



**HAL**  
open science

# The heritagisation of rituals: commodification and transmission. A case study of Nianli Festival in Zhanjiang, China

Shanshan Zheng

► **To cite this version:**

Shanshan Zheng. The heritagisation of rituals: commodification and transmission. A case study of Nianli Festival in Zhanjiang, China. *Études mongoles et sibériennes, centrasiatiques et tibétaines*, 2023, 54, 10.4000/emscat.6109 . hal-04572521

**HAL Id: hal-04572521**

**<https://hal.science/hal-04572521>**

Submitted on 15 May 2024

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

**The heritagisation of rituals: commodification and transmission.  
A case study of Nianli Festival in Zhanjiang, China**  
(Dernier document avant publication)

Zheng, Shanshan. 2023. « The heritagisation of rituals : commodification and transmission. A case study of Nianli Festival in Zhanjiang, China ». *Études mongoles et sibériennes, centrasiatiques et tibétaines*54. [En ligne], 6<sup>th</sup> June 2023, URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/emscat/6109>.

### **Abstract**

This article inquiries into the effects of heritagisation on popular religious practices in Guangdong Province, People's Republic of China. With the establishment of the intangible cultural heritage (ICH) inventory system in China, numerous popular religious practices, such as procession of local deities, ancestor worship, temple festivals, exorcisms, divination, and spirit mediumship, are free of the stigma of "feudal superstition" and are now recognised as ICH. Based on the fieldwork conducted in the prefecture city of Zhanjiang (Guangdong Province, China) on the local festival tradition of Nianli, I examine how local communities respond to the Party- state's efforts to safeguard ICH through two processes: the commodification and the transmission of ritual practice. How does the heritage-making process affect the commodification of ritual practice? And what impact has the participation of a plurality of new actors in ICH transmission had on the methods of transmission of local ritual knowledge?

**Keywords:** heritagisation, commodification, transmission, folk religion, Zhanjiang

### **Résumé**

Cet article interroge les effets de la patrimonialisation sur des pratiques religieuses populaires dans la province du Guangdong en République populaire de Chine. Avec l'établissement du système d'inventaire du patrimoine culturel immatériel (PCI) en Chine, de nombreuses pratiques religieuses populaires, telles que la procession des divinités locales, le culte des ancêtres, la fête du temple, l'exorcisme, la divination ou le médiumnisme, ne sont plus catégorisées comme « superstition féodale » et sont désormais reconnues comme PCI. En m'appuyant sur un travail de terrain mené dans la préfecture de Zhanjiang (province du Guangdong, Chine) autour de la tradition de la fête locale Nianli, j'examine comment les communautés locales répondent aux efforts du parti-État pour la sauvegarde du PCI, à travers deux processus que sont la marchandisation et la transmission de la pratique rituelle. Je répondrai à deux questions : comment la patrimonialisation affecte-t-elle la marchandisation de la pratique rituelle ? Quel est l'impact de la participation d'une pluralité de nouveaux acteurs sur les transmissions rituelles locales ?

**Mots-clés:** patrimonialisation, marchandisation, transmission, religion populaire, Zhanjiang

Among the advertisements welcoming travellers at Zhanjiang's airport since 2018, one stands out for its privileged location, next to the tourist office desk. On it is written: "Intangible cultural heritage and Nianli cultural festival in West Guangdong<sup>1</sup>: go to Dinglong Bay<sup>2</sup>, celebrate Nianli from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the first lunar month". What is Nianli? In Chinese, the term "nianli 年例" could be translated literally as "annual custom". This festival tradition is composed of various communal rituals from different localities (mainly in Zhanjiang and Maoming) on the Leizhou Peninsula. The marketing message not only mirrors a nationwide fad for intangible cultural heritage pursued by different social actors for various ends, but also implies the transformations of a local festival tradition fuelled by what Chinese scholars argue to be a far-reaching "heritage" (Peng 2008)/"social movement" (Gao *et al.* 2017).

As a signatory of the UNESCO *Convention for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage* (UNESCO 2003) since 2004, China has established a domestic four-level inventory system based on existing administrative subdivisions (at the national, provincial, municipal and county levels) aiming at safeguarding "intangible cultural heritage" (hereinafter: ICH, Ch. *feiwuzhi wenhua yichan* 非物质文化遗产). It comprises two lists at each level: ICH practices and "ICH inheritors" (*feiyi chuancheng ren* 非遗传承人)<sup>3</sup>. During the heritagisation process, numerous popular religious practices, such as processions of local deities, ancestor worships, temple festivals, exorcisms, divinations, and spirit mediumships, are free of the stigma of "feudal superstition" (*fengjian mixin* 封建迷信) and are now recognised as ICH. These practices have undergone phases of radical suppressions since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and varying degrees of revivals and reinventions since the 1980s following the economic reforms and a certain degree of political relaxation (Chau 2011; Dean 1995; Feuchtwang 1992; Gao 2000; Goossaert & Palmer 2011; Lagerwey 2010; Overmyer 2001; Siu 1989, 1990; Wang 2000). Then, the latest ICH projects pose new challenges to the identification of popular religious traditions among different social actors (Chen 2015; Gao 2007; Gros 2012; Wu 2009; You 2020; Zheng 2017), such as local cultural administrations, lineage/temple associations, and practitioners.

This article seeks to inquire into the effects of heritagisation on popular religious practices by asking: what are the social mechanisms that may enable these changes? How do the local communities respond to the challenges posed by this process? This field research was carried out annually in the prefecture city of Zhanjiang on Leizhou Peninsula from 2015 to 2019 during Nianli festivals. First-hand field data were collected from participant observation and interviews with different local actors, mainly in twenty-two villages under the jurisdiction of Zhanjiang. Meanwhile, local source materials, including gazetteers, newspapers, unpublished village and

---

<sup>1</sup> West Guangdong is known as a regional economic term that refers to one of the four major economic regions within Guangdong Province. The other three are the Pearl River Delta, East Guangdong, and North Guangdong. Administratively, West Guangdong is composed of three prefecture-level cities: Zhanjiang, Maoming and Yangjiang.

<sup>2</sup> Dinglong Bay is an ocean resort opened in 2018, located in the district-level city of Wuchuan.

<sup>3</sup> See the State Council (2005).

temple records, genealogies and liturgical manuscripts, were also gathered. Among these localities, Jiuxian 旧县 Village and Dongshanxu 东山圩 Village have been designated respectively as representative communities for two ICH items – the *nuo* 雩 dances of Zhanjiang and the dragon dance of Zhanjiang, registered in 2008 and in 2006 respectively by different levels of cultural administrations. These two practices, along with Zhanjiang's other ninety-nine ICH items (up to 2021), have long been essential components of Nianli tradition.

If the practices identified as ICH are seen as a social (Gao *et al.* 2017), political (Bodolec & Obringer 2020), cultural (Bodolec 2014; Demgenski 2020; Le Mentec & Zhang 2017; Zhang 2020) and economic (Maags 2021) resources for various ends, what has been propelled by the Party-state's efforts for ICH safeguarding is not a single top-down trajectory, but a multi-thread process that can be expressed as an interplay of different national policies in cultural, heritage and religious regimes. The involvement of Nianli in such multiple trajectories has a direct impact mainly on two processes that have occurred within local communities –commodification and transmission of ritual practices.

