Street Culture in Chengdu
PUBLIC SPACE, URBAN COMMONERS, AND LOCAL POLITICS, 1870–1930

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For my parents and wife
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built during this period. Running between Central Mansion Street and Horse Riding Street, it has since become one of Chengdu's most prosperous commercial areas, after Great East Street and the Commercial Center. The improvements in the streets of Chengdu set the standard for other towns in Sichuan. A British diplomat described what he saw in 1930: "A striking feature of present-day Szechwan is the surprisingly modern and up-to-date appearance of many of the large towns." Chengdu and other cities in Sichuan had undergone "a wholesale reconstruction within the past few years, and are now conspicuous for their wide streets, rows of clean and uniform houses and shops, and good sanitation." From this perspective, we can see one achievement of urban reform. Street reconstruction was the most visible change to the city's appearance. But if wider streets improved traffic flow, the resulting demolition of some traditional space for the lower classes and increased regulations provoked resentment.

The social reformers' successful engagement in local public affairs enlarged the scope of their influence. They now decided that they needed more public space for their mission. They had two major strategies for achieving this goal: to shape urban space according to their own design and to consolidate their leadership. Beginning in the early twentieth century, these reformist elites orchestrated profound urban reforms with state support. As in modern Western cities, where social reform and control often center on the politics and class struggles of urban public life, so, too, in early-twentieth-century Chengdu "the reform of popular values and customs inevitably became intimately bound up with" issues of "public order." The people targeted by the social reformers were usually at the bottom levels of the urban class structure, people whose existence reflected the gap between rich and poor, educated and uneducated, and residents and outsiders. When the elites tried to achieve their mission, they exploited blatant cultural discrimination and class prejudice. In fact, the elites' criticism of commoners' public behavior revealed a power struggle over control of the street as much as or more than it did their desire to "civilize" commoners.

5 Street Control

The most important change in early-twentieth-century urban Chengdu society was the establishment of an organized police force. The police force, established in 1902, was the first specialized municipal administrative unit in Chengdu. Previously, all Chengdu households had been organized into a baojia system, which provided local control and security but had no role in setting policy for urban management and administration. Similarly, local patron-deity associations assumed some responsibilities in the community but never acted in any official capacity. Because of the absence of a municipal government during the first two decades of the twentieth century, the police played a triple role, taking responsibility for local security, for urban administration, and for social reform. The police force dismissed all of the old "street clerks" and patrolmen and appointed 50 district heads (juzheng) and 383 street heads (jiezheng). About nine hundred men between the age of twenty and forty who were free from disease and were not opium smokers were recruited; these earliest policemen were acknowledged to be of strong moral character.

Urban elites had always sought opportunities to shape the values and habits of the lower classes. In this period, both local elites and officials tried to strengthen their influence on street life, and the establishment of the police force provided a powerful means to impose their reformist ideas. Thus, social reformers enthusiastically supported and even initiated police reforms. Many innovations were transplanted directly from Japan, as Fu Chongju's Investigation of Chengdu (Chengdu tonglan) demonstrated. As in early modern Europe, where the elite class and political authorities sought to transform society via the institution of the police, in late-Qing Chengdu the police also functioned from the very beginning in a role of social reform through regulation of street activities. Social reformers hoped to promote "civilization" by teaching the lower classes public behavior that was appropriate for these more progressive and attractive new public spaces.

As soon as Chengdu's police force was organized, it carried out measures of street control. The commoners' public appearance and behavior—everything from what they wore to what they saw and said—remained a
constant concern for the elites and police. On the street, police could investigate and even arrest anyone for a variety of vague offenses, including "bizarre speech," "unusual behavior," "weird clothing," or "evil and licentious talk." Singing purportedly "licentious" folk songs and gathering in public to "disturb the peace" by shouting were forbidden. For the first time, regulations governed traffic, prostitution, gambling, and hygiene, as well as the behavior of specific groups of people, such as monks and nuns, second-hand item traders, and witch doctors.1 These new street rules provide the first evidence that the city was beginning to institutionalize the tenets of modern municipal management.

The police tried to take over many responsibilities formerly controlled by such community organizations as patron-deity associations, charitable organizations, and guilds. During the period of the New Policies, elites and local officials often cooperated to promote reform projects, and therefore it is difficult to distinguish elite initiatives from the state's, although their agendas were often quite different. The police were a major force of local reform and represented the power of the state, but they were led by new elites whose policies reflected class-based ideas more than they did state-sponsored ones. Whereas the elite reform was largely promoted by the state and the New Policies were supported enthusiastically by local elites in the late Qing, the widening rift between the two became increasingly visible during the early Republic. This issue is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7.

This chapter examines how the police dealt with issues such as traffic, public order, begging, using opium, gambling, hooliganism, hygiene, firefighting, and prostitution. Kristin Stapleton offers a general survey on the relevant policies and leadership in the late Qing in her recent book.2 My discussion here details the implementation of new regulations and looks at how the reforms reached people on the streets. Furthermore, my discussion extends beyond the Qing until the late 1920s, to demonstrate that street reforms were enforced into the early Republican era. Despite the transformation from an imperial to a Republican system, the measures of street control remained largely the same.3 This chapter will also explore little-touched issues relating to street hoodlums, urban popular cults, and teahouses, to reveal what real changes took place in ordinary people's public life under the reform movement.

Regulating the Street

Controlling public space meant increasing restrictions on the street, which created enormous inconvenience for ordinary people, especially those who made their livings there.4 For example, Chengdu began to control traf-
the shops when they were opening in the morning and closing in the evening, and purchases could be made only outside. They were not allowed to buy weapons, stolen goods, or official property or purchase anything from sellers wearing soldiers' uniforms. They had to record sellers' names and addresses and keep purchases for at least five days before reselling them. They were required to assist in police investigations of theft and had to turn in to the police anyone suspected of selling stolen property. Any such trader who planned to move had to receive permission from the police in advance. People who did not live in Chengdu were forbidden to engage in the business. Finally, a permit was required to be hung on the front of each shop, stall, and basket; those who operated without a license were punished.

The police also sought to regulate the street labor market. Although literally meaning "sellers of human beings," renfan were actually employment brokers. A minority were indeed guilty of selling people, however, and their activities were restricted by the police. The police issued a regulation requiring all employment brokers to move to West Imperial River Street (Xiyuhe je) and Imperial City Street (Huangcheng bianjie) in order to live and work under police supervision. Those who did not comply were not allowed to continue in the profession. In the early Republican era, Rear Gate Street (Houzi men) along the West Imperial River (Xiyuhe) became the largest labor market (see Map 3) and even offered employment for women as wet nurses and servants. The police regulated all aspects of this business as well, requiring brokers to register and put wooden label boards on their gates to indicate licensure. Once an employer hired a laborer, the broker was required to list his or her wages and address. Brokers who served as marriage matchmakers were required to investigate their clients' backgrounds. No broker was allowed to procure servant girls or nurses for brothels. Finally, brokers assumed all responsibility for employees who stole from their employers.

Many social reformers felt that how the streets looked was an important indicator of the city's well-being. This might explain why so much social reform was aimed at improving the streets' appearance through improved hygiene. In traditional Chengdu, public hygiene was poor, particularly in lower-class neighborhoods. A French traveler complained in the late nineteenth century that "if you made a mistake and entered a blind alley, you had to cross refuse dumps, where it was slippery and smelly." In some streets, Fu Chongju wrote in Investigation of Chengdu, "water accumulates and bad smells assail one's nose." On rainy days "dirty water and excrement flow everywhere," while on sunny days "the air is full of dust." Missionaries observed that it was difficult for women to walk down Chengdu streets because of the latter's poor condition. There were "ill-smelling crocks" on every street corner; people threw trash on the street, and "great ugly pigs, fowl and rats were the scavengers."

The police regulated street hygiene, cleaning up refuse and dead animals, prohibiting pig slaughtering in the town, removing urine pits along paths, and improving public latrines and sewers. Furthermore, social reformers suggested other measures for keeping the city clean, such as requiring ox-cart drivers and street tanners to clean up ox droppings and relocating smelly leather tanneries to the outskirts of town. They also suggested protecting people's health by prohibiting water carriers from carrying polluted water from the Imperial River. Chengdu residents had had a tradition of keeping domestic animals such as pigs, goats, chickens, and ducks, and many of them lived in the street. To improve sanitation, the police banned all domestic animals from public thoroughfares.

