CHAPTER ONE

To Be Emplaced

Fuzhounese Migration and the Geography of Desire

An old convention of ethnographic presentation is to open with a map as a way for framing the field site as a locatable and knowable "place." Though a great flood of scholarship in recent years has challenged the assumptions of "place" as simply the staging grounds or container of social life, the territorial map has remained a powerful conceptual shorthand for situating anthropologists and the "areas" we study. Nonetheless, I also begin this chapter with a map in order to provide a general orientation to my field site, which I call Longyan. But in lieu of an image situating Longyan within the territorial and administrative borders of China (the nation-state), I offer an alternative geography of the five boroughs of New York City rendered in Chinese and English (figure 1). The map itself appears on the back cover of a book titled *Practical English for People Working in Chinese Restaurants*, which is published in New York. It has circulated broadly within Longyan; first through the efforts of overseas relatives who purchased and shipped copies of it from the United States to China and later through the technological wonder of copy machines, which made this map ubiquitous among all those who aspired to go abroad, mainly with the ideal of finding restaurant work in one of New York's three Chinatowns. As both a material link to overseas connections and a mediator of social imaginaries, this map has become much more integral than a regional map of China ever could to people's understandings of what it means to be a *dangdiren* or "local person" in Longyan today.

What I especially love about this image of the map here are the greasy fingerprint smudges on it pointing to the materiality of its circulation from restaurant workers abroad to their relatives in the village. This particular copy of *Practical English* belonged to Zou Shu, the wife of a short-order cook working just outside of New York City; he had sent her the book

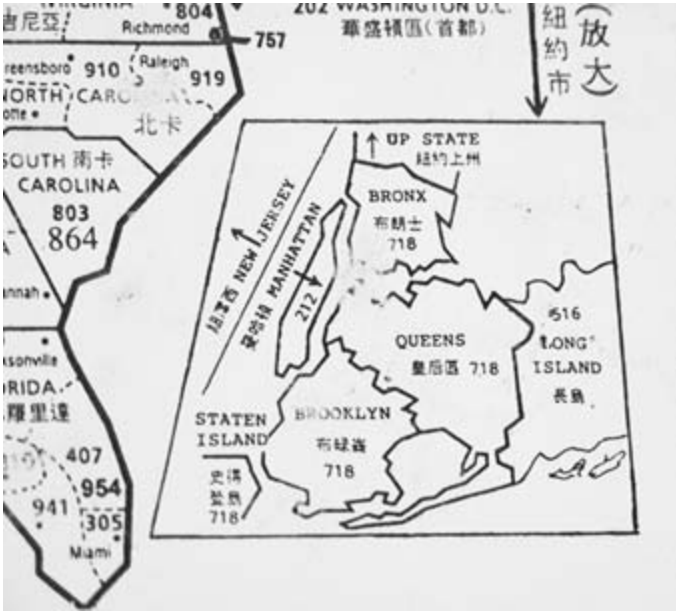

FIGURE 1 Map of the five boroughs of New York City from a Longyan villager's worn copy of a "Restaurant English" book.

along with its accompanying audio tapes and a Walkman cassette player to help her prepare for her impending venture and anticipated life overseas as a restaurant worker by his side. This book was already tattered by the time it reached her in Longyan, she told me. Inside its well-worn covers, scrawled notes in Chinese scattered along the margins enabled this villager to imagine her husband's studiousness, as well as his struggles overseas during their many years of physical separation. Inspired by these leftover traces of her absent husband's linguistic labors, she also scribbled in the margins as she studied from this book herself, adding her own distinctive marks as part of their continuity of efforts and momentum for connecting overseas and for remaking the scale of their everyday life as transnational subjects on the move.

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This chapter offers an exploration of what it means to be emplaced amid the various spatial and temporal streams currently flowing through my field site in the Fuzhou countryside along the southeast coast of China. These flows include both transnational currents resulting from two and

a half decades of mass emigration to the United States and other foreign destinations and national and translocal currents driven in part by post-Mao reforms for market liberalization and China's "opening up." Like other scholars working in the vein of transnationalism (Appadurai 1991; Basch et al. 1994; Clifford 1997; Kearney 2000; Levitt 2001; Ong and Nonini 1997; Rouse 1991), my aim is to highlight the complications of locality—its unsettled boundaries and experiences—among subjects differentially connected and on the move in contemporary Longyan.

The notion of a cultural and economic gap between one's "home" and "settlement" country has long informed much of the analysis concerning both motivations for migration and the possibilities for assimilation in receiving nations. Typically, scholars of international migration have assumed that the movement from "home" to "settlement" is naturally strange and alienating, while "to go home is to be where one belongs" (Malkki 1995, 509). This assumption that one's identity and experiences are only whole and well when rooted in a territorial homeland has been critiqued by anthropologist Liisa Malkki, among others, as the "sedentarist analytic bias" of research on migration (508).

"Diaspora" as a key unit of analysis beyond the territorially bounded nation has provided important challenges to the dominant assumptions of migration studies by foregrounding the multiplicity and hybridity of cultural identities among immigrants and refugees. Responding to an era of decolonization in the "Third" World and deindustrialization in the "First" World, works on diaspora, particularly in postcolonial and British cultural studies, have been among the first to analyze the important historical transformations of the global political-economic order in relation to the formation of cultural identities and political communities among displaced and mobile people. For instance, in observing the mass movement of former colonial subjects into the former metropoles of European empires, Stuart Hall (1991; Hall et al. 1996) challenges the conceptual distancing of "home" and "settlement," peripheries and centers, and other spatial metaphors emphasizing the boundedness and purity of people, places, and cultures. As Hall notes, far from being alienating and strange, these postcolonial migrations are the logical culmination of long-standing political and social ties, an experience less about social rupture than about historical continuity. Moreover, this kind of analysis has contributed to a blurring of distinction between economic migrants and refugees by historicizing the inextricable links between political and economic oppression.

Paul Gilroy's conceptualization of a "Black Atlantic" and the "double consciousness" of its diasporic African subjects has also provided important critiques of the essentialized conflations of cultural identity with discrete nation-states (1991; cf. Gilroy 1993). Specifically, Gilroy notes how the ongoing experience of displacement is the grounds, not a barrier, for forging an alternative cultural identity anchored in a diasporic network (that is, "the Black Atlantic") outside the territorial confines of any particular nation-state (cf. Hall et al. 1996: 235). Displacement, in this sense, refers to the shared experience of feeling out of "place" within and across the boundaries of the nation-state.

