

Managing religious mega-event in a mundane urban community: the case of Muslim Eid al-fitr in Huxi Mosque, Shanghai

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Abstract: Accompanying Shanghai's opening-up and rising-up as a global city, both internal and international Muslim immigrants are rapidly increasing. With a large proportion of the irreligious population, the Chinese government's attitude to religion is neutral. As religious mega-events would require extended open space, the Muslim immigrants have to occupy some public spaces around the mosque to hold religious events, confronting the everyday life of the local residents in the surrounding community. Taking the Eid al-Fitr 2017 in Shanghai Huxi Mosque as an example, we investigated the religious mega-event when it took up the whole streets for a whole day, and interviewed 56 Muslims, 89 locals, and 9 administrators. The results show that the rigid top-down government-enforced management model cannot resolve contradictions between the two groups because different social groups (the Muslims and the local residents) have completely different spatial demands. Based on the interview with key informants and survey, preliminary findings suggest that a bottom-up model, for example, a street-based community comprised by residents, Muslims and neighborhood committees, may work better to manage this religious mega-event in a self-organized fashion. First, more channels should be created to express the Muslims' opinions regarding the planning and formulation of both mega-events and daily life. Second, a harmonious cultural atmosphere could be created for the Muslims group by organizing some unique local activities and cultural festivals or temporary markets to enhance mutual understanding between local residents and Muslims. Finally, establishing Muslim cultural community may play an important role in strengthening the understanding of religious culture to the surrounding communities and mitigate the misunderstanding and alienation between locals and Muslims. These findings will generate implications for policy-makers to manage religious mega-events more effectively in a mundane urban community in Shanghai, and other global cities with diverse ethnic groups.

Keywords: religious mega-event, community, social group, self-organization

Introduction

With the rapid development of urbanization, more and more minority groups are flooding into cities, which brings many problems worth thinking about for the development of urban society. Among them, how to properly deal with large religious gathering places in high-density cities has always been a main topic in urban studies. Through reading relevant literatures, it is found that in the traditional settlements, Muslims mainly live in "adjacent temples", "due to temples" or "homologous temples", with characteristics of taking their own religious beliefs as the platform of social relations. However, in metropolis of Shanghai, most Muslims come to Shanghai by ways of immigration, the activity space is still very limited. At the same time, Muslims are

restricted by work restrictions, residence isolation, language barriers, communication limitations and communication methods, which further deepen their appeal for religious life.

In recent years, during the eid al-fitr and eid al-adha, many news media reported that thousands of muslims would occupy the whole road in Changde Road, Putuo district, Shanghai. The swats, public security and traffic policemen in Shanghai would "open the road" for believers to make pilgrimage. The international media was taken aback, lamenting as "Muslim occupation of the streets of Shanghai". The "pilgrimage on the road" of the eid al-fitr in the west mosque of Shanghai has aroused great controversy, which directly conflicts with the interest demands of other groups. Shanghai has always held an inclusive attitude towards ethnic groups and religions, and has adopted a series of management measures, but contradictions still exist and even become more and more controversial. So why do muslims "make pilgrimage"? What is the social impact? Why the controversy was happening?

Methods

This paper covers the area of Huxi Mosque, No. 3, 1328 Lane, Changde Road, Putuo District, Shanghai. It is adjacent to Line 7/13, and has convenient public transportation. Muslims worship in Shanghai for many years. Shanghai West Mosque, also known as Yaoshuilong Mosque, is the first rebuilt mosque in Shanghai after liberation. The whole building is exquisite, magnificent and full of modern Arab Islamic architectural features. The mosque is located between the residential area of Changshou New Village, a kindergarten and a further education institute. It also has a main entrance and exit on Changde Road, the city's sub-main road, and a secondary entrance and exit in the adjacent Changshou New Village.

We hope that by understanding and understanding the religious spatial organization in high-density cities, we will pay more attention to the contradiction between religion and urban mainstream groups and ethnic minority religious groups behind urban life. This paper focuses on the "Occupied Road worship" incident of the Shanghai West Mosque, investigates and analyses its process and social impact, understands the real ideas of interest groups and the causes of "Occupied Road worship", analyses the causes of disputes from a relatively fair point of view, and puts forward some suggestions for mitigating the impact and optimizing related management in the future.

