

# Local Society and the Organization of Cults in Early Modern China: A Preliminary Study

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## The Issues

We know surprisingly little about the ways in which local society in traditional China reproduced itself on a long term basis *outside* the bounds of family life (the subject of studies on lineage) and state control (the subject of studies on those sub-county structures for “self-government” that were actually set up by the state at various points in history in order to control local communities and to facilitate surplus extraction). As early as 1984 Steven Sangren pointed out that cult organizations have been studied little.<sup>1</sup> Since then several works have paid closer attention to this question, mostly for more recent periods, such as the late Qing and Republican periods.

As pointed out by Linda Grove and Christian Daniels, the question of what kept traditional Chinese society together has been a subject of fierce debate in post-war Japanese sinology. Japanese scholars who had carried out intensive fieldwork in northern China before and during the Second World War assigned an important role to local temple cults as the ritual centres of “local community (*kyōdōtai*)”. They did so on the basis of a detailed knowledge of actual village life, even if coloured and restricted by the fact that throughout their stays they were associated by their informants with the enemy. After 1945, their views were discredited because they were associated with efforts to legitimize the Japanese imperialist expansion into China from the early 1930s onwards. Marxist inspired critics argued that this notion of a “local community”, which stressed horizontal ties between different segments of

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<sup>1</sup> P. Steven Sangren, “Traditional Chinese Corporations: Beyond Kinship”, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, XLIII/3 (1984), p. 408.

local society (ranging from tenants to landlords), denied the possibility of class contradictions and hence the possibility of historical change. This was then seen as underpinning the pre-war image of a changeless China, which therefore “needed” an external impetus to bring modernity and progress. These critics therefore shifted the attention of Japanese sinological circles towards questions of periodization and class contradictions. When matters of local organization were investigated, this was done in the context of state or elite exploitation, resulting for instance in many detailed studies on taxation, sub-county administrative schemes imposed by the state, and irrigation.

The concept of “local community” was long regarded as too contaminated for usage in serious historical analysis. In his work on the society of the Period of Disunion, Tanigawa Michio of the Kyoto tradition of Japanese sinology was the first to revive interest in the earlier discussions about “local community (*kyōdōtai*)”, receiving heavy criticism especially from the much more dogmatically Marxist inspired scholars of the Tokyo tradition. Thanks to Joshua Fogel’s translation of Tanigawa’s principal articles on this topic, the concept has also attracted attention in Western social history writing on China.<sup>2</sup> Prasenjit Duara’s concept of the “cultural nexus” is clearly indebted to this Japanese concept of “local community” and the underlying pre-war Japanese fieldwork in Northern China.<sup>3</sup> Its primary advantage is its openness to the different ways in which “community” could be created, whether for instance that of kinship, of cult worship, or professional. There is, furthermore, no structural reason why “community” could not also have involved various forms of socio-economic or political exploitation. Duara also points this out. Basically, the concept of *kyōdōtai* may have suffered from a conflation of the cultural construction of community by its members as communal and harmonious, and socio-economic realities as they would be analysed primarily by outside scholars.

Western scholarship has generally moved on a different tack. A crucial post-war influence has been the British social anthropologist Maurice Freedman. He and virtually all other British anthropologists (apart from Stephan Feuchtwang, who worked extensively on Taiwan and more recently in Fu-

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<sup>2</sup> Linda Grove and Christian Daniels (eds.), *State and Society in China* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1984), pp. 11–12. For an example of a study on sub-county structures, see Tsurumi Naohiro, “Rural Control in the Ming Dynasty”, *op. cit.*, pp. 245–77. On the “local community”, see Tanigawa Michio (tr. and intr. Joshua A. Fogel), *Medieval Chinese Society and the Local Community* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). Recent introductions to the “local community”—including links to Western theorizing on local society in non-Western cultures by James Scott and Samuel Popkin—have been written by Uchiyama Masao, “Kahoku nōson ni okeru kyōdō kōdō”, *Chūgoku—shakai to bunka* 6 (1991), pp. 62–76, and Yoshimori Kennosuke, “Chūgokushi ni okeru ‘shakai’ to ‘ningen’ no haaku wo megutte”, *Chūgoku—shakai to bunka* 7 (1992), pp. 259–77. A recent commentary on the Ming period is to be found in Martin Heijdra, “The Socio-economic Development of Ming Rural China (1368–1644): An Interpretation” (Ph.D., Princeton University, 1994), pp. 130–51.

<sup>3</sup> Prasenjit Duara, *Culture, Power, and the State: Rural North China, 1900–1942* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1988), *passim*, esp. pp. 209–14.

jian) did their fieldwork in the Hong Kong region, where kinship is an obvious major factor in creating groups. Hence, their research, and the historical scholarship that was inspired by it, has stressed the importance of lineage structures in structuring local society.<sup>4</sup> Only quite recently has David Faure redressed the balance somewhat, by pointing out the equal importance of temple cults in the Hong Kong region, even for binding together kinship structures.<sup>5</sup> In the meantime, Michael Szony has been arguing the same for the Northern Fujian region, showing as well that lineage in the strong sense given to it by Freedman is a Ming development.<sup>6</sup> Another study, in the Chaolian area near Guangzhou, was carried out by the anthropologist Helen Siu. She has combined both historical sources and ethnography to compose a multi-faceted study with much attention to the role of kinship as well as temple cults in structuring local society. Undeservedly, her study has received less attention than Duara's, although she also refers to the role of "cultural tissues" in shaping "a regional nexus of power".<sup>7</sup>

Western (mainly North American) anthropology on Taiwan, more recently followed up by indigenous Taiwanese anthropology of high quality, has had more of an eye for the importance of temple cults. The reason for this different approach can be found in the relative importance of temple cults on Taiwan, and the smaller significance of kinship organizations.<sup>8</sup> Early on, Kristofer Schipper pointed out the significance of cult organizations in Tainan; a recent follow-up—which appeared after the present article was completed—was written by Mingming Wang for Quanzhou City.<sup>9</sup>

My aim in the present study is to provide more historical depth to this largely anthropological research, on the basis of material culled from local gazetteers, anecdotal sources, and inscriptions. As we will see, the link be-

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<sup>4</sup> See Maurice Freedman, *Lineage Organization in Southeastern China* (London: The Athlone Press, 1958, 1965), and *Chinese Lineage and Society: Fukien and Kwangtung* (London: The Athlone Press, 1966, 1971).

<sup>5</sup> David Faure, *The Structure of Chinese Rural Society: Lineage and Village in the Eastern New Territories, Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1986).

<sup>6</sup> M. Szony, *Village Rituals in Fuzhou in the Late Imperial and Republican Periods* (D.Phil., Oxford University, 1995).

<sup>7</sup> Helen F. Siu, *Agents and Victims in South China: Accomplices in Rural Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 10–11, and *passim*.

<sup>8</sup> For a critical review of American scholarship on Taiwan, see Stephen O. Murray and Keelung Hong, *Taiwanese Culture. Taiwanese Society: A Critical Review of Social Science Research Done on Taiwan* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1994), pp. 17–76. It would carry us too far to summarize more recent Taiwanese scholarship, which can be found in the flood of publications now issuing from Taiwan.

<sup>9</sup> K. Schipper, "Neighborhood Cult Associations in Traditional Tainan", in: G. William Skinner (ed.), *The City in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, 1977), pp. 651–76. Mingming Wang, "Place, Administration, and Territorial Cults in Late Imperial China: A Case Study from Southern Fujian", *Late Imperial China* 16/1 (1995), pp. 33–78. I obtained this article too late to integrate it fully in my own arguments. This is not to say that the phenomenon of cult organizations had not been noted before, viz. by Justus Doolittle, *Social Life of the Chinese* (New York: Harper, 1865), Vol. II, pp. 245–54.

tween cults and social organization has been a constant aspect of pre-modern local society throughout its history. There can be no doubt that further in-depth study of specific better documented regions, along the lines of the work by David Faure, Helen Siu, Michael Szony, and Mingming Wang, will yield further information on the role of temple cults in shaping traditional local society.