The police started to hire street sweepers in the late Qing. According to missionary Vale, they wore a distinctive uniform with the three characters "Qing Dao Fu" on the back and front, representing a wheelbarrow, a wicker basket, and a broom. All households were to take their garbage out before the sweepers started collecting garbage and sweeping streets at seven o'clock; the refuse they collected was transported to an assigned dumping ground. Nevertheless, before the 1920s street sweepers were not common, and residents still customarily swept the areas in front of their houses themselves. Often "each man or woman before his own door with a small hand broom of brush gathers the trash together, as he pleases, until someone who wants street sweepings comes and removes the pile." Local authorities encouraged city dwellers to take responsibility for the cleanliness of public spaces. A 1928 hygiene regulation required that "no trash and dirty water are to be dumped on the street"; that "while sweeping a house overlooking the street, water is to be sprinkled first to avoid flying dust"; and that "no dirty clothes are to be hung over sidewalks.

The public toilet seems always to be a prominent issue in urban hygiene. The police ordered all lavatories to be modified to follow official designs in 1903. Previously, some streets did not have lavatories; pedestrians urinated in "manure pits" at the side of the street. Under the new regulations, these pits were to be filled in, and anyone who urinated in the street was to be punished by a fine of fifty wen, or a day's work if the offender could not pay the fine. Because most Chengdu people didn't know about sanitation, urinating in the street often occurred, causing clashes between violators and policemen. One news story told of "a rude and uneducated man" who not only refused to stop urinating in the street when he was caught one night, but insulted the policeman. When the policeman attempted to take the scofflaw to the police station, he punched the officer, ran home, and locked himself inside. The next day he was arrested and charged with violating sanitation regulations and assaulting a policeman. Until the early Republic, however, the issue of the public lavatory was still unresolved because of residents' ignorance of sanitation. In 1914, the police ordered district policemen and
The oil lamps used during this period were very dim and poorly maintained. The police made a special effort to enforce the prohibition on urinating in the street; offenders were to be put in jail for a day or pay a fine of at least one yuan. Despite the new public-toilets and new rules, however, some people continued the old practice. One local newspaper reported such a story: a residential compound on a quiet street was frequently used as a site for urinating. The owner pasted a notice on the wall that said, “wanglerendeng bude zaici xiaobian” (no passerby is allowed to urinate here). One day he saw a man urinating there and asked, “Didn’t you see the notice?” The man answered, “Yes, I urinated here because I saw your notice. Doesn’t your notice say ‘wangleiren, dengbude, zaici xiaobiao’ (passersby who cannot hold it can urinate here)?” If the notice had been punctuated differently, the man would have been right, but obviously he was deliberately misinterpreting and challenging the public notice.

The police also forced the removal of unburied bodies, which had customarily been saved in temples. Chengdu was a city of immigrants, most of whom arrived in Chengdu after the Zhang Xianzhong Rebellion in the late Ming and the reconstruction of the city in the early Qing; when they died, their bodies would be sent back to their hometowns for burial, as was the custom. Until arrangements could be completed, however, the deceased were temporarily stored in caskets in the temples outside town. For a variety of reasons, many caskets ended up being kept at the temple for years, even decades, and some were actually abandoned. In 1909, the police reported that in the temples outside the East and North City Gates alone there were 327 coffins, some of which had been there for over thirty years. The authorities then issued a public notice requiring relatives of the deceased to bury the caskets within three months. Obviously, this custom could not be changed easily or quickly. From various documents, we find that this burial practice still existed in the 1930s and 1940s.

Whereas cleaning the streets and other public places gave the city a better appearance, installing streetlights altered the landscape and nightlife of the city, as well as expanded its public space. Unlit streets were filled with danger after nightfall. As one criminologist said, “a light is as good as a policeman.” He even went so far as to suggest that he “would rather have plenty of electric lights and clean streets than all the law and order societies in existence.” Early streetlights in Chengdu were oil lanterns, lit by night watchmen hired by the police; as a foreigner described, “oil lamps are set up on low posts at short intervals, and are lit every night.” All households had to pay a “lighting oil tax.” After the 1911 Revolution, the management of streetlights was transferred from the police to the local “neighborhood militia” (tsuanfang). According to complaints received by the police, the oil lamps used during this period were very dim and poorly maintained.

Although the early streetlights had many problems, they made possible outdoor activities at night and also brought a new look to the city. Furthermore, streetlights were sometimes used for other purposes as well; for instance, sedan-chair carriers would count them as they passed to determine fares.

All these changes were related to physical conditions of the streets and reflected the police’s efforts to improve the city’s appearance. Some of these measures, such as traffic control and market management, had never been enforced before, while some previously were the responsibility of voluntary organizations. In either case, efficiency dramatically increased after the police took over, and the city’s improved appearance created considerable support for the reform movement. The social reformers’ agenda, however, extended even into the behavior and appearance of individuals. Their main targets were the “law offenders” and the poor.

**Hooligans, Gamblers, and Policemen**

The police defined public order as one of its major duties, “controlling bad people and prohibiting bad things.” Anyone who disrupted the public peace by “playing the bully” would be warned and possibly arrested. After policemen began to patrol the streets, admirers noted that “well-dressed policemen are now stationed at frequent intervals through the city. Each is armed with a light stick, and all seem well disciplined. Without doubt the cause of law and order is advancing” (see Figure 5.1). The appearance of policemen in public indeed was a threat to local toughs. The police paid special attention to so-called hooligans and gamblers.

Hooligans liked to gather on the street, typically in groups of three or five or even more. Women were the hooligans’ primary targets on the street, especially those from ordinary families who sat in their doorways sewing or doing other daily housework. Groups of rowdy young men also often lurked at public events, such as the Flower Fair, where they would congregate at entrances or exits and comment or otherwise try to take advantage of women as they entered and exited. According to a new regulation, police were to follow and investigate those who looked like “rogues” (nuihui), did not behave, were frivolous, lured “young boys from good families,” or congregated in groups in theaters, teahouses, or wine shops. Anyone who wore “bandit dress”—in green, red, and black—would be ordered to take it off. Local newspapers often reported how the police dealt with the “hoodlums.” In one case, when two young women visited the Center for Promoting Commerce and Industry, some “frivolous young men” commented on their appearance from head to toe and slandered...
Some local toughs had organized into gangs, which the police tried very hard to break up. These people acted collectively, bullying and extorting from ordinary households, shops, and other small business. One group of "wandering riffraff" frequently rushed into brothels "with fierce and arrogant faces" to extort money. Their brazen actions caused furious attacks from the police. In the early Republic, some "profligate sons of the rich" organized into a "Society of Evil Deities" (Duoshen hui) and gathered in theaters and restaurants, deliberately drawing public attention by "not behaving themselves." Because they often caused trouble on the street, the police posted a public notice that prohibited their activities and ordered their parents to restrict their sons. According to the new rule, the profligate sons of the rich were not allowed to wander on the street. If they violated the rule, their parents would be punished along with them.

The police punished these "misbehaving" men severely, usually through public humiliation. For instance, some men often threw fruit and rocks at women traveling in sedan chairs or otherwise abused them. The hooligans caught were subjected to the public humiliation of wearing a yoke publicly for a whole day, "losing face before a thousand people." The police furthermore erected a stone pillar outside the main gate of the Two Deities Nunnery (Erxian an), on which was inscribed "the public place for locking up hooligans." Hooligans were often paraded through the street as a punishment, although this form of punishment was usually reserved for those who committed capital offenses.

Some so-called "cases of taking liberties with women," however, were obviously exaggerated by the conservative social environment. For instance, when a girl went to a shop and a sedan-chair carrier followed her and tried "to talk and make jokes with her," she called the police, and policemen took him to the police station for punishment. Another case occurred when one well-dressed man carrying a camera saw several beautiful girls drinking tea by a lotus pond; pretending to take pictures of the scenery, he actually focused on the girls. He was caught by the police, convicted as a hooligan, and whipped. In another case, a young man, regarded as a "hooligan," was beaten with a truncheon two thousand times and locked to the stone pillar in front the Two Deities Nunnery as nearly a thousand people watched. What had he done to merit such severe punishment? When a woman walked over a ditch, he said to her: "your feet are so small; let me hold your hand." Such behavior seems merely frivolous today, but in the 1910s it was a serious crime.

