mind the different trajectory and historic role of Tibetan and Chinese Buddhism. Although they are both organized in the same way under the state and officially recognized as one religion, there are naturally large differences. One of them is that when Buddhism first spread to Tibet in about 6th-7th century it was influenced by the areas original Tibetan Bon faith. In the 8th century the ruler of the Tibetan empire declared Buddhism as the official state religion and made his army soldiers robe and study Buddhism. Since this era the position of Buddhism has had some changes but always kept a very close relationship with state power in Tibet. Therefore Buddhism came into collision course with the government of China when Tibet was reclaimed during the communist takeover in 1950. Since it has been an ongoing conflict at different stages. Naturally, this effects the religion's role and expression in Tibet, however Buddhism appears still vibrant among the population today. Despite these differences, as for example Denton Jones example shows (2010, p. 93), Tibetan monks are popular teachers and guests among followers outside of Tibet by Chinese Buddhists. Judging by this it appears the believers at least do not differentiate when it comes to benefiting from Tibetan teaching and practice. To my knowledge, Lhasa as a point of pilgrimage is also important to non-Tibetan Buddhists.

3.3.2.1 Finance, flexibility and authenticity

Most would agree that religious sites have a special status in society, even to the non-religious. So religious spaces as tourist destination can be a debatable topic. Shackley (2002) researched this question in part by re-imaging English cathedrals as an Heterotopia, a concept developed by the philosopher Michel Foucault as a word for a ritual place that exists out of time (Foucault, 1986). In Shackley's article she described how financing the maintenance of these Cathedrals were dependent on the income from tourists in order to preserve these magnificent constructions, while ironically the same tourists could threaten the mental image of the heterotopia that first drew them there (Shackley, 2002, p.345). Meaning that the tourists themselves expected the atmosphere to be authentic and fitting the sanctity of the place There

were also other consequences, one being that the large number of tourists present could interfere with the availability for the practices of local believers. As Shackley (2002) explained, the negative attitude towards for example having to buy entrance tickets were not based on stinginess, but because it interrupted with the authentic experience, breaking with a preconditioned image of how a cathedral should be (Shackley, 2002, p. 347). Her findings showed how the cathedrals represented more than just being beautiful buildings, they were both cultural and religious heirlooms and still dynamic producers of religious meaning in today's society, even among the non-religious.

A way to look at the challenges of mixing religion with tourism in China can be seen in the terms Red Stain and Green Stain, introduced by Allison Denton Jones (2010, p. 66, 87) as a development of Fenggang Yang's ideas about the religious 'market in China (2006, p. 97). Their work can help understanding the peculiar conditions for tourism related to Buddhism in China (Denton Jones, 2010, p. 65). Firstly, what does the Red Stain refer to? According to Jones it describes the seemingly cooperative stand of the leaders within the Buddhist Association. The red in The Red Stain is based on the communist red colour, meaning that the leaders and monks are appearing too cooperative with the government. I would say the term *stain* is not a flattering moniker and can be interpreted as a term for negative associations and consequences. This sort of negative results could for example be the danger of losing credibility among believers, who could see a willingness for political adjustments as a sign of caring less about religious authenticity. However, this sort of flexibility can also be seen in a positive light. For without political support, any temple could become purely a museum, or simply a vacant building without religious activity. By staying comfortable within the unannounced political limits, the association can perhaps keep larger autonomy and endure less rigorous supervising by the state. As proven by the hard knockdown of the Falun Gong group in the early 90ties, it is a necessity to not cause political concern. Perhaps can even the access to Buddhist sites in mainstream tourism be read as a sign of the larger freedom Buddhism has been given compared to other religions. Then there is the problem of The Green Stain. Green here refers to the colour of dollar bills. As in the case with the English cathedrals, the sometimes centuries old temple complexes must keep up with large expenses for preservation and management through their own funding. Most temples will charge entrance tickets, but the prices differ a lot from temple to temple. In big cities such as Beijing you will find that many of the lush temple grounds are also used for recreational purposes,

even sports. Especially pensioners will use these green lungs daily, as if it was a regular park. In these temples the prices are often kept very low, especially for pensioners but also for non-local tourists. Whereas the more famous places, such as the temple made famous by ShaoLin Kungfu will charge about 100 CNY. This amount equals to for example a day's salary for a relatively low paid worker, such as waitress or security guard. However, the Buddhist Association and their members have many other means for income then tourism alone. First of all, there is the tradition of donations. Giving cash donations are ingrained in the religious system of Karma. These donations may be given at special times, such as festivals or funerals, but also at ordinary times of visit. Secondly, it is also not unusual among more wealthy believers to invite monks for the blessing of for example a new home or business, and a gift is given in return. Or for example by directly donating to a the rebuild of an old temple. The latter are particularly sought after among followers, since having a share in the rebuild of a temple would mean being partly on the receiving end of all the karma generated in the temple in the future (Fisher, 2008, p. 148). Trailing this rewards system are rumours of exploitation, and of monks living double lives (Denton Jones, 2010, p. 87). For example, rumours such as monks eating meat, driving expensive cars and/or paying for the living expenses of mistresses, as soon as they are out of the public eye. These are of course general rumours and not proven facts. Still, the existence of large sums circulating in the system fertilizes the ground for a rumour mill. To sum it up, what was originally only self-subsidizing could mean possible loss of credibility by the green stain. One way of dealing with this issue would be to offer more financial transparency to the public. Then there are efforts that appears to be made in order to generate income, or maybe just for keeping up with the times. Such as the famous Longquan temple outside Beijing, which offers Zen Camps (Yang, 2016). As in retreats where urban residents can enjoy sermons and a getaway from the stresses of daily life. Same place also had robots installed, that can answer questions related to Buddhism. Such arrangements can perhaps also be filed under the green stain category, or at least somewhat break with the cultural expectations for what an authentic temple should contain. Longquan temple also demonstrated the positive political stand as mentioned under the Red Stain, seeing as how the list of rules for participants on the mentioned Zen camps includes the slogan "Love our country, love Buddhism" (Yang, 2016).

3.3.2.2 Karma and tourists

As discussed in the previous chapter, tourism can bring about negative consequences by hurting religious authenticity. Still, tourism at religious sites in itself it was not counted as a negative by Buddhist clergy. At least not according to the clergy and volunteers at the temples of Putuo islands, who sees all visitors as future Buddhists, declaring that the arrival of tourists equals lots of potential good Karma both to them and the visitors themselves. Before I explain this further, let me give a little bit context. Putuo is an important temple cluster located at an island group outside Nanjing. This site is one of the top five most holy pilgrim places in China, but it can provide more than temples. For this historic place comes with beautiful scenery and quiet beaches only a short drive away from the crowded big cities nearby, so naturally this area is attractive to more than the religiously motivated visitors. Wong, McIntosh and Ryan's (2011) findings revealed the perspective on this tourist traffic by the monks and lay volunteers who had taken refuge in the temples at Putuo. Taking 'refuge', means committing to living as a monk, and sounds perhaps like a choice of life filled to the brim with quiet serenity and meditation. Instead, what you find here are temples bustling with life all year round, to the point of needing to stand in line to be able to offer incense at the most popular alters. This relatively small area received more than five million visitors per year already in 2008 and the number is increasing. Naturally, some of these visitors might be very devout Buddhist, but Wong et al (2011) focus point was not on them, but to explore how the monks and religious volunteers internally interpret the different visitor's presence and motivation, as well as how the crowds might influence their daily religious life. Wong et al (2011, p. 230) conclusion was that the habits, and noise level of some of the tourists were in fact experienced as an annoyance by the monks, nuns and volunteers. However, more importantly, these disturbances were perceived almost as a religious test. The individual monk's, nun or volunteer's ability to bear 'the burden' of disturbance in a compassionate and calm manner was viewed among their religious peers as a hallmark of being a high achiever. As an example, if a monk were unable to focus on his meditations because of external factors, according to their belief system this was an indicator that he/she needed to study more and train more. For in their minds, really mastering the Buddhist teachings meant already having the recipe of how to overcome such hindrance. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, all of the monks/nuns and volunteers who were interviewed in this article would underline the high value of every visitor's visit, regardless of the visitors religious standing. Because the

interviewees saw every tourist as someone taking one step further on the karmic wheel in order to become a true Buddhist (Wong et al, 2011, p 230). That means someone who will start on the long path in search of enlightenment.

3.4 Lijiang

As a case study I have chosen Zhi Yun Temple by Lashi lake in Lijiang. Lijiang was a trade and caravan town since the 12th century and is now one of the most popular tourist destinations in China. Today it is a heavily commercialized albeit picturesque old town, with a functioning and beautiful canal and irrigation system. Beautiful to the extent of feeling as if one is visiting a movie set for a kung fu movie, embellished with red lanterns and stone paved narrow winding roads and bridges. Unfortunately, many of the original old wooden houses have been demolished and rebuilt, albeit to look like a century old but still trendy guest house/shop/restaurant etc. A bit ironic, since Lijiang's ancient towns were first made famous by a major earthquake in 1997 and while the modern buildings suffered, the smaller ancient wood houses remained mostly intact. This made headlines in the news, and combined with the present media during the aid process it became the unlikely starting point for what would turn into a touristic goldmine. A year after the earthquake UNESCO deemed the town worthy for its list of world heritage sites (UNESCO, 2021). This was however largely due to the ancient ingenious canal system, and the 13th century murals in Baisha old town. These religious murals are depicted in the central temple complex and interestingly depict subjects both related to Buddhism, Taoism and the life of the Naxi people while also incorporating cultural elements of the Bai people. (UNESCO, 2021). The three ancient small towns Dayuen, Shuhe and Baisha are grouped together under the Lijiang brand but in reality, they are located a few kilometres apart. DaYuen were the main centre and market, while Baisha and ShuHe were a stopping and resting place for the caravans on its way to and from Tibet. A special noticeable detail in all three ancient towns/villages are the lack of fortification, as in having a surrounding and defendable city wall. This is often attributed by the local people to be a testimony of their predecessors' ability to avoid conflict among the different local ethnic groups, while still being ferocious enough to keep far coming invaders away. The largest ethnic group here are the Naxi, but there are also Bai, Yi, Muo, and Tibetans living in this mountainous area. In 2018 alone Lijiang received approximately 18 million visitors (Global

Times, 2019). Already in 2013 UNESCO stated a warning that the status of being on the world heritage list was under threat by the over commercialization and extensive building in the ancient town. By then nearly all small businesses, hotels and restaurants were managed by non-local investors who paid huge sums to rent and rebuild the resident's former family homes.

3.5 Summary chapter 2

Now many more people among the Chinese population can afford leisure travel. Tourism encompasses more than 11 percent of the GDP in China today. Rural tourism is a large part of the tourism sector, and it uses ethnic minority culture as an attraction and in so doing sometimes incorporate ethnic religious elements for entertainment. This an interesting observation when considering the situation for religion in China, since religious activity in China is restricted. However, as Gladney (1994) presents ethnic minorities are seen as the primitive other, and as I suggest so could their religion also be perceived as less developed and rebranded as elements of culture. Identifying as an ethnic minority is not a negative, as belonging to one means receiving some beneficial privileges.

Even with limitations in place, more people are becoming Christian or Buddhist. Many who identify as Buddhist also practice Chinese traditional religion. Buddhism in China has a better relationship with the government for several reasons, one is that it is considered more traditionally Chinese. This relationship and the need for financial self-reliance creates some special challenges to religious authenticity. Tourism at Buddhist religious sites are not considered a negative among clergy (the Sangha), as all people are carrying karma seed, and visiting a temple will be a good seed regardless of motivation for being there.

4 Theoretic frame

4.1 Lived religion

The main source of inspiration in this thesis is the concept Lived Religion and this chapter will explain more about this field. More theory was added during the analyzation process, these will be presented in 4.2.

4.1.1 Background

David Hall is one of the main pioneers and was credited for starting the academic conversation on this topic at a conference he convened in the 1990ties. The discussion that followed became the beginning of a book he edited, namely "Lived Religion in America" (1997). At the time, the main focus of the debate and book was to open academia's perspective and turn the focus of religious sociology towards a new arena. This arena was "The everyday thinking and doing of lay men and women" (1997, Hall). Now, that is a very far-reaching scope of research, to say the least. So, in the years that followed the research seemed to limit the definition of what Lived Religion is, by defining what it is NOT. (Ammerman, 2016, p. 87) To explain further, this meant a field of research that does NOT focus on what happens inside religious institutions, especially those who are normally led by elite leaders and professionals.