It is not easy to find historical information on the relationship between local cults and social structure, beyond ubiquitous references to the existence of cult organizations as a general phenomenon. For one thing, the state has continuously attempted to impose its own sub-county structures for surplus extraction and control, which receive much more attention in the sources, although one always wonders how effective these structures really were. Cult organizations were by the people and for the people, hence not a matter of great interest to our elite authors. I have therefore culled information from a great variety of sources from different periods and different parts of China, in order to make some fairly general points that apply to pre-modern China from roughly the twelfth century onwards. I consider this study preliminary because several larger issues have to be left unstudied, as I will point out in the course of my investigation. I have not referred to anthropological studies which attest similar practices in present-day Taiwan, Hong Kong or mainland China, since this would multiply the amount of footnotes many times. Studies devoted to different aspects of Chinese religion, including local cults, usually look at the individual's relationship to the objects of worship, or matters of doctrine, cosmology and mythology, with the aim of reconstructing the underlying beliefs and their meanings. Religion is conceived as a separate dimension of society that can be studied in isolation, much in the same way that it is believed to function (or ought to function) in our own Western societies. As a result, the role of local cults in structuring society (from creating individual networks to the institutionalization of groups) has been insufficiently appreciated, at least for the period preceding the nineteenth century.

### **The Creation of Symbolic Unity**

It is widely assumed that the Chinese divine pantheon is structured as a bureaucracy. This view ignores the basic fact that most local deities, at least since the Song period (960–1276), were not officials but had noble titles, ranging from duke to king or even emperor.<sup>10</sup> This contrasts with the human world, in which actual government was carried out by bureaucrats under the ultimate control of only one person of noble descent, the emperor.

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<sup>10</sup> This is not to deny the importance of the bureaucratic metaphor in shaping popular perceptions of certain aspects of the divine world, but only to modify it by pointing out another important dimension that is not covered by this metaphor. Stephan Feuchtwang, *The Imperial Metaphor: Popular Religion in China* (London: Routledge, 1992) has pointed out that it is primarily a military bureaucratic structure in which violence plays an important role.

### *Local Rulers*

Even “pure” bureaucratic institutions such as the underworld were ruled by royal figures, such as King Yama (*Yan Wang*) or the City God King (*Chenghuang Wang*). The Buddhist pantheon, too, is full of kingly and princely figures (starting with the historical Buddha Śākyamuni who started as a crown prince). Contemporary temples in the Minnan cultural region (formed by Southern Fujian and Taiwan) carry imperial symbols on their rooftops, such as two dragons or two phoenixes facing a pearl or (in the Buddhist variant) a pagoda. Most deities sit on thrones, wearing the exuberant clothes and ornaments of nobility, rather than those of officials. Some deities even have an imperial title, such as the Great Emperor of the Eastern Marchmount (*Dongyue Dadi*) or Emperor Guan (*Guan Di*), and were therefore venerated with the imperial ninefold kowtow.

Chen Chun (1153–1217), a pupil of Zhu Xi’s and an active polemical writer on proper local government, gives the following description of the situation under the Southern Song.

... They also make statues of the children and grandchildren [of the main deities]. They call them August Son and August Grandson (*huangzi huangsun*). When a temple goes on a procession, over ten statues are carried together in a palanquin through the streets. Furthermore they make its parasols [imperial] yellow, [adorn] its wheels with [imperial] dragons, and set up an imperial throne. They also dress up a retinue of imperial guards to lead the way. It is an instance of arrogating undue status and exceeding one’s proper position.

Later on in his attack, Chen Chun gives several examples of deities with noble titles, such the Emperor of the Eastern Marchmount, the Holy Princess from Putian (better known in the West by her colloquial name, Mazu, or her early Qing title, “Empress of Heaven”) and the King of Southern Seas from Guangdong (called by him “Broad and Advantageous King”, later mostly known as the Vast Saint [*hongsheng*] King).<sup>11</sup>

In the case of the Vast Saint, we have further information on the ritual implements of the cult. The Song emperor Zhenzong once donated a whole series of ornaments and clothes to its ancestral temple, including a royal hat. Several centuries later, the founding Ming emperor donated a golden incense box and a set of flags in yellow brocade (i.e. in the imperial colour). The incense box was specifically used by state officials during their performance of the spring and autumn rituals at the temple.<sup>12</sup> As it is stressed in a much

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<sup>11</sup> Chen Chun, *Beiqi daquanji (Siku quanshu)* 43: 14a–16b. Chen Chun was not alone in his criticisms, see for instance Du Zheng (fl. 1190), *Xingshantang ji (Siku quanshu)* 6: 10a–b (referring to this custom as practices of “recent years”).

<sup>12</sup> See Qu Dajun, *Guangdong xinyu* (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1985) 6, pp. 205–7. On the cult, see Siu, *Agents and Victims in South China*, pp. 79–85, with more details on its festival.

later source from the 1940s, since the deity was installed as a king, his ritual implements and personal retinue had to befit the status of a king.<sup>13</sup>

These titles were very real to the participants in local cults, with concrete social consequences. This remained the case in later periods as well, as is illustrated by several examples collected by a late Qing author, Chen Qiyuan (1811–81) in a note on the behaviour of temple keepers in the Hangzhou region (with the local nickname “temple ghosts [*miaogui*]”). When he was studying with his mother’s family in 1829, he was living in a certain alley. In the local temple, a General Shi was worshipped, a Song figure of minor historical importance. The temple’s “incense fire” was flourishing and his worshippers suffered under the low title of their deity. The “temple ghost” sent someone with 300 silver tael to the Heavenly Master in Jiangxi to buy a noble rank for their deity. Upon his return, a huge festival was organized, befitting the deity’s new rank. The “ghosts” of other temples all expressed their admiration.

In another case recorded by Chen Qiyuan, the deity was called Luminous King White Horse (a typical Lord of the Earth title in the Lower Yangzi region). When he went on his annual inspection journey around the area, the temples which he passed by all paid their respects as “stupid younger brothers”. However, when they passed by the *she*-temple of King Kang, its “ghost” came out, scolding that Luminous King White Horse had originally been ridden by his deity and that the title of Luminous King was inappropriate. The bystanders had to debate the matter extensively before it was finally solved.

Chen Qiyuan also mentions the general custom that when a procession passed by a temple whose deity had a higher rank than one’s own, its followers should crowd around the carriage of their deity and race past the temple. This was called “stealing the carriage” and in this way they expressed their respect. Here, the author discusses in some detail a case of two temples which fought extensively over the proper ritual forms.<sup>14</sup> The first example indicates how money actually bought increased standing for the deity in the form of a title. Implicit—but no less real—in all three examples is how these titles reflected positively on the self-esteem of the worshipping communities and their standing in local society.

Local deities also supported the imperial system more directly, performing miracles for the benefit of the imperial family and the larger region or even the nation as a whole. Frequently, a deity appeared over the city walls or the battlefield to drive away bandits or rebel armies. We also encounter examples in which the deity healed a member of the imperial family or put

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<sup>13</sup> *Chaolian xiangzhi* (1946; *Zhongguo difangzhi jicheng, Xiangzhenzhi zhuanji*, Vol. 32; Shanghai: Jiangsu Guji, 1992) 7, pp. 342–6.

<sup>14</sup> Chen Qiyuan, *Yongjianzhai biji* (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1989) 8, pp. 178–9. Incidentally, we find a similar custom to “stealing the carriage” described in the *Wujiang xianzhi* (1561) 13: 20a–b (translated below).

out a fire in the imperial palace.<sup>15</sup> Guan Yu started on his way to fame when in a bloody combat lasting days he defeated the demon Chiyou who caused the flooding of the saltponds in Guan Yu's native Xiezhou Prefecture. He was ordered to do so by the Heavenly Master, who was the supreme Daoist ritual specialist and who had been summoned to the imperial palace by the Song emperor Huizong.<sup>16</sup> Since the sale of salt was one of the main sources of income for the Northern Song state, this divine intervention directly benefitted the state, rather than the local people. Often enough, such miracles demonstrating support for the emperor and the state cannot be confirmed by evidence from official sources. They may well have been "constructed" by the local worshipping community or ritual specialists. However, whether the emperor knew about such events is besides the point. They reflect local attitudes towards the imperial system and the place of local communities and their deities in this system. They show that people saw themselves and their deities in direct connection with the fate of the nation and the imperial house.

The worship of deities as local rulers reinforced the hierarchical principles and ritual practices that were essential to the maintenance of the imperial system as one of absolute rule. Imperial gifts of objects and titles enhanced the status of these cults, but at the same time such gifts also created symbolic bonds between the imperial centre and the local communities supporting the cults. The way in which people looked at imperial authority has yet to be made the subject of serious research. A more extensive survey of the contribution of local cults to the maintenance of the imperial system is best carried out in the context of such a broader research project.

### *Cults and Local Identity*

The first and foremost way in which a cult bound together local people was by providing a locus for identification, which was invested with shared memories. By performing miracles for the good of the community, ranging from protecting people against bandits and plagues (or rather, the plague demons) to combatting droughts and floods, the deity built up a broad local following. This is an important dimension of local cults that should not be overlooked at the expense of miracles for individual persons.