Suppressing Gambling. Apprehending rowdy youths on the street proved much easier than regulating opium use and gambling. Opium smoking and gambling became major targets of the police after each was criminalized (Figures 5.2 and 5.3). The anti-opium campaign was relatively successful;
opium use ended almost entirely by 1911. Gambling, unlike opium smoking, most often occurred in public places and was virtually indistinguishable from many other leisure activities, particularly mahjong.

In late-Qing Chengdu, various games of chance, such as “bird fighting,” playing cards, and mahjong, were popular and took place on street corners, under bridges, and in teahouses, residential houses, and brothels (see Figure 5.2. Opium Princess (Yanhai gongzhu). This picture satirizes female opium addicts. From TSHB 1909, no. 6. Figure 5.3. Catching an Opium Seller. From TSHB 1912, no. 11.). Figure 5.4). Because some gamblers set up traps to take money from the inexperienced, reformers worried that gambling destroyed families and contributed to social disorder (see Figure 5.5). In the early twentieth century, reformers appealed to the police to send the “dangerous gamblers” to prison, and the police enacted regulations to forbid gambling, including the traditional pastime of mahjong. Social reformers supported this policy by writing many articles on the depraved aspects of mahjong. Popular Daily,
FIGURE 5.4. Fighting over Mahjong. According to the inscription, several people got into a fight after betting on mahjong at a street residence. They calmed down after pedestrians helped mediate the dispute. From TSHB 1912, no. 3.

for instance, published a “Song of Ten Bad Things About Mahjong,” written in rhyme, with each line containing four characters so that it could be easily understood and remembered. The song described how mahjong could destroy health, morality, and family, and what serious consequences could result for anyone—officials, gentry, students, teachers, merchants, soldiers, and young women alike—who gambled. The new elites even declared that eliminating gambling was a prerequisite to establishing a “civilized society.” They attempted to promote the “healthier activities” found in Europe and America and exhorted citizens to “play ball, exercise, paddle boats, and ride horses,” all of which were “good for social reform.” Popular Daily published

FIGURE 5.5. Becoming a “Living Buddha” (bian huofo). The gist of the inscription to this satirical drawing is that a gambler who loses everything, even his clothing, has to stay in a “chicken-feather inn” wrapped up in a cotton quilt like a living Buddha. From TSHB 1909, no. 6.
another essay under the title “Lecture on Forbidding Gambling,” which described in plain language the evils of gambling. The article explained that “hardened gamblers” cheated and seduced others to gamble, and warned people not to go to “gambling dens,” where, it cautioned, there was no such a thing as “a sure bet.” A person who lost money gambling, it was explained, would sell his clothes, furniture, land, and even his house, hurting not only himself but also his entire family.32

The police took this issue very seriously, searching houses and streets to arrest gamblers; collecting as much information as possible on gaming establishments, their purveyors, and participants; and making quick arrests of violators, who received fines and physical punishment. The police even prohibited hawkers of candy, cake, and peanuts from using lotteries and bets to entice children to buy their products, even though the practice had previously been considered socially acceptable. As a result of these severe measures, gambling was brought under control although never completely eradicated. In the spring of 1910, the police attempted to cut off gambling at the root by banning, within three days, both the manufacture and sale of mahjong equipment. All mahjong equipment in storage was to be destroyed, and anyone who made such products would be severely punished.33 From banning gambling to prohibiting mahjong, this policy reflected not only reformers’ resentment against gambling but also a denial of the most popular leisure activity in Chengdu. Far from bringing an end to gambling, the police’s actions simply angered Chengdu residents, and illegal gambling flourished after a slight downturn.34

Taking the Poor Off the Street

How to deal with the poor was always one of the major issues of urban reform. Traditionally, local elites regarded charitable activities as one of their responsibilities. The long history of Chinese local welfare institutions became, of course, a basis for the modernized charitable projects at the end of the Qing era. From 1903 to 1906, the police established various institutions for the poor, which were similar to the social institutions for the poor in America, such as the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century public almshouses and the nineteenth-century houses of refuge and asylums. These institutions, also like their American counterparts, “did help many people lead happy and productive lives,” though their function was limited. The 300-bed Coolie Hospital (Kuli bingyuan) was set up for poor laborers who became ill. Additionally, the Hospital for the Aged, Handicapped, and Ill (Laoruo feiji yuan) accepted more than a hundred patients. The police notified all sedan-chair shops, coolie guilds, and “chicken-feather inns” (jimao dian) that any homeless people or coolies who were ill should be sent to the hospital, where they could get help for their ailments as well as for opium addiction. Most of the programs established in the late Qing survived after the 1911 Revolution, but some were transferred from police control to the public sector.35

Taking “unemployed wandering people” and beggars off the street was another major goal of street reform. A missionary in Chengdu described as “revolutionary” the changes that took place after a new regulation required police to arrest anyone who wandered the street. The homeless were sent to workhouses and abandoned children to orphanages. Those who merely looked like beggars, but could prove employment and make their own living, were allowed to continue. Policemen on patrol were ordered to arrest any “ferocious beggars” who persisted in begging in doorways. The police converted old temples and soup kitchens into workhouses where beggars were forced to do supervised labor. A workhouse was built in 1905 specifically to recruit the poor and vagrants “to teach them both working skills and morality,” reflecting the view of social reformers that the poor were morally inferior. The House for Training and Education (Qianshan su), built the same year, promised rehabilitation to petty criminals through labor. The next year, the police established other two workhouses for beggars (qi-gai gongchang) near the East and South City Gates (see Figures 5.6 and 5.7). The police herded more than 1,500 panhandlers into the workhouses within six months. The Workhouse for Rearing and Educating Children (Youhajiao yang gongchang), built at almost the same time, could house 1,000 homeless children. Children under six were cared for by nurses, and those between six and fourteen were taught reading, counting, and basic working skills. At age fourteen, the children left the workhouse to make a living on their own. Within a year, the workhouse hosted more than 500 wandering and mendicant children.36

Little today is known about the inside of workhouses, but missionary J. Vale’s reports in West China Missionary News provide some details about working conditions, wages, and the living situations of inmates. As soon as beggars were sent to a workhouse, they were given a number, and their hair was shaved “the width of two fingers on either side of the head,” as a mark to distinguish them if they ran away. According to another source, however, their hair was cut into the “shape of a shoe.” Their clothes were taken, and they wore uniforms made from old military uniforms. The sleeves of the uniforms only reached to the elbows, and the legs to the knees. This style was designed for convenience in work as well as to prevent their being stolen and sold. Some workhouse inmates did outdoor tasks, while others worked indoors. The inmates who worked indoors were taught to make straw sandals and weave cloth. Outdoor work was divided into “public
and "private." Public work was usually done on the streets and included carpentry and masonry; inmates learned how to repair houses, build walls, dig drains, or fill in roads. Thus, they were able to work on government projects when needed. Private work involved all kinds of physical labor for private families or in shops. Families that needed help with events such as funerals or weddings found workers at the workhouses; this became a tradition in Chengdu. Before the reform, however, households could hire beggars directly from the street to carry banners and flags for such ceremonies, but under the new rule, they could be hired only from the workhouses. Twice a day, each inmate received a basin of rice gruel and a saucer of salted vegetables. Those employed in outdoor work were given an additional bowl of boiled rice. The supervisor called the roll at dawn and dusk. Each man was to shave and take a bath every ten days.

Beggars provided a steady supply of cheap labor for the police. Inmates hired by private individuals were paid only 70 percent of what they would have been paid as regular workers; when they labored on public works, they were paid even less, only 40 percent of the regular wage. Adults worked fourteen hours a day. One of each ten working inmates was appointed a foreman to oversee the others. Each workhouse kept its workers' time sheets, which recorded all wages earned in outdoor labor and all articles produced through indoor work each day. At the end of the third month after he entered the workhouse, the amount of wages each workman had earned and the value of articles made would be totaled. After a deduction for food and materials, the balance would be handed to the worker, who was allowed to leave the workhouse to seek a living. Anyone who did not try to find a job after his release might be arrested again. To identify former inmates, the police kept their photographs on file.

Taking the poor off the street became important work for the police reformers; they believed that achieving this goal would result in at least three advantages. First, it would stabilize public peace. Elites always regarded poor people as the cause of trouble such as robberies and thefts, so controlling the poor would improve security. Second, since the presence of shabbily dressed vagrants interfered with the new image of the city that the elite class sought to cultivate, taking them off the street would improve that image. Finally, social reformers claimed that putting these people to work in workhouses was done in their own best interest and would both provide them with shelter and teach them skills for future employment. The majority of lower-class people in Chengdu did not appreciate the changes, however, and tried to cling to their traditional way of life, as we will see in the next chapter. It could be said that whereas in the past beggars had nothing but their freedom, during the period of the reform they lost even this.