Another a clear trend was to not only try to see what ordinary lay men and women were thinking and doing but to be especially concerned with previously overlooked groups in the field of religious and sociologist studies. Those groups were for example women, especially women from ethnic minority groups or other marginalized people and communities in society. This focus was motivated by trying to be more inclusive, an ambition which would seem positive within any field of study. However, this inclusion was also becoming too exclusive. As it were, as Ammerman points out, David Hall had already early on pointed out the importance of not including new groups only to exclude institutions or elites, that it was important to overcome the high/low binary interwoven in the idea of official and popular religion. (Ammerman, 2016, p. 88) While Meredith McGuire in "Lived Religion: Faith and

practice in everyday Life" (2008) sees lived religion as a field emerging from having been overlooked historically in religious studies precisely because institutions needed to maintain monopoly of providing religious content. In her research she has also called for more focus on the embodiment and emotions connected to spiritual experiences, as people "do not experience their spiritual lives as separate from their physical and mental/emotional lives" (McGuire, 2008, p. 137) McGuire points to healing as an example of how embodied religion can function, which is a practice that illustrate how intimate the role of religion can be in our lives. In 2006 Nancy Ammerman edited and contributed a chapter in a book called, "Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives", and becoming another influential voice on the field. Her later work resulted in "Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes: Finding Religion in Everyday Life" (2014), which is the inspiration source for this thesis. As Ammerman describes it, the field covered new ground by intentionally looking beyond institutions, beyond elites, and beyond beliefs, but argues that these findings should be put into dialogue with how we understand that societies have a relationship with institutionalized religion (Ammerman, 2016). She made the observation that even though todays globalized world can seem based on the individual's decisions, and that our daily actions are based on a consciously made choice, it does not take away the fact that people's daily life are a part of collective productions. These collective productions are a societal process where the institutions also play a large role, so we must try see both the individual and the institutions in our perspective (Ammerman, 2016, p. 89) So in other words, emphasizing that if one point of interest is important does not have to imply that something else is less valuable to study. Instead, and perhaps what lived religion most importantly brought to the field of religious studies, is the aim to see the whole picture.

Another approach to Lived Religion is to consider it as a response to the ongoing dialogue of enchantment-disenchantment, the term made famous by Max Weber more than a hundred years ago. In Weber ideas disenchantment meant a loss, the loss of spiritual explanations and magical expectations that the former traditional world once had (Saler, 2006, p 693). Disenchantment was thought of as a logical part of modernity, where the decreasing importance of religion was a natural development towards a rational and secular society based on science. Secularity theory, briefly summed up, deems religion as being no longer needed in a world of advanced science and modernity, and therefore no longer relevant. There seems to be some validity to this idea, as recent studies can reveal the fast-dwindling numbers of active

members of religious communities in Western Europe. However, works such as Ammerman's "Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes" (2014) show that spirituality can be found everywhere as a part everyday people's life, not just on Sundays in a congregation. Religion can be a part of, but often not the whole part of any aspect in a person's life.

Of course, Lived Religion has its weaknesses. One common critique is that Lived Religion is too individually focused and intimate to serve as an academic field with any usefulness to society. Robert Orsi is another researcher who together with Hall broke new ground with this concept and has since had an extensive amount of work published. As Orsi (2002) presented as a special presidential plenary address at Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, even he worried about the question of relevance especially after 9/11 shook society to the core. Could the idea of Lived religion really be useful in order to understand religious actions, phenomena and major societal issues? His conclusion was that the idea of seeing an individual's action and experience in the context of their everyday life, would mean having the ability to NOT create a simplified idea of religious life as a separate entity in itself. Such simplifications in regard to religious identification could overshadow the individual and the surroundings that influence him/her. This could for example mean being able to explain how being a Muslim does not define how someone such as a martyr decides his/her actions, and that the idea of 'bad Islam' and 'good Islam' were only media created categories made in order to make complex situations more easily understood by the public.

4.1.2 Lived religion as a concept for studying religion in China

Now, how could this concept be suitable to the situation in China? Firstly, there is to my knowledge little pre-existing research within the field of Lived Religion concerning China. In addition, in my experience the study of religion itself is a relatively small niche in the academic world in China and would often be placed under the philosophy department administration at university level. By a glance, religious studies would seem more frequently found at the Ethnic Minority Universities, again a referral of the view that religion is more acceptable as a trait of ethnic culture. As previously discussed, the political stand towards religion is generally considered negative/hostile. Research about religion might then be considered a lesser option, or the least not a subject that one might easily build an academic

career on. However, this does not mean religion is considered less important to the average people or thereby unimportant to study. From the lucky cat robots in small shops, to the jade Chinese cabbage on the director's desk, there are signs of religiosity if you know where to look. Therefor using Lived Religion as a looking glass can be a fitting tool. This concept makes it possible to see past secular macro statistics and mass census, past institutions and political strategies, by collecting information about what takes place in people's daily life and how people make meaning of events in their life. The issue is how to accomplish this feat? One way is by opening up the questions in the qualitative interviews. In the book, "Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes: Finding Religion in Everyday Life" (2014) Ammerman and the other researchers attempted to let people recall stories from their lives, take photos and talk about them, write a diary, etc and then listen for when, where and what words with connotations to anything linked to the spiritual came up with interviews taking place over a whole year.

Another way is to observe the common habits, for even if Chinese public life today appears mostly secular there are remaining practices in the wider society that can be connected to a spiritual meaning. One of many traditions that I have witnessed is the burning of symbolic fake paper money during funerals or at Tombsweeping Day. This is one particular action, with one specific meaning all over China. Namely that the fake money is representing a money sacrifice made in order to make sure their ancestors are provided for in the afterlife. However, as studying lived religion can teach us, is that the same act can have different meaning for the individual person. For one person this action would be described as a tradition without any spiritual meaning, while for another it is a sincere practice and a caring action for dead relatives in the afterlife. Relatives that also might repay the favour by watching over the family's fortunes and misfortunes in this dimension. So how to determine if the same action is related to spirituality or not? Well, the answer is quite obvious, you ask and listen. However, in order to ask the right question, you need to have knowledge about Chinese society. As for example, if you were to ask 50 random people whether or not this action of burning paper money is a traditional or spiritual practice to them, you might see a large group answer that performing this ritual is based on merely following a tradition. Then, if a third box were added, as in 'is this a spiritual AND traditional action' there are a chance that many who formerly replied 'traditional' would turn out to include a spiritual connection, possibly revealing more adherence to the old religious ways then perhaps first assumed.

This practical example might seem like an obvious solution, but in order to have the understanding which enables someone to ask these questions and analyse them, means the researcher knows not only the religious practices and world view within their chosen religious area of research, but also the culture and societal environment the interviewee is living in. In other words, trying to see the whole picture, and not extract the religions actions as an entity separate from of a person's daily life and agency. Of course, this is just an imagined dilemma, but they illustrate the need to understand nuances and background when working with Lived Religion, and how essential knowledge of the context is when trying to understand phenomena through the perspective of an individual. What this perspective can reveal, is that the reality people experience is not so secular or disenchanted as generally perceived, and that there perhaps are more than meets the eye under the surface. It might seem like religion does not have a large influence in China, but it could still matter in the way people experience their lives.

When trying to measure how religion influences society, we should also see how society influence religion. Lived Religion employs and works within the categories in religion, as in studying certain different religious groups and compare differences, but it also includes those who do not identify as a religious person. Such openness presents a challenge in defining the threshold for what counts as spiritual and religious. In the case of Ammerman "Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes" (2014) a spiritual experience could also for example mean someone having an emotional response to music that makes him/her have a special feeling of being connected with humanity as a fellowship. The musical experience in itself is not enough, but it also requires an elevated feeling of unity with something bigger than us. So, my assumption is that the openness in the perspective on religion and spirituality within Lived Religion is suitable for China specifically because the religiosity here is a bit covered. I met people in China who would describe themselves as someone without any spiritual or religious views, but later on the same day would warn me to not visit temples in the dusk because ghosts could follow me home and bring back bad luck on the household. This sort of paradox might require a way to see spirituality without the descriptive frame that earlier religion theory set, meaning it must be connected within a specific dogmatic religious frame. In other words, being able to study experiences of spirituality, religious feelings or engage with spiritual practice without having to be a Muslim/Christian/Jew/Buddhist etc.

Working with Lived Religion in China, one of the major works is written by Allison Denton Jones (2010), whose doctorate paper's research was conducted among Buddhist in Nanjing. She chose to focus especially on the conversion narrative. The data she found was compared to their professional and family background. Her findings showed for example that the participants who spent their daily lives or/and their professional life in an environment with a hostile attitude towards religion would focus on explaining their choice to convert based on science and logic. A hostile environment to religion could be for example that the person in question had a career within the military. This shows how using the Lived religion perspective can be useful to understand the correspondence between society and religion.

4.1.3 Methods by Lived religion

By continuing to use some of the working terms and methods in previous works in Lived Religion I hope to further concretize the concept while exploring its usability in the Chinese context. As mentioned, Lived Religion includes a focus on spiritual experiences, down to the individual level. To exemplify how to define what counts as religious/spiritual within the frame of Lived Religion I will again refer to Ammerman et al research work "Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes: Finding Religion in Everyday Life" (2014). This was a large project where a team of researchers gathered stories from nearly 100 participants for over a year's time in two different cities in USA. These stories contained mainly events from their daily life, but also focused on major life events. By using topical key words, the researchers found clusters and patterns of spirituality among both the religious affiliated and the non-affiliated, and the amount found painted a picture of a spiritual vibrant population. These clusters were separated into three main categories, namely 'theistic', 'extra-theistic' and 'ethical spirituality'. These three I will continue to use as thematical codes in my analyzation.

1. Theistic. Theistic being mentions of God, practices in order to develop the relationship to God, mysterious encounters and happenings. (Ammerman, 2014, p. 28)

2. Extra-theistic. This can be summed up as a reaching beyond the ordinary, as in transcendent connection to others, a sense of awe by something in the natural world and moments of beauty in music, arts and so on. Life philosophies crafted by an individual

seeking meaning with an inner core where the individual's self-worth was based on being part of something "bigger than us", etc. (Ammerman, 2014, p. 34)

3. Ethical Spirituality. Consists of a point of view that a spiritual life is linked to deeds. Similar to the concept Golden Rule Christians, meaning in general being a good caring person to others without self-interest. This 'cluster' is seeing random acts of kindness as proof of transcendence (Ammerman, 2014, p. 44).

In the book the analysis used the categories Christianity, Judaism, and Wiccan/naturistic communities to compare the results with participants without any religious affiliation. Accordingly, it was only the practical limitations that prevented them from including Buddhists, Muslims or other religious groups in this project. So, when attempting to relate these working definitions of spirituality and religion to Buddhism and the possible spiritual experiences in a Buddhist temple I would need to adjust them. One important point is that Buddhism is perceived by some as a non-theistic religion, or even define it as a philosophy and not a religion. This is a complicated question, and perhaps I am too easily avoiding this important discussion by simply applying the idea of understanding it according to what it was meant as in the language. In other words, I will go by the way Buddha is referred to in my dialogue with the participants, and how Buddha is referred to bares much similarity to how people talk about God in Theistic religion. As an example, one interviewee said he would pray to Buddha for the protection and well-being of his relatives, another said that the power of Buddha was strong at this temple. To me this sort of phrases when analysed applies to the first category. However, a perhaps better way to approach this question is by renaming this category, as in for example naming the cluster of spirituality as *supernatural icon* or *non-theistic icon* instead of theistic. As I see it, whether Buddhism should be defined as religion or philosophy is a very interesting question, but not a relevant debate to my research topic where the aim is to try to understand what the interviewees experience at a religious site in a touristic setting.