Some scholars argue that the market can play a significant role in ICH safeguarding notably for those practices that have an intrinsic commercial dimension, such as food- related ICH (Bortolotto & Ubertazzi 2018) or traditional handicraft (Maags 2021). If the ritual services can already be seen as resources with a high degree of commodification in present-day China (Chau 2011), how does heritagisation affect ritual practices' commodification and what are the responses from local communities? Meanwhile, built on four ICH transmission patterns elaborated by Liu (2006) (namely “collective transmission”, “family/lineage transmission”, “social transmission” and “divine transmission”), I attempt to discuss the effect of heritagisation on the classic master- apprentice ritual transmission method (Homola 2013; Névot 2013). According to Grenet & Hottin (2011) and Maguet (2011), ICH safeguarding measures can facilitate the transfer of local practices from an intimate space to a hyper-visible arena. As a result, a plurality of new actors participates in their transmitting activities (Berliner 2010; Bortolotto 2011; Givre& Regnault 2015; Tornatore 2010). Does this imply some variation in the transmission patterns for such ritual knowledge?

In the following parts, I will first examine the transformations of Nianli rituals in Zhanjiang. I will then provide a comparative analysis of two local dances' heritagisation trajectories. Before my conclusion, I will discuss how local communities respond to the Party-state's efforts for ICH safeguarding through the study of two processes: the commodification and the transmission of ritual practice.

### **A recomposed Nianli tradition**

A few ethnographic works (He 2011; Jiang & Lü 2008; Zhou & Pan 2008a, 2008b) have described the contemporary structural features of Nianli rituals in some localities that are scattered over Zhanjiang's neighbouring city of Maoming. These works define Nianli as one of the most significant deity worship activities staged around the fifteenth day of the first lunar month (He 2011), or as communal rituals structured by the worship of ancestors and local deities, integrating entertainments and feasts (Jiang & Lü 2008; Zhou & Pan 2008a, 2008b). The previous findings provide a glimpse of the polymorphic characteristics of this local ritual tradition, which are consistent with some of my observations in Zhanjiang. I will now trace various transformations of Zhanjiang's Nianli tradition through fragmentary historical materials

and ethnographic data, gathered mainly in two villages – Dongshanxu and Jiuxian – to further understand this local ritual tradition in its current social, cultural, and religious context.

In the earliest known official record using the term, the local gazetteers from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, “Nianli” was referred to specifically as the procession of “*nuo*” 傩. The latter was defined as a New Lunar Year custom which aimed “to expel evil spirits and pestilence from door to door in a rural area”<sup>4</sup>. This ritual was particularly performed in certain localities: Gaozhou, Wuchuan and Maoming. Although other localities’ local gazetteers compiled in the same period had also documented this ritual tradition, the expression “*nianli*” was not used to refer to it. From this period until the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), it is difficult to trace the use of “*nianli*” in official documents due to the lack of local historical data. The term sporadically reappeared only in a handful of articles published in the local newspaper, *Zhanjiang ribao* (“Zhanjiang daily”), in the 1970s, and it became synonymous with “feudal superstitions” and “old customs” (*jiuxi* 旧习), without referring to any specific localities. It seems that in this period, in official discourse, “Nianli” had been employed as a generic category to describe various local communal rituals. In the “Cultural gazetteer of Zhanjiang” compiled and published by the local cultural administration in 1995, “Nianli” was mentioned as a “representative mass cultural activity (*qunzhong wenhua huodong* 群众文化活动) that had long prevailed before 1949. It could be preserved as a local cultural tradition only if we discard its dross and keep its essence”<sup>5</sup>. Overall, based on these limited documentary materials, it is unclear as to when the meaning of the term “*nianli*” was transformed from a New Lunar Year custom from certain localities into a category of festivities for integrating a variety of local festive occasions in Zhanjiang. Nevertheless, long-term ethnographic research can provide an insight into local actors’ interpretations of a changing Nianli.

During my stay in Zhanjiang, I found that in parallel with the generic term “*nianli*”, a cluster of expressions such as “deity’s birthday” (*shendan* 神诞), “lantern festival” (*yuanxiao* 元宵), “temple fair” (*miaohui* 庙会) or “procession of gods” (*youshen* 游神) were also in use within the villages to refer to this very occasion. Goossaert (2000) has noted that religious life is based on a liturgical calendar that is specific to each locality or group. Between 2012 and 2019, on the news website for both “Zhanjiang daily” and “Zhanjiang evening news” website<sup>6</sup>, we found a summary of “Zhanjiang’s Nianli calendar”. It lists the dates of the Nianli festival in 262 villages in the Chinese lunar calendar, from the first day of the first lunar month to the ninth day of the twelfth lunar month. It shows a considerable variety of the Nianli’s traditions that exist in Zhanjiang. According to my observations, even if two villages’ Nianli occur on the same date, this does not necessarily mean that they have the same meaning. Likewise, two localities celebrating their Nianli on different dates might not necessarily have different traditions. Thus, to understand how each locality interprets Nianli, an analysis of its date, meaning, ritual sequence and organisation is needed. Next, based on vernacular expressions and interpretations of Nianli in Dongshanxu Village and Jiuxian Village, I attempt to outline different ritual types of Nianli.

---

<sup>4</sup> See the “Gazetteer of Gaozhou” (Wang & Yu [1759] 2009), the “Gazetteer of Maoming” (Zheng & Xu [1888] 2009) and the “Gazetteer of Meilu” (Liang 1902). Gaozhou is a district-level city administered by Maoming; Wuchuan is a district-level city administered by Zhanjiang.

<sup>5</sup> See “Culture gazetteer of Zhanjiang (1995, p.124).

<sup>6</sup> The article had been published on this site in 2012 and could be accessed by the following link until 2019: <http://www.gdzdaily.com.cn/topic/2012nianli/> (accessed on 5 February 2016).

### *Nianli in Dongshanxu and Jiuxian villages*

Located only twenty kilometres apart, Dongshanxu Village and Jiuxian Village have a wide variety of natural geographic features, administrative subdivisions, forms of social organisation and ritual framework. The former village is located on Donghai Island, which falls administratively within Zhanjiang's economic and technological development zone. The latter is situated in the rural area of Mazhang District. According to the genealogy records of the major clans of the two villages and villagers' accounts, the histories of the two villages can be traced back as far as the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). The spoken language in both villages is the Leizhou dialect, which is an offshoot of the Min dialect originating from Fujian Province. As Freedman (1958, 1966) noted, there exists a considerable variation in the lineage-village organisation in Southeast and South China. Dongshanxu and Jiuxian represent two typical types: several lineages (including Wu, Wang, and Chen...) occupy Dongshanxu, and a single lineage (the Peng) spreads over a cluster of villages, including Jiuxian, and three other villages in the surrounding area. The difference in forms of social organisation leads to distinct power relationships in the two villages. In Dongshanxu, the temple-based committee of the temple of Emperor Kang (Kang huang 康皇) prevails over several lineage organisations in power, and is in charge of coordinating its Nianli, while in Jiuxian, ritual-related affairs are managed by the Peng's lineage association.

Dongshanxu's Nianli coincides with the "Lantern Festival" during the New Lunar Year period, on the sixteenth day of the first lunar month. I visited the village around this period in 2015 and 2017. The ritual sequence on that day is structured by the procession of the Emperor Kang and other local gods. In China, a procession of gods is a typical ritual form performed on the occasion of a deity's birthday. The god's statue is carried on a sedan chair borne by male villagers and taken around one's jurisdiction domain for the purpose of reconfirming one's authority and expelling the intruders (Goossaert 2000). I noted that inside the village, besides the "Lantern Festival" or "the sixteenth day of the first lunar month" (*zhengyue shiliu* 正月十六), the term "Dragon Dance Cultural Festival" (*renlongwu wenhua jie* 人龙舞文化节) has recently appeared to refer to this occasion. For instance, on the banner used in the procession, one can read the words "Celebrating the Lantern Festival and Dragon Dance Cultural Festival". Mention of the "Lantern Festival", or "the sixteenth day of the first lunar month" specifies the relevance of its Nianli to the New Lunar Year Festival tradition. On the contrary, the use of the term "Dragon Dance Festival" implies the immediate effect of the dragon dance's heritagiation on the village. Meanwhile, in the loose discussions with the villagers and between villagers that I overheard, the terms "Lantern Festival" and "*nianli*" appeared interchangeably. However, the term "Dragon Dance Cultural Festival" was rarely mentioned.