**Policing Everyday Life**

Before the emergence of the police, everyday life in the city was largely unregulated. The baojia system and voluntary organizations were
concerned only with issues of security, charity, and community ceremonies. But, beginning in the early twentieth century, the police became involved in almost every aspect of everyday life, from public gatherings to religious activities, increasing their span of control while also providing a public service.

In the late Qing, the police began regulating all public gatherings. The elites had often criticized Chengdu people for their extraordinary curiosity, "gathering and watching immediately whenever a small matter occurred." A foreign visitor also noticed that any unusual happenings on the streets would attract "a large and inquisitive crowd." It was said that such public gatherings frequently caused disputes. Under the new regulations, anyone who wanted to set up a stall for performing in public had to obtain advance permission. The police were responsible for maintaining order at these events, and hawkers, young women, and children were forbidden to attend, in order to prevent any disruptions. Policemen also stood along the parade routes for popular religious ceremonies to help expedite traffic, prevent disputes, protect young women and children, and control those who took these opportunities to "call mass gatherings, fight, and steal."43

The policies controlling public space were consistently enforced and became increasingly restrictive. During the "winter defense" (dongfang) in 1916, for instance, policemen were ordered to watch strangers carefully, especially in certain areas such as the Imperial City.44 The local government restricted the traditional Flower Fair because of alleged overcrowding and the difficulty of distinguishing between "good people" and "bad ones." Only the selling of agricultural tools, plants, and flowers was allowed; sales of all other wares were banned. Furthermore, teahouses, wine shops, and food peddlers were forbidden to build sheds at the fair. In 1917, the police issued regulations prohibiting gambling, urination on the fairgrounds and roads, gossiping (this referred only to women), fortune-telling, hooliganism, abuse and fighting, and prostitution. Those who violated the rules were fined.45

In addition, the police made an effort to control children who gathered in groups on the street or in other public places to "make trouble." Children often amused themselves on the city wall, but some made mischief by throwing pieces of brick, breaking branches of trees, and hitting pedestrians. Some boys who threw bricks and rocks from the wall and broke the tiles of roofs were caught and their parents forced to repair the damaged roofs under the street head's supervision. Reformers suggested that parents should pay closer attention to their children who liked to play games on the street, because some of them caused injury.46 Many children had gone to teahouses and wine shops in the evening, but the police banned them from such places, issuing a public notice warning parents to discipline their children and keep them away from "bad street habits" (jieshi exi). Parents would be punished if their children gathered in the streets to make trouble.47

The police watched closely some places where "bad people" could hide, especially those frequented by the lower classes. "Chicken-feather inns" were such locations. As a commercial and cultural center in the upper Yangzi region, Chengdu attracted many visitors daily, resulting in a booming trade for innkeepers. Accommodations in Chengdu fit into three categories: "chicken-feather inns," "guesthouses," and "official hotels." Chicken-feather inns, which were primarily places for the poor, beggars, and vagrants, were usually located near the East City Gate. They were regarded as havens for criminals. Guesthouses were commonly for merchants, while official hotels served both officials and merchants. There were more than three hundred inns in late-Qing Chengdu, which may give us an idea about the number of travelers in Chengdu. The chicken-feather inns, however, were the main target of police control. Under the new regulations, those who stayed in chicken-feather inns had to report their native places, ages, occupations, and reasons for coming to Chengdu. The innkeeper was to report any suspicious people to the local branch of the police. Inns were to refuse service to prostitutes, gamblers, and "people who did not have luggage and arrived at night." Patrolling policemen inspected these inns every morning and evening; after the evening inspection the inn was to shut its doors and not allow anyone else in. The inn could not open its doors before the policemen came to count the number of lodgers in the morning.48 We lack evidence on how this policy was enforced, but one can assume that the measure may have been abandoned for logistical reasons. Because there were many such inns scattered all over the city, it would have been almost impossible for policemen to keep track of each lodger.

Besides enforcing the new measures of control, the police also provided some much-needed services, including a more efficient fire-fighting system. Fire was a constant threat in Chengdu. Newspapers from the era are full of reports on the destruction caused by fires. In 1903, according to West China Missionary News, "there was a big fire on one of the most important business streets, right in the center of the city." Buildings on both sides of the street were destroyed for more than 100 yards. The fire resulted from "the explosion of a kerosene lamp left burning while people slept." Just a week later, "another fire broke out not far distant from the scene of the first." Foreigners in particular noted the inadequacy of fire-fighting procedures and equipment. In 1905, an enormous conflagration on Great East Street underscored the need for new equipment; as one bystander noted, "rude fire engines"—"water dragons"—now went rattling through the streets. Unlike Hankou, which had experienced a revolution in fire fighting with the introduction of the hand-drawn fire engine at the end of the eighteenth century, Chengdu depended on huge "emergency vats" on the streets until a new fire-control system was established in the early twentieth century.49
To deal with overcrowded shops in the commercial districts, where fire could be catastrophic, the police enacted regulations to prevent fires, including instructions for storing oil and lighting lamps. The first professional fire brigade was founded and employed more than a thousand people. It took responsibility for putting water in 1,100 huge "emergency vats" on the streets and replacing it regularly, and for investigating all wells and marking them with wooden boards labeled "jing" (well) for use in fire fighting. Upon spotting a fire, watchers clanged bells to alert residents. The brigade often conducted public fire drills for educational and training purposes, and these gradually became popular public performances. In 1909, the police fire brigade burned several thatched cottages built especially for the drill. When the brigade extinguished the fire using water hoses, a large audience applauded their skillful performance. The biggest fire drill was held in the Northern Parade Ground in the late Qing; 1,400 policemen and members of fire brigades took part as more than 10,000 people watched. Four watchtowers also were built at the four corners of the city. On spotting a fire, watchers would raise the alarm by ringing bells.

Despite the inconvenience that the regulations must have caused, some evidence shows that during this period the police force was considered "a good helper" for the neighborhood, especially following a natural disaster or an accident. When the streets were flooded, for instance, the police "once more proved the excellence of their training. They came promptly to the rescue; they systematically distributed biscuits to the families in the flooded areas, and ordered those in the dangerous places to move at once." Also, the police helped settle the frequent disputes that occurred on the streets, a responsibility formerly held by the neighborhood organizations.