4.2 Here-there, And the Emotions

When working with the collected data it emerged that I needed more theory to understand and explain what I observed. My case study is about experiences, but in this case the experiences

are connected to a specific location, Zhi Yun temple. For as I learned, experiencing a temple means taking in the sights, the smells, perhaps listen to chanting (or as it was, many noticed the silence there), it means perhaps turning a prayer wheel, lightening incense, etc. Or feeling the strain from climbing stairs, the stone texture when touching an old statue. In other words, visiting a temple is a sensory experience. While at the same time it is also an experience that takes place in the mind, all the information we are gathering through our senses are being processed in our mind into meaning by us. As Knott writes, it is through our bodies that we experience and conceptualize the social relationships between things, places, persons, and to identify differences (Knott, 2005, p. 17). By studying space we are studying the conditions for the possibility of experience, which "prefigures the structures of knowledge" (Knott, 2005, p. 21). This combines the intuitive perception of relations between people, between people and things, people and places, people and symbols, and the imagined relations between these. Meredith McGuire has long been an advocate for including the body more in religious studies. She believes this is important in part because we are our bodies, it is a vessel to experience religion, but also because sensory perception is not purely subjective. In many ways, our physical senses are socially shaped, trained, and changed. The social is integral (not additive) to each individual's mind-body experiences and expressions (McGuire, 2016, p. 155). When studying everyday lived religion, she believes bodies are manifestations of ourselves in our worlds. Embodiment is our way of knowing those worlds and interacting with them. We might each be unique individuals, but our experiences are also deeply social. Because we experience with our bodies, but while doing so we are going through mediated learned roles and other expectations and those are influenced by social context, subconscious memories, and communicated to us through language and other cultural symbols.

While the body is important in how we experience a place, so is the place we are in also part of how we produce meaning. For space takes religion from the abstract to the solid. We experience places like Zhi Yun temple through our body, our senses, and when we use our bodies for religious practices, we even embody religious content and channel this to others present. Focusing on space and location in religious studies can include geographical places, material objects, the human made environment, institutions, in other words the substantial. It can also be read as a metaphor for the more abstract and imaginary, such as social or cultural spaces. All of these perspectives are interesting to look at, however in this subtext working with Zhi Yun temple, I see the platform of Knott, "Space as a medium in which religion is

situated" (Knott, 2005, p. 3) to be suitable. As she writes, it is a spatial strategy for examining the relationship between religion and its apparently secular context. Especially as this temple is isolated in a natural landscape, its protruding presence is displaying and communicating the existence of religion in society, even in a communist atheist state. Knott presents the idea that space, the spaces surrounding us are both material and metaphorical, physical and imagined. Secondly, that a lack of clarity on the relationship between mental and material spaces leads to an inadequate account of the nature of space itself. My interpretation of this, means it is possible to see the personal effect and the inner experience of Zhi Yun temple for the participants as something not coming from a religious source in itself, as in religion as sui generis, but understanding that several components at the location creates the opportunity for the individual to have a religious experience there. How so? Because space is never an empty container of meaning. In order to understand the participants reactions to this specific space it takes understanding that religion does not exist independently outside the rest of society. Religious spaces have a certain form of cultural expression, and this expression are subject to social, political and economic forces. In other words, understanding the symbolic meaning that can possibly be transferred by this site to visitors means also learning about how a secular society still can transfer some of the legitimizing power behind those symbols.

Lastly, experiences are experienced through emotions. Now, the emotional and internal part of religion is difficult to pinpoint as a unit and compare, but it remains an integral part of how we experience everything in our life, so that of course includes religion. Perhaps the reason for why it is so little accounted for in religious studies, is partly because it is difficult to study and compare. Still, I would assume most would agree that for any person emotions are important in any part of our life, and especially in our experiences. However, as Riis and Woodhead point out, our emotional life is not as individualized as me might believe (Riis & Woodhead, 2012, p. 49). We have been socialized to know how to emotionally react in different situations, and what we should expect from others and etc, and react emotionally when those expectations are not met. This goes for our closest relationships, but also strangers. For example, let us say you see a waiter that suddenly starts crying in public, or a co-worker that shows anger during a client meeting, this brakes with our expectations and we are uncomfortable. Riis and Woodhead point out that we not only relate to these social relations, but we also have super-social relations (2012, p 7). These we might have with sacred sites, artefacts and beings, and they also provide a structured emotional repertoire that

guides us in what we preconceive to be normal. As they write so well, emotions are always about something, they deliver information to us about the world, be they true or false (Riis and Woodhead, 2010, p. 16). Emotions are also a powerful component in choosing our actions.

Abby Day describes felt belief as an emotional resource that guides and reassures. It is a variation of belief with no need for validation from religious authority or intellectual assent (Day 2013, p. 287). So is a feeling, an emotion, enough to categorize an experience as a religious experience? Riis and Woodhead defined emotions as religious when individuals relate emotionally to religious symbols within the context of a religious community (Riis and Woodhead, 2012, p. 95). In this case, can the temple be accounted for being a part of a community? I interpret Buddhism as a loosely based community often without formal membership, however it is still a community where the openness makes it possible for anyone to just show up without requirements such as routine attendance. The experiences made at the temple is connected to the temple, and the temple is a connection to this community.

Doreen Massey (2005, p.139) introduced a term that sheds an interesting light on the topic of how we experience. What he introduces is a here–there terminology. As in, seeing how someone's current location are always understood by that person by using memories from other places they have been to with similar traits. Or in other words, by visiting a place, a person will subconsciously draw upon memories of similar places in their minds meaning making process so places and times will interrelate in their accounts. In Massey's words, this is something which might be called there and then is implicated in the here and now (2005, p. 139). Danièle Hervieu-Léger has described religion as a chain of memory, and memory is transferred through teaching from one generation to the next about the community's religious beliefs, scriptures, and social norms. However, the emotional experience of the sacred, both collective and individual, is the primary source of authentic religiosity (Hervieu- Léger, 2000, p 52). Riis and Woodhead also discuss Hervieu-Leger's chain of memory and their point of interest is how this chain can be broken. What they describe is how this chain, when the symbols are taken out of context, dissociated or affiliated with other programs the power of a symbol to convince and compel dissolves. Such examples are how the Christian cross become a fashion statement, or Michelangelo's depiction of creation are used in advertisement and in

so doing remove the connection to the original religious meaning (Riis & Woodhead, 2012, p. 209).

4.3 Summary chapter 4

Lived Religion is an emerging field in sociology of religion. It first featured the aim to bring forward less heard voices, such as women and the underprivileged groups in society. Now trying to be less exclusive in its inclusiveness by also examining institutions and the elite, or in fact to look for religion in all aspects of people's life. By understanding everyday lived religion's role in people's lives, we can understand larger phenomena in society and why they take place.

Research using this frame in other areas then the west is underrepresented. Allison Denton Jones dissertation gives a good example of working within Lived Religion in China, by using conversion narrative among Buddhists in Nanjing as a foundation.

In order to work with Lived religion, it takes a working definition of what religion and spirituality is. In my case work I will follow the lead of Ammerman' "Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes" (2014) who have designed three brackets for categorizing spiritual experiences: 1. Theistic, 2. Extra theistic and 3. Ethical spirituality. When researching in a Buddhist context, the first bracket could be adjusted to for example non-theistic icon.

Connected to the case study it was necessaire to include theory based on space, embodiment and religious emotion. All three are components in how we orient ourselves in our life and make meaning of our experiences including the religious.

5 Case study

The first section in this chapter is to paint a picture of the temple which the interviews are focused on, so that the reader can perhaps relate to the experiences that the participants describe in the interviews that follow in this chapter.

Let me revisit the research question for this thesis:

How does a group of Chinese tourists experience a Buddhist temple? In what ways can their experiences be interpreted as spiritual using the approach of Lived Religion?

In total there were eight interviews. By random chance the participants were from different parts of China, which increases the findings validity. Unfortunately, as mentioned before, there were more male than female participants. Their age varied from 21 to late 50ties. In order to protect their identity, I have chosen to refer to them by using the words for different colours in Chinese. At times I will include a sentence to better transcribe the full meaning of a word, and when so doing I will include the Chinese word in *cursive.*

The interviews and the findings were collected by staying as close as possible to the methods of "Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes" (Ammerman, 2014), meaning letting the participants speak freely, looking for when, where and how anything with religious or spiritual association shows up in the dialogue. The approach to what counts as religious/spiritual is a broad and inclusive one, as explained in the section 4.1.3. Methods by Lived Religion. I had prepared a short, semi-structured interview guide, and albeit the participants were few the answers clearly showed some similar trends. In the next sections I will try to present the key themes and extract the main points of similarity and differences in the different interviews, before I discuss the relevant topics in the next chapter, 6.

5.1 Zhi Yun temple

This temple stands at the foot of one of the mountain hills surrounding the Lashi lake. The nearest village is only about two-three kilometres away, and there are several small villages dotted around the lake. Living nearest to the lake you will find the Naxi people, while higher up in the hills above the temple are Yi people, and at about a day trek away through to the

other side of the mountains are the Tibetans living, all the way up to Shangri La. ZhiYun temple is located six kilometres outside of Lijiang town and is a 300 plus years old temple on the outskirts of the Tibetan ethnic groups area in Yunnan Province. The entrance is lined with threes as old as the temple, walking in you enter a narrow hall, before a courtyard with prayer wheels, another entrance hall until you reach the walled garden that feels as if it is built into the hill. Here you will find the unaltered and well-preserved prayer room, lined so the monks face each other, and five meters tall Buddha statues dominate the back wall. This temple has gone under the radar of tourist agencies for years, even though it is unaltered, beautiful and serene. One of the reasons can be that there are already many sights to be seen and choose from in Lijiang in the limited days that the average tourist will stay in town. Also, only a three-hour drive away lays the famous site Shangri-La, a mountain plateau town inhabited by the Tibetan ethnic group. This city was formerly known as Zhong Dien, but local government changed the name to attract more tourists, and chose the name based on the famous book. Here you can experience a “mini”-version of the famous Potala palace of Lhasa, grasslands with herds of Jaks, Tibetan wooden villages, etc. A couple of hours drive the other way lies Dali old town, by one of the biggest freshwater lakes in Yunnan. It is inhabited by yet another ethnic minority, the Bai. However, recently there has been a change that might change the profile of Zhi Yun Temple and its appeal value. Over a couple of years, a new expansion was constructed up on the hill above the original temple. An expansion that approximately tripled the temple in size. In addition, the lamasery outsourced the highly ranked and esteemed Gong Sang Wang Dui JinGang as the leader. In this way the religious status is overstepping the more famous temple in Shangri-La, as Gong Sang’s presence in Zhi Yun temple comes with high prestige. This can be interpreted as a plan for a different future for ZhiYun temple, one that could include large new numbers of tourists. Or, maybe a sign that Buddhist leaders want to be more present in this area. Regardless of motif, this means the research at Zhi Yun for this thesis can be repeated in for example five years’ time to see how tourism can influence a religious site.

There are about 40 monks living here. For a while there were almost double, but age regulations meant many residents recently had to return home to attend regular school. These younger novices were from the nearby Tibetan areas, but the three monks I am familiar with here are from Hubei, Guangdong and Sichuan. These have stayed at the temple for 3 to 7 years already. All except one had experience of taking refuge at different temples before in

different areas, saying they preferred Zhi Yun's peaceful atmosphere. Here at Zhi Yun there are four chanting per day, lasting about 90 minutes. The temple is adhering to Kaju (Kagyu) school and Xianzong branch of Buddhism.

The original hall at the base was built in 1727, taking five years to finish. According to one of the monks the temples Feng Shui is particularly good, because the back is to the mountain and the front is facing the lake. Water has an especially important position in the composition of Feng Shui. Also, the mountain behind is like a lotus from which the hall is a lotus canopy. This can supposedly be seen using drones in aerial photography. There are three Buddhas enshrined here, the Sakyamuni Buddha, Maitreya Buddha and Guru Padmasambhava.

During the Cultural Revolution the buildings were being used as a school, and the clergy were ordered to return to normal life. Still, how the buildings have remained so well kept and intact over the decades when religious activity was prohibited is rather unusual, and something I could not quite come to the bottom of. The climate here could be a helping factor, as there is a rainy season for only a couple of months in the summer, but for rest of the year the high-altitude air here is very dry, with blue sky and sunshine. Since the temple does not charge admission fee, they are dependent on donations for the upkeep of the temple and its residents daily needs. However, lately they must be receiving large sums to be able to have room for a large expansion above the original hall and monastery. The temple is also running a small-scale charity project supporting Tibetan orphans.

Figure 1 Main entrance, all pictures from 2021.