Jiuxian Village's Nianli is held from the twenty-fifth day to the twenty-seventh day of the third lunar month of each year, in honour of the birthday of the Great Emperor of the Eastern Peak (Dongyuedadi 东岳大帝). The three-day birthday celebrations are structured by the procession of the gods. However, during this procession, the statue of the Great Emperor of the Eastern Peak remains in the temple. Only the statues of his two subordinates, General Ban (Banshuai 班帅) and King Kang (Kangwang 康王), make a tour of inspection around the village and its surrounding area. According to the Holy Registration prepared by the local Daoist priest for this occasion, these two local gods are sent by the Great Emperor of the Eastern Peak to perform the procession. It is different from most processions performed in other villages on the Leizhou Peninsula (He 2014) and in the Southeast China area (Dean 1995). At the end of the last day, when the procession returns to the endpoint, the courtyard in front of the temple of the eastern

peak, the final ritual occurs. This ritual, called “passing the pavilion” (*guolou* 过楼), is considered as a test in front of the Great Emperor of the Eastern Peak, in order to examine the moral conduct of the main members of the Peng lineage in the past year.

This temporary wooden pavilion was built by the villagers. During the ritual, the statue of the Great Emperor of the Eastern Peak is taken out from the temple and placed on the pavilion behind the three Daoist priests who perform the ritual. A Daoist priest calls each member’s name and uses the result from “casting divination blocks” (*paobei* 抛杯) to decide if one has had good moral conduct<sup>7</sup>. Only those who receive a “yes” answer are considered to have passed the god’s test, and then are eligible to cross the bottom of the stage, which is built on stilts. Once the last person has crossed the stage, the annual festival comes to a close.

During my stay in Jiuxian Village in 2017 and 2018, on the days of Nianli, a red paper bearing the words “deity’s birthday” was hung at the main entrance of the village. At the same time, the word “*nianli*” was used on the bulletin in red paper posted on the wall of the ancestral hall to announce villagers’ contributions to the rituals. The younger villagers used these two expressions (deity’s birthday/Nianli) interchangeably to refer to Nianli. The senior villagers, and those eligible to participate in the ritual of “passing the pavilion”, preferred for their part to use the expression “pay respects to the deity” (*chaobai* 朝拜). This expression is also used in the “Book of Chaobai” (*chaobai bu* 朝拜簿)<sup>8</sup> compiled by the Peng lineage’s organisation. This book registers the members of the Peng who obligatorily participate in the procession of the gods, and the “pass the pavilion” test.

Dean (1995) has pointed out that China’s liturgical framework generates a complex process model of spiritual power in a multifaceted interaction with local systems of power. Most of the existing studies on social organisation, festivals and rituals frameworks in local society in South China (*huanan* 华南) have centred on the geographic areas around the Pearl River Delta (Faure 2007; Freedman 1958, [1966] 1971; Siu 1989). In comparison, the regional subcultures marked by differences of dialects and local festival traditions in Zhanjiang remain largely unexplored. By attempting to understand the relationship between social organisation and ritual framework in local Zhanjiang society through Nianli, a variety of ritual frameworks can be observed across localities. This reflects different types of power relationships between the central state and the local states, between the local states and the local communities, and between the social actors within the local community. All of these elements have contributed to recompose a contemporary Nianli in plurality.

Since 2006, various popular religious practices associated with Nianli have been recognised as ICH. Meanwhile, Maoming and Wuchuan’s Nianli festivals have also been inscribed on Guangdong province’s ICH list in 2012 and in 2013 respectively. One can see that a cluster of new expressions has been created by local administrations to address Nianli celebrations, such as “Nianli Cultural Festival”, “Nianli Folk Tourism Cultural Festival”, and more recently, “ICH

---

<sup>7</sup> For the divination practices in different localities in China, see Dean (1995), Goossaert (2000) and Chau (2006). *Paobei* (“casting divination blocks”) is performed by throwing a pair of moon-shaped wooden blocks to seek the guidance of the deities in the form of a yes-or-no question. Each block is round on one side and flat on the other. If the blocks drop to the floor with one block flat and the other round, this indicates a “yes” answer.

<sup>8</sup> The *Book of Chaobai* is a handwriting booklet that lists the members’ names of the Peng who are eligible to participate in the “passing the pavilion” ritual. The latest edition was compiled in 2005 by the village’s leading Daoist priest.

and Nianli Cultural Festival”. In the next section, I will discuss the effects of two dances’ heritagisation on their Nianli traditions.

### **The heritagisation of two dances and the dislocation of rituals**

Among a total of nine items inscribed on the national ICH list that Zhanjiang possesses (up to 2021), “the dragon dance of Zhanjiang” (inscribed in 2006) and “the *nuo* dances of Zhanjiang” (inscribed in 2008) are the earliest practices identified as ICH. The former director of Zhanjiang’s ICH safeguarding centre<sup>9</sup>, who participated in the preparations of the two dances’ application files, attributed these successes to the prior identification of the dances as national folk dances in the 1980s. Indeed, these two dances have been included in the “Compilation of Chinese ethnic folk dances – Guangdong volume” (Liang 1996)<sup>10</sup>. Based on my ethnographic observation of the rituals in Dongshanxu Village and Jiuxian Village, I intend to delineate how the two dances are respectively embedded in their ritual frameworks, and how they are involved in the heritagisation process.

#### *The dragon dance of Zhanjiang*

During Dongshanxu Village’s Nianli, the performance of the dragon dance runs through the procession of the gods. All the members of the dragon dance troupe stand at the head section of the procession. They hold a banner that reads “Zhanjiang’s dragon dance: inscribed in the first batch of the national list of ICH” in Chinese and in English. This banner was made in 2010 especially for the occasion of the opening ceremony of the “Guangdong Week” during Shanghai’s World Expo, when the dance was performed by the village dancers, and has been used by the villagers during Nianli processions ever since. Throughout the parade, the dance is usually performed in front of the village market and at the end of the procession in front of the temple, followed by the final worship sequence, “rolling on the bed of thorns” (*fanjichuang* 翻棘床).

Dragon dance, as a popular dance form, prevails all around China. It is often associated with the Chinese New Year’s tradition. In Dongshanxu, besides the “Lantern/Nianli Festival”, the dance is also performed during the Mid-autumn Festival (the fifteenth day of the eighth month)<sup>11</sup>. According to the former dance troupe leader Wu (born in 1961)<sup>12</sup>, a legend dates the origin of the dance to the late Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). The legend says that the villagers choreographed the dance to boost the troops’ morale when the Ming army was defeated by the Qing (1644-1912) and retreated to Donghai Island on the day of the Mid-autumn Festival. Wu

---

<sup>9</sup> Zhanjiang’s ICH Safeguarding Center, as a subordinate unit of the Bureau of Culture, is in charge of the research, safeguarding, transmission and promotion of Zhanjiang’s ICH. For an understanding of China’s ICH administration, see Bodolec & Obringer (2020).

<sup>10</sup> The national investigation into Chinese folk literature and art was initiated by the Ministry of Culture, the State Ethnic Affairs Commission and the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles in the late 1970s. It lasted for over thirty years. Until 2009, “Ten compilations of Chinese national folk literature and art” (*Zhongguo minzu minjian shibu wenyi jicheng zhishu* 中国民族民间十部文艺集成志书) comprising two hundred and eighty-nine volumes have been published. For the state’s efforts to identify and document folk culture practices that were antecedent to ICH projects, see Durand-Dastès (2014) and Bodolec & Obringer (2020).