Unfortunately, in much of the scholarship concerned with diaspora, critiques of assimilationist ideologies and primordial ties to territorial nations often privilege the idea of displacement to such an extent that "home" countries become devalued as proper sites for research. This is because displacement is usually construed as the *result* of the physical departure of people from a prior literal or imagined "home," an analytic move that logically excludes these "home" sites as significant domains for examining diasporic conditions. At best, such sites simply get reinterpreted as immigrant nostalgia for a shared mythical homeland and desire for impossible returns (cf. Safran 1991).

My research in Longyan, which currently has 49 percent of its population overseas, aims to provide a corrective to this overemphasis (and sometimes celebration) of displacement as an experience outside of "home" and, moreover, to the mystification of "home" sites as simply imaginary places of longing and belonging. Approaching issues of migrant identities and social formations from the location of dispersion rather than arrival enabled me to critically examine and situate these analytic assumptions of displacement alongside local theorizations of *emplacement* made by those who stayed put (or rather "stuck") in my field site as others moved around them. As I will show for my Fuzhounese subjects, the ultimate form of displacement was seen and experienced as the result of *immobility* rather than physical departure from a "home."

This examination of emplacement presupposes the imbrication of "home" sites in diasporic formations while at the same time it contributes to the continual intellectual project on "diaspora" for relativizing (though not discounting) bounded and autochthonous assumptions of belonging to the nation-state, the primordial homeland, or the pristine "local" (against a penetrating globalization "from above") (cf. Brecher et al. 2000). I do not

wish to suggest that territorial boundaries no longer matter in an era of transnational and global flows. Rather, my goal is to show how villagers' quest for emigration shifted the very grounds of both mobility and enclosure (Cunningham and Heyman 2004). It reshaped the geography of desire, expanding the possibilities of emplacement for some while contracting the terms of belonging for others. As I will show, not everyone was localized (or globalized) in the same way in Longyan. There were, in fact, multiple scale-making projects that shaped villagers' sense of belonging in the world. Scale, as Anna Tsing has noted, "is not just a neutral frame for viewing the world; scale must be brought into being: proposed, practiced, and evaded, as well as taken for granted" (Tsing 2005, 58).[1]

In the remainder of this chapter, I focus on these processes of scale-making and particularly on the resonances, tensions, and confusions of "place" such processes have generated among Longyan residents. Following a general overview of village experiences of locality, I offer three ethnographic sketches of how architecture and landscape could enable concurrent as well as conflicting senses of scale and emplacement among villagers. These three sketches will spotlight transformations first in housing, then in temples, and finally in roads. As a means for understanding Fuzhounese migration, the built environment is a particularly good starting point since scholars and journalists often seemed so puzzled by Fuzhounese desires to spend overseas remittances on the building of lavish temples and houses rather than on what most critics consider more "rational" economic activities like investments in local enterprises or public works. Overseas remittances currently comprise approximately 70 percent of all income in Longyan, and according to the local party secretary's office, an estimated two-thirds of these remittances go to the renovation and construction of houses and temples.[2] While these construction projects are commonly dismissed by local officials and elites as the unproductive result of newly wealthy but "low cultured" residents (*di wenhua*), my aim here is to move this discussion of value and value production beyond the economic terms of rational utility. Instead, I ask: How do these transformations of the built environment contribute to the production of locality as a structure of feeling? Specifically, how do they complicate the possibilities and terms of place and emplacement among the various members of this community? I conclude this chapter with some final thoughts on scale-making by returning to the spatial imaginaries conjured by "Restaurant English" and its practitioners in Longyan.

In many ways, Longyan appeared to be an idyllic rural village, surrounded as it was by verdant mountains on three sides and the flowing waters of the Min River as it splinters off and winds into the South China Sea. The small, flat valley bounded by the mountains, river, and sea contained most of the houses for village residents, as well as more than thirty Buddhist-Daoist temples, one Protestant church, an elementary and a middle school, a local government office, a few patches of farmland, and a green market at the end of two short and intersecting commercial streets of small shops. One of these two streets, River Head Road (Jiang Tou Lu), has long served as the vibrant hub for Longyan residents, though its luster as the commercial center for neighboring and even far-flung places up until the Communist Revolution no longer exists except in the youthful recollections of its oldest members. Though not much has changed about River Head Road's practical functions over the past century and a half, the street's spatial significance—like that of Longyan itself—has undergone several challenges and revisions since the Republican Era in China (1912–1949).

In regard to Longyan as a whole, as noted, there is some debate about whether this community is (or should be) properly called a "village" (*cun*) or a "town" (*zhen*). Though Longyan's physical boundaries remain intact, its emplacement within regional, national, and (more recently) transnational spatial hierarchies has been anything but stable through the years. The shifts are evident in Longyan's official "place" markers over the last century: from a regional township and military command center in the late Qing to a small district within a larger rural commune (*gongshe*) under Mao to a discrete "peasant village" (*nongcun*) under decollectivization and, finally, to its recent and ongoing transformation as a cosmopolitan home village of overseas Chinese (*qiaoxiang*). These various designations of place evoke quite different structures of feeling for being "local" in Longyan.[3] Moreover, they have not succeeded one another as linearly and neatly as the official changes made to Longyan's "place" designation would suggest. Rather, as I discovered through my research, all of these distinct senses of locality still resonated in Longyan, though not necessarily at the same frequency or force.

Town, commune, peasant village, and overseas village channeled different spatial and temporal imaginings of what it meant to be a "local

person" in Longyan. Some figurations of the "local," like "town," conjured up nostalgia for the pre-Communist days of regional prestige and influence, while others, like "peasant village," evoked ever-present anxieties of the stagnation and narrowing limits of one's social world since the Communist Revolution. Yet another term, like "commune," carried entangled associations of political obsolescence, moral idealism, and personal bitterness over utopic aspirations and material deprivations in the recent and still reverberating past. All these senses of locality have persisted in memory and embodied experience beyond their functional purposes for political administration by different state regimes in China. In fact, they have not only coexisted with but also centrally shaped Longyan residents' current efforts and collective claims for being an "overseas village."

Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai has observed how contingent and fragile imaginations and experiences of the "local" can be, especially in the contemporary context of increasingly transnational and globalizing forces. As he notes, "Locality is ephemeral unless hard and regular work is undertaken to produce and maintain its materiality" (1997, 181). In trying to understand the unrelenting desires of the Fuzhounese to migrate through human smuggling networks, I found that I was also tracking this process for the production, transformation, and maintenance of locality in Longyan. As Appadurai argued, locality is not merely the given, stable grounds for identity formation and collective action but also in itself "a relational achievement" (186) and "property of social life" (182). Not only were there different and contested ways for being "local" in Longyan, but some people also became more local-ized than others in the process.

Not everyone who resided in Longyan was considered a "local person" (*dangdiren*). Many in the population who had migrated from Sichuan and other interior provinces of China were commonly referred to as "outsiders" (*waidiren*), as were the small corps of teachers and school administrators who mainly hailed from Fuzhou City and held urban residence status in the Chinese state's household registration system (*hukou*). It goes without saying that as a resident of Longyan, I also occupied this position of "outsider." Though all these "outsiders" shared spaces of habitation and sociality in Longyan, they did not all share the same material and embodied sense of locality. These distinctions were based not only on where people were from, but also, and perhaps more importantly, on where they were potentially *going* in the increasingly fluid context of a globalizing post-Mao China. Some people were better positioned amid

regional, national, and transnational flows to imagine themselves as mobile and forward-looking (or "modern") subjects in a cosmopolitan context. Others less connected to such currents easily became "stuck" in the most narrow and confining sense of locality—as unchanging peasants in an equally stagnant and backward peasant village.

Over the past two decades, traveling through human smuggling networks has been one crucial technique for people's spatial-temporal extension beyond the imagined and material limitations of peasant life in China. Despite people's knowledge of the great physical dangers and staggering economic costs of human smuggling, aspirations for leaving China persisted in Longyan because in many ways, such migrant yearnings enabled residents to embody a more privileged sense of locality among other existing and competing notions of the local. But what I want to show in this chapter is how one did not need to physically *leave* China to feel emplaced within a larger global and transnational social field. Likewise, one could experience displacement while remaining at "home" simply because the boundaries of one's social world had shifted or come under contestation (cf. Mahler 1992; Verdery 1998). All these discontinuities and dissonances of locality were already present in Longyan and could be felt in very material and embodied ways through the built environment itself.

House: Up, Up, Away

In less than a decade, a new crop of brightly tiled enormous houses has rapidly emerged at the center of Longyan, replacing plots of farmland along both sides of the Min River. Commonly referred to as the homes of "American guests" (*Meiguoke*), these distinctive buildings marked the newfound prosperity of households with members in the United States and with abundant remittances flowing into Longyan (figure 2). Typically rectangular in form and rising four or five stories high in flashy shades of bubble gum pink or peach, these buildings not only dwarfed other houses around them in size and aesthetic dazzle, but they also exhibited the competitive spirit of their owners, who tried to outdo one another with each new and successive construction and renovation project. Although most residents in Longyan viewed the completion of each new house with a combination of collective pride and personal envy, they also tended to gripe about the general—and *literal*—escalation of competitive house-

FIGURE 2 "American guest" mansions in Longyan.

building among those with overseas connections. As Old Man Liu (Lao Liu), my self-proclaimed godfather in Longyan, observed one day while walking around with me, "They keep getting taller and taller." Shaking his head and pointing to specific houses, he noted, "First, this one had a three-story house, then over there—four stories, then five. . . . It's really getting excessive!" Incidentally, it may be worth noting that Old Man Liu had a four-story home himself, and as one could guess, he was less than pleased about being outdone by the newest houses.

Shortly after I settled into Longyan in the fall of 2001, the debut of yet another new house, nestled between the mountains and the southern bank of the Min River, would spark even greater debates and gossip about distinction and prosperity among village residents. This house (figure 3) not only upped the ante in height—rising six stories instead of the usual five—but it also offered a novel facade of elegant white tiles, jade green windows, and warm terracotta roofing that contrasted sharply with the

FIGURE 3 New house in Longyan, Lunar New Year 2002.

pink and peach uniformity of previous "American guest" mansions. Like most of the other new houses, this one was built with overseas remittances by Longyan villagers who had emigrated to the United States in the late 1980s through transnational human smuggling networks. The owners had since achieved a level of prosperity by starting their own family-run Chinese restaurant abroad. Because of ongoing chain migration, this family had no members left in Longyan to actually reside in the new mansion on a permanent, full-time basis.

Like so many other enormous houses in the vicinity with dwindling or no members remaining because of continual emigration, this new mansion was expected to be mostly unoccupied, aside from the occasional return visit or future retirement plans of its various overseas members. But the fact that this house had been built without definite residents in mind did not deter other Longyan inhabitants from imagining what it would be like to occupy that space. Even though most people had seen this mansion only from a distance—partly because the owners were rarely there to have visitors—gossip still abounded about what the interiors might look like and especially about its relative luxury among other new houses. My favorite uncorroborated rumor concerned the existence of an elevator located dead center in the house for easy and speedy access to all six floors. Though this house turned out to have only a staircase like all the other new mansions, this imaginary elevator made sense to people as the kind

of distinctive, innovative feature of the interior that would complement the novel, modern look of the building's exterior.

Ultimately, the fact that the mansion's family had not actually built an elevator mattered less than the sense of lack others felt from imagining this new and superior mode of habitation and mobility among them. Through the elevator, people extended and concretized their imagination of the kind of superior, modern *habitus* this family must have acquired as successful overseas Chinese, with an ease of coming and going beyond the narrow terms of Longyan as a simple peasant village.[4] Figuratively if not literally, the elevator offered a new means for judging the relative mobility of Longyan residents, both in dwelling and in traveling.