The link between the local community and the deity is usually expressed in fairly stereotyped terms. In the case of two deities who had died while defending Hangzhou against the Jin invaders in 1129, "[t]hose who live near [the temple] receive the protection [of the deities], those who are ill pray to them and are healed; that one is without plagues, without fires, and without

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<sup>15</sup> Kenneth Dean, *Taoist Ritual and Popular Cults of Southeast China* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993), pp. 73–5, 142, for a few examples.

<sup>16</sup> Barend J. ter Haar, "The Origins and Development of Guan Yu Mythology and the Guan Yu Cult" (unpublished manuscript).

bestly disasters is all thanks to the deities.”<sup>17</sup> In the same period, local people (*xiangmin*, clearly not a social, but a spatial category here<sup>18</sup>) in Linping township near Hangzhou built a palisade around their local temple to defend themselves against the Jin enemy. When the enemy saw the flags and banners announcing the support of the deity, they all paid their respects and fled.<sup>19</sup> Here, people anticipated the deity’s support for the local community and the rapid retreat of the enemy proved to them that they were right. A list of similar examples from other periods and different regions could be added on the basis of almost any local gazetteer. Whatever the “real” reasons for the defeat or disappearance of the attackers, in such cases the events were constructed by local people as resulting from the assistance of their own deities. The history of the locality and the cult defined each other, being predicated on common worship and on the perception that the cult belongs to the community as a whole.

Just how intimately the histories of a deity and its surrounding locality were interlinked can be illustrated rather aptly with the Ouyang Hu cult of Shaowu (in the north of modern Fujian). A special feature of this cult was that people visited the parental temple of the cult at Daqian Mountain to obtain advice from the deity in their dreams, especially concerning the civil service examinations. However, he never lost his original role of local protector. From 1230 onwards the region had suffered from unrest, and in 1234 the local magistrate and an official on leave at home “led gentlemen and people (*shimin*) to welcome the Fortunate and Good King (i.e. Ouyang Hu). In the prefectural *yamen* itself, making the local link especially visible, they led a Yellow Register Cosmic Renewal Ritual (*huanglu jiao*). They ordered the Daoist priest Lin Xiaoyao to present their memorial to Heaven. Lin fell to the ground for many hours; when he woke up again amidst auspicious rain, he reported that he had met the King outside the Gate of Heaven. The King had told him that he had requested the Emperor on High (i.e. the Jade Emperor) to bestow Great Peace—a typical politico-religious term describing a nation’s stability—on the region in reward for the excellence of the ritual. This peace would last for forty years.

Forty years later, the local notables again requested a Daoist priest to present a memorial. The priest told them that the King had already left for Hibiscus City, a mythical place inhabited by immortals, and would not

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<sup>17</sup> *Lin’an zhi* (1265–74; *Songyuan difangzhi congkan*, Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1990) 72:4a–b.

<sup>18</sup> The precise meanings of this and similar terms for (segments of the) local population are difficult to determine. I do not think that we can assume these terms to refer to local elites, e.g. landlords, without more explicit evidence from the same context. I feel that Japanese scholars tend to over-interpret the sources in this respect. However, this question can only be solved in a specialized study. For a Japanese view vis-à-vis the following of local cults, see for instance the various studies by Kanai Noriyuki (quoted below, notes 22, 25).

<sup>19</sup> *Lin’an zhi* (1265–74) 73: 1b–2a. Incidentally, the original supporting group of the shrine had been the local “great surname Yu”.



return for another twenty years. Indeed, the ritual was a big flop and from the next year onwards (probably 1275) local unrest and war broke out. As we know, the dynasty fell in 1276. The cult slackened as well, and only after the suppression of the Tingzhou bandits in 1291 did the incense fire flourish again. The author adds in small characters that in 1274 or 1275 a friend of his had inquired in a dream at the temple after the nation's prosperity (*guozuo*). He dreamed that the King had welcomed him in full royal dress, replying only, "I cannot bear to say it. Soon there will be a transfer of the Mandate [of Heaven]."<sup>20</sup> Thus, the fates of the cult and the region were closely intertwined. Proper rituals, carried out by the entire community under the leadership of prominent local figures, could affect the fate of the region, but only to a certain extent. When the nation as a whole was in danger, the local deity could not help any more and little was left for him to do but to retreat temporarily from the human world. Basically, the deity protected all who lived in the region around the temple, which contributed significantly to a sense of belonging among the local people.

### **The Creation of Social Cohesion**

Roughly speaking, the maintenance of a temple cult was carried out on an individual basis and through personal networks, as well as by organizations called "societies (*she*)" and "gatherings (*hui*)".<sup>21</sup> Since this study is primarily directed at more institutionalized forms of cult organization, I will focus here on the societies and gatherings.

Comprehensive lists of temples *with* their respective cult organizations are quite rare until the late Qing period, and even then most material stems from ethnographers. For earlier periods, we have to rely on local gazetteers, anecdotal collections and inscriptions. Even then, the evidence is highly sketchy and incomplete. The present study is a preliminary report on the material that I have gathered up to now, less representative for the Song and Yuan, but more so for the Ming and later periods, thanks to the much better situation with regard to the sources.

#### *Temple Organizations*

Especially the term *she* (society) has a long and complicated history. It was originally used to refer to the local earth cult carried out on an open-air altar of stamped earth. Confucian critics of local cults always lamented the rise of shrines and temples with roofs and walls, and advocated a return to the original open-air altars. During the early Ming a fundamental reform of

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<sup>20</sup> Liu Xun, *Yinju tongyi (Congshu jicheng)* 30: 313–14. On this mythical city, see *Hanyu dacidian* (Shanghai, 1990-4), 9: 281. On this cult, see also Barend J. ter Haar, "The Genesis and Spread of Temple Cults in Fukien", in: E. B. Vermeer (ed.), *Development and Decline of Fukien Province in the 17th and 18th Centuries* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990), pp. 363–5, 380–1.

<sup>21</sup> When I use these terms hereafter, I will omit the quotation marks.

local cults was attempted, in which temples were to be replaced once more by such open-air altars.

Since the *she* had always been the common cult of (ideally) all the people in a given locality, it is not surprising that this word should also acquire the connotation of a worshipping group. The atmosphere of the traditional *she*-cult is expressed rather well in the following lines from a poem that commemorates the festival of the *she*-day. This festival, on the second day of the second month, traditionally marked the start of the agricultural year. The following is a tentative translation of part of this much longer poem.

The old and the young stand in proper sequence to each other,  
After paying obeisances again, they straighten their clothes.  
After sprinkling liquor, they prognosticate with moonblocks,  
They hope to learn whether the deity accepts [the sacrifices].  
When they obtain “auspicious”, they all praise that it is good.  
This serves to soothe the feelings towards the present year.  
After worshipping, everybody then sits down,  
No matter whether rich or poor.  
Although it is the locality which has gathered,  
There are also those who with their relatives,  
Take fine foods and donate them to each other.<sup>22</sup>

No doubt the ideal of the *she* worship was that all members of the local community could participate. That this was not always the case is told in an anecdote from the Song local gazetteer of Chang’an (modern Xi’an), which tells of a man who was excluded by the “masses of the village *she*” from worshipping at the earth god altar (*she*). He then carried out his own worship, making food offerings out of mud. Afterwards he found gold in the ground and struck rich, no doubt as a divine reward for his devoutness.<sup>23</sup> This anecdote dearly implies that the principal reason for his exclusion was his inability to contribute to the cult (whether financially or materially). The point is that only intention ought to matter.

Somewhat unexpectedly, it proves very difficult to find explicit references to the *she* as a group worshipping a local cult (rather than a location) before the Yuan dynasty. I find this even more surprising because the term is already used early on to refer to lay Buddhist groups. As Jacques Gernet has pointed out, the indebtedness of these groups to the old style *she* is remarkable.<sup>24</sup> The studies by Kanai Noriyuki on the *she* during the Song

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<sup>22</sup> Quoted from Kanai Noriyuki, “Sōdai no sonsha to shashin”, *Tōyōshi kenkyū* 38 (1979), p. 221. Kanai only indicates *Jianghu ji* as a source, but does not specify author, edition, or pages. Kanai, *op. cit.*, p. 225, quotes another poem on the communal nature of the *she* festival.

<sup>23</sup> Chang’an zhi (1076; *Songyuan fangzhi congkan*) 18: 12a.