Figure 2 Entrance to the new addition.

Figure 3 Prayer wheels.

Figure 4 New addition.

5.2 Glimt Of Magnificence

When earlier discussing some of the definitions of spirituality in Lived Religion in the section 4.1.3, the format of non-theistic was brought up. Simply put, be open to references to religion or spirituality that is not necessarily connected to a deity such as Allah or God when looking

at the data. A lot of the non-theistic cluster in "Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes" (Ammerman, 2014) were associated with a sort of a heightened experience compared to the day-to-day events. For example, such as a stronger consciousness of the beautiful surroundings, moving music, or even a feeling of connection with humanity as a higher unified unit. Similar references were observable in several of my interviews, but perhaps some times in a less obvious way. For example in the way Mr Lan expressed himself at different parts of the interview. As the only one, he specifically mentions turning the prayer wheels, and then refers to it again, as the answer to what he will remember the most. Then when describing what he chose for a subject when taking photos, he mentions it again.

> *The long, long stairs, from down to top, it was a grand sight…The buildings, the prayer wheels…*

The way it appears the prayer wheels made a special impression on him, one that he could not quite put words to. This was his first visit to Zhi Yun temple, but the third time visiting Lijiang. He had been recommended to visit by a friend, and were pleased with what he found, and eager to publish his photos to social media. However, he was very clear on not having religious belonging. According to him, going to a temple, any temple, could be beneficial to him when faced with a problem, or dealing with bad emotions.

> *If the temple area is peaceful (like here) it will be useful to me. But I am not a Buddhist, I do not need that kind of 'content'. But the surrounding environment can be of help."*

In his idea, being at a quiet area can help a person by allowing him to let your inner relax and think more deeply about something. Even if being quite adamant about not needing the Buddhist content, he seemed to have regards for those who do, by for example underlining that everyone should show respect to the sacredness here and keeping the quiet atmosphere here as it is. Mr Lan had perceived the other guests/tourists who were present at the same time as him to share the same respectful attitude that he had, but also revealing that it was not something that he took for granted:

> *They also showed their respect, they were not so 'casual' ('suibien' in Chinese) as usual.*

Speaking of the differences to this temple compared to his hometown, his comments were mostly neutral, but brought up an interesting point.

> *Compared to the temples in Guangzhou, this is quite different. This place is a lamasery, back home it is more like normal Chinese Buddhism.*

This reveals that he has a little more insight into the Buddhist branches within China although not a Buddhist. Notwithstanding, all temples in China are registered within the one Buddhist association and welcome to all without any sort of membership. Still, saying Zhi Yun temple was less like normal Chinese Buddhism means he might see Zhi Yun temple as a representation of Tibetan culture, and not his own. Looking at all of his replies in total, some of the things might seem a bit contradictory. As in readily informing of having turned the prayer wheels and prayed, but later on easily reject the idea of being Buddhist. Are his actions, or practice, of praying and turning the prayer wheel then still considered a religious act? My knee-jerk answer would be yes. For how can anyone pray without turning to a higher power? However, in reality it does not have to be so black and white. According to one definition of religion it could for example depend on whether or not Lan turned his hopes to something beyond himself, be it the powers in the universe or Buddha. Regardless, even if asked, he might not have had self-awareness or a clear agenda when he decided to turn the prayer wheel or pray. Perhaps the act of praying was simply to make him not seem out of place, a sort of assumed politeness. Or likely it was done in hope of maybe receiving some good luck or help from somewhere beyond, probably Buddha himself whose powers would seem concentrated in such a temple. This in turn leads to another discussion, as his statements suggests, can someone believe Buddha to have supernatural powers, but not be a Buddhist? Or can this be coming from a negative association in society to being seen as a religious person? Allison Denton Jones describes how people from for example military background would explain their convert to Buddhism as being based on science, thereby avoiding the flair of returning to old superstitions.

All interesting questions, and this is where I see the strength of looking at people's perspective through Lived religion. Namely, by showing that the religious footprint in society is more than one dimensional. Not to say that understanding the dogma, ethics and regulations within a religion or the variations between countries or cultures is not important in

understanding the overall picture, but it should also be possible to recognize the nuances in the experiences of people like Lan, who is not neither or. Overall, his visit at Zhi Yun temple was described in very positive terms, and as a visit that meant more to him than merely sightseeing.

5.3 A Spectacular Sight

Mr Lu, was like Mr Lan, taken in by the sight of the stone stairways connecting the original temple with the newly built complex up on the mountain side. A perhaps more outgoing person, the way he described his impression of the temple were more colourful than the rest of the interviewees.

> *My best impression of this place is powerful and peaceful… Spectacular. Especially when I go to the top of the mountain. I got the same feeling. Spectacular.*

Or:

> *ZhiYun temple is a sort of place where people can feel free from the evil in the world.*

Mr Lu had only five days to spend in Lijiang but was hoping he will return for a longer stay in the future. Interestingly, he was also quick to point out that he was not a Buddhist. He had previously visited temples in the town where he grew up. These temples he described as crowded, small and in the middle of the city. When asked about if the practices there were different from what he saw in Zhi Yun temple, he too was quite clear about there being large differences. According to him the visitors in his hometown would pray and ask for blessing, while the people in Zhi Yun temple were more into internal mediations or chanting, the setting was quieter, and people kneeled down. The biggest difference, as he saw it, where the number of people present as there were so few here. Like the visitors he described in his original hometown's temple, he also went to Zhi Yun temple to as for a blessing. Perhaps a random choice, but he also described himself like one of the ordinary people.

> *I came to Zhiyun, like many ordinary people I came to pray for my mother's health. She is about 80 years old, and she lives in China while I live in the States, so I can't visit her so often. So, I pray for her, for her happiness and health.*

Does this mean that if he were a Buddhist, he would be doing something else? This raises an interesting question; what is the general perspective of a Buddhist believer in China among the public? According to Pew's research (2017), as previously mentioned, the hostility score towards religion in China was low, even though is scored high on government restriction regarding religion. Another connection is to Jones's findings (2010, p. 133), that the converts to Buddhism whom she had interviewed would sometimes prefer to explain their conviction as based on rational scientific reasoning. Especially if the convert had a background from a situation where there would probably be a more negative attitude to religion, as for example having a career from the military or government. This was not the case for Mr. Lu, who is a software engineer in his 50ties, and had spent large part of his life abroad. However, Mr Lu and Mr Lan differs in the tone of the reply. Based on when and how he says it, Mr Lu is less adamant about not being a Buddhist, but instead would seem to rather excuse his level of knowledge of Buddhism. In his words he does not know much about the inner works of Buddhism, but that he can understand a lot by looking and feeling (at what happens in the temple). Also, according to his reply, regarding how often he goes to a temple back in the town where he came from, his answer was that had he had easily access to a place such as Zhi Yun he would have liked to go more often to clean his mind. According to him, this was in part because the temples in his hometown were too crowded for this purpose, but also because in Zhi Yun temple he believed he would be able to talk to a monk in person. Again, like Mr Lan, he pointed out that Zhi Yun temple was Tibetan, and therefor apparently different. However, when saying he would have liked to visit such a temple if he lived nearby, and would have liked to communicate with a monk, it would appear he does not see Tibetan Buddhism as only an ethnic trait. Or in other words, a religion only for ethnic Tibetans, a faith he could not qualify to commit to because of his own different ethnicity. Therefore, perhaps his statement of not being a Buddhist, while still choosing to pray in the temple was probably not a reflection of shielding from a negative attitude towards religion in society as Jones (2010) saw in Nanjing. Instead, it appears his idea of being a Buddhist requires someone to have a certain level of knowledge and insight in Buddhism, something which he has not yet required.

5.4 Entering Another World

The youngest among the people interviewed, Mr Hei was still very well spoken and delivered longer answers then the rest, boding well for his studies in communication at the University. Also, he was one of the few who did not mention participating in any action that can be associated with religious practice. Repeatedly he used the word *fenwei*, which directly translates as atmosphere, but is a bit more formal and poetic then the direct translation allows for. In my mind it relates to how someone can experience surroundings by being so immersed/close to it that you can feel it with you senses. It was the wish to experience and explore this *fenwei* which had drawn him to visit Zhi Yun temple, after reading about it in a travel forum. Mr Hei also gave the impression of particularly being interested in photography and said he had not yet published his photos at social media, because he always used a long time to carefully select and edit. Interestingly, when asked about what social rules to follow in a temple, he revealed two different perspectives of the temple at the same time:

> *Most important is to keep quiet, to respect other people's faith. Respect others culture. Like, see all you want, but don't interrupt others. Because I believe a temple is a holy place. Everybody should do as they ought to do, be more considerate to others.*

For again religion/faith is side-lined with culture, as in other people's culture. Here Mr Hei does not directly mention Tibetan culture when saying to respect others culture, but it can be read between the lines. At the same time as saying it is necessary to be respectful to others culture, he still gives credit to the locale as a holy place. This can of course also be seen as unattended small random mishaps, but as known language does play a part in construing reality. Would he consider it a holy place because Tibetans see it as such, or is it holy because it belongs to something beyond? However, there is another other in his statements too. Mentioned a couple of times in the interview is his esteem for religious people, or in his words *you xinyang de ren* (people who have religion). Seemingly, he was taken by the sincerity he saw in Zhi Yun temple.

> *My deepest impression is…religious people really are committed, so honestly. Going inside the temple is completely different from the outside world. Especially if you come from a busy city to here, it is like entering another world.*

Taking the role of the spectator and not participant, Mr Hei several times mentioned how touched he was by the effect of religion on other people. Though it is not completely clear in his phrasing, I assume he is referring to the numerous monks and young apprentices he had seen chanting. This chanting takes place four times per day. Later on in the interview he replied that going to a temple is not something he would do to lighten up his mood, but that the chanting had made him feel high esteem and touched. Only when asked a quite leading question, whether or not going to a temple can solve problems in life, did he say anything about his own standing.

> *Going to a temple isn't really solving any problems. But let's say I am feeling hopeless, or if I want to bless others, I might go to pray. Cause if you go with a heavy heart, you have many complicated problems, then praying isn't going to make me more happy, but I wish for good luck.*

Still, even if Mr Hei counted it as an option it seemed like going to a temple to pray for luck did not appear as a very likely situation in the future for him. Instead, his tone of voice seemed to give away that, as he said, he was still a young man so going out to a bar with some friends were his most likely cure for feeling low. According to him, it is better not to think too much about unhappy things in order to overcome bad emotions. Although, praying or wishing for good luck is still a way of representing the idea of acknowledging the existence of something supernatural in daily life. However, for Mr Hei meeting someone living according to a faith almost seemed like a novelty, or so it appeared in the phrasing of his words. If so, that is perhaps not too surprising. As with any 21-year-old student from a big town, it is reasonable to believe it could have been his first meeting with monks in real life. When talking about the temple he had seen previously in his hometown, he mentioned it was not like here (Zhi Yun temple), which is a monastery. Instead, he described it as a place where people burned incense for Guanyin. This is the Goddess of mercy and compassion, a deity also with origins within Buddhism, but who have been immersed and syncretic with Chinese folklore. Based on my observations, she is the religious figure whose image is most often represented in public areas, next to the general of the army of Lord of Heaven, who usually is plastered on walls by the entrance or the door itself to protect the home. This aside, when asked about what he will remember the most about Zhi Yun, he found it difficult to point out anything specific and did not return to the talking point of chanting monks.

I will remember…how to say..I will remember the beauty of this place, the scenery..many kinds of things.

5.5 A Well Kept Secret

Mr Hong and his interview differed from the rest on many points. One of them is that he saw the quietness at Zhi Yun temple as unfitting or maybe undeserving. Perhaps just caught up in the tourism aspect in the explanation for my interview, or maybe because of his professional background from real estate marketing, he seemed more focused on the market value in terms of tourism appeal then his own experiences. Hong mentioned for example that he felt it was a failing by the local government to not 'push' Zhi Yun temple more through marketing, since the temple had obviously unused potential on the tourist market. He called it a well-kept secret that few tourists knew about.