<sup>11</sup> This national traditional festival is also known as the Moon Festival and is celebrated on the fifteenth day of the eighth month throughout China.

<sup>12</sup> The interview was conducted on 6 March 2015 in front of his house, Dongshanxu Village.



and other members of the temple committee did not have a clear idea of when the dragon dance was first performed during Nianli. This dance had only been mentioned in the “Gazetteers of Haikang” (Liang & Chen 1938) as a mass recreational activity during the festive procession. Then, when it was inventoried by “The compilation of Chinese ethnic folk dances – Guangdong volume” in the 1990s, its association with local rituals was weakened, while its peculiar technique was stressed.

Most Chinese dragon dances included in the ICH inventory are performed by a team of dancers who manipulate a long flexible figure of a dragon using poles. Distinguished from this structure, the “dragon” in Dongshanxu Village is entirely made of the bodies of dancers. One man carrying three boys forms the head of the “dragon”. The first boy, hanging opposite this man’s chest represents the tongue; the second, straddling his shoulders, represents the horn, and the third, also straddling his shoulders, has his body tilted back. The latter leans on the shoulders of the second man in line to compose the first joint of the dragon’s body, and so on until the tail. Thus, a successful performance of the dance requires a high level of technique and cooperation from all the dancers.

The last sequence of the Nianli, “rolling on the bed of thorns”, is performed by the shirtless young volunteer villagers. They roll on a table (about ten-meter long) on which bunches of thorn branches are spread out. Sometimes, spurred on by the fervent atmosphere of this scene, young spectators might also be encouraged to dabble in this practice. At this very moment and place, they believe that their gods are present to protect them from any injury. When all the practitioners arrive at the end of the table safe and sound, the villagers scramble for a branch of thorn, which symbolises the gods’ blessing. This gesture heralds the end of the Nianli celebration. In point of fact, this final sequence, as a religious practice of spirit mediumship, was completely ignored in the repertoire of folk culture in the 1990s. With the introduction of the ICH category, it was identified as Zhanjiang’s ICH in 2009. This could be seen not only as an effort by the local community to revive a local tradition, but also, to a certain extent, as a reconciliation between the Party-state and local society towards the issue of popular religion.

### *The nuo dances of Zhanjiang*

The relationship between the dance of *nuo* and the Nianli in Jiuxian Village will narrate a different story. Originally, the *nuo* was a ritual performed by dancers wearing masks with the purpose of expelling pestilential spirits. It was mentioned in several Chinese classics (*lishi dianji* 历史典籍) as early as the Zhou dynasty (ca 1100-256 BC). There were two forms of *nuo*: the “great *nuo*”, and its popular aspect (Granet 1926). The “great *nuo*” has now disappeared. It was performed in the official rite three times a year in the imperial palace. Its popular aspect, which is still performed within local festivals during New Year celebrations period, is widespread in different localities in China (Hirota 2005; Wang [1989] 2014). In today’s popular religious landscape, there exists different forms of *nuo* ritual depending on each locality’s tradition. For instance, the *nuo* in the form of dance prevails in some parts of the Shanxi, Anhui, Fujian, Guangdong, and Gansu provinces. It is performed by dancers wearing masks to embody the local deities. Meanwhile, in other provinces, such as Guizhou, Hebei, Hunan, Jiangxi (Hirota 2005) and Yunnan, the *nuo* rituals are manifested in the form of “*nuo* theatre” (*nuoxi* 傩戏) (Beaud 2012, 2015).

In Jiuxian Village, the festival related to the *nuo* rituals is the Lantern Festival on the fifteenth day of the first lunar month. In 2017 and 2018, I observed that the rituals consisted of a series of sequences: “invitation of the gods” (*qingshen* 请神), “procession of *nuo*”, “revelation of the

gods” (*xianling* 显灵), and “sending calamities away” (*qianzai* 遣灾). The *nuo* dance is performed in each sequence by five dancers wearing masks and holding ritual instruments to embody different local deities. The highlight of the rituals is the “revelation of the gods”, following the *nuo* dance. This section, consisting of “rolling on the bed of thorns” and “arrow piercing” (*chuanlingjian* 穿令箭), is performed by the mediums in the village. Similar to the dragon dance in Dongshanxu Village, the mask dance in Jiuxian Village has also been included in “The compilation of Chinese national folk dances”, with the denomination “examining the soldiers” (*kaobing* 考兵), under the category of *nuo* dances.

Then, with the successful inscription in 2008 of “*nuo* dances of Zhanjiang” as ICH in the national-level inventory in 2008, *kaobing* along with three other genres of mask dances<sup>13</sup> from different localities were combined as one item by local ICH experts during the ICH application process, even though they represent different religious traditions, distinguished by characteristics such as their ritual sequence, concerned deities and event dates. One of the immediate consequences of this administrative operation lies in the lexicalisation of *nuo* at a local level. As noted by Beaud (2012), the term *nuo* has been lexicalised to become a generic category and this terminology has been adopted in order to facilitate the heritagisation of masked ritual practices. This explains why, in Jiuxian Village, the vernacular expression “*kaobing*” is barely employed. Besides the modification of the appellation of mask dance, Jiuxian’s Nianli programme has also been rearranged.

In 2015, when I firstly met the former director of Zhanjiang’s ICH safeguarding centre, he introduced to me Jiuxian’s “Nuo Cultural Festival”, which was held on the twenty-seventh day of the third month (the last day of the three-day celebration of Nianli) in 2013. The idea was to insert an “ICH demonstration” programme on the last day of Nianli, during which all the dancers of four genres’ of *nuo* dances and two practitioners of “rolling on the bed of thorns” and “arrow piercing” were invited to perform. One of my informants from Jiuxian Village is a retired headmaster of a local elementary school, who was in his eighties in 2018. As one of the principal members of the Peng’s lineage organisation and the author of a village gazetteer (unpublished), he is familiar with Jiuxian’s festival tradition. He verified that in Jiuxian, the dances performed by five dancers wearing masks should take place only on the fifteenth day of the first lunar month (the Lantern Festival), rather than on any day of Nianli. Apparently, this short-lived rearrangement of the ICH programme (which existed from 2013 to 2016) was considered as an effective strategy to display the local state’s effort for ICH safeguarding. Also because of this, the *nuo* dances and Jiuxian’s Nianli have gained unprecedented attention from local media, scholars, and the tourists from other areas in Guangdong Province.

Nevertheless, it has caused the dislocation of some sequences. The practices of “rolling on the bed of thorn” and “arrow piercing”, as part of the sequence of “revelation of the gods” in the Lantern Festival rituals, needed to be performed at the exact moment and at the right location depending on the result of “casting the divination blocks”<sup>14</sup>. Chau (2006) has noted that the result of the divination might show a miraculous response from the deity when one requests for divine assistance. As observed in Zhanjiang, the practitioners and villagers believe in the magical effects granted by divine power. The newly inserted ICH programme may disrupt the modality of interaction that had long been established between villagers and the deities. But how could this still happen? I argue that it might be a result of the negotiation between the local

---

<sup>13</sup> They are the “dance of two generals” (*wuerzhen* 舞二真) and the “dance of six generals” (*wuliujiang* 舞六将) in Wuchuan, and the “marching generals” (*zouqingjiang* 走清将) in the Leizhou city area.