<sup>24</sup> Suzuki Chūsei, “Sōdai bukkyō kessha no kenkyū”, *Shigaku zasshi*, Vol. 52 (1941), No. 1, pp. 65–98, No. 2, pp. 71–107, No. 3, pp. 37–67. Jacques Gernet, *Les aspects économiques du bouddhisme dans la société chinoise du Ve au Xe siècle* (Paris: École Française d’Extrême Orient,

may give the false impression that it is a clear-cut case that by then *she* was already a general term for the cult group of a local temple. However, apart from the fact that Kanai mixes sources from different periods and quite different backgrounds together to make statements on the Song period, the Song quotations that use the term can mostly be interpreted as referring to the old style open-air altar cult for the deity of the earth.<sup>25</sup> Without an in-depth study of changes in the god of the earth cult during the Tang and Song dynasties, the precise process of historical change cannot be ascertained. This will have to be postponed to another date. What does seem to be certain is that by the Yuan period the term was predominantly used to refer to cult groups as distinct from the place of worship. It is possible that this transition was furthered by the Yuan use of the term for units of a sub-county self-administrative system established by the state, but we lack the evidence to investigate this possibility.<sup>26</sup>

Sometime during the Northern Song, people in Yangquan *li* in Pingding prefecture were suffering from drought. They “danced for clouds everywhere and prayed for rain at the *she* without success”. Six or seven youngsters came to feed their cows at a stone platform. They placed their bottles under the reeds and prayed to them for fun. Water coagulated on the reeds and dropped into the bottles. Soon afterwards it started to rain everywhere. Subsequently, whenever there was a dry spell, the “people of the *li* led each other” and imitated the behaviour of the boys, always with immediate success. They founded a shrine for the deity of the reed-platform. In 1104, the temple received a plaque, implying the existence of sufficient local support such that local elites and magistrates could be convinced to apply for this kind of state recognition. In 1186, Fan Yu, who belonged to great surname [group] of the *li* led the local people (*zhong*) in asking a local literatus to compose a commemorative inscription, which was then carved in stone and placed in the temple.<sup>27</sup> The term *she* here definitely refers to a location (being preceded in the original text by the locative particle *yu*), most likely the traditional open-air altar for the god of the earth. The new and evidently more effective deity was worshipped in a roofed-over temple, but otherwise the distinction from the old style cult was not very great.

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1956), pp. 251–69.

<sup>25</sup> Important articles by Kanai Noriyuki are, “Sōdai no sonsha to shashin”, pp. 219–45; “Sōdai no kyōsha to tochishin”, in: *Nakajima Satoshi Sensei koki kinen ronshū* (Tbkyo, 1980), pp. 385–407; “Sōdai no sonsha to shūzoku”, in: *Rekishi ni okeru minshū to bunka—Sakai Tadao Sensei koki jukuga kinen ronshū* (Tokyo, 1982), pp. 351–67; “Sōdai sessai no sonsha to toshin”, in: *Sōdai no shakai to shūkyō* (Tokyo: Kyūko Shoin, 1985), pp. 81–118.

<sup>26</sup> A general overview of state imposed sub-county administrative schemes is given by Sōgabe Shizuo, *Chūgoku oyobi Nihon ni okeru kyōson keitai no henshen* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1963). For the Song and Yuan periods, see Yanagida Setsuko, *Sōgen kyōsonsei no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1986).

<sup>27</sup> *Shanyou shike congbian* (Xi’an: Shanxin Renmin, 1988 reprint), 21: 50a–51b, commentary 51b–52b.

In 1353 the temple on Reed-Platform Mountain still flourished. To celebrate the continued support of their deity, the “greybeard elders (*qilao*)” of the six villages that supported the cult had a text composed that described their cult and its festival. This text was carved in stone and placed in the temple. The six villages were divided into societies (*she*), which were subdivided into hamlets (*luan*, not to be confused with *luan* meaning “group”). The hamlets consisted of the people, led by a chief, probably the “elders” who are mentioned several times in the inscription. The inscription was signed by several local officials *qualitate qua*, and the “temple-official” surnamed Fan, most likely from the same “great surname [group]” that had been involved in 1186. By now the deity was called a King and no longer identified with the original reed-platform. Some even identified him as Bingling, the son of the Emperor of the Eastern Marchmount.

On the day preceding the festival day on the fourth day of the fourth month, “the deity is welcomed (*ying*)” with a splendid procession, with music and all kinds of acrobatic and theatrical performances (*shehuo*). This is called “raising the deity (*qishen*)”.

The following day, the meat sacrifice, the ritual liquor, the incense and the paper money are abundant and rich. Then flutes are blown and drums are beaten, actors perform variety skits. Each *she* has its own performances (*shehuo*), some on horseback and others on foot, some as immortals or Buddhas and others as ghosts or deities, or fish, dragons, tigers and leopards. They yell, cry, sing, and call out in the same way as the excitement of the [exorcist] celebrations of the Twelfth Month. The following day, they start again, which is called “lowering the deity (*xiashen*).” At the places where the deity passes by, sacrifice and worship go on day and night in a respectful manner.<sup>28</sup>

Here, the *she* was without a doubt an organization of worshippers, probably roughly based on the natural village, but not necessarily identical. The different villages co-operated to maintain the cult and each *she* performed its share of theatrical performances to please the deity. Although the inhabitants of the village were led by members of “a great surname [group]” or the elders, the festival activities were otherwise communal. Whether there exists a relationship between the Yuan administrative *she* and this new *she* cannot be ascertained. In any case, the religious functions of the new *she* did not derive from the administrative *she*, which was not formally centred on a temple cult.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> *Shanyou shike congbian*, 38: 25a–27b, commentary 27b–28b. On *shehuo*, see *Zhongguo minjian meishu quanji* (Ji’nan: Shandong Jiaoyu, 1993), Vol. 14, with abundant illustrations. On its Song-Yuan background, see Liao Ben, *Songyuan xiqu wenwu yu minsu* (Beijing: Wenhua Yishu, 1989), pp. 85–94.

<sup>29</sup> The rules for establishing *she* units are set out in great detail in the Yuan set of regulations,

By the Ming, it would seem, the common connotation for *she* was certainly that of a cult group.<sup>30</sup> However, I have only found one explicit Ming list of cult societies to date, contained in the local gazetteer of his native Gaoling County compiled by the Ming literatus Lü Nan. He lists a number of temples and their principal worshipping groups, based on residence.

- Palace of Houtu (an archaic type of earthgod) “worshipped by the people of the East Street *she*”
- Temple of the Eastern Marchmount “worshipped by the people of the North Street *she*”
- Palace of the Purple Purity (the Ciwei Star) “worshipped by the people of the South Street *she*”
- Temple of the Dragon King “worshipped by the people of the South Street *she*”
- Temple for the Righteous and Brave King of Martial Peace (Guan Yu) “worshipped by the people of the West Street *she*”
- Temple for the deity of the Deer Platform “nowadays worshipped by the people of Fengzheng *li*”
- Temple of Lord Wen of Jin “nowadays worshipped by the people of the Anxin *she*”
- Temple of Master Yan Minister of Qi “worshipped by the people of the Yan Village *she*”
- Temple of Minister Wei of the State of Zheng from the Tang “worshipped by the people of the Yaozitou *she*”

Significantly, altars, shrines and temples of the official state cult (including the City God) were not maintained by such a society.<sup>31</sup>

Apart from this list, we obtain very little information. The only exception is the Houtu Palace, worshipped by the people of the East Street *she* to pray for rain, to avert diseases and to obtain children and grandchildren. Its incense

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*Tongzhi tiaoge*. See Okamoto Keiji (ed.), *Tsūsei jōkaku no kenkyū yakuchū*, Vol. II (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankōkai, 1975), pp. 148–53 (translation and annotations, *op. cit.*, pp. 153–65). These rules are extremely detailed in enumerating the various obligations of *she*-members, but do not mention cult activities. Amongst other things, the kinds of text that ought to be read in the *she*-school are all from a Confucian canonical background.

<sup>30</sup> For explicit remarks from the Ming period on the widespread nature of *she* as cult organizations, see for instance *Changshan xianzhi* (1590) 15: 37b (including a comparison with the classical open-air altar *she* of the pre-Han period). Compare also the remark on a late Ming northern Chinese cult in the *Xiezhou fuzhi* (1525), 4: 6:20a: “of old, the [cult’s] *she* that received incense-fire were eleven in total. ... Later, the temple was moved here from the old city, only the effort of five *she* was used.” Other examples in the same source, *op. cit.*, 6: 2b and 6: 14. *Shanyou shike congbian*, 31: 30b, records how an “inhabitant of the *li*” gathered the elders of the city and its outskirts to “co-operate to form a society (*she*)”.