Hong had already visited Lijiang on three occasions and had only on the fourth visit discovered this temple. When asked, he would emphasize that he really liked it here, and that he was positivly shocked, *jingya*, over how well it was kept, and in such an authentic, original way. Mr Hong claimed he had visited several temples in Tibetan areas previously, but none could compare to Zhi Yun's splendour. Still a young man at 27 years old, he presented himself as a seasoned traveller, one that preferred to not take photos in order to take in more of the experience without disturbance. Later on in the interview, he quickly refuted it when asked if he believed a temple should be a quiet place, such as Zhi Yun. This reply was also unusual compared to the others. For Mr Hong saw many visitors and a vibrant environment as a positive, and that if Buddhism is growing big and is becoming popular in an area, then the temple grounds should reflect it by the number of people there.

His own position towards Buddhism had also a somewhat different take. According to him he would normally go with his family to a temple at important festivals, to burn incense and pray. His hometowns temple he described as more plain and traditional, while Zhi Yun temple was majestic and had more religious feeling. Still, these feelings had not made him partake in any religious practices here. The reason he said, was that he was not so familiar with Tibetan Buddhism, the habits and traditions. So again, in a way he was saying that Zhi Yun was different from his hometown because it was Tibetan, but also because it had more religious

feeling. Perhaps the interpretation here is that to him both temples represented Buddhism, but he did not feel familiar within the cultural setting to do the practices he would do in his hometown.

5.6 Feel The Power of Buddha

Mrs Huang had also visited Lijiang several times before she had heard of Zhi Yun temple and decided to visit. However, she said she would normally seek out temples in her travels, because walking in them made her feel good. At those times she would normally donate sesame oil, a not uncommon offering to see among gifts on the altars at the temples in the countryside. Oils and fruits are a quite normal gift, but you can also observe rice and similar day to day products among the gifts. Today she was unprepared and had given a cash donation instead. To her, going to the temple was something very different from visiting a tourist attraction like the old town.

> *It's completely different. Although I don't know much about Buddhism, I feel that when I come to this place, my mind will be very peaceful, and then very comfortable, I seem to feel the power of Buddha. Those places in the ancient city are just a commercial attraction.*

Therefore, it seems she does not see herself as being in the role of a tourist when visiting this or other temples, even though she did not identify as a Buddhist. However, she described herself as someone with a little bit faith in Buddhism. Her case was a little bit particular, as she had especially heard of the inscriptions in the temple before she came to visit. As with other interviewees her friends had introduced her to Zhi Yun temple, but the awareness of this point this might be a sign of more interest in the topic then the average tourist. These inscriptions are the well wishes of both Jiang Zemin and the 11th Panchen Lama. Although she seemed quite knowledgeable, she twice described herself as someone without having much knowledge of Buddhism. Much like the previously mentioned Mr Lu, she would seem to feel that in order to call oneself a Buddhist, it takes knowledge and study, and not only conviction or faith. In her words, Buddhism was a religion for many people in China, one that she wanted to understand and accept, *renke*. The accept here, seems to me as accept in her mind as her own faith too. Another sign of this was that she was planning to visit again

whenever she was in Lijiang. She also mentioned that the temple was magnificent and with very bright colours. The referral to colours was brought up by several of the participants. As a foreigner, I had not taken so much notice. Perhaps there are more latent symbolism in colours to Chinese, or maybe it is because these participants are coming from big cities where the urban landscape is greyer. Mrs Huang was self-employed and working in the clothing industry in Guangzhou, a fast paced highly competitive market with much uncertainty. Visiting today she had wished/prayed, for her health, though still a relatively young woman in her early 40ties. She said she had heard this temple was like Mount Putuo. This island archipelago outside Shanghai is an important pilgrimage place for Buddhists, but also generally known among people to bring luck to those who visit, so in other words a spiritually powerful place.

5.7 Two Cats and A Slow Visit

The most special part of the experience at Zhi Yun temple for Miss Hui was to be able to wander around by herself and exploring the temple in a slow pace. This was because there were so few people around, so she did not feel hurried in any way. I assume that she might compare it to organized travel groups, where the tour guide take charge of when, what and how long time to visit. Or in general, from my own experience travelling in the high season, at famous sites such as Temple of Heaven in Beijing, there are so many people that in some areas you simply can't stop to admire something because the crowds push forward from behind. Speaking of what she photographed, it was not so much temple related, but instead two kittens playing in the yard. She had particularly enjoyed that they had been too busy playing to notice her taking photos. All in all, her interview was one the most void of spiritual or religiously loaded words. Her visit was also rather unplanned, because it was suddenly decided because the original planned got changed because of traffic problems. Asked about her expectations and why she wanted to visit, she replied:

> *Ehm, I didnt have any expectation. I would like to see some culture, how it would look like, and also like, wish to get some new and fresh experience from it. That is what we want when we are travelling, right? Mostly just no expectations, just see what it has.*

Like with other participants, the reference to Tibetan Buddhism as a sort of cultural trait pops up. With the others, the reference to seeing the temple as a representation of Tibetan culture was often mixed with also partaking in religious practice, or a feeling that can be related to the non-theistic cluster previously mentioned. In Miss Hui case, the only mentioning of anything similar was when asked about the rules, or etiquette for visiting a temple.

> *I think the most important thing is to behave ourselves, be quiet, not disturb any guest, or the God.*

Later on in the interview her description of the temple when compared to the one she has seen in her hometown, the same perspective on the temple as culture is revealed again. In her words, Zhi Yun was a little bit different because it had some ethnic elements to it. This was supposedly shown in the colours, patterns and the way it is organized. She also said it was quiet and tranquil. While her hometowns temple was less of an attraction.

> *In my hometown..I don't know really if it counts as a temple, it is religious, but nothings special to see.*

This was not so much because it was not ethnic, but according to her it was faded and looked old/unkept. At Zhi Yun she had not partaken in any religious practices. Seeming like an upbeat and easy-going person, the 27-year-old student Miss Hui revealed she had recently started to practice meditation in order to handle life's stresses and hardships.

> *I didn't approach it through religion, nowadays it is more like a daily life thing, so it was like I use an app and it guides me through it. Lately I knew there was some Buddhist meditation way too, but I am not quite there yet.*

However, she would not deliberately go to a temple for dealing with hardships or wish for luck. Still, she claimed going to Zhi Yun unexpectedly did have an effect on her mood, by calming her mind. This sort of phrasing, calm, peace, etc in their mind or heart is also a recurring theme. However, when looking at her replies in total, this reaction was more about the peaceful surroundings and not given by the religious theme.

5.8 Donating Equally

Mr Bai seemed to have a specific habit to his visiting temples. According to him he had donated 200 yuan at every temple that he had been at recently, three in total, and he said he would often seek out temples when he was traveling. Donating can be seen as a way to be granted blessing/luck, or to improve one's karma. Bai had been to Lijiang twice before hearing about Zhi Yun temple through his friends. He explained he had many friends who were Buddhist back home but used the word for having interest in, *you xinqu*, related to Buddhism and himself. Even though he was in the very social business of managing a restaurant and red wine salesman, Bai appeared slightly shy and kept most of his answers short. He did, like several others, also make a reference to seeing the temple as an ethnic representation.

> *I am a Han Nationality and I didn't know much about Tibetan Buddhism in the past. This visit made me know that Tibetan Buddhism has Red Sect, Yellow Sect, and White Sect.*

Sect refers to the different schools, or hierarchies/branches within Tibetan Buddhism. Bai talks about three, but there are more, and they are usually known by other names. Even if he was not completely correct, it showed that visiting as a tourist can also be a way of sharing knowledge about religion. His comment was very interesting to me, since he was especially clear on his position as an ethnic Han in relation to the culture tourism aspect that I discussed before. Namely that they categorize their temple visit as tourism since the temple in their perspective is a representation of Tibetan culture. As a recurring theme, I will therefor explore it further in the next chapter. Interestingly, he also seemed to not put himself completely as an outsider, by both donating and saying he would visit temples because he had an interest in Buddhism. He also made a comment on authenticity.

> *Other scenic spots are crowded with people, asking for money everywhere. The locals are selling things. It is very peaceful and peaceful here. People come for faith.*

According to Mr Bai it seemed as if the lack of commercial activity added to the temple's credibility as a genuine place for faith. However, in the phrasing of his sentence it appeared Zhi Yun temple was grouped in with other scenic spots, by using the same words for the temple as for tourist attractions on maps, *lüyoudian*. Still, he recognized that there was

something more in the differentiation, for people came for faith. (This word for 'faith' can also be translated as belief.) Asked about what he chose as a topic for his photos, he commented on the specific colour of the walls. Calling it a specific red for Tibetan Buddhism and describing it as particularly beautiful and advanced. This was, as mentioned before, a very recurring theme in the interviews. Perhaps there are more awareness around the aesthetics of colours in Chinese culture. As an example, the choice of colours is consequently used in Peking Opera to show who the bad guys and heroes are. The red colour does however also play up to the cultural exceptions and symbolism for Tibetan religious buildings, although in different degree. In a western perspective, a religious building is often in white, or bricks, but can also be in other colours and at least the modern versions can have quite different architecture. There is of course an expectation for a certain reverence in the architectural design, let us call it an overall expression of dignity. While in cathedrals, larger mosques, or buildings of similar standing we would expect grandeur, magnificence as a homage to the faith. Tibetan temples are not always but often red, and the interior is usually very colourful. The colour of the outer walls in Zhi Yun temple is seen again in the monks' robes, so I can understand it makes a powerful impression.

5.9 Comfort and Spirit

Mr Fenhong said he did not need a special reason to visit Zhi Yun, to him it was very natural since he likes Buddhist culture. This time the word for culture came up again, but unlike the others he did not say anything about Tibetan culture. What could he mean by Buddhist culture? To be specific, the word he used for culture was the very specific *wenhua*. Is a culture different from the religion? For example, from my own culture, I have seen Christian culture to mean different things. It could be used in media when explaining something that would be stereotypical, like assumed negative attitudes to homosexuality, or in my personal opinion it could also mean for example songs or fictional literature created by and for people in Christian communities and/or Christian believers or decorations frequently used in homes or Churches, etc. This could be similar to what Mr Fenhong talked about as he said:

> *The architecture..the whole place's culture...It lets people feel comfortable, to be there makes all of you relax.*

In the case of Mr Fenhong I see a positive attitude towards Buddhism, and I do not assume the word of culture to be meant as nominating Buddhism as culture and not a faith or religion. When asked what he did first, he said *baibai Fo*. This can be translated as pray to Buddha or show respect to Buddha. In my experience this means putting your hands together and bow your head and/or bow in front of the Buddha statue with an incense stick. He had also been at the temple at his hometown and said that he would like to go to a temple in times of trouble because it would help him relax and make him comfortable. Mr Fenhong was the only person to use this word, *shufu*, as in comfortable, and used it several times during the interview. I interpret it as a personal trait, and not too intentional. The other word he used about three times in the interview was *linqi*, a word that can be translated in many ways, in this context I believe spiritual is the right word. Mr Fenhong did not get as much of this feeling in his hometown temple, namely *linqi*, because it was more crowded there. He also mentioned that the place's *daochang* was part of why his experience was spiritual. This *daochang* was difficult word to translate, but I find the 'flow of the layout' as a close fit. The 'dao' relates to the word for Taoism, so mentioning of the layout is more meaningful than just the objective design. Now, to begin with he apologized for his poor level in standard Mandarin, as his first language is Cantonese. I found him easy to communicate with, but perhaps is his different choice in phrasing only a reflection on a culture difference which is reflected in the habits of language.

39-Year-old Mr Fenhong was visiting Zhi Yun with family, and had taken a photo with them, and of the inscription of Jiang Zemin. He did not publish photos of his travels online, he said. On a follow up question, Mr Fenhong said he had a business in construction, and did not like to show everybody where he went to have fun.

6 Topical issues

Some of the key themes that stood out in an inductive thematic analysation will be presented here.

6.1 Here and there, emotions and authenticity

The experiences in for example "Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes" (Ammerman, 2014) were related to events in their daily life, which is often the case in research in Lived Religion. Here, however it is a bit upside down, as in the case of the visitors at Zhi Yun temple their experiences are not about their everyday life. Instead, their visit can be described as something out of their ordinary lives, when acting in the role as tourists. The difference is important to notice because as tourists we might break out of our daily habits and patterns. When being in the role of a tourist, we may have other habits particular to this setting. This was also the case here for some of the participants, as four of them mentioned they would seek out local temples or had visited many before when traveling. For most of the participants, when they were back in their daily life in their hometown they would rarely visit a temple. What also transpired, is that many had a much more positive feeling about Zhi Yun temple than the temple they had been to back home. Even describing spiritual emotions, as in I felt the power of Buddha. Or, I felt peace in my heart. To several the religious feeling was stronger here. There are different perspectives on the background and reason for this, as I will discuss further in this section.