<sup>14</sup> See note 7.

state and the community. The current village leader holds several posts within the village. As well as being the head of the village committee, he is also a Daoist priest and one of the leaders in the Peng's lineage organisation. He is in charge of performing the major rituals in both the Lantern Festival and Nianli. As both a representative of the local state and a ritual specialist, he acts as an agent in two different arenas at the same time – political (between the local state and villagers) and religious (between local deities and villagers). Under the mediation effort he led, a special version of Nianli was made up: the ICH programme, which has composed a “cultural festival”, has demonstrated the achievement of the local states in safeguarding and promoting ICH. Meanwhile, it did not interfere seriously with the Nianli's original agenda. It was arranged to occur precisely between two o'clock and four o'clock in the afternoon on the last day of Nianli, during which the procession was still going on, and when the courtyard in front of the village temple was also available to serve as the venue for the ICH demonstration. A practitioner of “arrow piercing” explained to me that this kind of arrangement is acceptable. At least, by performing it in front of the village temple, he felt that he was still under the gods' protection.

The case studies on two villages' ICH items and ritual traditions display their different trajectories during and following heritagisation. Jiuxian is not the only village that has infused its Nianli with a “cultural festival” decor since its heritagisation. Dongshanxu has done so as well, but to a different extent. In the latter village, it is mostly changes in form that are evident, such as Nianli's appellation on the village's bulletin or dancers' costumes. Going further, I next discuss the changes of popular religious practice prompted by heritagisation in a broader context of national policies.

### **The commodification and the transmission of ritual- related ICH practices**

Some Chinese scholars argue that ICH safeguarding is not just a national cultural project, but also a heritage/social movement which has drawn wide social participation (Gao *et al.* 2017; Peng 2008). The practices identified as ICH are seen as a social, political, cultural and economic resource by different social actors for various ends. I argue that what has been propelled by the establishment of the ICH institution is not a single top- down trajectory, but a multi-thread process that can be expressed as an interplay of the implementation of different states' policies at each level. In this section, I will concentrate on different local actors' efforts in commodifying ritual-related ICH practices, and on the participation of new actors in transmission activities.

#### *Different commodifying trajectories of ICH practices*

Tourism is often seen as a commodifying agent for religious heritage, including sites and practices (Olsen 2003). In Zhanjiang, it seems that the commodification of local cultural resources for tourist consumption has occurred in an indirect way. Such attempts can be traced back to the 1980s, when several local temples obtained the label of “important protected units of historical monuments” (*zhongdian wenzu baohu danwei* 重点文物保护单位)<sup>15</sup>. In the same period, as China became a signatory of the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage of the UNESCO, tourist attractions bearing the World Heritage emblem were considered as stimulating local economic growth. The enthusiasm for listing World Heritage sites has also spread over Zhanjiang. However, it seems that this port city has, so far, had no luck in its attempts to obtain a UNESCO label. Domestically, Zhanjiang's cultural

---

<sup>15</sup> See the State Council (1961).

and natural resources still seem insufficient to provide the same inbound tourism as other Guangdong Province cities. How does the local tourist office react towards the increasing number of ICH practices related to Nianli?

During 2015 and 2016, the prefecture-level tourist office's attitude towards the commodification of Nianli was still ambiguous. Its employees are mainly natives from the Leizhou Peninsula. They declined my request for a formal interview on this issue. Through a loose discussion with an employee who was originally from Zhanjiang, I noticed that some arguments had started within the office. He recounted to me that he had witnessed a bloody "arrow piercing" accident during a resort inauguration ceremony. He supposed that this might have been caused by the dislocated timing and location of the practice. This story may explain employees' concerns over commodifying Nianli for tourist consumption. Besides the visible danger of the practice, it seems that they fear that the commodification of the ritual practice will weaken its sacredness and efficacy, and even lose its deeper meanings as a social/ religious practice. Similar concerns are also raised among its practitioners. In 2017, I met one such practitioners in another village. He said that he wished that "arrow piercing" had not been recognised as ICH, because then he would not have to perform it outside of the village. Until 2018, several ritual-related ICH items appeared on the front page of the website of Zhanjiang's tourist office as the most recommended itinerary. Compared with the prefecture-level tourist office, the tourism administration at district level adopts a proactive attitude on this issue.

The tourist office in Donghan Island has undertaken a specific destination promotion plan with Nianli and the dragon dance. On the day of Nianli in 2017, a one-day FAM trip<sup>16</sup> was organised to invite travel agents and KOLs<sup>17</sup> to experience this festival. According to their itinerary, the highlights of the trip were to watch the dragon dance, "rolling on the bed of thorns" and "arrow piercing", followed by a seafood feast at villagers' houses. In this instance, the local tourist office's promotion plan did not interfere in the original Nianli agenda. It did not demand that the villagers make any specific arrangements to meet visitors' expectations. Even the dining experience at the villagers' homes was not a staged programme. It has been a part of Nianli tradition to invite the passers-by, even strangers, to the feast to show local people's hospitality.

At the current stage, the two levels of tourist offices manifest differing degrees of prudence on the issue of commodifying ritual-related ICH practices. It seems that the concerns raised by these efforts are not about the market challenge, but rather about the possible effects on the rituals' efficacy.

With regard to practitioners' efforts, even before heritagisation, the commodification of some practices had occurred. Dongshanxu Village's dance troupe is frequently invited to perform at local businesses' opening ceremonies to bring prosperity and blessings. Meanwhile, *nuo* dances have rarely been involved into commercial activity until their proclamation as ICH. The *nuo* dance troupe in Jiuxian has participated in cultural festivals or ICH galas throughout China, which are organised by different levels of government and tourism enterprises. Lately, the dancers have reconsidered their stance on their involvement to such activities. According to the dance troupe leader, between 2007 and 2014, they had performed twenty-two times on different

---

<sup>16</sup> A FAM trip is a familiarisation trip. It means a free (or low cost) trip for travel agents or media, provided by a travel operator or tourist office as a means of promoting their service or destination. The theme of this FAM trip is "Cultural tour of Donghai Island: celebrating the temple festival, watching the dragon dance and going to Longhaitian Beach".

<sup>17</sup> The term of "key opinion leader" is widely spread in China to refer to those who have a strong social status, and whose recommendations and opinions influence the consumers on purchase decisions.

occasions outside of Zhanjiang, such as at the Guangzhou's Folk Culture Festival (Guangzhou, 2008), the China Art Festival (Guangzhou, 2010), and the International Gardens and Flower Exposition (Chongqing, 2011), etc. Nevertheless, they faced difficulties in continuing these commercial activities, either due to a shortage of dancers, a lack of travel expenses, or because of the conflicts raised by the uneven distributions of benefits among the dancers. More than that, the dancers have another concern: as an essential part of the *nuo* ritual, five dancers need to repeat the same eight beats of movements strictly one by one in a fixed order. However, event organisers often require these ritualistic dance movements to be adapted to be more “sophisticated and attractive”, in order to meet the expectations of the spectators or tourists.

Local tourism administrations and the practitioners' efforts in commodifying ICH practices demonstrate that while heritagisation can facilitate the commodification of ritual practice, it may encounter resistance from the surviving and revived religiosity of the local community.

### *The interplay between heritage and religious policies and the emergence of new transmission actors*

In parallel with the heritagisation of popular religious practices, the Party-state's attempts to institutionalise popular religion can also be noticed at a local level. The intertwining of these two top-down processes can fuel the emergence of a new transmission pattern of ritual knowledge.

Chau (2011) noted that in Chinese religious culture, faithful transmission of a fixed repertoire of ritual knowledge relies heavily on apprentice training. Inside Jiuxian Village's temple of the eastern peak, a pile of ritual manuals is well kept in a moisture-proof box under the altar. On the eve of Nianli, three local Daoist priests from the same local altar, with their apprentices, were preparing for the most important event of the year. The master-apprentice transmission pattern (Homola 2013; Névot 2013) still prevails in passing on local ritual knowledge in oral and written methods in Zhanjiang.