The police also dealt routinely with unwelcome human or animal interlopers. A cartoon published in Popular Pictorial shows a drunkard making a fool of himself at a teahouse (see Figure 5.8). Like drunkards, the mentally ill were not welcome in public, and their appearance was felt to disrupt public order, especially in crowded areas such as the Flower Fair. A journalist reported that within the first two weeks of the fair that year, he had seen six or seven instances when the police escorted mentally ill people out of the area. Dogs, a constant menace, were also controlled by the police. Reformers particularly disliked that some dog owners would "bring their pets to the Center for Promoting Commerce and Industry, compromising the center's lofty reputation in Chengdu business circles." The dogs, reformers complained, "block traffic and also fight each other at the front gate." It was suggested that violators be fined. A cartoon entitled "Spending Money to Watch the Backs of Dogs," published in Popular Pictorial, condemned those who brought their dogs to the theater (see Figure 5.9). The police required all dogs to be registered and to wear around their necks a wooden board issued by the police. If a registered dog was lost, the police
Restrictions on Spiritual Life. The police tried to regulate not only people's public behavior but also the religious beliefs and activities that had become an important part of everyday life. In premodern times, state authorities always sought to manipulate popular religion; if people displayed "signs of extraordinary devotion, then the officials were likely to step in." To a certain extent, the official ideology met the elites' needs, and thus social reformers joined with state power to change commoners' beliefs. The orthodox view held that commoners' religious beliefs were "superstitious" and "backward" and should be restricted. During the Qing, the government "did everything in its power to limit contact between the common people and non-elite ritual specialists." In the early twentieth century, the police further restricted all religious and folk ceremonial rituals. For example, on the twenty-eighth day of the fourth lunar month, the birthday of the Medicine King, the police forbade entry to the Temple of the Medicine King for the celebration. During a drought in the summer of 1914, the local government pasted on all streets posters that prohibited the ritual of praying for rain. In 1917, although the police did not prohibit the ritual of praying for rain, they prohibited people from playing the part of ghosts in the ceremony. During the Medicine King Festival, the police did not allow the people to burn incense or kowtow either at the Temple of the Medicine King or in nearby streets. During the late Qing and early Republic, the police banned certain practices of divination, such as "watching a deity" (guanxian), "visiting hell" (zouyin), and "drawing an egg" (huadan). People continued to see diviners, however. Because the reformers were so disappointed in the people's refusal to abandon "superstitious" beliefs, the police enacted even stricter rules. In the late 192os, under pressure from having their businesses sharply restricted, astrologists and diviners wanted to organize and establish an "academic association" to protect their livelihood. The local authority denied their request, claiming that "astrology and divination have no academic value." It charged the practitioners with fooling ordinary people, degrading customs and culture, and damaging society. Therefore, the government "should restrict all astrologists and diviners" and "abolish superstition" during the "reformist era." In 1927, city authorities prohibited all witch doctors and fortune-tellers and also forbade Buddhist monks and Daoist priests from such practice. The next year, various forms of worship of local deities were officially prohibited by "a general order from the nationalist government." Nevertheless, there is much evidence to show that the police were unsuccessful in their attempt to control popular cults. Although the police forbade the ceremony of the Medicine King, for example, local residents, especially women, still went to the Temple of the Medicine King to burn incense; in fact, there were so many worshipers that they were forced to set up altars on the street. When the government prohibited the celebration of the Dragon Boat Festival, forbidding people from preparing dragon boats and hiring boatmen for service at the festival, people still gathered in the River View Tower (Wangjiang lou), a traditional place for the festival. The Liberating Living Creatures Festival (Fangsheng hui), on the eighth day of the fourth lunar month, was celebrated by decorating flower boats and "liberating" living creatures, under the Buddhist custom that regarded the liberation of birds, fishes, turtles, eels, and snakes as a way of amassing merit. During the festival, thousands of people gathered on both banks of the river to watch the creatures being set free, while some poor people took this chance to earn some money selling fish and animals at good prices. Despite the prohibition of this activity as a "hundred-year-old bad custom"
and a “decadent custom,” commoners kept up the practice. And finally, the police were forced to accommodate the sentiment of the common people.

In 1918, the police allowed the Lower Lotus Pond (Xia lianchi) to be used as a “liberating living creatures pond” (fangsheng chi). Social transformation changes people’s spiritual life; as Clifford Geertz pointed out, it weakens the traditional ties of social structure and interrupts “the simple uniformity of religious belief and practice characteristic of an earlier period.” What happened in early-twentieth-century China provides new evidence to support this argument. In Chengdu, however, police involvement escalated the process. Still, this was not an easy task, and the commoners’ lifestyle, religious beliefs, and folk culture demonstrated their strong continuity. The issue of how to treat religious cults was debated among the elites. Although there was a strong inclination to criticize all popular cults, some reformers tried to distinguish between religion and superstition. Moreover, government policies were inconsistent, sometimes harsh and sometimes lenient. In 1919, Sichuan’s provincial government approved an appeal by the Sichuan Buddhist Association and vowed to protect the property of temples and nunneries. A public notice to this effect, distributed by the local government, blamed local gentry and heads of communities for such practices as cutting down temple trees and demanding money while falsely citing “public interest” as a reason. As we know, since the late Qing, temple property had been a primary target of local reform movements for financial reasons; therefore, posting public notices protecting this property might reflect a setback for the radicals’ policy against popular religions.

**Control of Public Leisure**

Under the police reform, the commoners’ leisure was no longer a “free” activity, and the police could regulate what people watched and listened to for entertainment. The police prohibited performances of “ghostly,” “bizarre,” “licentious,” and “evil” (yao, dan, yin, xie) stories. Reformers highly praised this measure, stating that “many licentious activities once practiced in the city of Chengdu are now under control, thanks to the establishment of the police” (see Figure 5.10). When it was reported that a troupe of acrobats was performing “evil plays,” the police, yielding to pressure from reformers, banned the performances. The police made several arrests at the Joy Teahouse on the grounds that their performances “harmed local customs” and displayed “unseemly manners.” A tricky entertainer, nicknamed “Little Ghost Chen” (Chen Xiaogui) although he was over sixty, performed an indecent game in public places and was accused by the police of “harming people.” Previously, martial artists and acrobats could perform in any public space. Now, however, the police required the issuance of a permit before a public area could be used and frequently denied such applications. Traditionally, many blind people made a living by chanting stories and singing folk songs on the street; the practice had been sanctioned by the police, but others were prohibited from doing so. Thus, when people who were not blind, called “rascals” (wulai) by the police, sang songs on the street, the police believed that “it would harm local custom” and charged them with “enticing many women to watch.” A police regulation banned the activity and threatened these “rascals” with hard labor if they were caught. To bypass this restriction, some pretended to be blind to perform “licentious songs.” However, under these restrictive measures, the number of folk performers in Chengdu gradually dwindled.

The teahouse, as the most popular center of public leisure, drew special attention from the police, who sought to supervise them. In early modern Western cities, public places such as taverns, restaurants, theaters, and coffeehouses were “generally on the periphery and therefore reserved for the populace” and were “so well patronised that the government was already

![Figure 5.10. A Patrolman Chases a Golden Bamboo Clapper Performer. From TSHB 1922, no. 11.](image)
thinking about prohibiting them." The same was true for Chengdu in the early twentieth century, with the police and local government attempting to "civilize" and "modernize" public places. The teahouse immediately became their target. Local authorities constantly criticized teahouses as "disorderly" and sought to control them in the name of preserving public order. Ever since the founding of the Chengdu police in the late Qing, "drinking settlement tea" in teahouses (as described in Chapter 3) had been forbidden. According to Li Jieren's satirical account, "this was the first inconvenience Director Zhou Shanpei of the police gave to the local people, and that was why he was abused by his folks." Although there is no direct evidence to verify Li's comment, one news item in a local newspaper did state that after the police issued a regulation to forbid settling disputes in teahouses in the early Republic, the teahouse guild appealed to the police to make a clear distinction between "settling disputes" and normal chatting. Otherwise, confusion between the two activities would jeopardize the teahouse business. In fact, the practice was never completely extinguished in teahouses and continued to be mentioned frequently in local newspapers.

Just as in the West, where "the commercialization of leisure always attracted criticism as a waste of time," in Chengdu the elites criticized teahouse-goers for "idly lounging in teahouses all day long" and reflecting Chinese "inertia." The municipal authorities, too, considered teahouses a place of "rumor spreading" and "trouble making," because various kinds of people gathered there and often "did not behave themselves." Teahouses were also criticized for making the students who went there neglect their studies. Performances of local operas in teahouses also became the target of the authorities' attacks. After the 1911 Revolution, the provincial government forced the Joy Teahouse to close; one local newspaper supported the action, saying "watching local operas is nothing but wasting time."

In the late Qing, soon after the establishment of the police force, they issued the first "Regulations for Teahouses." The regulations required teahouses to register with the police and banned them from allowing such activities as gambling, bird fighting, and practicing the rituals of secret societies. Teahouse entertainment also came under police control. Storytellers were to notify the police before performing, and those whose stories were deemed "licentious," "evil," or "bizarre" were to be expelled. Teahouses were no longer allowed to expand into the streets. Patrolling policemen were to be notified when disputes occurred in teahouses, and teahouses were required to allow policemen to enter to investigate. All teahouses had to close by eleven o'clock in the evening. If a proprietor failed to turn the lights off after the third watch (one o'clock in the morning), the police would investigate. In their "Rules for Surveillance and Patrol," policemen were told to give teahouses careful scrutiny. The teahouse regulations may be seen as part of the elite's efforts to control public space, a phenomenon that was similar in some ways to the situation in the United States. Roy Rosenzweig found in his study of an American city that "leisure time became an arena of class struggle in which workers and industrialists fought over who would control life outside the workplace." Basically, although the Chengdu police had conducted some measures of reform in the late Qing, they did not carry out aggressive and harsh policies on teahouses, and this moderation was appreciated by local elites and therefore drew their positive participation. And actually many of the moderate regulations that were enacted were backed by local elites.