<sup>31</sup> *Gaoling xianzhi* (Lü Nan [comp.], 1541 pref.) 2: 5a–8a. This gazetteer contains no instances of *she* as a part of placenames, indicating that we are indeed dealing with cult groups and not with former administrative *she*.

fire is overseen by someone who lives in a Daoist hall that forms part of the temple. On the eighteenth day of the third month they organize a festival with a banquet. The banquet was and still is an integral part of religious celebrations, serving to bind the community together by sharing food and especially spirits (*jiu*). Lü Nan notes that “[he] was born and grew up in the territory of the deity”, showing the territorial nature of the cult. There is also a small building where the local people often come to read books. During his days as a *jueren*, Lü Nan himself taught some pupils here.<sup>32</sup>

In this account, we learn in the usual stereotyped way how the deity serves the local people. Then, Lü Nan explicitly notes how the cult community was perceived in territorial terms. Finally, we receive a rare glimpse of the social function of the temple as a gathering place. Of Lü Nan himself we know that he had a special interest in local temple cults, which is also attested in the gazetteer that he compiled on Xiezhou Prefecture, where he served as magistrate, and in a hagiographical compilation on the deity Guan Yu.<sup>33</sup>

Indirect information from the Ming period on the social significance of local cults in binding the local community together comes from an unexpected source, namely the lists in some gazetteers of open-air altars of stamped earth for the worship of the classical god of the earth (i.e. the old-style *she!*). This cult for a generic deity of the earth had been re-instituted upon the order of the Ming founder, Zhu Yuanzhang, in the place of the newer local cults in roofed-over temples for individual deities. This was part of an elaborate attempt to re-organize Chinese social, economical, religious and political life on a perceived classical basis. It turned away from what we now see as the commercial and financial revolution of the Southern Song and Yuan dynasties and its concomitant social and religious changes, and attempted a drastic move back to agriculture as the only foundation of society. Apart from serving as locations for the communal thanksgiving rituals for the crops during spring and autumn, these places were to serve as the location of the Community Compact (*xiangyue*). The aim of this compact was to improve the moral calibre of the people. As one of the canonical acts of the Ming dynasty founder and because Confucian ideologues sympathized with the underlying moral programme, these altars and the compact received much attention in local gazetteers.<sup>34</sup>

However, instead of destroying the old temples and replacing them with altars, they were actually often built in the neighbourhood of existing local

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<sup>32</sup> *Gaoling xianzhi*: 2: 5a–6b.

<sup>33</sup> See Barend J. ter Haar, “The Origins and Development of Guan Yu Mythology and the Guan Yu Cult”, q.v. Lü Nan’s Xiezhou gazetteer is referred to in note 30, above.

<sup>34</sup> See Anita M. Andrew, “The Local Community in Early Ming Social Legislation: Ming Taizu’s Approach to Transformation and Control in the “Great Warning”, *Ming Studies* 20 (1985), pp. 57–68, Heijdra, “The Socio-economic Development of Ming Rural China (1368–1644), pp. 130–51. My summary is based upon my own interpretation of the evidence in Ming local gazetteers, such as those quoted in this study.

temples.<sup>35</sup> A case is recorded in 1333—still during the Yuan—in which the elders of Neiwang Village (=Neiwang *li*) in Huguan County had themselves organized a “Community Compact”, but felt that it needed a deity to supervise it. The compact was therefore linked with a temple cult.<sup>36</sup> Linking the new “old” open-air altars with temple cults completely invalidated the intended ideological aims of the reform and further demonstrated the power of the local cults. It did signify that temples were the pre-eminent places for addressing the local people as a collectivity.

The 1618 gazetteer of Changshu (modern Jiangsu) contains an extensive list of open-air altars. At the outset it is noted that during the Hongwu period (1368–98) it was prescribed that each hundred households should worship the Deity of the Five Soils and the Five Grains on the open-air altar (*lishu*). With the disclaimer of only recording those that the author knew, he then listed 120 deities by name and their locations of worship. They were virtually all local earth gods with temples and quite different from the rather abstract Deity of the Five Soils and the Five Grains who should have been worshipped. A number of them can also be identified in the much more concise list of temples in this same gazetteer. None of them was a supra-local cult, such as the locally very important worship of the Emperor of the Eastern Marchmount.<sup>37</sup>

From time to time, local officials attempted to carry out the early Ming prescriptions to the letter, as far as we know with limited results. This is illustrated excellently by the efforts of Ye Chunji (fl. second half of the 16th century) in Huian county (southern Fujian). In his account of his reforms, he observes that even this small county had 551 “licentious shrines (*yinci*)”. He adds that territories of varying sizes depend on one temple, ranging from one *li* to several areas (*qu*, the precise nature of this unit is unclear). Disturbed by their financial burden on the people, Ye Chunji had the cults destroyed. Instead, he made the people respect the “auspicious mounds” (the altars of the classical earth god cult?) and founded 221 *she*-schools. At the same time, he also comments that the people moved the statues of their deities to their private sleeping rooms and quotes how some said that as soon as he was out of the city gates, the deities returned to their temples!<sup>38</sup> Ye’s remarks indicate the strength of temple cults as a communal institution.

By the late Qing and the Republican period, local gazetteers start to contain more detailed evidence on local cults and social organization.<sup>39</sup> Even

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<sup>35</sup> See, for instance, *Yuanwu xianzhi* (1594), *shang*: 49b; *Wuwei Zhouzhi* (c. first half of the 16th century) 5: 1b–4a; *Huayin xianzhi* (1614) 7: 31a; *Jing’an xianzhi* (1565) 2: 17a, on the replacement of the old style *lishu* open air altars by roofed-over *she* temples; *Yuyao xianzhi* (1603) 8: 1a; *Xinghua fuzhi* (1575) 2: 52h.

<sup>36</sup> *Shanyou shike rongbian*, 34: 6b–8b.

<sup>37</sup> *Changshu sizhi* (1617) 6: 2b–3b. They can be identified as earth gods from their names.

<sup>38</sup> Ye Chunji, *Shijian ji* (*Siku quanshu*) 7: 14a.

<sup>39</sup> Wu Cheng-han, *The Temple Fairs in Late Imperial China* (Ph.D., Princeton, 1988), pp. 86–

then, the information is by no means as rich as one might expect from the significance of local cult organizations as it is documented in late nineteenth and early twentieth century ethnography. An exception is the 1935 gazetteer of Yin County (Ningbo), which not only contains a list of virtually all local temples, but also records their cult organizations and the number of households belonging to them. A full analysis of this list is impossible here, since it contains some 517 temples devoted to hundreds of different deities and records the number of households in 262 cases. The range in size of the cult organizations (called *she*) is huge, with the largest organizations counting over 2000 households, and the smallest ones only ten. Many of them were subdivided into *jing* (territories), *bao* (fortresses) and/or *zhu* (pillars), which then dispatched someone to the temple committee. These subdivisions were partly based on villages and partly on surnames, but then several villages or surname groups might co-operate in the same subdivision. Thus, the long term management of cults led to the institutionalization of co-operation transcending the level of natural units such as villages or families. The “territory” as a cult unit was confined to the townships; its number of participant households was consistently small (twenty-five to fifty). The number of households in a “fortress” or a “pillar”—which are found in the countryside—could vary considerably. This may reflect the larger amount of wealth in the townships, enabling smaller groups to sustain one temple cult.<sup>40</sup>

The early Republican local gazetteer of Daishan township (Zhejiang Province) gives the following general statement.

Each *she*-temple of Daishan controls a territory. The borders and boundaries do not overlap each other. For instance, Upper Street at the bridge-end belongs to the Xuantan Temple, Lower Street belongs to the Juying Temple. I do not know by whom this has been decided. Custom has been continued over time and cannot be broken at all. ... [F]or instance, the territory controlled by Xuantan Temple is the biggest and the number of households is also the largest. Next, Gaoxian Temple, Juying Temple, Taiping Temple, Shima Temple all exceed the thousand households. The others sometimes number several hundreds or dozens of households. The Dashun temple, Zhanggong Temple and Haishu Temple for instance are the smallest. In all households when a person's death is imminent, then just before the person dies [a member of the family] will first go to their own temple to burn some incense and report.

The Palace of the Eastern Marchmount was the general temple of the entire territory of Daishan. Its organization was subdivided into “pillars (*zhu*)”

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<sup>40</sup> *Yinxian tongzhi* (1935) 725a–793a (1449–1585). A further analysis of this material, correlating it to other socio-economic information, still needs to be carried out.



whose heads instigated various late Qing rebuilding efforts.<sup>41</sup> Each temple in the township had its own “territory”, generally much larger than the individual “territories” in Yin county.