When it came to understanding the various possibilities for emplacement, the two aspects of dwelling and traveling were inextricably linked in Longyan, as they were in other locations (and as previously noted by Clifford 1997). Houses of all sizes and styles, including these "American guest" mansions, were structured not only by different imaginations and conditions of dwelling, but also through distinctive trajectories of various residents moving in and about Longyan in space and time. I learned to appreciate the different temporal and spatial contours of the built environment early on in my research, when Longyan's party secretary guided me to the panoramic view from his office window and proceeded to narrate a history of village transformation through the various housing styles visible in the landscape. Pointing at different buildings in our view, Party Secretary Chen traced three distinct styles and eras : (1) red exterior, (2) white exterior, and (3) tiled exterior (*hongzhuang*, *baizhuang*, and *cizhuang* respectively). These three kinds of housing (which can be seen especially clearly in figure 4) concretized for Secretary Chen a spatial-temporal order of prosperity among Longyan residents.

Specifically, each successively larger and more grandiose style of housing marked a distinct point of departure in people's imagination and embodied experiences of modern and prosperous living in Longyan. First, the red-exterior houses evoked the initial era of prosperity before mass emigration, when, following China's economic reforms, Longyan residents first branched out from compulsory farming into several lucrative enterprises mainly involving building materials, construction, and renovation work in and around Fuzhou City. Between 1978 and 1985, these red-brick structures dramatically transformed the social landscape of Longyan by rapidly replacing the majority of old-style wooden housing and offering

FIGURE 4 Various housing styles in the changing village landscape.

a new and superior mode of habitation linked to success in the booming construction industry.

In the mid-1980s, the emergence of the white-exterior dwellings became associated with a diversifying profile of wealth involving not only those in construction but also an increasing number of families with members in the United States. As Party Secretary Chen noted, "From 1985 to 1990, every year at least ten people went abroad. First year, there were ten or so. In '86, twenty or so. In '87, forty to fifty. By 1990, massive numbers were going abroad." Like those who had achieved success through construction, the first residents with overseas connections also celebrated their newfound wealth by upgrading their houses to reflect the reigning imaginations of modern living at the time.

By the early 1990s, those who had achieved their success from construction increasingly lost momentum and faced mounting difficulties keeping up with the standards of prosperity set by residents with overseas connections. These difficulties came about partly because as people left for abroad in growing numbers and sent increasing remittances home, a new flow of migrants from China's interior provinces, like Sichuan, also began to move into Longyan and replace longtime residents in all sorts of village occupations from agriculture to the crucial industry of construction. Many residents, who were either displaced or simply disillusioned by the grow-

ing presence of internal migrants in local industries, ultimately joined a second, more massive exodus out of China to the United States beginning in the 1990s. During this period, the first houses associated solely with overseas wealth emerged in the social landscape. This new style of architecture was distinguished by its tiled exterior. Known locally as "American guest" houses, they immediately dominated and overwhelmed all other dwellings in their surroundings through their sheer height and sense of spaciousness.

This sense of spaciousness did not simply concern the actual square footage so much as it reflected people's new attentiveness to the nature of occupancy in different housing situations. For what most distinguished the "American guest" mansions from previous styles of habitation was the small and dwindling number of occupants in these spaces. While residents who had made their wealth locally tended to fully occupy and furnish all the rooms of their new houses, those with overseas connections commonly left their mansions nearly or completely empty, with very few occupants and with only the barest of amenities on one or two of the bottom floors. In fact, despite the fancy tiled exteriors, most floors, if not all, were left totally unfinished, with neither electrical connections nor plumbing installed, not to mention an utter lack of interior design. Some of these houses, like the new six-story mansion discussed above, had no occupants at all because of ongoing chain migration, and they sat absolutely vacant. Though the overseas families could have rented their empty houses to others, especially given the flow of internal migrants into Longyan, most preferred to keep them totally unoccupied and bare in their absence. Villagers often showed me how to identify the emptiness of these houses from the outside by the lack of curtains adorning their windows. Unlike occupied and furnished dwellings, these houses had no use for curtains, people told me, since there was nothing, including nobody, to shield from prying eyes.

The emptiness of the "American guest" houses was in fact central to the distinct sense of overseas prosperity and luxury surrounding them, marking both their overseas connections and the immense wealth of their absent owners. As villagers saw it, only those earning plenty of money abroad could afford to build a gigantic house in Longyan and then leave it completely vacant and therefore nonproductive (that is, neither in use nor generating income). Through the emptiness of these mansions, villagers could also evaluate just how constraining and crammed their own

quarters and ways of habitation were without access to overseas connections. On the streets, the vacant interiors of these mansions served as embodied reminders of the superior mobility of absent owners with dual residences abroad and in Longyan, while others remained stuck within the confining boundaries of the village.

People also imagined that those living abroad must reside in housing as spacious and luxurious as the mansions they built for themselves in Longyan. Often while accompanying me on the streets, villagers would point out some of these houses and ask me questions like, "American houses all look like this high-rise mansion (*gaolou dasha*), right?" Initially, it seemed perplexing to me that people could imagine American dwellings through houses that I took to be distinctly non-American in aesthetics and architectural structure. But though I tried to describe my sense of American housing styles—the sprawling suburban home, East Coast brownstones, high-rise apartment complexes—as something quite distinct from these rectangular tiled buildings, villagers were rarely convinced by my explanations and refutations of their imaginative comparisons. People simply assumed that my knowledge of American housing styles was partial at best (which is true) and that somewhere in the vast geography of the United States—particularly where they imagined their own relatives—these same peach- and pink-tiled mansions were rising triumphantly from the modern American cityscape.

This imagined resemblance between Longyan mansions and American houses began to make sense to me only when I noticed similar high-rising tiled buildings in various states of construction, renovation, and grand opening all over Fuzhou City. Like the houses in rural Longyan, these new buildings in the city proper were being imagined in local advertisements and everyday conversations as a more cosmopolitan, modern, and Western-inflected style of habitation in an increasingly open and globalizing China. Just like Longyan villagers, Fuzhou urbanites were also caught up in an immense housing and construction craze as household incomes rose steadily over the past decade and new middle-class aspirations were nurtured through a growing consumer market and newspapers and television programs promoting the joys of shopping, interior decorating, and the ownership of new cars and houses. Similar to the "American guest" mansions in Longyan, the new five- and six-story tiled buildings in Fuzhou City were commonly referred to as "high-risers" and looked upon with pride by urban residents as a superior way of dwelling.