During the early Republic, however, teahouses were central to the government attack on popular culture. In 1914, some merchants planned to build a new theater in the prosperous commercial district of New Street (Xin jié), combining a teahouse, bathhouse, restaurant, and barbershop. Although local authorities approved the project, the police later stopped it, citing "security," "customs," and "hygiene." The real reason, however, was to limit the development of teahouse theaters, because the police believed that Chengdu already had too many, reflective of the city's lamentable taste for the "excessively luxurious." Also, they believed "bad" operas were "diseases" that degraded social customs and the intellect. In 1916, the police issued rules controlling teahouse theaters, banning so-called "licentious operas." According to this rule, performances could not contain any disapproved language or behavior; all operas in teahouses were to end by ten o'clock during summer and autumn and by nine during spring and winter. Under this new regulation, the occupancy of teahouses was even restricted, ranging from 100 seats for a small teahouse to 400 seats for a bigger one. More seats could not be added without permission. In 1921, comic dialogues (xiangsheng) were again prohibited in teahouses because of their alleged "licentious" and "dirty" language. This increasing control of city dwellers' personal lives was a common phenomenon in the early Republic; in Shanghai, for example, the police force's interference "represented the new state's effort to create a civil culture." Another common complaint was that teahouses were crowded and dirty. When late-Qing hygiene reforms occurred, the police demanded that teahouses keep the room, grounds, and tables clean. In the early Republican era, further regulations were issued that covered items of sanitation, such as prohibiting barbers and pedicurists from serving customers at their seats. A few new hygiene regulations for teahouses were promulgated in the 1920s and 1930s, laying out standards of sanitation for water, cups, floors, tables, and chairs. They stipulated that cups must be boiled and spittoons and sanitary toilets provided. Also, the police required teahouse workers to wear uniforms and numbered badges, and forbade people with lung, venereal, skin, and other infectious diseases from working in teahouses.
As public leisure increasingly came under the control of the Nationalist government, teahouses in Chengdu suffered unprecedented attack. A new regulation permitted only one teahouse per park, shut down some establishments in areas that had many, and shortened their business hours to six daily. An even more radical campaign against teahouses was waged, limiting their numbers, hours, and number of patrons. Each professional guild was allowed to have only one teahouse; only one teahouse was allowed in each harbor, station, or park, and all others were to be shut down. Teahouses were allowed to be open only from nine in the morning until noon and from six to nine in the evening. Young students, women and children, government clerks, army personnel, and vagrants were not permitted inside; merchants were restricted from going to teahouses that were not associated with their guilds.

Of course, many people, including social reformers, opposed such radical regulation because it brought unprecedented disruption to citizens' customary lives. Critics pointed out that teahouses had traditionally met people's social needs. Like other public facilities such as inns, wine shops, and coffeehouses, teahouses had both negative and positive aspects; the government should not squelch them without taking the positive functions into account. They also noted that frequenting teahouses was relatively economical compared to drinking wine and coffee. In addition, illegal activities were not exclusive to teahouses; if teahouses were closed, they would simply take place at other private or public places. Teahouse-goers were criticized for wasting time and spreading rumors, but these activities could take place elsewhere as well.

Unlike in the late Qing, when social reformers endorsed most government-sponsored reform projects, the Republican government's projects were received much less enthusiastically. The disagreement between local reformist elites and the Nationalist government over teahouses was in a sense emblematic of wider schisms that developed between them over time. The split over the teahouse issue was just a reflection of the deterioration of the overall relationship between the government and local elites during this period. The fact that state power increasingly reached into the bottom of the community and its social life seriously jeopardized the elite's traditional leadership for ordinary people.

The teahouse was a microcosm of the society. It has been misunderstood not only by scholars but also by the general public. In the early twentieth century, teahouses were thought to be places for the idle; therefore, the most common accusation against teahouses was that they encouraged people to waste time. Along with other social transformation in China came changes in the very concept of time, but this new understanding was largely limited to "modernized" and "Westernized" elites. Most ordinary residents retained the concept of time that had prevailed for centuries. How they used their time depended on many factors: personal habits, education, occupation, family background, economic status, and so on. In the teahouse, a scholar might find inspiration for his writing; a merchant might make a business deal; a student might learn about the society beyond his textbooks; a member of a secret society might make contact with other members; and a casual worker might find employment. And, of course, many petty peddlers, performers, and craftsmen made their living there. Therefore, distinctions between the idle and the busy were mutable and overlapping. In the teahouse, a man who looked idle might be busy, and vice versa. Idleness and industry were each part of the rhythm of daily life, and the teahouse accommodated both. It was one of the few public spaces available to urban residents for public life; even after the emergence of other "modern" gathering places, teahouses remained the most affordable option for urban commoners. This phenomenon also tells us that for Chengdu, as Susan Davis found for modern American cities, "industrial progress did not immediately destroy older urban and agrarian work rhythms."

The persistence of the teahouse exemplified the vitality of Chengdu's popular culture.

**Limitation of Success**

It might be said that in Chengdu the police were an early form of municipal government. Police duties extended far beyond the contemporary basic responsibilities of maintaining public security and social order. The police in Chengdu were not specialized in their duties, which led to inefficiencies. The police had a stake in almost all public matters, from public order and the city poor to fire control and hygiene, until 1928, when the municipal government was established. The police's involvement at least opened a path for managing urban issues that previously were the domain of neighborhood and charitable organizations, as well as guilds. Transferring these matters to the police, in fact, weakened the influence of the street (or neighborhood-) and community-level organizations. Although the police force was unable to handle all issues well, it indeed took the first step toward establishing a quasi-municipal administration.

The reformers partially achieved their goal: Chengdu indeed established a new public order in the early twentieth century. Missionary J. Vale admired this change and said, "the police force, as at present organized, is a great improvement to the old Tithing System, and gives great satisfaction to all concerned." He believed that the people of Chengdu had "nothing but praise for the system: they are quick to perceive the advantages the system affords and appreciate the promptness with which petty troubles are dealt with. Under the old system no case could be heard under a week or ten days, but now every case is attended to on the day the plaint is filed."
The streets, he also noticed, became quieter and cleaner, and thieving was “much reduced owing to the police patrol at night.”

It is difficult to say whether Vale’s opinion truly reflected the commoners’ position, although the social reformers could claim some achievements. Vale, as a missionary from the West, naturally admired most Western-inspired reforms and tended to see them in a positive light. When Western missionaries admired police regulation of the city, they revealed their own cultural prejudice. They believed that there was a need for “some regulating in this land where life is of so little value and so many abuses occur!” Therefore, they welcomed this “new feature in Chinese life.” Other visitors had a similar impression. According to Yamakawa, the new programs unquestionably enhanced the appearance of Chengdu, which was cleaner than other cities he had visited. In the 1920s, foreigners had a similar opinion, that “the city is clean, orderly, with an efficient police.” Nevertheless, any major change brings multiple responses. In American cities of the same time, reformers had a hard time getting working-class people to accept their projects. And when they tried to limit and redefine what constituted acceptable behavior among the lower classes, “their intentions were not easily realized” and their efforts “often met with unenthusiastic responses,” because these measures “harassed” the people who “used the street's rich resources.” Social reformers in Chengdu met a similar situation; their achievements did not bring happiness to most commoners, in fact, but only more restrictions. Many government regulations affected not only commoners’ everyday life but also their livelihoods.

Actually, commoners accepted or rejected street reforms based on their personal interests. Pedestrians, for example, might embrace traffic control, but those whose livelihoods depended on access to the street, such as sedan-chair carriers, ox-cart drivers, and hawkers, would likely be less accepting. Taking beggars, gamblers, prostitutes, and thieves off the street was welcomed by many residents, but not by those removed. Theatrical troupes also opposed measures prohibiting “licentious” and “violent” operas because of the potential loss of audiences and income. Furthermore, those measures that were carried out by force understandably provoked popular resentment. That is why Chengdu Police Director Zhou Shanpei was widely criticized and despised by many before and even after the collapse of the Qing dynasty. Guo Moruo, a major modern Chinese intellectual who experienced early-twentieth-century Chengdu, tried to explain the reason: it was because “a repressive body that carried out extreme regulations had emerged overnight in the formerly diffuse society.” For the people who made their living on the street, in particular, more regulations meant more difficulty in earning a living. It is no surprise that they struggled to defend their established claim to the street.
better respond to natural disasters and crime, rumors spread that telephones would bring bad luck to the city. The police issued a public notice instructing people not to believe the rumors (TSRB Oct. 18, 1909). Unfortunately, no follow-up reports are available regarding this topic.