6.1.1 Here and there

Looking at Doreen Massey's model of Here-There, many of the findings seem to fell into place. According to this frame, there is something which might be called there and then which is implicated in the here and now Massey's (2005, p.139) To explain further, when the participants visited ZhiYun temple they did not only see the present surroundings, but in their subconscious meaning making the absorbed past recollections of temples they had seen, and how they think a temple should look like, were also part of their current experience. Other places and times interrelate in their accounts and the comparisons involving place and

memories becomes the frame for interpreting their subjective experiences. The favourable comparison in this case could in this case could enlarge their positive opinion of Zhi Yun temple as an authentic place of religion, or source of spiritual power.

I first learned of the Here-There frame through the work of Hildegunn Kleive (2020), whose article showed how important a place can be for inspiring spirituality. She had investigated the religiosity among young Hindu Tamils living in Norway, and one of the things she found was that performing the religious gatherings and practices at public areas for rent such as gyms and classrooms affected the youth's emotional religious experience. What came up was that the lack of 'a real temple' was seen as their personal reason behind their own perceived low level of religiosity. According to her participants, the access to a proper temple would change their relationship with their religion.

> *The young Tamil Hindus sense places, people, and materiality with their bodies and these experiences affect them emotionally; they value these experiences and consider them as meaningful. (Kleive, 2020, p 278).*

As mentioned in her article she also refers to the here/there terminology, explaining the participants low appreciation for the makeshift temporary temples with their comparison to temples for example in Sri Lanka. I read this situation as that it means that the diaspora youth would find the religious activities in the rented locales more religious had they not had the mental image of what a temple should look like in mind from previous experiences. While in the case of Zhi Yun temple, it was the other way around. To the interviewees here the emotional response could be coming from seeing a temple that was more similar to how a 'real' temple should be, compared to earlier experiences. As Mr Hong said, he was positively shocked that this temple was not more famous/popular, describing it as a hidden gem. The words often used about 'there' aka their hometown, were: crowded, or commercial, nothing special, noisy, traditional, etc. While Zhi Yun, or 'here' were majestic, beautiful, unforgettable, peaceful. As Mr Lu said:

> *My best impression of this place is powerful and peaceful… Spectacular. Especially when I go to the top of the mountain. I got the same feeling. Spectacular.*

According to this, since Zhi Yun temple invoked more religious feelings than their temple back home, it would mean that Zhi Yun temple fitted their imagined idea of how a temple should be like. In the participants comparisons, in the here/there, what transpired is that Zhi Yun appeared to have more religious feeling or emotion.

One way of understanding where the spiritual emotions come from, is explaining them as rising from religious regimes as Riis and Woodhead suggest (2010, p. 54). As in, where would the participants get their imaginary standard for a temple from? According to Riis and Woodhead, these regimes are recognizable by their own symbols and tropes who were directly representative to, as for example in a Christian setting, God himself. Interestingly, they described the power of these symbols by the metaphor of a battery, the metaphoric latent 'battery power' that these symbols could wield in activating religious emotions were charged by societies emphasis on them. An example of this is how people from a seemingly non-religious society in Scandinavia will flock to the church in times of large crisis to light a candle etc. This shows that as a symbol the church still has a power, a power maybe less consciously given, but still given by the people and society. This also translates somewhat to what Poria et al (2003) found when comparing the religious backgrounds of people visiting the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem. They tried to show through mathematical equation and statistics that the tourists' religion and their strength of religious belief are linked to the meaning they give to the site and that this is also observable in their visitation patterns. Still, what they found is that the religious affiliation could be seen as an indicator for that meaning, but it was the culture in which participants lived in that influenced their experience associated with the site, and this was at the core of the tourists' meaning-making at the visit. So, put simply this means their cultural background decided their experience, not their religious affiliation. Another way to understand an ideal temple is to see it as an imagined heterotopia. Myra Shackley used the Foucalt idea of Heterotopia when examining the situation for English cathedrals and tourism (Shackley, 2002). To Foucalt (1986) Heterotopia was meant as a description of certain cultural, institutional and discursive spaces that are somehow other, worlds within worlds. To Shackley it helped explain why the public had such reluctance to accept the imposition of paying for an entrance ticket to cathedrals. It was not a financial issue, but for a deeper reason, one that was intrinsically related to the visitor's motivation for coming (Shackley, 2002, p. 351). For a cathedral to remain a Heterotopia in their imagination, it needs to be removed from the world of time constraints and commerce. Being faced with

paying an entrance ticket brings the visitor down to earth, and this becomes confusing because the site then no longer represents a space apart from the mundane everyday world and becomes instead an extension of it. Now, the issue of entrance ticket is only one of the markers that can help sustain or break the 'Heterotopia' of a site. It is however true that Zhi Yun temple does not charge entrance tickets, and that this is a rarity, especially for a place of this size. This was also brought up by both the monks here and a participant, Mr Bai, who also pointed out that there were no local people here selling stuff. Therefor this could also be a factor that explains the felt spirituality. It is also easily imagined that the location, style and quietness would encourage the sort of world within worlds and otherness feeling that inspired Foucalt and Shackley. Much like Shackleys idea of heterotopia in English cathedrals, Mr Hei described it as somewhere outside of the rest of the world.

> *My deepest impression is..religious people really are committed, so honestly. Going inside the temple is completely different from the outside world. Especially if you come from a busy city to here, it is like entering another world.*

More importantly, what would this mean in the case of the tourist's experiences at Zhi Yun temple? You could say it was the beauty in the surrounding scenery that helped inspire these emotions, or a sense of awe as described in "Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes" (Ammerman, 2014, p. 34) as in something bigger than us, or that the religious tropes/regimes as Riis and Woodhead (2012) describes still lives on in the collective memory and are setting the scene for having just such emotions. Considering the latter, one would think that the upheaval during the cultural revolution followed by limitations of religion in late history would have removed much of the power in these symbols in China. So where could the imagined power of the symbols be coming from? There are of course the important festivals that still observe some religious content, as well as the symbolism used at funerals. These could help keep the collective memory of religious symbolism alive. Another possibility is through media. This could be for example the movies and tv-shows inspired by the legendary folk tales mixed with Buddhist mythology, such as the previously mentioned Nezha and Monkey King. Both these characters were originally anti-heroes who despite themselves became heroes, overcoming their inherent evil flaws. Monkey King is portrayed in several ways, but in one of the most known movies, the trilogy "A Chinese Odyssey" he is forged into a better version of himself by the hardships he met and the forced companionship of the monk who were tasked with

bringing Buddhism (the scriptures) to China from India. If judging by the characters and their movies huge popularity, it would mean as symbols these can still have power among the general public.

Now, what I would suggest is that Zhi Yun temple is a mediator of religious content even in a touristic setting. Much like in the same way a soundtrack to a movie can stir emotion, so can the tropes, the here-there, and the impression of otherness create a kind of religious emotion, in both those who are originally less open, and those who are more open to religion. This can explain in part why some who did not see themselves as Buddhist, still participated in an individual religious practice by their own initiative. This way of thinking can explain how a place can have spiritual power, at least power to stir emotion in a visitor.

Acknowledging emotional experience is also a comment to the idea of secularism as a natural development. Knott has done an interpretation of Taylors work which explains that there is a transition from where belief is informed and legitimized by the church, to a new focus and dependence in late modernity on the authenticity of the individual's own experience (Knott 2005, p. 67). She writes that Taylor rejects the argument that, just because church attendance is falling, religion must be declining, preferring the view that the secular age constitutes a plurality of beliefs, including those that are religious and spiritual. This phrase I found especially encompassing for the results from Zhi Yun, namely 'the authenticity of the individual's own experience'. Because the participants emotional response to this space was legitimized by themselves and not from a religious institution or leader. However, as Riis and Woodhead (2010) explain, symbolic power is created from somewhere. To use a blunt metaphor, it is somewhat like the eternal question of the chicken and the egg, which came first. For without the common understanding in society, the emotional or spiritual power of a religious place will be lost, and without a religious site such as for example Zhi Yun, there are no arenas to reflect back that given emotional power. Danièle Hervieu-Léger (2000) writes that religion is 'a chain of memory', and that emotion naturally is a part of the memory process. So, when Zhi Yun calmed my mind and made me feel peace in my heart, these statements comes from a positive outlook on a 'memory' of Buddhism, and the new memory reinforces this through the emotional response.

6.1.2 Authenticity

Another key word here, to understand how the participants experienced Zhi Yun temple, is authenticity. The issues surrounding authenticity and Buddhism was presented in the section 2.3.2.1, where I presented the markers red /green stain by Allison Denton Jones (2010). One stain representing the adjusting to political needs, the other for becoming too commercial. In regard to the green stain, following in the trail of tourism there is naturally a flow of potential income. This income could be necessary to finance the upkeep of religious buildings and education, as for example in Zhi Yun there are also at least 40 monks who require the means for daily life. Statements related to this topic was brought up among the interviewees when favourably describing Zhi Yun temple. As Mr Hei mentions he was very touched by the sincerity, and Mr Bai had noticed that there were nobody selling things at the premises.

> *Other scenic spots are crowded with people, asking for money everywhere. The locals are selling things. It is very peaceful and peaceful here. People come for faith.*

I would say there is a juxtaposition there, as in 'selling things' opposed to 'people come for faith'. So, when balancing between the needs for income and the need to protect the religious authenticity, it means ensuring authenticity because this will also provide to the tourist's experience.

As for the balance if the Red Stain, meaning accommodating to political powers, Zhi Yun provided a very literal example by having the inscriptions of both a former President visiting and the 11th Panchen Lama visible, hanging side by side. This photo legitimizes and claim approval from the highest position in the state. Could this influence authenticity? Not according to my participants. Both Mrs Huang and Mr Fenghong had taken notice of this photo and the inscription, and these two were among the most religiously active at both this temple and others. Both noted it as a positive as a sign of the temple's high status, and Mr Fenhong had even taken a photo of it.

6.2 Exploring new cultures

Next to the participants favourable descriptions of their experience compared to back home, the most recurring topic was how they explained their visit there as seeing a new foreign

culture, Tibetan culture. To visit the temple was equal to a sample of this different ethnicity. Even though we are far from Lhasa and outside what most consider the Tibetan area within China (one would need about a two-hour drive to an area that is first and foremost populated by Tibetans). This again is based on how Lijiang is marketed. For Lijiang is in the Yunnan province, an area which has advertised itself in the tourism market as Colourful Yunnan to reflect the high diversity in ethnic minorities living here. Although technically the Tibetans living in these areas are also Chinese and would most likely identify as such, especially since we are far away from Lhasa. Even so, as the interviews showed, many of the participants would say that they are coming to experience another culture as part of their tourist experience. This mindset can explain why they would see their visit at a religious site as not related to personal religiosity. Gladney described the exotification of the ethnic minorities as a way to identify the Han ethnicity, by being what the Han was not. National identity can be described as a continuously construed reality, as Hylland Eriksen and Neumann (2011, p. 414) writes, so one might say differences between for example Swedes and Norwegians are defined by our own perspective. There are naturally also differences in culture, dialects, traditions etc internally among the Han, who is by far the largest ethnic group in China at approximately 91,4 percent of the population. By having a 'other' group like the ethnic minorities, it can be easier to identify who 'we' are. Of course, one could say this is only semantics, because Tibetan people clearly have their own language, both written and oral, they often live in only Tibetan populated areas, and have a distinct unique culture by all that includes in way of life, clothes, music, history, etc. If by looking at the religious part as a separate part you can see that Tibetan Buddhism has developed into a specific branch of Buddhism, and then further separated into different schools/branches. Being originally Tibetan, Tibetan Buddhism does however not exclude followers based on their ethnic identity. Officially, The Buddhist state association should function as an umbrella for all Buddhist activity in the country, which can be interpreted as supporting a public image that there are no separating divisions within. Besides this, what makes the participants view of their visit as going to see an example of another culture especially interesting, is that they despite of this would sometimes still participate in what one could call religious practices. Examples of these are spinning the prayer wheel, asking for a blessing, lightening incense etc.