This social survey adopts the methods of field observation, interview, questionnaire survey, literature review, software analysis and so on. The subjects were mainly Muslim worshippers, residents and managers. Fifty-six questionnaires were interviewed with Muslims and 89 questionnaires were interviewed with Muslims of different types, including 23 Muslims, 32 residents and 9 managers.

Analysis of the results

Limited religious space for muslims

According to the data of the Fifth and Sixth Census, there were 60,000 registered Muslims and 78,000 Muslims in Shanghai in 2000 and 2010 respectively, while there were 30,000 and 120,000 foreign Muslims in the same period. Although they accounted for a small proportion of the total number, they grew rapidly. The average annual growth rate of registered Muslims was 2.6%, which was 4.7 times the growth rate of registered population, while the average annual growth rate of foreign Muslims was 14.8%. On the one hand, local Muslims continue to grow, on the other hand, a large number of foreign Muslims continue to pour in, resulting in increasing demand for Muslim religion in Shanghai.

In addition, it was found that Muslims who attended the Eid al-Fitr came from various districts and counties in Shanghai, exceeding the service radius of the Mosque itself. On the one hand, the number of mosques in Shanghai has not changed for a long time. In 2004, there were 8 mosques in Shanghai. Each mosque

corresponds to 8,479 Muslims with household registration. It ranks second among provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the Central Government, far exceeding the number of believers that a normal mosque can do. By 2010, this figure has risen to an average of 9,700. The monasteries are unevenly distributed, overlapping service areas, and generally occupy a small area with limited accommodation. The number of Muslims is increasing and the demand is increasing, while the number and space of mosques are not increasing. It is the imbalance between supply and demand in this space that leads to the occurrence of the incidents of the occupation of public space by the pilgrimage of Eid al-Fitr.

Lack of jurisdiction and feedback among relevant groups and departments

The administrative administrators of the Eid al-Fitr worship in Shanghai West Mosque are mainly divided into three departments: Street residents committee - Changshou Road Street residents committee, traffic control Brigade - traffic police detachment of Putuo Public Security Bureau, Public Security Department - Putuo Branch of Shanghai Public Security Bureau and its subordinate police stations. In the organization and management, the district government takes the lead, jointly with the above departments, as well as urban management departments and religious offices, to coordinate various work and feedback from interest groups.

The mosque lacks the consciousness of communicating with the residents actively, and the opinions and consideration of the surrounding residents are insufficient. It does not assume the responsibility of informing and explaining actively. Their lack of initiative also increases the difficulty of other management departments. Relevant departments failed to establish effective communication channels. Due to the sensitivity of religion, it is difficult to establish effective communication channels due to the passivity and delay in dealing with problems and the complexity of relevant departments. Due to the lack of communication and feedback between the departments and residents, residents do not attach importance to the universality of religious assemblies, and only publicize the results of administrative management. The public lacks the basis for understanding religious assemblies, thus increasing misunderstanding and dissatisfaction.

Comments and feedback between residents and Muslim because involves the religious and ethnic problems, management style is more complicated, making comprehensive management department is difficult to deal with both sides, both sides communication channels, combined with the traffic police are required for large religious gatherings, urban management, public security, such to maintain order, to strengthen the residents of the Muslim sense of distance, make growing estrangement together.

Discussion

Through the semantic difference, it is found that residents and muslims have different attitudes towards eid al-fitr, residents generally do not understand and feel monotonous, while muslims think it has a happy festive atmosphere. The difference in values and culture behind this event is the reason for the controversy caused by the road using. Objectively, muslims are different from ordinary people in dress, language communication, eating habits and even lifestyle. This cultural difference will inevitably lead to the exclusion of the two sides in the contact, which is further reflected in the values. Residents generally feel the influence of road worship, while muslims are accustomed to it.

The communication between muslims shows a ranking characteristics of religious identity, local identity, identity, community identity and professional identity. After arriving in Shanghai, due to the differences in cultural customs, community relations gradually weakened along with their identity, occupation and community identity, and continuously strengthened their religious and local identity. This kind of self-identity of muslims habitually constructs the social circle according to the traditional way. They lack a sense of belonging to the local people and have a strong "pass-by mentality". As a result, their identity is blurred and "inner circle". The original dogma of not supporting intermarriage limits the communication of muslims. 70% of muslims show a negative attitude towards non-muslim communication and have no strong subjective will for communication.