44. GMGB Sept. 15, 1916. Qin Shao (1997) has studied the significance of the clock tower in early-twentieth-century Nantong.

45. GMGB July 23, Nov. 15, 1914; June 13, 1918; Jan. 9, 1922.

46. GMGB May 23, Apr. 19, 1919; GMGB Jan. 10, Aug. 2, Nov. 12, 1913; Sichuan sheng wenshi guan 1987: 98-99. These gate heads had alternative names: Tonghui men was also called New West City Gate (Xin ximen), Wucheng men, New East City Gate (Xin dongmen), and Fuxing men, New South City Gate (Xin namen).

47. GMGB Jan. 12, 1913.

48. GMGB Mar. 15, 1913; Jan. 23, 1918; Feb. 16, 1919; May 5, June 19, July 24, 1917; Zhong Maoxuan 1984: 202. More than 2,000 invaders occupied the Imperial City and used it as a fort during the war (see details in Chapter 7).


CHAPTER 5: STREET CONTROL

1. On the early history of the Chengdu police, see Stapleton 1993; 1997a, 2000: chap. 3; Wang Di 1993; chap. 8. 1994. In the early Republic, the police force frequently changed names under different political and military powers. In the early 1920s, it was called the "Bureau of Capital Military Police" (Sheng jinshi jingcha ting), and in the late 1920s it became the "Headquarters of City Defense" (Cheng-fang siting bu) (GMGB May 29, 1922; Dec. 23, 1927). On the baojia system, see Chapter 2 above and Wang Di 1993: 376-80. For more on street headmen, see Stapleton 1993: 151-54, 179-84.

2. CDTL 1: 388-89; WCMN 1904, no. 5: 126; GMGB Apr. 17, 1914. After Zhou, however, management of the police became so loose that some elites questioned the policemen's education and morality. They pointed out that if policemen were uneducated and of poor moral character, they would abuse their power and disrupt the lives of law-abiding citizens (GMGB Apr. 17, 1914).

3. CDTL 1: 201, 308, 300-301, 372; Raeff 1983: 5.

4. CDTL 1: 193, 301, 389, 390, 392, 393, 394; STJZ 1, II, III, Vale 1904, no. 5: 110.

5. See Stapleton 2000: 126-34. Stapleton's analyses of these issues are basically limited to the late Qing period.

6. This phenomenon is entirely different from the situation when the People's Republic was established in 1949, when the communist municipal government enforced policies about public space.

7. The police also tried to control households. They enacted a restrictive code, which required all heads of households, whether living in compounds or in houses on the street, to register their name, age, place of birth, occupation, and the number, names, and ages of other male and female family members and servants. One copy of the form was to be filed at the nearest police station and another was to be hung on the home's door. Residents who were suspected of crimes but against whom the police had no evidence were required to put "supervised boards" on their doors (STJZ 1-1). There is no direct evidence to show if this rule was actually enforced. The police conducted a census in 1910 under the order of the Department of Civil Affairs (Minzheng bu) of the central government (Wang 1993: 592-93; Stapleton 2000: 135).

8. STJZ 1-7; TSRB Mar. 6, Nov. 1914; GMGB Sept. 9, 1914.

9. The selling of frog meat, for example, was prohibited because the peasants who hunted frogs cut off the skin, making the meat spoil quickly. Some beef shops sold spoiled beef to street peddlers at a discount, exposing the people who purchased it—mostly the poor—to harmful bacteria and disease. To rectify the situation, the police issued a public notice prohibiting the sale of unsafe beef. In another example, pork became smelly by afternoon during the summer months, and some butchers tried to sell it by way of a lottery, offering the winner half a kilogram of "smelly pork" at a discounted price. The police eventually outlawed this practice as well, citing gambling as well as sanitation concerns. Some meat peddlers sold at a discount meat from diseased pigs, horses, and cattle, and many people who ate it became ill. The police tried to find the peddlers, and if they did, they threw the meat into the river publicly and punished the sellers. See STJZ 1-3; TSRB July 21, July 23, Sept. 11, 1909; Apr. 29, 1910; GMGB Sept. 5, 1914.

10. STJZ 1-8; TSRB Nov. 1, 1909; GMGB June 26, 1914.

11. CDTL 1: 190-91.


15. Vale 1904, no. 4: 86; STJZ 1-3. Street sweepers' social status was not as low as one might expect; because they were hired by the police, they considered themselves "official employees." An article in one local newspaper accused a street sweeper of "bullying common people." It reported that a street sweeper had dashed madly down the street and struck a woman and her children with his garbage cart. Not only did he fail to apologize, but he also hurled verbal abuse. His behavior provoked anger from residents and pedestrians (GMGB Mar. 17, 1914).


18. STJZ 1-3; TSRB May 9, 1910; GMGB Apr. 1, July 29, 1914; Apr. 6, 1917.

19. Regarding immigration in the early Qing, see Wang Di 1993: chap. 2.
ple, these words were also common in Chengdu residents’ vocabulary. Chengdu (ruffians), and men.” In Hankou, William Rowe found people also had many other words to describe hoodlums, such as duoshen (literally was the most frequently used term (Liang Deman and Huang Shangjun 1998: 124).

Those from rich families were called wankua zidi (Provincial government) in the smaller city, was victimized by several “immoral bastards,” who peeped at her, took other liberties with her when her husband was at work, and beat her when she resisted (GMGB June 16, 1919). One of the rascals was named Wu Huanzhang. After his name was revealed in the newspaper, a famous local lawyer with the same name was so angered that he demanded that the newspaper clear his name (GMGB June 18, 1914).

23. STSB Oct. 12, 1909. A similar story appeared in the same paper: Yao, a local hooligan, led some of his followers to the brothels on Meteorite Street (Tianyashi)—a “red light district”—every day to drink and eat. The reformers condemned Yao and his men as “shameless,” appealed to the police to eliminate them, and also criticized prostitutes for “loving to be their slaves.” See STSB Oct. 2, 1909.

24. Woman Gao, the wife of a laborer who lived in Three Lanes Street (Sandao jie) in the Smaller City, was victimized by several “immoral bastards,” whopeeped at her, took other liberties with her when her husband was at work, and beat her when she resisted (GMGB June 16, 1914). One of the rascals was named Wu Huanzhang. After his name was revealed in the newspaper, a famous local lawyer with the same name was so angered that he demanded that the newspaper clear his name (GMGB June 18, 1914).

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27. STJZ July 10, Aug. 4, 1909; Chen Kuan 1911: 150–57.
28. STSB Oct. 12, 1909. A similar story appeared in the same paper: Yao, a local hooligan, led some of his followers to the brothels on Meteorite Street (Tianyashi)—a “red light district”—every day to drink and eat. The reformers condemned Yao and his men as “shameless,” appealed to the police to eliminate them, and also criticized prostitutes for “loving to be their slaves.” See STSB Oct. 2, 1909.

29. GMGB May 31, 1913.
30. GMGB Aug. 16, Oct. 2, 1914; Mar. 11, 1919. One such story is particularly interesting: a hooligan grabbed the foot of a sedan-chair passenger, thinking the passenger was a woman, but instead, the foot turned out to belong to the magistrate of Huayang County. As a result, the man was punished severely (GMGB July 12, 1914).

31. STSB Dec. 10, 1909; GMGB Dec. 29, 1927. Once, more than ten men, old and young, poor and rich, were forced to kneel at the site of the Flower Fair merely because they tried to enter through the female entrance. Among them, the reporter noticed, there was even “a man wearing intellectual-style glasses and a silk gown” (GMGB Mar. 26, 1919).

32. GMGB Mar. 21, 1919. Such punishment seems impossibly harsh. I was skeptical about “two thousand times” and assumed that it was a mistake of “twenty times” or, at most, “two hundred times.” In an earlier date’s Citizens’ Daily (Guomin gongbao), however, there was another report that a “hooligan” was beaten two thousand times with a “big wooden board” simply because he touched a woman’s hand (GMGB Mar. 20, 1919). I wonder if the newspaper exaggerated the severity of the punishments.