On the other hand, some mentioned feeling like they were not familiar enough with Tibetan Buddhism to be comfortable enough to perform a religious practice such as burning incense.

Worrying about doing the wrong thing, they decided to do nothing instead, even though as in the case of Mr Hong he would attend a Buddhist temple in his hometown at festivals. Perhaps can this be the interpreted the other way around, meaning the participants who had partaken in a ritual would do so because it seemed respectful to the cultural social rules? In other words, were their action only courteous and not religious? I will suggest, since some like Mr Lu and Mrs Huang mentioned that their internal intent for praying were done in hopes for good health for themselves or family members, it is not an action completely void of spiritual content. While others also spoke of the spiritual power of the place, for example in how they felt the Power of Buddha. Mrs Huang, who said that she did not know much about Buddhism, did say she felt that when she come to this place, she became peaceful by feeling the power of Buddha. Instead, on the topic of etiquette and social rules when visiting a temple, most would talk about the need to be quiet and not disturb others. One simply said: Follow the rules of etiquette, be quiet. And in so doing imply that quietness was the main rule of courtesy in a temple. When asked about what the other guests were doing, Mr Hei did mention that some copied what the monks were doing, but I assumed he was talking about the chanting, as he had witnessed the monks doing this. All would say that the other guests behaved appropriately according to their idea of how one should behave in a temple.

6.3 Praying without belief

The word for ‘prayer/to pray’ that has been used by these participants is ‘LiBai’. Although correctly and directly translated, it does not describe much about the action itself. How long did it last, were they standing, were the hands folded, did they speak out loud, and so on. Therefore this part of the interviews I feel might be misunderstood if interpreted in a western context, or one might say lost in translation. The translation might especially create possible confusion since the word was spoken by interviewees who would not identify with being a Buddhist. As discussed previously in the interview section, some participants might not see themselves as Buddhist, because for them being a Buddhist would require qualifying as one, this could for example mean putting oneself through deep studies or other practical involvement. This makes me wonder, can someone pray, without thinking that they themselves are a believer? Naturally, a part of Buddhist doctrine means the only way to getting closer to achieve enlightenment is by choosing the ascetic life of a monk, and the

ultimate goal is to end the karma wheel. This would take a lot of sacrifice for an average person, who I assume would most likely want a better life in the here and now, or the next. Another possibility, and the one I would like to discuss here, is that the act of prayer itself has perhaps different cultural connotations in this context. In a theistic religion, especially in the west, God has historically been portrayed as a father figure (Riis and Woodhead 2012, p 42). This 'family' idea within religious thought through history could be why prayer in the west has what I would call a more intimate personal characteristic. As seen in the symbolism of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples, where most would notice that both humility and servitude is expressed, I would also say you can see the intimate connection between a religious figure and followers. To my knowledge, in Buddhism the stress is on the individual person who must through discipline and strength of mind follow the righteous and given path to enlightenment. A good teacher can really help someone on their way, but I assume the relationship between teacher and student is less personal, as the personal is a part of what someone will need to discard in order to achieve enlightenment. Of course, compassion and universal love for humanity is a large part of the fundament, but when interacting with Buddhists I have not heard phrases such as 'Children of Buddha' or 'the love from Buddha' as one might in a theistic community. Therefor my idea is that the participants who at Zhiyun temple took the time to pray maybe did not address their prayer in a personal way, and this could be making the threshold to pray lower? As in to put forward a wish to the universe or the powers of Buddha with a hope for supernatural help, but without committing to the idea that the source for help existed. However, most importantly I should underline that even though there are different ways of praying, there are no right or wrong way to pray and the participants themselves used the word to pray, *libai*, so that is how it should be understood.

Except from prayer, there were other acts that are connected to religious practice. Half of the participants would mention that they had donated money. As discussed earlier, donating money is a part of the karma system, and in that system donating is almost like a trade off in the pursuit of a better next life in the Karmic wheel. Although, in my experience it is mostly the more committed believers who will consider donations for karma in order to improve the next life. Instead, these participants who does not identify as Buddhists would more likely make donations with a more down to earth target. As mentioned, Mr Lu hoped for his mother's good health, and Mrs Huang for her own health. Interestingly, when looking at

prayer, burn incense, spinning the prayer wheel and donating the pattern is a bit uneven, as in partaking in one activity did not automatically include another.

6.4 Intention and motivation

When we are in the role of a tourist, we might have other habits and social rules compared to our normal daily life. Going on a holiday can mean different things to different people, while some prefer doing as little as possible on a sunny beach, others go looking for new input or experiences. In the case of Zhi Yun temple, the latter seemed like the most often given reason for visiting. As in they wanted to visit the temple to explore another culture. Still, despite all of the participants being of the same nationality and ethnicity this reason was not always given. So, except from the Tibetan culture aspect, why would a tourist want to visit a temple? Based on my personal preferences I would have imagined people would like to visit to immerse themselves and vividly imagine being in another historic era, but the answers I received were quite different. Three of them reported that they would seek out temples when travelling, and two had had a specific motivation for visiting in order to ask for a blessing. Why does their motivation for visiting matter? Because the difference between a tourist and a pilgrim/religious tourist can be defined by their reason for visit. Collins-Kreiner and Wall (2015) writes of this general view, how pilgrims are not tourists because they travel for spiritual reasons, while tourists travel or visit sites for reasons that are more secular in nature such as curiosity or pleasure. However, in practical concern and by the tourism industry, pilgrims and tourists are very similar for they require transportation, food and beverages, and accommodation, and buy souvenirs. According to Hecht (1994, p. 222) the differences between pilgrimage and modern-day tourism is not that easily categorized, for both kinds of travellers can be motivated to embark upon journeys and seek out experiences in order to add meaning to their lives. Now, this resonates with what I found among the participants at Zhi Yun temple. Six of the eight in total would say something in the line of it calmed my mind, I felt peace in my heart etc. Also, several had performed a religious practice while there. To me, this information tells me that the surroundings inspired them and stirred emotions similar to those one could call spiritual emotion, as discussed previously in this chapter. This also reminds me of the findings in “Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes” (Ammerman, 2014), where among those who had not any religious affiliation the researchers still could observe reports

of feeling connected to a higher unity, a sense of awe, etc that were categorized as non-theistic spirituality. In the case of Zhi Yun temple, the spiritual feelings were also connected to a religion, Buddhism, but probably also came from the temple's objectively beautiful design and natural surroundings.

To clarify, the question asked was straight forward: Why did you want to visit? Another question related to the intention and motivation was: What did you hope to gain from it? The 'gain' in this question was *shouhuo*, a word that has a little bit more meaning to it. The direct translation is reward, but also the meaning of gain, acquire. I feel it sets a more positive tone to the question than the slightly egotistic 'gain' and is a word more related to the act of experience itself.

As mentioned, two of the participants revealed an intentional religious motivation that was made beforehand, but at the same time the visit was also slightly random. Mr Lu, said he had made a plan to go to Zhi Yun temple to ask for a blessing for his elderly mother, in the hopes for her to stay healthy and happy. However, he also mentioned that he had been introduced to Zhi Yun temple by a friend and had not heard of the temple before he arrived in Lijiang. Same with the other religiously motivated person. Mrs Huang declared she had a little faith in Buddhism and would visit local temples when traveling. She had prayed for her own health. Mr Hong and Mr Bai said they would seek out temples when travelling. Mr Bai also referred to the temple for being famous and important, and that is why he wanted to visit. According to him Zhi Yun temple was famous not only in Yunnan, but in all of China. The importance he talks about here, according to my interpretation and based on the background information about the temple, would derive from the religious position and not as place of historic legacy. By historic legacy, I mean that Zhi Yun temple is not connected to any major historical event or development.

Still, the most common reply was as mentioned wanting to experiencing Tibetan culture or wanting to see the temple because it was beautiful. Interestingly, nearly all reported they had been recommended to visit by a friend. This could be because, as Mr Hong pointed out, that the temple had not been 'pushed'/marketed on the tourism market, so a recommendation from the social circle is the most likely way to know about this temple. Regardless, this shows that their friends also had a positive experience at the temple and that the participants intention to

visit was planned, and not fully random. For some, as mentioned, they already had a habit of seeing religious places/temples when travelling, and/or had an interest in Buddhism, so it would be natural that they friends suggested a visit. In those cases, it means the difference between a pilgrim and a tourist is not so clear by looking at motivation only.

6.5 Religious introduction?

As I have previously discussed in 3.3.1.“Religion in China, background and position”, religion and religious actors have to balance the formal and informal political rules in their outreach. Although, when religious practices are being presented as a part of ethnic rural tourism there are apparently more leeway. This could perhaps be influenced by the role of ethnic minority culture, as discussed in the chapter 3.2.3. “Culture, not religion”. So, is it possible that an introduction to Buddhism could come through tourism? In order to investigate this point, I would look at the differences of habit in visiting a temple in the participants daily life compared to when being a tourist. Or in other words, will someone who never visits a temple at home, do so when they are traveling? Even more concrete, could this visit be the first time in any temple? According to my findings, about five out of the group of eight would not go to a temple normally in their hometown, as in not more than once or twice in their lifetime, and especially the two youngest in group, Mr Hei and Miss Hui had only a vague recollection of haven been somewhere similar to a temple. So, could the reason behind them not going back home be because of practical challenges, as in lack of time or opportunity? Among their replies, Mr Lu stated he said he would like to go more often to a temple but that he lived in a foreign country most of the year. Mr Hei and Miss Hui would say they would have liked to go if the temple back home were as quiet as Zhi Yun, but this was mainly for being able to enjoy the serenity, and not Buddhism. Several in the group who had been once or twice at a temple in their hometown also revealed negative associations to their visit, by describing the temple with words such as crowded, too noisy and/or commercialized, nothing special. This was discussed in section 6.1. More on point, Mrs Huang especially would return to Zhi Yun when visiting Lijiang, and so it appeared that Mr Lu would too. Therefor it seems reasonable to say that visiting a temple such as Zhi Yun as a tourist can have some influence on the religious habits for the participants in the future, but the findings do not fully prove that someone who is not interested in Buddhism can become more curious by visiting as a tourist.

7 Conclusion

The two central topics in this thesis are tourism and Buddhism in China, and the research question focuses on how a group of Chinese tourists experience a Buddhist temple and in what ways can their experiences be interpreted as spiritual using the approach of Lived Religion. Tourism is, in the capacity of being a large part of the economy, naturally also a part of the political and societal landscape. Due to the recent history and political climate, religion has special parameters in China. On the surface it appears that the regulation of religious activities is strict, as for example Pew's research shows (2018). However, as part of the rural tourism industry there seems to be more openness. The way ethnic identity is perceived, and the connection of folk tourism to rural tourism can be the explanation to this. The suggestion is, that because ethnic groups can be seen as exotic and primitive, so can their religious expressions be perceived as less of a threat politically. Buddhist temples are often in rural areas and therefore also a part of the effort to promote rural tourism. Many of the participants saw their visit at the temple as a sample of Tibetan culture, but still engaged in religious practice as if in a Chinese Buddhist temple. This could mean the temple had a double meaning, simultaneously a representation of a different culture while also serving as a site for their own religious expression.

The original question was how a tourist experience a temple but the locale for the case study, Zhi Yun temple, might have influenced the findings, or so it appeared since most of the eight interviews revealed that the participants preferred this temple compared to their previous experience and/or had a stronger spiritual feeling compared to the temple in their hometown. This finding was discussed using Massey's (2005) theory of here and there, meaning that a singular experience is always based on previous experiences and expectations. The words describing the comparatively positive experience was an emotional experience, as in feeling good, comfortable, peaceful, feel the power of Buddha, etc. As Riis and Woodhead explains, these emotions are not only individually created but activated by how society endorses power to the cultural and religious tropes and symbols. So perhaps these findings can show that there are streams of religiousness underneath the surface in the general society, since the religious tropes and symbols can only be powered from the society they are found in.

This thesis also discussed the cultural differences between western Christian prayer and the prayer the participants had been inspired to do at Zhi Yun temple, since none of the

participants claimed they were Buddhist, but several mentioned they had prayed. The background for this might be that the act of praying has different connotations in China, perhaps because in a Christian context the prayer is made with having a fatherly figure in mind. Secondly, the background for not identifying as a Buddhist could be connected to an idea of needing to qualify as one in terms of having enough knowledge or commitment.