The folklorist Liu Xicheng (born in 1935), as a member of the national ICH expert committee, has discussed four transmission patterns of China's ICH practices (Liu 2006). First, a “collective transmission” (*qunti chuancheng* 群体传承) mainly concerns the transmission of customs, festivals and folk cultural activities. The transmission of Nianli-related practices, as an essential component of communal rituals, can be seen as a “collective transmission”. Then, “family/lineage transmission” (*jiating/jiazu chuancheng* 家庭/家族传承) involves the practices that are particularly transmitted within a family and lineage. The majority of Zhanjiang's villages have a lineage-bonded social structure, which also indicates that the village's Nianli rituals are passed on through this form of transmission. Next, “divine transmission” (*shenshou chuancheng* 神授传承) refers to the practices whose practitioners claim to obtain their knowledge and skills through dreams or as initiated by deities. The practices of “arrow piercing” and the “rolling on the bed of thorns” can be considered to be part of these practices. Finally, “social transmission” (*shehui chuancheng* 社会传承) is the transmission between two persons without any kinship relationship. This might be in either of two forms: master-apprentice and self-learning. With regarding to the transmission of dragon dance leaders' (called “dragon ball”, *longzhu* 龙珠) knowledge in Dongshanxu Village, the former “dragon ball” – Wu, official ICH inheritor – acquired his knowledge of the dance by self-learning in the 1990s after thirty years' suppression of the dance. Then, he transmitted this knowledge to the current leader Wang (born in 1989), through a master-apprentice pattern. However, when examining the recent transmission activities of ritual-related ICH practices in

Zhanjiang, it seems that these four patterns are not always adequate for explicating the current situation.

In Zhanjiang, most of the religious practices among different ritual specialists are still following master-apprentice or family/lineage transmission. In his study of local Daoist priests in Guangdong Province, Lai (2007, p. 249) has pointed out that local Daoist priests who speak the dialect usually acquire the ritual knowledge from the elders in their family/lineage or from masters. This appears to be mostly the case for the *nuo* dance in Jiuxian Village. Knowledge about the *nuo* ritual has been passed on from two current dance troupe leaders – Peng Q. and Peng A. – to the younger generation of male villagers from the same lineage. However, with the implementation of the national heritage policy on ICH transmission<sup>18</sup>, an increasing number of local actors have recently participated in the transmission of the *nuo* dance embroidered with the ICH label. *Nuo* dances have been included in extracurricular activities at elementary schools in Zhanjiang. Since then, the courtyard in front of the village temple is not the only place where a master can transmit the knowledge of dance movements and techniques to the Peng's descendants. Sometimes, one needs to teach hundreds of young students at the same time in a school playground. Moreover, a textbook written by local scholars consisting of four genres of *nuo* dances has recently been published. Hereafter, a new form of ritual-related ICH social transmission is articulated by the integration of local knowledge and public school-based teaching. It is probably too early to discuss the new actors' participation in the transmission of *nuo* dances. Nevertheless, based on what I have observed, *nuo*, as ritual dances, are still transmitted in a master-apprentice pattern within the village's principal clan. Only the members of the dance troupe are eligible to wear the masks and participate in the rituals. As for the adaptation of dance's movements, it is remarkable that there exist at least two sets of movements: one is specifically choreographed for staged performances on the occasion of "cultural festivals" or "ICH galas" while the other one has been preserved for a long time as the continuation of local religious traditions. Significantly, the *nuo* dancers in Zhanjiang can consciously distinguish the dance movements for these two different occasions. They would not adopt the staged dance steps during the rituals (Zheng 2017).

39 Another example to signpost this new form of social transmission can be observed in religious regimes. I argue that the variation in the transmission of ritual knowledge can also be facilitated by the Party-state's policy orientation. Wang (2011) has noted different perceptions of local governments towards the governance of popular religion. Chen (2010, p. 170) has discussed the possible policy change on the institutionalisation of popular religion. Meanwhile, I noticed that the local government's attitude towards the revival of popular religious practices is still ambiguous, even after the proclamation of ritual practices as ICH. Therefore, in the case of Zhanjiang, most ritual specialists, as essential bearers of ritual knowledge, are rarely identified as official ICH inheritors. During my fieldwork investigation in 2015 and 2016, as an overseas PhD student conducting research on ritual-related ICH practices, originally from Beijing, my request for an interview with the local religious administration was declined. Afterwards, since 2018, I have occasionally run into the working groups from the local bureau of religious affairs in different village temples in Zhanjiang. This suggests that a state-led institutionalisation of popular religion has recently been initiated. At a local level, this policy change may result in a diverging status among ritual specialists. Taking the example of the *nuo* ritual, Daoist priests, *nuo* dancers and senior members of the lineage organisation are all indispensable actors in the continuity of local ritual traditions. Nevertheless, only the *nuo*

---

<sup>18</sup> See the Ministry of Culture (2008).

dancers are identified as official ICH inheritors. Under these circumstances, I noticed that some local Daoist priests that I have met have recently joined Zhanjiang's Daoist Association. This demonstrates local Daoist priests' efforts in striving for an official recognition. Thus, with this new status they become subject to the Party-state's religious regulations. Chau (2011) has noted that the state's intervention in the processes of religious transmission has spawned some changes. Currently, a registered local Daoist priest needs to participate in training courses on the latest religious regulations organised by the Daoist Association in the local Party school of the Communist Party of China. Some of them have also voluntarily enrolled in classroom-based clerical training to become priests of higher rank. In 2019, during a ritual in honour of Mazu's birthday held in a village temple managed by Zhanjiang's Daoist Association, three local high priests chanted in Mandarin, rather than in the Leizhou dialect.

## **Conclusion**

This study has demonstrated the effects of the state-led heritagisation process on local rituals in contemporary China. Through the transformation of a communal ritual tradition, "Nianli", in Zhanjiang, I have discussed the roles played by different social actors in reframing the current Nianli tradition in plurality. The local state's efforts to integrate a variety of ritual practices from different localities into one category of festivity contribute not only to enhance a regional cultural identity and belonging, but also to facilitate the ICH identification of these ritual practices. The current developments of Nianli reflect a complex disposition that has been achieved among different social actors within local community structures to the changing social, cultural and religious contexts.

With the rapid growth in the numbers of Nianli-related ICH items, various ritual practices, defined under the category of popular religion, are free of the stigma of "feudal superstition". Nonetheless, the issue of popular religion still remains a thorny question for different levels of government. On the one hand, demonstrating ICH practices during the "culture festivals" or "ICH festivals" can be an effective way to display the achievement of the local state's effort to safeguard ICH. On the other hand,

when it comes to ritual-related ICH items, this may lead to tension between the local state and communities, due to practitioners' concern about ritual efficacy. During local state-led ICH commodification, this concern is also raised. When ritual practices are seen as ICH commodities, their different trajectories in this process reflect the varying degrees of accommodations from local communities to the rise of an ICH market.

The notion of transmission has been redefined since the invention of the neologism of ICH (Berliner 2010; Bortolotto 2011; Tornatore 2010). In practice, a state-led heritagisation contributes to the emergence of a new form of ritual transmission patterns. Meanwhile, the Party-state's efforts to institutionalise the governance of popular religion can also facilitate its variations. Under these circumstances, the responses of practitioners are diverging. Although some of them have adopted a classroom-based transmission pattern to transmit ritual knowledge in public spaces, this can be seen as a response to a national heritage policy in ICH safeguarding. At the same time, the traditional master-apprentice training of ritual knowledge still remains within local communities. The other group of practitioners who have been ignored by ICH institutions are exploring possible official recognition from authorised religious organisations. Thus, they are more willing to participate in standardised classroom-based ritual training. Although the current ethnographic materials preclude any further discussion on the effects of

ritual specialists' recent actions during the institutionalisation process, this could be a starting point for future research.