The clearest evidence that a non-kinship local group existed primarily in the celebration of a common cult can be found in the custom of reporting sad events (deaths) and/or happy events (births and marriages) to the local deity.<sup>42</sup> We have already encountered the example of Daishan township. In the Chaolian area (Xinhui County, Guangdong Province) people only reported happy events to their *she*-temple, whereas unhappy events were kept within the family. In the year that a baby is born, the family was supposed to contribute a lantern to the *she*-temple at the Lantern Festival. The connection between lanterns and children is widespread in southern China, because in the different local languages the words *dīng* (historically the term for a “male taxable unit”) and *dēng* (lantern) are homophonous.<sup>43</sup> The *she*-temple was the temple worshipped by one’s local *she*-organization. The local gazetteer of Chaolian states that these temples were used for gatherings and deliberations, as well as banquets by the local community.<sup>44</sup> In a sense, the deity here functioned as the Registry Office of the locality, a function that did not correspond to anything in the real Chinese world. The history of this custom has yet to be written and might shed further light on the linkage between community and local cult. Like the noble titles of most deities, this is further evidence that the supernatural world was not the mirror-image of the real world.

### *The Organization of Festivals*

Whereas the precise history of the “society (*she*)” from open-air altar cult for the god of the earth to general cult organization has yet to be written, the rise of single purpose “gatherings (*hui*)” seems to be much clearer. They already existed in a lay Buddhist context, viz. the famous White Lotus Gathering (*bailian she*) and other Pure Land type of Buddhist gatherings, but separate “gatherings” in charge of the yearly organization of temple festivals appear to have been a Southern Song development. Generally speaking, the gathering was a religious group with a well circumscribed purpose, ranging from large scale activities such as the organization of festivals and rituals, to reciting sutras or cleaning the incense burner.<sup>45</sup> Since the local cult manifested

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<sup>41</sup> *Daishan zhenzhi* (1927; *Zhongguo difangzhi jicheng, Xiangzhenzhi zhuanji*, Vol. 25) 10: 1a- b. The division into “pillars” is clear from the appearance of “pillar-heads”.

<sup>42</sup> For instance, Sidney D. Gamble, *Ting Hsien: A North China Rural Community* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1954, 1968), p. 387.

<sup>43</sup> *Chaolian xiangzhi*, 1: 12–13.

<sup>44</sup> *Chaolian xiangzhi*, 2: 70–1. These *she*-temples are explicitly distinguished from old style *she* as *minshe*.

<sup>45</sup> See for instance the survey by Wu Zimu, *Mengliang lu* (Hangzhou: Zhejiang Renmin, 1980), pp. 181–2.

Virtually all references to *she* are to groups of people with a common activity ((a) pastimes and sports; (b) types of sacrifice; (c) two *she* connected to the cult of the Emperor of the

itself most clearly in its yearly festival, the gathering that organized this festival could also become a long-term organization. Even then, the name of the gathering would derive from the occasion, rather than the group that backed it up.

Chen Chun's polemical description of local cults during the twelfth century—from which I quoted above—is also revealing on the organization of festivals. He notes the large number of temples in his native region of Zhangzhou Prefecture and how throughout the year “gatherings to welcome the deity (*yingshen zhi hui*)” take place, such as the locally immensely popular Audience of the Marchmount (*chaoyue*) on the birthday of the Emperor of the Eastern Marchmount, when everyone comes to pay homage to this deity. He describes in some detail how “loafers, no-goods and those who like to stir up trouble” use all kinds of devious means to collect contributions for festivals.

Privately, they enjoy the pleasure of roasting goatlets and killing pigs. Publicly, they make the claim of expelling disaster and praying for good fortune. At the outset, they implore respected local people to take on the office of Signatory Chief Exhortator of Contributions (*qiandu quanyuan*), and thereupon they further pressurize members of the Imperial House to be their assistants, called Principal Exhortators (*quanshou*). The powerful and crafty clerks also take part in this and become their co-conspirators, called Gathering Managers (*huigan*).

He finishes this section by informing us how local people were driven to debt and ruin by the demands for contributions.<sup>46</sup> Clearly, he must have overstated his case, for the cults were able to persist, which indicates that sufficient money remained within the community as a whole. Individual people also continued to contribute, which suggests that they felt it was worth their while one way or another.

The principal two points to retain from Chen Chun's attack are the existence of a structure to collect contributions and the social status of the leading members of this structure. Still, despite this leadership by persons of some weight, the cult as such remained very much as a communal activity in which all were obliged by social pressure to take part.

That a Principal Exhortator did not need to be a member of the imperial family (with the family name Zhao) is clear from another source, namely

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Eastern Marchmount, one responsible for sacrifices and the other for people who carry instruments of torture and punishment to do penance), while the much more frequently mentioned *hui* are linked to ritual occasions (performance of rituals and reading of sutras). “On the eighth day of the fourth month all *she* pay court at the Gathering of the Five Manifested Kings Who Celebrate the Buddha.”

<sup>46</sup> *Beiqi daquanji*, 43: 12b–13b. He reiterates the same complaint elsewhere with slightly different details, *Beiqi daquanji*, 47: 5a–6b, 9a–b.

a 1215 inscription on a bronze tripod incense burner for a Temple of the Eastern Marchmount in Sichuan. Here “Li Gang, a Principal Exhortator in the service of the deity,” led a group of local people from different *li* units to fund the tripod.<sup>47</sup> This Li Gang cannot be identified further.

The example of the Yellow Register Cosmic Renewal Ritual in Shaowu Prefecture, encountered above, indicated that local notables were in charge of the organization of festivals. The following account from the late twelfth century by Hong Mai confirms this.

According to local custom in Wuzhou, every time on the birthday of [the deity] True Martiality on the third day of the third month, *the entire suburb together* sets up a Yellow Register Cosmic Renewal Ritual (*huanglu jiao*) to expel disaster and invite good fortune. In 1190 the [chiefs of the] rich households, Mr. Chen and Mr. Xu were in charge of the events. Chen was Principal Head and Xu was Vice-Head to him. From then on, each year the sacrificial gifts were most complete and impressive. Three years later, because of a death in the family, Student Chen coincidentally appropriated a considerable amount of the collective money. When the date came, he could not pay it back and thereupon he pushed Xu to replace him. Xu agreed and for all that was necessary to spend he gave private money to provide for it, without the slightest bit of miserliness.<sup>48</sup>

We are dealing with the same kind of local foreman and ritual occasion (viz. the phrase “to expel disaster and invite good fortune”) as discussed by Chen Chun. The two men had collected money and could make use of it freely. Hence, it is not difficult to see how abuses could take place. However, in this particular case the two men were certainly supported by the local people, since when they were subsequently struck dumbfounded by the gods who had discovered an error in the proper ritual forms, the “several hundreds of men and women present at the gathering together profusely paid obeisance, prayed and lamented for them”.

The Southern Song cult for King Zhang at Shrine Mountain in Guangde Prefecture (modern Zhejiang) was probably the most flourishing regional cult of its day. A huge festival was celebrated every year. The organizers apparently had to underwrite its financial obligations personally and were rotated on a yearly basis. Our source notes that rotation was normally (I suspect we must interpret this as “should be”) based on people’s personal volition. In this case, however, the function of Gathering Head (*huishou*)

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<sup>47</sup> Jinshi yuan (*Shike shiliao xinbian*, Taipei: Shin Wen Feng, 1986) 6569 *shang*.

<sup>48</sup> Hong Mai, *Yijian zhi* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981) *zhiwu*: 6: 1100. I do not follow the proposed emendation. I am not certain whether Student Chen (*chensheng*) really refers to the lowest examination degree (as it does by the late Ming) or simply is a polite way of referring to him, Mr. Chen or Chen, Esq.

was rotated as a kind of *corvée* assignment (the technical term is “to draft [*cha*]”). The financial pressure of this task could lead to bankruptcy.<sup>49</sup> The precise tasks of this functionary are not specified. Given the scale of the festival, which extended beyond county boundaries, they will have been extremely time-and money-consuming. All local *bao* (a self-rule unit in the state-sponsored *baojia* system of the Song dynasty) and even all *she*-temples within a contributed one oxen to be sacrificed each year. For the original Shrine Mountain temple, this resulted in over 720 oxen per year; for a competing local temple as many as over 2000 oxen were killed each year. As our source notes, these people killed oxen on a scale that others kill cockerels in sacrifice.<sup>50</sup> These sacrificial practices indicate how an entire region was drawn into one religious network.