Another aspect of this thesis was to explore the useability of the concept Lived Religion in a non-Western context. What I found is that the inherent openness in Lived Religion towards religious experience was necessary when trying to see the fluent borders between tourism and personal experience in this setting. As in the case of understanding prayer without belief I found Ammerman perspective useful:

> *Equally sensibly, when the subject includes people of multiple religious traditions – or no religious affiliation – lived religion provides a way to make sense of religious life and spiritual practice without measuring participants against a Protestant definition that begins with belief (2016, p 87)*

In my experience, working with Lived Religion means clearing my view from looking for preconceived ideas about what and how religion should look like, and instead try to see how people make meaning from their own experiences.

Another important target is to secure validity and consider how the study's findings would be recognizable to the researched group. In this case, to be specific, the researched group would represent any Chinese tourist visiting a sacred Buddhist site in China. To say something general about such a large group would be over ambitious, although the participants did come from different areas in China. Instead, I hope that I have been able to give a peek through the window of a very big house and shed some light on what a tourist might experience when in a beautiful temple.

When exploring this theme, I found that using religious dances, myths, etc as part of the rural tourism market in China is an understudied area and how it would be interesting to know how this could influence ethnic identity and traditions in the future. Also, as I have described, Zhi Yun temple could be at a transitional point since it has recently been expanded to a much larger size, and as it is located in the near vicinity of such a popular area for tourism it could

be interesting to do a follow up later to see how the findings might differentiate when there are more tourists present daily.

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9 Attachments

9.1 Information letter for participants

9.1.1 In Chinese

您愿意参与我们的这个佛教与旅游研究项目吗？

这是一个请你参与我们研究项目的问题，该研究的目的是更多地了解中国佛教与旅游业之间的关系.在这封信中我们向您提供有关研究目的以及对您意味着什么的信息.

目的：

这些调查将用于硕士论文.该论文主要是关于旅游业是否有助于推动佛教发展的信息

谁负责研究项目

MF大学神学、宗教与社会学院负责该项目

为什么邀请你参加？

在我参观研究指云寺期间我拜访过这里的游客而你也是其中之一.我试图询问不同年龄和性别的人

参与研究对你意味着什么？

我有一个关于您对寺庙观感的简短采访，大约有 10 个问题您不必全部回答. 如果您对此感到满意并且同意我将进行录音并整理出来以电子方式存储这些资讯。我会给您我的电子邮件地址，以便您以后可以与我联系在必要时您可要求撤回访谈.

参加是自愿的

参与该项目是自愿的.如果您选择参与，您可以随时撤回对您的访谈无需给出任何理由.您的所有个人信息将被删除.如果您不想参加或以后选择退出不会对您产生任何负面影响.

您的隐私

-我们如何存储和使用您的信息

我们只会将有关您的信息用于我们在本文中描述的目的。我们会根据隐私法规对信息进行保密处理.

数据将存储在我的私人笔记本电脑上，只有我可以访问和编码。您将被匿名化，您的个人信息将被编纂不会用于其他项目.

当我们结束研究项目时您的信息会怎样？

根据2021年12月的计划，在项目完成/分配获得批准后，该信息将被匿名化并删除。

您的权利

只要您可以在数据材料中被识别，您就有权：

-访问已注册的关于您的个人信息，并接收该信息的副本.

-更正您的个人信息，

删除有关您的个人信息，以及

-向数据监察局投诉处理您的个人数据.

是什么赋予我们处理您的个人数据的权利？

我们会根据您的同意处理有关您的信息.

NSD - 挪威研究数据中心代表MF 大学科技与创新学院评估了该项目中个人数据的处理符合隐私法规。

我在哪里可以找到更多信息？

如果您对研究有任何疑问，或想行使您的权利，请联系位于 Marielle Stigum Gleiss 的 MF 大学学院 marielle.S.Gleiss@mf.no。我们的隐私代表：personvern@mf.no。

如果您对 NSD 对项目的评估有任何疑问，您可以通过电子邮件 (personverntjenester@nsd.no) 或电话联系：NSD-挪威研究数据中心AS：55582117。

最诚挚的问候

[redacted] /Marielle Stigum Gleiss（研究员/主管）

同意声明

我收到并了解了有关佛教和旅游项目的信息并有机会提出问题.我同意：

-□参加电话面试面试会被短时间保存.

9.1.2 In English

Do you wish to participate in the research project Buddhism and Tourism?

This is an invite for you to participate in a research project where the purpose is to understand more about the relationship between Buddhism and tourism in China. In this information letter, we would like to present you the information about the goals for the project and what participation will mean for you.

Purpose

The surveys will be used in a master's thesis. The thesis is mainly about whether Tourism can influence the interest in Buddhism in China.

Who is responsible for the research project?

MF University College of Theology, Religion and Society is responsible for the project.

Why are you asked to participate?

As part of my visits to Zhi Yun Temple, I have looked for tourists here, and by chance you are

one of them. I have tried to ask people of different ages and genders.

What does it mean for you to participate?

I have a short interview about your visit to the temple, approximately 10 questions, and you do not have to answer every one of them. If you feel comfortable, and give consent, I will take audio recordings, if not I will only take notes. I will later store these answers electronically and privately. I also want to give you my email address so that you later can contact me and if necessary to withdraw consent.

It is voluntary to participate

It is voluntary to participate in the project. If you choose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving any reason. All your personal information will then be deleted. There will be no negative consequences for you if you do not want to participate or later choose to withdraw.

Your privacy - how we store and use your information

We will only use the information about you for the purposes we have described in this article. We treat the information is confidential and in accordance with the privacy regulations. The data will be stored on my private laptop to which only I have access and code. You will stay anonymized, and your personal information will be codified and will not be used for other projects.

What happens to your information when we end the research project?

The information is anonymised and deleted when the project is completed / the assignment is approved, which is according to plan by December 2021.

Your rights

As long as you can be identified in the data material, you have the right to:

- Access to which personal information is registered about you, and to receive a copy of

the information.

- To have personal information about you corrected,

- To have personal information about you deleted, and to send a complaint to the Data Inspectorate about the processing of your personal data.

What entitles us to process personal information about you?

We process information about you based on your consent.

On behalf of MF University College of Science, NSD - Norwegian Center for Research Data AS considered that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with privacy regulations.

Where can I find out more?

If you have questions about the study, or want to exercise your rights, get in touch with MF University College of Science at Marielle Stigum Gleiss marielle.S.Gleiss@mf.no.

Our privacy ombud: personvern@mf.no.

If you have questions related to NSD's assessment of the project, you can contact:

NSD - Norwegian Center for Research Data AS by email (personverntjenester@nsd.no) or at

phone: 55 58 21 17.

With best regards

[redacted] / Marielle Stigum Gleiss (Researcher / supervisor)

9.2 Interview Guide

1. How did you know about this place? How long will you stay in Lijiang? First time here? First in a Buddhist temple? If so, any differences to here? Did you travel alone? Did you take pictures? Of what? Posted on WeChat or other media? Did you see photos of this place or similar on WeChat, weibo or somewhere similar before?

2. What was your expectations, and first impression? How would you describe the atmosphere? Buildings? Do you ever go to a temple in your hometown?

3. What did you do while you were here? Did you notice what the other guests do? What is the most important thing to do when visiting a temple? Why is it important? What is customary to do in a Buddhist temple?

1. If at times you are not happy, does it ever happen that you go to a

temple? If you do, what do you do in the temple then? Did going to the temple lift your spirit?

2. If you don't, what do you think is a good way to lift your spirits?

3. Is there any special reason for why you want to visit today? What will you remember the most about this place?

4. Do you think a temple should be quiet? Why? Do you enjoy silence?

Age and profession.

9.3 - Approval letter from NSD (anonymised)

NSD sin vurdering

Skriv ut

Prosjekttittel
Buddhisme og turisme i Kina

Referansenummer
871221

Registrert
02.12.2020 [redacted]

Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon
MF vitenskapelig høyskole for teologi, religion og samfunn

Prosjektansvarlig (vitenskapelig ansatt/veileder eller stipendiat)
Marielle Stigum Gleiss, Marielle.S.Gleiss@mf.no, tlf: 22590605

Type prosjekt
Studentprosjekt, masterstudium

Kontaktinformasjon, st[redacted]
[redacted]

Prosjektperiode
01.01.2021 - 01.12.2021

Status
02.03.2021 - Vurdert

Vurdering (1)

02.03.2021 - Vurdert
Det er vår vurdering at behandlingen vil være i samsvar med personvernlovgivningen, så fremt den gjennomføres i tråd med det som er dokumentert i meldeskjemaet den 02.03.2021 med vedlegg, samt i meldingsdialogen mellom innmelder og NSD. Behandlingen kan starte.

MELD VESENTLIGE ENDRINGER
Dersom det skjer vesentlige endringer i behandlingen av personopplysninger, kan det være nødvendig å melde dette til NSD ved å oppdatere meldeskjemaet. Før du melder inn en endring, oppfordrer vi deg til å lese om hvilke type endringer det er nødvendig å melde: https://www.nsd.no/personverntjenester/fylle-ut-meldeskjema-for-personopplysninger/melde-endringer-i-meldeskjema. Du må vente på svar fra NSD før endringen gjennomføres.

TYPE OPPLYSNINGER OG VARIGHET
Prosjektet vil behandle alminnelige personopplysninger, særlige kategorier av personopplysninger om religion frem til 01.12.2021.

LOVLIG GRUNNLAG
Prosjektet vil innhente samtykke fra de registrerte til behandlingen av personopplysninger. Vår vurdering er at prosjektet legger opp til et samtykke i samsvar med kravene i art. 4 nr. 11 og 7, ved at det er en frivillig, spesifikk, informert og utvetydig bekreftelse, som kan dokumenteres, og som den registrerte kan trekke tilbake.

For alminnelige personopplysninger vil lovlig grunnlag for behandlingen være den registrertes samtykke, jf. personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 a.

For særlige kategorier av personopplysninger vil lovlig grunnlag for behandlingen være den registrertes uttrykkelige samtykke, jf. personvernforordningen art. 9 nr. 2 bokstav a, jf. personopplysningsloven § 10, jf. § 9 (2).

PERSONVERNPRINSIPPER
NSD vurderer at den planlagte behandlingen av personopplysninger vil følge prinsippene i personvernforordningen:

- om lovlighet, rettferdighet og åpenhet (art. 5.1 a), ved at de registrerte får tilfredsstillende informasjon om og samtykker til behandlingen
- formålsbegrensning (art. 5.1 b), ved at personopplysninger samles inn for spesifikke, uttrykkelig angitte og berettigede formål, og ikke viderebehandles til nye uforenlige formål
- dataminimering (art. 5.1 c), ved at det kun behandles opplysninger som er adekvate, relevante og nødvendige for formålet med prosjektet
- lagringsbegrensning (art. 5.1 e), ved at personopplysningene ikke lagres lengre enn nødvendig for å oppfylle formålet.

DE REGISTRERTES RETTIGHETER
NSD vurderer at informasjonen om behandlingen som de registrerte vil motta oppfyller lovens krav til form og innhold, jf. art. 12.1 og art. 13.

Så lenge de registrerte kan identifiseres i datamaterialet vil de ha følgende rettigheter: innsyn (art. 15), retting (art. 16), sletting (art. 17), begrensning (art. 18) og dataportabilitet (art. 20).

Vi minner om at hvis en registrert tar kontakt om sine rettigheter, har behandlingsansvarlig institusjon plikt til å svare innen en måned.

FØLG DIN INSTITUSJONS RETNINGSLINJER
NSD legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene i personvernforordningen om riktighet (art. 5.1 d), integritet og konfidensialitet (art. 5.1. f) og sikkerhet (art. 32).

For å forsikre dere om at kravene oppfylles, må prosjektansvarlig følge interne retningslinjer/rådføre dere med behandlingsansvarlig institusjon.

OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET
NSD vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet.

Lykke til med prosjektet!

Kontaktperson hos NSD: Silje Fjelberg Opsvik
Tlf. Personverntjenester: 55 58 21 17 (tast 1)