The affinities between Longyan and city imaginations of housing suggest how villagers' assumptions of Americanness in this case were refracted less through transnational ties than through Fuzhou's urban dreamscape of modern and cosmopolitan modes of living. The similarities, however, end here. While the buildings in Longyan remained mostly empty, a similar (though somewhat larger) structure in Fuzhou City would most likely be filled to capacity, with each floor divided into two residential units for a total of ten households under the same roof.

An even more pronounced difference between city and village high-risers became apparent upon entry into these domestic spaces. While the city residences usually opened into spacious living rooms—a fairly recent shift according to my urban sources—village mansions typically led people initially into a space of worship, where a large altar displaying ancestral tablets, household gods, incense holders, and food offerings would sit in the center. In contrast, most city high-risers positioned altars for worship in marginal spaces, such as a small corner of an office or an open kitchen shelf—if such religious shrines were displayed at all. Many urban dwellings I visited, in fact, had no place for worship at all, while in most village residences, regardless of housing style, a central altar room at or close to the entrance was the norm.[5]

I want to stress that this difference between having or not having an altar of worship bears little correspondence to a neat, normative assumption of "traditional" village and "modern" urban lifestyles. Although ritual life was certainly central to Longyan villagers, the next section will demonstrate how religious practices were actually integral to villagers' imaginations and aspirations for a modern, cosmopolitan lifestyle rather than barriers to such aspirations.

As I learned in Longyan, the grounds of "tradition" and "modernity" were constantly shifting and under contestation as people strategized, adapted, and adjusted life courses in response to material and symbolic transformations of the village landscape over the past two decades and beyond. What were once the shining symbols of new prosperity in the early 1980s—the red-exterior houses—were by the early 1990s the ramshackle signs of lowly living among newer imaginative structures of modern and cosmopolitan dwelling. While what was usually considered the most "traditional" kind of housing—the wooden compounds—was virtually all gone by the time I arrived in Longyan, both the red- and white-exterior houses had lost their novelty by the 1990s and increasingly became stand-ins

for the "traditional" and the "backward" (*luohou*) among village dwellings and styles of habitation. This was especially true of red-exterior housing, which was commonly rented out to poorer internal migrants when local residents built new tiled-exterior mansions with overseas wealth. This meant that longtime village residents who were still living in red-exterior dwellings were now inhabiting the same kinds of spaces as the "outsiders" they considered more provincial and inferior to themselves.

Starting in the mid-1980s, without physically moving or transforming their ways of dwelling, the old residents of these red-exterior houses felt the privileged boundaries of locality shift beneath them, and by the 1990s, they found themselves newly displaced in the emerging social terrain of Longyan as an overseas village. Those like the Lin family, who lived in a red-exterior house along the Min River, could still recall with pride how they had the best home on the street in the early days of the local construction boom, when they were bona fide successes in Longyan. But such memories of superior dwelling now highlighted disjunctures with newer forms of habitation and made these former spaces of "modern" living seem hopelessly crammed, dilapidated, and backward in the present era. Dwelling in such comparatively confining quarters was now an embodied reminder of one's marginalization and failed capacities in the era of "American guest" mansions and mass emigration to the United States.

Temple: Spirits of the Time

Two temples sitting side by side at the end of a Tang-style stone bridge along the Min River offer contrasting narratives of the recent history of religious revivalism in Longyan (figure 5). On the left, the low-slung Qing-era temple with the elaborate curving eaves (built during the imperial reign of Jiaqing [1796–1820]) houses the Monkey King (Qitian Dasheng), the divine trickster made famous in the classic Chinese tale *Journey to the West*, about the quest to retrieve the Mahayana Buddhist scriptures from India in the early Tang period. On the right, the tall, burgundy-tiled temple provides the newest space for Guanyin, the Buddhist goddess of mercy and, among other things, the patient guardian of the mischievous Monkey King. Although it is hard to imagine from this picture, for most of these two temples' histories, the Monkey King temple dominated the visual landscape on its side of the Min River. In fact, less than half a year before this picture was taken, the temple on the right could not even be

FIGURE 5 Tang-era bridge leading to the Monkey King Temple (left) and the newly expanded Guanyin Temple (right).

seen from the bridge, tucked as it was in the sloping hill almost directly behind the ornate roof of the Monkey King temple.

Although technically Guanyin is considered a more powerful deity than the Monkey King, the temple of this goddess was always meant to play a supporting role to the Monkey King temple in Longyan. Legend has it that in the Republican Era villagers first built the Guanyin temple after a tragic but awe-inspiring opera performance of *Journey to the West* took place on the bridge in front of the Monkey King's temple. At the height of a chase scene, when the trickster Monkey loses his pursuers by destroying a bridge and flying over the rushing waters, Longyan's own bridge supposedly collapsed with scores of audience members on it. But in the midst of this disaster, something miraculous also happened: the opera performer playing the Monkey King was seen soaring over the gaping waters and the heads of shaken audience members and landing on the other side of the river, as the real trickster god had done in the original tale.[6]

Witnesses of this event took it as a sign to build the Guanyin temple as a tribute to the Monkey King's divine efficacy. The Buddhist goddess was brought to this site behind the Monkey King to serve as the trickster god's

guardian and anchor, as she does in the original *Journey to the West*. With this smaller temple, villagers believed that the compassionate Guanyin would watch the Monkey King's back and, moreover, keep the mischievous trickster in his place. As the old caretaker of the Monkey King temple noted, "So he won't fly off again and cause trouble."

Village residents on this side of the Min River had every reason to want to keep the Monkey King in his place. The trickster, after all, was the titular district god for this part of the village, responsible for overseeing the well-being of all who lived on the south side of the river since this temple was built. Before the Communist Revolution, when popular religion thrived in China, Longyan was reportedly divided into four separate temple districts, each with its own territorial god to watch over a discrete quadrant of village residents. But after decades of vigilant Communist denouncement and destruction of ritual life and temples, only two of these four temple districts were able to effectively revive and blossom in the 1980s and '90s. The two others eventually got incorporated into the already flourishing temple districts, so the entire village was divided roughly into two cosmological zones—north and south of the Min River. As long as villagers could remember, the Monkey King had served as the designated district god for the half of the village south of the Min River.