The examples that I have summarized above date from the Southern Song. They indicate how the cult was a communal activity, with its leadership often in the hands of rich or socially important local people. In the case of more local cults, confined to one village, the people who collected money could be “half-drunk village elders” or even “old temple shamans”, as noted by Lu You in his poems.<sup>51</sup>

Local gazetteers from the Ming period and after generally tell us only that a particular cult had a yearly gathering (*hui*). Sometimes it is added that these gatherings had a rotating leadership, but usually this is all we learn about their precise organizational structure.<sup>52</sup> Thus, it is noted of the Guan Yu temple in Liuhe county that it celebrates “the Gathering for King Guan, on the thirteenth day of the fifth month, ... each neighbourhood [of the city] collaborates to sacrifice both a goat and a pig and holds a banquet. This is called the Gathering for King Guan. Each year one of the Gathering Heads (*huishou*) is changed.”<sup>53</sup> Whether this meant that all family heads could (or even had to) become Gathering Heads remains unclear. What does seem to be clear is that ideally each member of the community participated in the cult sacrifice and subsequent socially integrative banquet.

Evidence for the participation of the less privileged in local cults is hard to find. Interestingly, even in the socio-economically highly differentiated

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<sup>49</sup> Huang Zhen, *Huangshi richao* (Dahua Shuju, 1984) 74: 9b–10a. On this cult, see Valerie Hansen, *Changing Gods in Medieval China, 1127–1276* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1990), pp. 148–9. On this particular evidence and a later stage of the organization of this cult, see Kanai, “Sōdai sessai no sonsha to toshin”, pp. 99–102.

<sup>50</sup> Huang Zhen, *Huangshi richao*, 74: 13b.

<sup>51</sup> Lu You, *Jiannan shigao* (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji, 1985) 25: 1782 and 45: 2785. I have found these references thanks to the work of Kanai Noriyuki. The poems of Lu You are a mine of information on local culture that still needs to be exploited to the full.

<sup>52</sup> For instance, *Bamin tongzhi* (1491; *Zhongguo shixue congshu* III) 4: 14b and *Xinghua fuzhi* (1575) 1: 78a; *Tangxi zhi* (1890; *Zhongguo difangzhi jicheng, Xiangzhenzhi zhuanji*, Vol. 18) 6: 4b; *Xiuning futan zhi* (1723; *Zhongguo difangzhi jicheng, Xiangzhenzhi zhuanji*, Vol. 27) 286 *shang*.

<sup>53</sup> *Liuhe xianzhi* (1553) 2: 4b.

county of Wujiang near Suzhou, by the late Ming the bondservants of rich households could take part in the year-end festivals organized by the local villages.<sup>54</sup> Given the fact that the festivals surrounding the New Year were also generally organized by the local temple cult organizations (specifically referred to as *she* in many cases),<sup>55</sup> this participation by bondservants in Wujiang county most likely applied to general and temple festivals alike.<sup>56</sup> We may also consider the leading role of local riffraff in organizing festivals, pointed out by so many polemicists. We do have to bear in mind that these descriptions primarily concern festivals connected with cities, which leaves open the question as to how the situation was in the surrounding countryside.

The following early seventeenth century description from Danzhou Prefecture (Guangdong Province) is more instructive on the structure of gatherings with a rotating leadership.

[The people of] Dan[zhou] customarily worship Buddhas. As of old they celebrate days for [their] Buddhas. There are the following Gatherings: “Gathering for the Lord on High”, “White Clothes Gathering”, “Gathering for the Empress of Heaven”, “Gathering for Heavenly Lord Deng”, “Gathering for General Yang”. Big villages have big gatherings, small villages have small gatherings. Each celebrates with those who belong to them, the numbers cannot be counted. Each gathering rotates one Gathering Head each year to organize the procession-exchanges. They decorate five-coloured phoenix-coaches, in which no less than several tens or hundreds of deities will ride. Each time a procession arrives at a village, then a great response is made with a banquet and liquor. The people in the gathering come together, and they drink and eat for the entire day. Whether bean, meat, raw or cooked dishes, there are quota for everything and the expenses are high. When the head of a gathering is poor, he will sell off property to do it. In extreme cases, they sell off children, [for] they do not dare to retreat from the area. Whether old or still robust, from time to time each has to take care of a Buddha. Each village founds one temple or two or three temples.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> *Wujiang xianzhi* (1561) 5: 20a.

<sup>55</sup> *Jing'an xianzhi* (1565) 1: 18a; *Ningbo fuzhi* (1560) 4: 36a; *Shangyu xianzhi* (1606) 2: 48b; *Daishan zhenzhi* (1927) 18: 4b–5a (translated below); *Longyou xianzhi* (1612) 5: 1b–2a; *Changshan xianzhi* (1590) 1: 14a-b; *Bamin tongzhi* (1491) 4: 14b (184) and *Xinghua fuzhi* (1575) 1: 78a; *Longyan xianzhi* (1557) 1: 30b.

<sup>56</sup> See also the role of the bondservants in the New Year festivals in Shunde County near Canton in 1643 or 1646, discussed further below.

<sup>57</sup> *Danzhou zhi vanlue* (1618) *tianji*: 39b–40a (quotation); *diji*: 9a–h and 10b (explicatory comments). The term “Buddha” is used here like the more common Bodhisattva (*pusa*) as a general term for deities. Only the “White Clothes Gathering” was probably a lay Buddhist group. The “Gathering for the Empress of Heaven” was devoted to Mazu from Putian in Fujian,

The gatherings were connected to natural villages. The Gathering Head was held personally responsible for financing the collective banquet. The festivals were communal enterprises, which is proven by the very fact that the less privileged ran into financial difficulties because of the equal rotation of organizational responsibilities.

In the highly developed Suzhou there existed a much more differentiated organization, which has been described for us by the literatus Wang Zhideng (1535–1612), for the celebration of the festival of the Sage Saints of the Five Directions in Suzhou City. Ironically, this was the same infamous Wutong cult that was repeatedly attacked and even persecuted by other literati and local officials.<sup>58</sup> Wang begins his description by enumerating the seventeen gathering-territories (*huijing*, using the same technical term for the areas covered by a township cult organization that we have encountered before) that organized such a festival. Finances were the responsibility of the Gathering Heads, who seem to have funded almost everything. In Wang's words, they were “the powerful of the locality and stalwarts of the marketplace (*lihao shixia*)”, i.e. probably local landlords and merchants. Then there were those who collected helpers, money and so forth. These were also called Gathering Heads; their social background is unclear. Their task was to prepare everything months in advance. With the approach of the festival, they had to work especially hard on the accounting. The entire community from the social elite to the relatively poor was involved in the huge procession of the deities as audience or participants. Thus, differentiation applied primarily to the financial dimension of the festival, which undoubtedly brought considerable prestige.

As everywhere else, the New Year period in nearby Wujiang county was also an important period for large scale celebrations. A late Ming local gazetteer describes the two different types of cult organization and their relationship to social structure. Except for the reference to the Fierce General deity, a popular local cult, the identification as temple cult organizations remains implicit.<sup>59</sup> I have already pointed out that New Year festivities in most regions were taken care of by these organizations. Since the description is extremely detailed, it deserves to be quoted in full.

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the “Gathering for the Lord on High” to the Jade Emperor, and the “Gathering for Heavenly Lord Deng” to General Deng of the Ministry of Thunder. These last two are specifically Daoist deities.

<sup>58</sup> Wang Zhideng, *Wushe bian (Biji xiaoshuo daguan*, fourth series) 1b–4a. The author sandwiches his description between more explicitly critical remarks, but by and large his tone is by no means negative. On this cult, see Richard von Glahn, “The Enchantment of Wealth: The God Wutong in the Social History of Jiangnan”, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 51/2 (1991), pp. 651–714.

<sup>59</sup> See also Che Xilun and Zhou Zhengliang, “Quhuangshen Liu Mengjiang de laili he liubian”, *Zhongguo minjian wenhua* V (Shanghai: Xuelin, 1992), pp. 1–21. Sawada Mizuho, *Chūgoku no minkan shinkō* (Tokyo: Kōsakusha, 1982), pp. 118–36, has made a preliminary examination of this and other cults devoted to deities who drive away locusts.

[In the first month] each city quarter and country village organizes a Divine Gathering for the Heavenly Bureaucracy (*tiancao shenhui*)<sup>60</sup> in order to celebrate the Pierce General deity. It is said that the deity is able to drive away locusts and therefore he is worshipped. Each gathering assembles old and young men to be clerks and soldiers, they sound the metal instruments and beat the drums, they arrange a parade and unfold the parasols. They run all across the city and the marketplaces. Rich households give them money and grain. From New Year's Day until the fifteenth or twentieth it continues. On the final day, those with means organize theatre performances (*zaju*), driving extravagance to the extreme. No less than a thousand people are then gathered.