## Bibliography

Beaud, S. 2012 Un « fossile vivant » de la culture *nuo* nationale. Réflexion sur la désignation de *nuoxi* appliquée au Guan Suo Xi, *Études chinoises* 31(1), pp. 95-108.  
2015 La fabrique d'un patrimoine chinois. D'une production culturelle nationale à une tradition théâtrale locale, *Ebisu* 52(1) pp. 291-321.

Berliner, D. 2010 Anthropologie et transmission, *Terrain* 55, pp. 4-19.

Bodolec, C. 2014 Être une grande nation culturelle. Les enjeux du patrimoine culturel immatériel pour la Chine, *Tsantsa* 19, pp. 34-44.

Bodolec, C. & F. Obringer 2020 L'impact de la Convention sur le patrimoine culturel immatériel en Chine, in J. Csergo, C. Hottin & P. Schmit (eds), *Le patrimoine culturel immatériel au seuil des sciences sociales* (Paris, Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme).

Bortolotto, C. 2011 Le trouble du patrimoine culturel immatériel, in C. Bortolotto, A. Arnaud & S. Grenet (eds), *Le patrimoine culturel immatériel. Enjeux d'une nouvelle catégorie* (Paris, Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme), pp. 21-43.

Bortolotto, C. & B. Ubertazzi 2018 Foodways as intangible cultural heritage, *International Journal of Cultural Property* 25, pp. 409-418.

Chau, A. Y. 2006 *Miraculous Response. Doing Popular Religion in Contemporary China* (Redwood, Stanford University Press).

2011 (ed.) *Religion in Contemporary China. Revitalization and Innovation* (Oxon/New York, Routledge).

Chen Jinguo 陈进国 2010 Chuantong fuxing yu xinyang zijue – Zhongguo minjian xinyang de xinshiji guan cha 传统复兴与信仰自觉—中国民间信仰的新世纪观察 [The revival of tradition and the self-awareness of belief. A new century's perspective on Chinese popular beliefs], *Zhongguo zongjiao baogao* 中国宗教报告 [China religions report] (Beijing, Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe), pp. 152-189.

Chen Huali 陈华丽 2015 Jiuxian nianli zhong de nuowu Kaobing yishi yinyue wenhua yanjiu 旧县 年例中的傩舞考兵仪式音乐文化研究 [A study of the ritual music of *nuo* dance. Kaobing during Nianli in Jiuxian], *Yishu jiaoyu* 艺术教育 [Art education] 7, pp. 74-79.

Dean, K. 1995 *Taoist Ritual and Popular Cults of Southeast China* (New Jersey, Princeton University Press).



Demgenski, P. 2020 Culinary tension, *Asian Ethnology* 79(1), pp. 115-135.  
Durand-Dastès, V. 2014 *La Grande muraille des contes. Une collecte géante de littérature populaire en Chine à la fin du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle et sa publication* (Paris, BULAC).  
Faure, D. 2007 *Emperor and Ancestor. State and Lineage in South China* (Redwood, Stanford University Press).

Feuchtwang, S. 1992 *The Imperial Metaphor. Popular Religion in China* (New York, Routledge).

Freedman, M. 1958 *Lineage Organization in South-Eastern China* (Oxon/New York, Routledge). [1966] 1971 *Chinese Lineage and Society. Fukien and Kwangtung* (Oxon/New York, Routledge).

Gao Bingzhong 高丙中 2000 Minjian de yishi yu guojia de zaichang 民间的仪式与国家的在场 [Local ritual and the presence of the state], in Guo Yuhua 郭玉华 (ed.) *Yishi yu shehui bianqian* 仪式与社会变迁 [The rituals and social change] (Beijing, Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe), pp. 310-337.

2007 Zuowei feiwuzhi wenhua yichan yanjiu keti de minjian xinyang keti 作为非物质文化遗产研究课题的民间信仰课题 [The issue of popular beliefs as a research subject in intangible cultural heritage], *Jiangxi shehui kexue xuebao* 江西社会科学学报 [Journal of Jiangxi social science] 3, pp. 146-154.

Gao, B., Zhang, J. & B. Long 2017 The social movement of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and the end of Cultural Revolutions in China, *Western Folklore* 76(2), pp. 167-180.

Givre, O. & M. Regnault 2015 (eds) *Patrimonialisations croisées. Jeux d'échelle et enjeux de développement* (Lyon, Presse Universitaires de Lyon).

Goossaert, V. 2000 *Dans les temples de la Chine* (Paris, Albin Michel).  
Goossaert, V. & D. Palmer 2011 *The Religious Question in Modern China* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press).  
Granet, M. 1926 *Danses et légendes de la Chine ancienne* (Paris, Librairie Felix Alcan).

Grenet, S. & C. Hottin 2011 Un livre politique, in C. Bortolotto, A. Arnaud & S. Grenet (eds), *Le patrimoine culturel immatériel. Enjeux d'une nouvelle catégorie* (Paris, Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme), pp. 9-19.

Gros, S. 2012 L'injonction à la fête. Enjeux locaux patrimoniaux d'une fête en voie de disparition, *Gradhiva* 16 pp. 25-43.

Guangtian Luzi [Hirota Ritsuko 广田律子] 2005 *Gui zhi lai lu – Zhongguo de jiamian yu jishi* 鬼之来路 – 中国的假面与仪式 [Where ghosts come from. The masks and rituals in China] (Beijing, Zhonghuashuju).

Guowuyuan 国务院 [the State Council] 1961 *Wenwu baohu guanli zanxing tiaoli* 文物保护单位暂行条例 [Interim regulation on the management of heritage protection] [online, URL: [http:// www.gov.cn/gongbao/shuju/1961/gwyb196104.pdf](http://www.gov.cn/gongbao/shuju/1961/gwyb196104.pdf), accessed on 15 June 2022].

2005 *Guowuyuan guanyu jiaqiang wenhua yichan baohu de tongzhi* 国务院关于加强文化遗产保护的 通知 [Opinion of the General Office of the State Council on strengthening the safeguard of the cultural heritage] [online, URL: [http://www.gov.cn/gongbao/content/2006/content\\_185117.htm](http://www.gov.cn/gongbao/content/2006/content_185117.htm), accessed on 15 June 2022].

He Xi 贺喜 2011 *Yishen yizu – Yue xinan xinyang goujian de shehuishi* 亦神亦祖 – 粤西南信仰构建的社会史 [Gods and ancestors. A social history of the construction of belief system in Southwest Guangdong] (Beijing, Sanlian shudian).

Homola, S. 2013 La relation de maître à disciple en question. Transmission orale et écrite des savoirs divinatoires en Chine et à Taïwan, *Extrême-Orient Extrême-Occident* 35, pp. 11-43.

Jiang Mingzhi 蒋明智 & Lü Dongyu 吕东玉 2008 Xiangcun shehui de renqing shenghui. – Yi Yue xi Gaozhou de nianli weili 乡村社会的人情盛会 – 以粤西高州的“年例”为例 [The gathering of presenting traditional code of conduct in rural society. A case study of Nianli in Gaozhou, West Guangdong], *Minsu yanjiu* 民俗研究 [Folklore studies] 3, pp. 84-99.

Lagerwey, J. 2010 *China, A Religious State* (Hong Kong, Hong Kong University Press).

Lai Chi-tim 黎志添 2007 Guangdong difang daojiao yanjiu – daoguan daoshi ji keyi 廣東地方道教 研究—道觀、道士及科儀 [Guangdong local Daoism. Daoist temples, masters and rituals] (Hong Kong, The Chinese University Press).