This has led to "inner circle" social networks, in which muslims are mostly of the same ethnicity and religion and rarely interact with non-muslims. Due to the residents' lack of willingness to take the initiative to learn about muslims, the frequent occurrence of international violence and the excessive exaggeration by the media, the residents generally form stereotypes about the Muslim community, such as "extreme" and "restless". Even their religion, culture and some negative events are associated to form a label. The formation of such a cultural label is also the cause of the growing estrangement between the two sides. The cultural differences between the minority groups and the urban mainstream groups make the two sides in the process of cultural contact, integration and adaptation, have alienated and discordant towards other cultures, and even subjectively have negative attitudes, such as cultural separation, cultural isolation, and cultural disidentity. Islam belongs to the minority group culture, so the residents will feel superior to the mainstream culture when they come into contact with it, resulting in different cultural acceptance attitudes of the two sides. Through the questionnaire, it is found that the residents generally believe that muslims should follow the local customs and learn and understand the local culture, but they do not think that they should also take the initiative to understand the Muslim culture. Such an imbalance in attitude makes muslims have been alienated from the mainstream culture rather than integrated.

To sum up, the objective cultural difference makes the Muslim community more inclined to ethnic identity, and intensifies its social "inner circle". The labeling of religious culture and the difference in cultural acceptance attitude make the relationship between muslims and residents more alienated. This kind of space, the cultural difference behind the behavior and even the social identity, is the main cause of the controversy of this pilgrimage.

5 Conclusion

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In the process of in-depth analysis, the author found that "occupying the road to worship" is not a horrible problem. The essence of the dispute is mainly caused by spatial imbalance and cultural differences. According to the statistical analysis of the number of Muslims coming from various districts, mainly living in the northern suburbs, considering the radius of the mosque service, it is recommended to build a new mosque or relocate the Huxi mosque to the northern suburbs, and appropriately expand the scale to meet the religious activities of Muslims.

In the case where the current space is limited, the following measures can be taken. First, focusing more on national cultural exchanges. Relevant departments or the media should strengthen the science of national culture. Residents can have a way to understand Muslim religious beliefs and customs, thus narrowing the sense of distance and strangeness between different cultures, changing the stereotypes of the people and removing cultural labels. Fully mobilize the enthusiasm of the Muslim community mechanism, promote mutual understanding, thereby enhancing the sense of identity and creating a harmonious and good cultural atmosphere for different groups. Second, enhancing the effectiveness of communication channels. In view of the shortcomings of timeliness, communication effectiveness and information transparency in the management mechanism, the proposal to establish a permanent body of the Standing Committee is proposed. It consists of representatives of residents, management departments, and mosques, allowing residents to participate in and understand the development of the activity process to compensate for the feedback from residents to the communication channels between departments. Through self-governing institutions, we will establish long-term

exchange channels between residents and mosques to resolve misunderstandings and alienation caused by lack of communication throughout the year. Third, promoting creations of religious activities. In order to shorten the social distance between religious culture and secular society, some “innovative” religious festival patterns can also bring us some inspiration: turning religious festivals into local festivals and secular festivals, including unique localities. Activities, non-religious recreational breaks and market events can be naturally integrated into it. If Eid al-Fitr is not only a religious activity, but also a secularized local national cultural festival, it will be conducive to the harmony of national culture.

Life is still going on with times changing. Shanghai's pressure on population growth, environmental resources constraints, cultural complexity and diversity is increasingly prominent. Shanghai must break through the development bottleneck and realize the transformation of urban development model. As mentioned as Shanghai 2035, “in a future society with a more diverse demographic structure, Shanghai will strive to become a humanistic city with successful cultural governance, outstanding global influence, and high public recognition through its unremitting pursuit of urban quality”. As a remarkable global city, religious groups and religious activities will be treated in a more inclusive manner. Even if it is not the same faith, everyone can still find a space in the city, can be recognized and looking forward to know each other.

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