Because of the Monkey King's singular importance south of the Min River, residents in his temple district were increasingly frustrated with the unchanging facade of his temple as all others, including the Guanyin temple next door, underwent drastic renovation and construction under loosening state policies on religion and growing overseas prosperity. In particular, as villagers began to succeed in their risky journeys abroad, overseas remittances began to flow back into Longyan with the designated purpose of thanking the gods through new temple construction and other lavish ritual activities. In the 1990s, at least 4 million renminbi (RMB) (approximately $500,000)—the majority from overseas remittances—was invested on the renovation, expansion, and new construction of temples in Longyan. The Guanyin temple alone underwent two expensive makeovers—a renovation for 70,000 RMB in 1989, followed by a more elaborate expansion and construction of a new high-rising building in 2002 (pictured in figure 5), currently towering over the old Monkey King temple at a cost of over 300,000 RMB. In fact, aside from the Monkey King temple, every major temple in Longyan, including the temple of the other territo-

rial god, Hua Guang Dadi, had drastically expanded in size and height over the decade of the 1990s.

In the meantime, the Monkey King temple had weathered all the ups and downs of ritual life in Longyan since it had first opened nearly two hundred years ago and had maintained practically the same aesthetic and architectural form. It was in fact the temple's historical value that both saved it during the worst years of the Cultural Revolution and (as villagers saw it) doomed it in the present era of increasingly competitive temple renovation and construction. While more than forty temples in Longyan were either demolished or collapsed from disrepair between the bombing and looting of the Japanese invasion and civil war (1937–1949) and the equally destructive acts of the Cultural Revolution, the Monkey King temple managed to stave off disaster and preserve its integrity, first by chance and later through the sheer gumption of one of its worshippers. Specifically, during the height of the Cultural Revolution, as clashing Red Guard factions tried to outdo each other by tearing down all signs of "backward superstition" in Longyan, one persistent villager succeeded after twelve tries in persuading the Fujian provincial administration to decree the historical preservation of the Monkey King temple and the interlocking stone bridge leading to its entrance. Although the temple itself was converted into cadre offices during this period, the provincial recognition of its historical value guaranteed that the integrity of the structure itself would be unharmed and unchanged through the years.

In the present era, this administrative order for historical preservation had become the key obstacle for villagers to demonstrate their gratitude to the Monkey King for protecting them on dangerous smuggling ventures and helping them secure overseas prosperity. Although during the heyday of Mao the temple's preserved architecture was a sign of the superior power of the Monkey King to defy Communist plans for obliterating ritual life, its unchanged form now evoked its relative austerity and obsolescence among the newly built or expanded temples. Twice, in 1990 and 1999, villagers on the south side of the river gathered funds to renovate the interior of the Monkey King temple as a celebration of their collective overseas prosperity and as gratitude to the god for successfully overseeing their temple district. But with the prohibition against the transformation and expansion of the structure, worshippers of the Monkey King simply could not keep up with the pace of temple reconstruction among other

newly successful and grateful worshippers—especially the followers of Hua Guang Dadi, who could completely raze and rebuild their temple to fit a more modern and grand sensibility with no spending limits or administrative obstacles.

These temple construction projects reflected more than a competitive dynamic between village districts trying to outdo each other in the display of newfound overseas prosperity. They also highlighted the complexities of religious revitalization as a kind of collective, forward-looking project among villagers. In particular, through their unremorseful enthusiasm for the tearing down and complete rebuilding of ritual spaces—regardless of "historical value"—villagers promoted their temples and their gods *not* as nostalgic bearers of "traditional" morals and lifestyles but rather as the crucial *vanguards* of modern, cosmopolitan ways. As villagers understood them, gods were fundamentally coeval subjects who both inhabited and exceeded the same spatial and temporal spheres as their worshippers. In other words, the gods were not timeless but *timely*. Or more accurately, as prescient beings with divine power over the progress and fate of their worshippers, gods were the ultimate trendsetters, always steps ahead of the temporal curve of humanity. Not surprisingly, as villagers transformed their habitats to reflect newer imaginations of modern, cosmopolitan lifestyles, they also worked on updating their spaces of worship. In fact, in general they prioritized the renovation of temples over that of their own houses, funneling the first batch of overseas wealth to their gods rather than to themselves as recognition of the gods' superior positioning as modern subjects in the temporal-spatial order.

In this sense, the historical preservation of the Monkey King temple was never a nostalgic, ideological project about "traditional" values but rather a strategy of last resort for survival in desperate times. Now that the climate for ritual life had considerably improved, residents south of the river could only express frustration that the district god responsible for forwarding their newly improved lifestyles was not dwelling in an even more modern and cosmopolitan space than their own "American guest" mansions. After all, the trickster god, like all other divine beings with the power to leap over rivers, mountains, and distant lands in a single step, already embodied and in fact surpassed the kind of worldly transnational mobility to which most villagers aspired in the contemporary era. For villagers, it only made sense that the Monkey King should inhabit a space representative of his superior mobility and worldliness, particularly as

these aspects had trickled down and positively affected the residents in his district. The god's continual residence in a small and relatively humble space was seen by his worshippers as unjust and dissonant—a frustrating displacement and marginalization of the Monkey King's obvious divine efficacy on behalf of his prosperous and grateful followers.

In contrast to the Monkey King temple, the new Guanyin site articulated village imaginations of proper dwellings for their modern and cosmopolitan gods. In fact, these new temples bore an uncanny resemblance to the villagers' "American guest" mansions in their height, tiled exteriors, and utilitarian lines. Only, as villagers often pointed out, their houses did not have the lavish decorative eaves or the complete and carefully remodeled interiors as the Guanyin temple had; thus, this divine space could be seen as just a bit more advanced than people's own dwellings, as it should be according to village understandings.