Le Mentec, K. & Q. Zhang 2017 Heritagization of disaster ruins and ethnic culture in China. Recovery plans after the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake, *China Information* 31(3), pp. 349-370.

Liang Chengjiu 梁成久 & Chen Jingfen 陈景棻. 1938 *Minguo haikang xian xuzhi* 民国海康县续志 [Sequel to the Gazetteer of Haikang sequel during the Republic of China]. Guangdong lidai fangzhi jicheng 广东历代方志集成 [Compilation of Guangdong's local gazetteers] (Guangzhou, Lingnan meishu chubanshe).

Liang Lun 梁伦 (ed.) 1996 *Zhongguo minzu minjian wudao jicheng – Guangdong juan* 中国民族民间舞蹈集成-广东卷 [Compilation of Chinese ethnic folk dances – Guangdong volume] (Beijing, ISBN Center).

Liang Zhaokeng 梁兆馨 1902 *Meilu zhi* 梅菪志 [Gazetteer of Meilu], unpublished manuscript.

Liu Jinfeng 刘金凤 2012 Zhanjiang nianli yiluo xiangjian de wenhua mima 湛江年例, 遗落乡间的文化密码 [Zhanjiang, the cultural code left behind in the countryside], *Zhanjiang xinwenwang* 湛江新闻网 [News site of Zhanjiang] [online, URL: <http://www.gdzjdaily.com.cn>, accessed 7 May 2023].

Liu Xicheng 刘锡诚 2006 Chuancheng yu chuanchengren lun 传承与传承人论 [The theory of transmission and transmitter], *Henan jiaoyu xueyuan xuebao (zhexue shehui kexue ban)* 河南教育学院学报(哲学社会科学版) [Journal of Henan Education Institute (Philosophy and social science edition)] 25, pp. 24-36.

Maags, C. 2021 Common, luxury, and fake commodities. *Intangible cultural heritage markets, China Perspectives* 3, pp. 7-17.

Maguet, F. 2011 L'image des communautés dans l'espace public, in C. Bortolotto (ed.), *Le patrimoine culturel immatériel. Enjeux d'une nouvelle catégorie* (Paris, Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme), pp. 47-73.

Nénot, A. 2013 (ed.) *De l'un à l'autre. Maîtres et disciple* (Paris, CNRS).  
Overmyer, D. 2001 From "feudal superstition" to "popular beliefs". *New directions in mainland*

*Chinese studies of Chinese popular religion, Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 12, pp. 103-126.

Olsen, D. 2003 Heritage, tourism, and the commodification of religion, *Tourism Recreation Research* 28(3) pp. 99-104.

Peng Zhaorong 彭兆荣 2008 Yichanxue yu yichan yundong: biaoshu yu zhizao 遗产学与遗产运动: 表述与制造 [Heritage studies and heritage movement. Representation and production], *Wenyi yanjiu* 文艺研究 [The literature and arts review] 2, pp. 84-91.

Siu, H. 1989 *Agents and Victim in South China. Accomplices in Rural Revolution* (New Heaven, Yale University Press).  
1990 Recycling tradition. Culture, history, and political economy in the Chrysanthemum Festivals of South China, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 32(4), pp. 765-794.

Tornatore, J. 2010 L'esprit de patrimoine, *Terrain* 55, pp. 106-127.

Wan Gai 王槩 & Yu Dianyan 于殿琰 (eds) [1759] 2009 *Qianlong Gaozhou fuzhi* 乾隆高州府志 [Gazetteer of Gaozhou during Qianlong period], Guangdong lidai fangzhi jicheng 广东历代方志集成 [Compilation of Guangdong's local gazetteers] (Guangzhou, Lingnan meishu chubanshe).

Wang Kefen 王克芬 [1989] 2014 *Zhongguo wudao fazhan shi* 中国舞蹈发展史 [The history of Chinese dance] (Shanghai, Shanghai renmin chubanshe).

Wang Mingming 王铭铭 2000 Lingyan de yichan 灵验的遗产 [Efficient heritage], in Guo, Yuhua 郭玉华 (ed.), *Yishi yu shehui bianqian* 仪式与社会变迁 [Rituals and social change] (Beijing, Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe), pp. 11-56.  
2011 A drama of the concepts of religion. Reflecting on some of the issues of "faith" in contemporary China, *ARI working paper* 155.

Wenhua bu 文化部 [Ministry of Culture] 2008 *Guojiaji feiwuzhi wenhua yichan xiangmu daibiaoxing chuanchengren rending yu guanli zanxing banfa* 国家级非物质文化遗产项目代表性传承人认定与管理暂行办法 [Interim measures for the identification and administration of representative inheritors of national intangible cultural heritage] [online, URL: [http://www.gov.cn/gongbao/content/2008/content\\_1157918.htm](http://www.gov.cn/gongbao/content/2008/content_1157918.htm), accessed on 22 August 2022).

Wu Zhen 吴真 2009 Cong fengjian mixin dao feiwuzhi wenhua yichan minjian xinyang de hefaxing licheng 从封建迷信到非物质文化遗产 – 民间信仰的合法性历程 [From feudal

superstition to intangible cultural heritage. Legitimation of popular beliefs], in Qiu Yonghui 邱永辉 & Jin Ze 金泽 (eds), *Zongjiao lanpishu – Zhongguo zongjiao baogao* 宗教蓝皮书——中国宗教报告 [Bluebook of religion. China's religion report] (Beijing, Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe), pp. 161-180.

You, Z. 2020 Conflicts over local belief. “Feudal superstitions” as intangible cultural heritage in contemporary China, *Asian Ethnology* 79(1), pp. 137-159.

Zhanjiang shi wenhua ju 湛江市文化局 [Zhanjiang City bureau of culture] 1995 *Zhanjiang wenhua zhi* 湛江文化志 [Cultural gazetteer of Zhanjiang] (Tianjin, Tianjin guji chubanshe).

Zhang, Q. 2020 Intangible cultural heritage safeguarding in times of crisis. A case study of the Chinese ethnic Qiang New Year Festival celebration after 2008 Wenchuan earthquake, *Asian Ethnology* 79(1), pp. 91-113.

Zheng, S. 2017 Religious diversity and patrimonialization. A case study of Nianli Festival in Leizhou Peninsula, China, *Approaching Religion* 7(1), pp. 21-31.

Zheng Yechong 郑业崇 & Xu Rushao 许汝韶 (eds) [1888] 2009 *Guangxu Maoming xianzhi* 光绪茂名县志 [Gazetteer of Maoming during the Guangxu period], Guangdong lidai fangzhi jicheng 广东历代方志集成 [Compilation of Guangdong's local gazetteers] (Guangzhou, Lingnan meishu chubanshe).

Zhou Daming 周大鸣 & Pan Zhengyan 潘争艳 2008a Nianli yishi yu zongzu rentong – Yi Yue xi Dianbaixian Tancun weili 年例仪式与宗族认同 – 以粤西电白县潭村为例 [Nianli custom and lineage identity. A case study of Tan Village of Dianbai District in Western Guangdong], *Wenhua yichan* 文化遗产 [Cultural heritage] 1, pp. 61-70.

2008b Nianli yishi yu shehui gongneng – Yi Yue xi Dianbaixian Tancun weili 年例仪式与社会功能 – 以粤西电白县潭村为例 [Nianli ritual and social functions. A case study of Tan Village of Dianbai District in Western Guangdong], *Zhongnan minzu daxue xuebao shehuikexue ban* 中南民族大学学报社会科学版 [Journal of South-Central Minzu University social science] 2, pp. 5-9.