33. Since the issue of opium has been discussed by my previous work (1993: 641–43) and by Stapleton (2000: 133–34), I will not repeat the discussion here. The following gives a brief description of the situation: Sichuan had been one of the biggest centers of opium cultivation in China, providing users with a ready supply. Opium production in Sichuan was the most extensive in all of China; in 1906, it totaled 238,000 dan (1 dan = 60 kilograms), out of 184,800 dan in all of China (Li Wenzhi 1957: 457). For more about opium cultivation in Sichuan, see Wang Di 1993: 153–55. Social reformers and local governments thus conducted a campaign to restrict opium use. A 1903 police regulation prohibited women, youths under age twenty, students, and soldiers from entering opium houses. After 1907, the local government conducted a more aggressive policy forbidding opium; the Bureau for the Prohibition of Opium (jinyan ju) was established in Chengdu, and all opium houses and opium equipment shops were ordered to close. Policemen searched everyone entering the city gates and destroyed all opium equipment found in brothels. They also prohibited opium equipment in public spaces (STJZ I-11; SCGB 1907, no. 6; STSB July 21, Aug. 1, 1909). In the meantime, programs to help addicts were established in the name of social reform. The police built a hospital for opium addicts, and the Chamber of Commerce set up the Merchants’ House for Opium Addiction Recovery (Shangjie jieyan suo) and requested all shops to register their employees who used opium. Employees who did not quit smoking opium and who refused to enter the house were to be fired; otherwise, the shop owner would be punished. Within a year, more than two thousand merchants quit smoking opium, it was reported (SCGB 1909, no. 11). In the early Republic, however, opium consumption surged under loose administrative oversight and political instability, as powerful warlords took over the opium trade.

35. STSB June 30, July 3, 1909.
37. We will come back to this issue in Chapter 6.
39. Vale 1907, no. 9: 6–7; no. 10: 8; STJZ 1-2; Sichuan xuebao 1905, no. 5; Xiliang 1959: 645, 648; SCGB 1906, no. 28. Stapleton pointed out that in fact most beggars fled the city for the suburbs (2000: 26–27).
40. Vale 1907, no. 9: 7; no. 10: 7–9; Jiang Yungang 1943.
41. Vale 1907, no. 10: 7–9.
42. The issue of beggars’ resistance is addressed in the next chapter.
43. STJZ I-3; Wallace 1903: 43; GMGB Feb. 21, 1913.
44. The “winter defense” began in the post-Taiping era. In winter, grain prices rose and rural refugees would flock to the cities. Thus, in winter officials paid special attention to local security and relief. Such activities gradually became institutionalized. Also see Rowe 1989: 129–30 for discussion of the winter defense in nineteenth-century Hankou.
46. CDDB Aug. 8, 1909; GMGB Jan. 10, Apr. 15, 1918. In the ruins, one reporter wrote, fifty to sixty children played a game of war, throwing rocks and bricks at each other while constantly shouting “Kill!” The game of “leapfrog,”
though very popular, was forbidden by the police, because children sometimes fell and were injured as they jumped over their playmates’ bowed backs (TSRB Aug. 6, 1909; GMGB May 18, 1917).

47. CDTL 1: 201; GMGB Apr. 15, May 13, 1918.
48. GMGB Aug. 13, 1912; CDTL 1: 276; STJZ 1-1.
49. WCMN 1903, no. 3: 45; 1905, no. 12: 258; Rowe 1989: 164; TSRB Apr. 13, 1920.
50. TSRB July 28, 1909; CDRB Aug. 11, 1906; CDTL 1: 58. After a local fire brigade put out a fire in a shop on East Great Street, the keeper of the shop went to the police station to express his apologies and offer to pay for a huojiao, a ceremony in which Daoist priests performed a fire-prevention rite. The police responded that a huojiao would do nothing for fire control; however, the money would help purchase a few emergency water vats (TSRB Mar. 14, 1910).

51. TSRB Oct. 26, 1909; Chengdu zhi tongxun 15: 10; CDRB Aug. 11, 1909.
52. WCMN 1907, no. 9: 20. In another case, a woman carrying a child dropped her money; when a man identified as a “laborer” picked it up, a policeman who saw him made him return it. Another story is about a young man on a horse who knocked over an old woman. After pedestrians stopped the young man, the old woman stood up and said she was uninjured. A policeman confirmed this but still ordered the young man to hire a sedan chair to take her back home. The poor woman said, “I don’t want to take the sedan chair but would rather get too wen.” The policeman replied, “200 wen is useless,” and persuaded the old woman to take the sedan chair (GMGB Mar. 24, July 13, 1914).

53. TSHB 1909, no. 6. Another case in point is Gao Laoyao, a shop owner in the area of the Nine Arches Bridge who often drank to excess, behaving crudely and using foul language. Once, a policeman expelled him from a restaurant because he punched the cook and the waiter. In another report, a drunken man charged into the First Tea Balcony (Diyi chalou), shouting loudly, and was subdued only after policemen arrived. “If not for his expensive clothing,” Popular Daily commented, “he would have been taken to the police station” (TSRB Nov. 1, Dec. 21, 1909).

54. A former official, for example, fired because of his addiction to opium, eventually went insane. One day, with stick in hand, he dashed into the street, announcing that foreign lamps were not allowed, and broke two. He then ran to the office of the local administrators, planted himself in front of the gate, and refused to leave, only to be removed later by three policemen before an inquisitive crowd (TSRB Sept. 23, 1909). Another instance of irrational conduct occurred at the Flower Fair. Policemen discovered a man speaking and behaving strangely and promptly escorted him to the station for “compromising public security.” Later, it was learned that he had mental problems (GMGB Mar. 10, Mar. 23, 1914).

55. Once, as a customer was enjoying his lunch in a restaurant, the shopkeeper’s black dog bit his leg until it bled, for example. Those who brought dogs to public places were often criticized by elites (TSRB Oct. 26, Oct. 28, 1909).

56. CDTL 2: 348.
58. TSRB June 6, 1910; GMGB June 24, 1914; June 19, 1917.
59. The efforts that traditional occupations made to organize in Shanghai are discussed in Xu 2001: chap. 7.

60. TSRB Sept. 2, 1909; GMGB Nov. 16, 1927; Dec. 10, 1928; Huayang xianzhi 1934: 399-401.
61. TSRB June 6, 1910; GMGB May 3, May 17, 1914; Grainger 1975b: 8; CDTL 1: 549; Chongxing Chengdu xianzhi 1873: 2; Huayang xianzhi 1934: 415.
62. TSRB May 13, 1913; May 3, 1914; May 6, 1918. One “benevolent person” bought 600 turtles and, after having their shells carved with Chinese characters, released them into the pond, by one account (GMGB May 13, 1918).
64. GMGB May 17, 1914; Feb. 9, 1919.
65. STJZ 1-1; TSRB Dec. 10, 1909.
68. SSDS; Li Jieren 1936: 338-39; GMGB July 8, 1914; Mar. 6, 1917.
70. Zhou Zhiyong 1943: 246; SSDS: 18-19; GMGB Aug. 4, 1912.
71. STJZ 1-10, 1-12; Shengyuan jingqu zhangcheng n.d.: 27; Rosenzweig 1983: 223.
72. GMGB Apr. 27, 1914.
73. For example, 400 seats were permitted for the Cluster Deity (Quxian), 200 for the Joy, 150 for the Sichuan Theater (Shuwutai), 120 for the Elegant and the Tasty, and 100 for the Long Spring (GMGB Dec. 26, 1916).
76. Wakeman has made a profound study of this issue in Shanghai (1995b).
78. SSDS: 14-20.
79. Chapter 7 discusses this issue in greater detail.
82. Vale 1904, no. 6: 126.
85. For instance, the warlord government forced public bathhouses to replace traditional Chinese wooden tubs with Western-style porcelain ones, which, at that time, had to be imported from the West or Japan. This policy immediately devastated the bathhouse business. Liu Shiliang, owner of the Double Dragon Pond Bathhouse (Shuanglong chi zaozang), faced bankruptcy and finally had to close his business when he discovered he lacked the capital to purchase the foreign tubs (Zhou Shanpei 1929: 86).
86. Zhou Shanpei 1957; Guo Moruo 1929a, 1929b, 1937; Yamakawa 1909: 14-20. Kristin Stapleton has given a similar explanation: “Zhou was disliked because of his zeal for reforming public behavior in the city” (2000: 110).

CHAPTER 6: THE STRUGGLE FOR THE STREET

1. Scott 1985: 36. This situation is unlike, though not entirely, the one described by Richard Cobb in his book The Police and the People, which states that the principal weapon of the common people is “collective violence” (1970: 86). Indeed, in