Road: High-Speed Horizons

In this final sketch of the built environment, I want to direct our attention to travel as an aspect of social relations and a condition of dwelling in Longyan. As I have argued above (with reference to James Clifford), traveling and dwelling are inextricably linked to the production of locality and people's experiences of relative emplacement among others in their social world. Dwellings themselves—whether "American guest" houses or new-style temples—were not just immobile sites of residence. They were also emanations of travel relations and what Doreen Massey (1993) calls "differentiated mobility" among the people of Longyan.[7]

In a very concrete and literal fashion, figure 6 highlights yet another aspect of how people's sense of place and locality is currently being transformed. Cutting across the valley landscape of the village, the pristine strip of a new highway curving into the infinite distance promises in the very near future to connect Longyan in an even more high-speed and direct fashion to the mobile flows of China's cosmopolitan centers, from Beijing and Shanghai in the north to Guangzhou in the south. The road required significant encroachments on fertile village land for its construction, not to mention massive demolition and drilling for a cavernous tunnel through the solid center of one of Longyan's imposing sacred mountains. Despite the loss of productive agricultural land and the major alteration of one of their mountains, villagers all seemed to eye this long

FIGURE 6 The newly constructed highway stretching across village farmland to connect Longyan to Shanghai in the north. It was still closed to traffic as of August 2002.

stretch of highway with considerable pride and optimism. As I was taking this picture, the villager who had hiked up with me to see the highway from above nudged me approvingly and noted, "Look how pretty it is." She added, "In the future, when you want to come and go between the countryside and the city, it will be even more convenient, even speedier. Then it won't seem so far between here and there."

Less than a decade ago, villagers still recalled the necessities of traveling for more than two hours along dirt and pockmarked roads to reach Fuzhou City from rural Longyan. Those who could remember further back, to the Republican Era, also reminded younger villagers (and me) of how better-connected Longyan had been to the city and other places before the Japanese invasion and the Communist Revolution had reduced it to an isolated peasant village in the countryside. On the eve of the Japanese invasion in 1937, some could still point to the completion of a new road stretching from Longyan to the South China Sea, meant to function as a major thoroughfare for troops and goods in the high era of Longyan's prestige as an administrative town and military command center in the region.

Less than a year later, this road would be obliterated in the first stages of war with Japan, when military commanders under the Chinese Nationalist Party (Guomingdang or KMT) ordered the same local servicemen who had built the road to dig it up in a defensive effort to stymie the advancing Japanese military. The Japanese managed to reach the village nonetheless, older residents recalled bitterly, while the KMT forces, who were supposed to defend the village, fled for their own self-protection and left Longyan at the mercy of the Japanese. In the ensuing devastation, the Japanese not only killed, looted, and raped in the village but also left many dead along this road until survivors came by to identify and bury them in shallow graves by the roadside. Until the era of mass emigration, this road remained in the same devastated and haunted state as a constant reminder of Longyan's past regional influence and superior connectedness and its reduction by war and revolution to an out-of-the-way, marginal place—an isolated peasant village.

Since the era of mass emigration and overseas remittances in Longyan, significant reconstruction of roads has helped reduce the travel time to Fuzhou City from a couple hours to about forty-five minutes. Still, villagers held even higher hopes for the new highway running through the middle of their landscape, which was in the last stages of completion at the end of the summer of 2002. Where I saw air pollution, traffic congestion, and other environmental hazards, people glimpsed the promise of greater embodied mobility and social connectedness and, moreover, the hope for recentering their social world as a locality of extended reach and import. Whatever nostalgia I felt for the soon-to-be outmoded village landscape and pace of life seemed quite unwarranted to these no-nonsense, modern(izing) villagers. As I learned whenever romanticized sentiments about the "peasant village" threatened to creep into my engagements with Longyan residents, these were subjects with no desire to remain where they presently were or, worse, return to a glorified version of their past, despite Longyan's prestigious and rich history as a military and commercial center in the region.

Although much scholarship on migration and diaspora has led us to consider "home" sites as places of nostalgic longing and view the articulation of displacement as a migrant's "politics of return" (cf. M. Smith 1994), what Longyan residents showed me through their aspirations, imaginations, and everyday practices of dwelling was the *necessity* of mobility and travel to the experience of emplacement in their contemporary

context. How one came to embody a superior mode of living had less to do with a "politics of return" than a politics of *destination*. To be the ideal modern, cosmopolitan subject in Longyan, one needed to find ways to be always better connected and more fluidly on the move, even as one remained in the same "home" site. To revisit and revise a well-known insight of Paul Gilroy's (1991) about diasporic conditions—that is, the notion "It ain't where you're from, it's where you're at"—I would argue that for these Longyan residents, ultimately "It ain't where you're at, it's where you're going" that matters (cf. Ang 1994, 10). Nowhere was this more evident than in the various classes of Restaurant English scattered around Longyan, where for a few hours every weekday a slew of villagers gathered to actively stage scenes of anticipated encounter at destinations overseas. To conclude this chapter, let me offer some final insights into the shifting contours of the Fuzhounese world as imagined through various editions and renditions of Restaurant English lessons in Longyan.

What's in General Tso's Chicken?

Zhong-Tang Tso was a famous Chinese General. The Chinese dish he liked the best was named after him. This is one of the favorite dishes of Americans. The chicken is battered and deep-fried to crispy brown and then sautéed in a sweet, sour, and hot sauce. It tastes delicious.

—Yuan Dai, *Practical English for People Working in Chinese Restaurants*

1) My food is ____	tasteless
	flavorless
2) This dish tastes ____	strange
	awful
	very bad
3) This sauce is too ____	light
	salty

—Andy Yang and Ann Lincoln, *Practical English for Chinese Restaurants*

China man: "Refers to Chinese male, carries humiliating, insulting characterization."

—Yuan Dai, *Practical English for People Working in Chinese Restaurants*

For 100 RMB each per month, anywhere from a dozen to over thirty villagers gathered in the converted sitting room of Chen Tao's house every

Monday through Friday to practice English passages like the ones above. With Chen's direction, these villagers would collectively bark out lines like "For here or to go?" or "What's in General Tso's Chicken?" in a speedy, discordant jumble against the repeated playback of a terribly warped, third-generation cassette of a seemingly proper American female voice elocuting the same lines with ease. Chen Tao's Restaurant English course was only one of many being taught in dispersed corners of Longyan, as well as in other similar villages in the Fuzhou countryside, where a critical mass of U.S.-bound residents could be found.

Like the worn copy of *Practical English for People Working in Chinese Restaurants* (Yuan Dai 1995), discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the text and tape used in Chen Tao's classes also made their way from New York to Longyan via relatives overseas. All the students in Chen's class worked from photocopied versions of another book, *The Most Practical (Eat-In, Take-Out) Restaurant English* (A. Yang and Lincoln n.d.), also published in the New York area. Both of these books had gone through multiple printings in the United States, with different editions circulating among the villagers in various forms—original and photocopied, tattered and new. In Longyan I encountered two editions of each of these books—1995 and 1996 editions of the former and two undated versions of the latter, which had been renamed *Practical English for Chinese Restaurants* in its later revised and updated edition.[8] As the "practical" in their various titles suggested, all of these books promised to offer lessons not just of English but also of restaurant work overseas. Chock full of maps and sample restaurant menus, as well as detailed recipes for common stir-fry sauces and cocktail mixes, these texts were in fact more like survival guides for those navigating the Chinese restaurant industry overseas, be they clueless new immigrants encountering English and restaurant work for the first time in New York City or savvy restaurant owners negotiating tricky business leases, health inspections, and public relations in suburban or small-town America. Studying these books from cover to cover, one would not only proceed from the basic English alphabet to complex English dialogues involving restaurant customers, landlords, and lawyers; along the way, one would also encounter whole texts in Chinese providing detailed descriptions and tips about everything from the different working environments of take-out, buffet-style, and more upscale, sit-down restaurants to the proper etiquette, responsibilities, and skills required of various restaurant workers—from delivery person, cashier, and host to waiter, manager,

and boss. The following passage from the 1995 edition of *Practical English for People Working in Chinese Restaurants* illustrates some of the extralinguistic knowledge available in these books:

> Within Chinese restaurants in the United States, there is a kind of store specializing in take-out. Their scale is usually smaller, usually with three to five workers and with the most having about ten. This kind of take-out restaurant in the United States is extremely common. In many areas, they can be found in every town and district, and even within a small range of neighboring streets, there is commonly one restaurant on every block. Because these take-out restaurants have fewer employees, every worker's workload is bigger. . . . Because every take-out restaurant is similar in major aspects, though different in minor points, customer service becomes a main point for attracting business. Here are key points for good interaction:
>
> 1. You have to be friendly. First impression is crucial.
> 2. You can briefly exchange greetings and be on friendly terms with the customer, but don't talk about sensitive topics such as politics, marriage, race, yearly income, etc. (Reader can consult section on conversations with guests).
> 3. You must keep clothes and appearance clean and tidy. Fingernails must be kept short and rinsed clean. Also make sure that the work area is clean.
> 4. When serving a customer, you will commonly face all sorts of questions or problems. In order to respect the customer's argument, you should use appropriate words and behavior to solve the problem.
> 5. When the customer leaves, you must remember to say thanks to him/her. (Yuan Dai 1995, 54–55)

Restaurant English lessons like the one above incited villagers to engage in what Douglas Holmes and George Marcus (2006) have termed "para-ethnography." In particular, through such texts, aspiring migrants from Longyan were developing a specialized knowledge of cultural practices and life overseas in ways both familiar and entangled with the very project of ethnography, including and especially my own. Like me, the students in Chen Tao's class studied the maps and passages in Restaurant English books in hopes of gaining a better insight and foothold into a social world in which they were not yet conversant or fully situated. Every single one of the seventeen students I met during my visits to Chen Tao's

morning sessions already had plans in motion for leaving China. In fact, attending Restaurant English classes was itself a declaration of imminent departure for overseas, something recognizable in Longyan as a scale-making practice for pushing the terms of emplacement beyond the provincial boundaries of village life. Five days a week, Chen Tao's makeshift classroom provided a staging ground for these students to make claims of belonging to the world conjured up through Restaurant English.

Yet as I learned in Longyan, Restaurant English was merely the starting point, not the end, for enacting spatial imaginaries. In fact, the text Chen Tao's students recited in class offered not just one but several divergent possibilities for emplacement, its various lessons leading the reader through an ambiguous and shifting social landscape from the backroom kitchens of Chinese take-outs in New York City to business dealings and everyday life in the suburban and rural outskirts of the United States. Perhaps most striking about these classes was that claims to scale oscillated from lesson to lesson and student to student. While dialogues set in New York's Chinese restaurants occupied the bulk of these books, aspiring migrants also had the opportunity to imagine alternative geographies through scattered English lessons for catching long-distance buses to Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., for checking into a motel while scouting restaurant locations in the Midwest, and for getting a driver's license and a car in small-town America. Even more illuminating were sections orienting students to the possibilities of emplacement in what villagers termed *zaqu* ("mixed" or multiracial neighborhoods overseas). These included a chapter on Spanish translations of typical Chinese foods and restaurant dialogue (Yuan Dai 1995, 1996; Yang and Lincoln n.d.) and a dictionary of common racial slurs and profanities (Yuan Dai 1995, 1996) that began with the following list:

1. Chinaman
2. Chink
3. Chinky
4. Nip
5. Jap
6. Slant-eye
7. Slope-face
8. Flat-head
9. Gook. (Yuan Dai 1995, 307)

Chen Tao's students did not all embrace the various scenarios and settings evoked by the lessons of Restaurant English in the same way. Some, like the shy but earnest Zou Shu, were drawn to the tensions that occasionally rippled through these texts and looked for opportunities in class to map out the hazards of racism and marginalization overseas. Others, like the outgoing and ambitious young bachelor Wang He, who had already failed once to emigrate, preferred to hone in on the entrepreneurial side of things, perking up in class only when reading the English dialogues and Chinese texts that pointed the way to climbing the restaurant industry ladder from humble busboy to successful boss in the United States. Then there were two teenage boys, Zhao Yongjun and Lin Zhu, who sat in the back corner of the room and spent most of their time conspicuously playing checkers with each other while the rest of the class recited English words and dialogues together. While Zhou Shu pondered a hostile terrain of enclosure and exile and Wang He strove to inhabit an expansive one of upward mobility, these two youths merely registered their grudging presence and obvious reluctance for belonging to a world mediated by Restaurant English. Though all these students shared a general orientation to destinations overseas, clearly there were tensions and divergences in the ways they claimed their "place" within and beyond Chen Tao's classroom. As the next chapter will show, such tensions of scale only intensified when village aspirations for emplacement were juxtaposed against state expectations of their lives as "peasant" subjects.