In the villages there also people who organize gatherings by collecting money. First, people collect five *sheng* of rice at the end of the year and deliver it to the Gathering Head of that year (*dangnian huizhang*), in order to provide for the expenses for liquor and meats. On New Year's Day they shout and rally together. Pretty youngsters are made into deities, immortals and princes, with brocade clothes, hats adorned with flowers, feather fans and gauze handkerchiefs. The others all arrange theatre performances and run around the villages. The rich households reward them with liquor and food. When two gatherings happen to encounter each other on the road, they run away drumming and dancing. ...<sup>61</sup>

From the evidence, two ideal types can be ascertained. In the first type, leadership is rotated and the burden of organization and financing is carried by all (in the form of rotating responsibility, as in Danzhou, or tax-like contributions, as in the Wujiang countryside). Both organization and participation are still communal affairs. Social differentiation has progressed further in the second type. The rich and powerful play a large role in financing and organization, as in the cases described by Chen Chun and Hong Mai for the Southern Song as well as in the late Ming cases described by Wang Zhideng and in the Wujiang County gazetteer. The shift from more communal to hierarchical organizations is the by-product of socio-economic change. One can easily imagine that local festivals not only served to express status and wealth, but could also be manipulated to increase one's status. Nonetheless, all the time participation in these temple festivals remained open to all those who could identify with the deity in question. This identification process is not the subject of this study, but it should be stressed that someone's selection of a particular cult depended not on a closed set of beliefs, but on

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<sup>60</sup> This term refers to the worship of the deities of Heaven and Earth, which is an essential part of any household's New Year rituals.

<sup>61</sup> *Wujiang xianzhi* (1.561) 13: 20a–b. We have already encountered a similar custom in Hangzhou, described by Chen Qiyuan.

people's individual evaluation of the efficacy of the cult concerned. As long as the hagiography of a deity allowed differing personal or group interpretations, it could continue to attract people from quite diverse social, economic and cultural backgrounds and thereby bind them together.<sup>62</sup>

This function of providing cohesion not only applied to people of common residence, but also to kinship groups. I have already mentioned how in Yin County surname groups were frequently active as worshipping units in local cults, with both one surname group supporting one cult and different surname groups sharing the worship of the same cult.<sup>63</sup> In other regions, all over China, mention is also made of the collective worship by “great surname [groups] (*daxing*)”, indicating that groups of people were active in particular cults as kinship units.<sup>64</sup> The link between a kinship unit and a temple could go quite far, such as in Weishi County (modern He'nan Province) where temples were even called after the family (*jia*) which had founded it.<sup>65</sup> According to Confucian ideology, family units should be organized around ancestral cults, yielding the lineage type of organization that has occupied so much recent Western scholarship. This evidence confirms the findings by David Faure and Michael Szony on the role of temple cults in providing kinship units with a long-term focus, besides ancestor worship. When we consider the long history of local cults, it is remarkable that stronger cult institutions such as “societies (*she*)” and “gatherings (*hui*)” came into being rather late. The reason may well be that as long as the natural village and the following of a temple coincided, less of a need was felt for such institutionalization. It may be that this process was stimulated by state-imposed schemes for subcounty administration, but this would require further examination of the scarce available evidence. What is abundantly clear, however, is that these organizations were not a late imperial development, nor something unique to “peripheral” regions like Taiwan and in Hong Kong.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, the state-imposed schemes did not involve the kinds of cult that we find at the centre of grass-roots social organization.

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<sup>62</sup> e.g., James L. Watson, “Standardizing the Gods: The Promotion of Tien Hou (‘Empress of Heaven’) Along the South China Coast, 960–1960”, in: David Johnson, Andrew J. Nathan, Evelyn S. Rawski (eds.), *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 292–324.

<sup>63</sup> At the same time, local kinship groups had their own ancestral halls. To what extent we can speak of lineages in the strong sense used by Maurice Freedman, is as yet unclear.

<sup>64</sup> *Zhenjiang zhi* (1322; *Songyuan fangzhi congkan*), 8: 18a–b; *Cixi xianzhi* (1624) 4: 9a and *Yuyao xianzhi* (1603) 14b–15a, both relatively close to Yin County.

<sup>65</sup> *Weishi xianzhi* (1548) 4: 17b. A similar example from the Shanghai region, in: *Tangwanxiang jiushiyitu lizhi* (1678, 1856; *Zhongguo difangzhi jicheng, Xiangzhenzhi zhuanji*, Vol. 1) 4: 4b, where a kinship group unrelated to the deity worshipped him as their “family-deity (*jiashen*)”.

<sup>66</sup> This should *not* be taken as a denial of Hong Kong and Taiwanese uniqueness, nor a statement that these organizations were hence identical all over Chinese territory.



### *Processions and Paying Court*

An important part of the cult festival as a social event was the procession of the deities to inspect their territory. In this way the territory of the cult was re-created and given supernatural recognition. Furthermore, smaller cult groups (ranging from households and larger family units to entire villages) obtained a chance to pay obeisance to the deities and in this way re-confirm their link to the ritual centre. Significantly, the Chinese term for procession festivals is “to welcome (*ying*)”, stressing the feelings of the local people vis-à-vis their gods. The alternative was to go and visit the temple oneself, either in person (or representative of a cult group) or as the deity. A common appellation for this was “to pay court (*chao*)”, as a parallel to an audience with a king or emperor.

The following description in a 1491 local gazetteer on Fujian, concerning the Xinghua region, covers all relevant elements:

The people of each neighbourhood gather their fellow *she* members to carry out the cosmic renewal ritual for the New Year. That night they welcome (*ying*) their god of the earth with drums and music, and make a procession across the entire territory. All households set up altars and wait for the deity to arrive. Then they sacrifice liquor and fruit, burn paper money, and send him off with obeisances.<sup>67</sup>

The ritual—in addition to its other functions of inviting good fortune and expelling evil influences—reconfirms the cohesion of the territory and its people.

During the festival of the Sage Saints of the Five Directions in late Ming Suzhou the procession was a major event. People prepared large tables with sacrifices, candles and incense. When the deities passed by the houses, its inhabitants worshipped. It was a social event of the first order. All residences where the procession would pass by, invited guests and relatives to join and watch, providing them, if they were rich, with a banquet, or just a little tea and some grain if they were poor. Through the procession the territory of the cult was symbolically integrated. The people along the route all worshipped (hence submitted to) the deities. In this way, the procession actually contributed to the unity of the territory of the cult and the people living in it. From Wang Zhideng’s description it is clear that this was just as much an occasion for revering the deities as for conspicuously showing off wealth and status. Therefore, in Lili township (in Wujiang County) during the late Qing the rich and important local households not only set out “incense tables” (i.e. altars) and hung out lanterns, but also “displayed precious

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<sup>67</sup> *Bamin tongzhi* (1491) 4: 14b (184). These *she* were also the basic groups that organized the Dragon Boat Festival, *op. cit.*, 15a (185).

objects and dazzled one another”.<sup>68</sup>

During the festival, a deity not only received the respect of the local people, but also often of other local deities. Thereby they—and, I would suggest, by implication also their cult groups—ritually subordinated themselves to the celebrating cult, creating socio-ritual hierarchies. These hierarchies are of a different type than the “splitting off incense (*fenxiang*)” networks, in which cults for the same deity (or deities) split off from the ancestral cult by taking some incense from its central burner.

The cult for the Emperor of the Eastern Marchmount often functioned as such a higher cult. The deity stood at the apex of a huge Daoist bureaucracy which controlled all aspects of life and death. From it, exorcist priests recruited their spirit generals.<sup>69</sup> The cult had started to flourish on a nationwide scale during the Northern Song and its temples were often located in cities and market towns.<sup>70</sup> In the Quanzhou region, local cults traditionally had an incense borrowing relationship with the Eastern Marchmount cult, even though they had not come into being by the “splitting off incense” process.<sup>71</sup>

The Eastern Marchmount temple located in Fushan Township in Changshu County was famous all over the Lower Yangzi region during the Southern Song, and remained popular during later centuries as well. During the late Ming, on his birthday on the 28th day of the third month, “twelve temples in town, namely of Lord Bingling (the Eastern Marchmount’s son), Prince Qingyuan, Duke Shouting (=the later Emperor Guan or Guan Yu), the White Dragon King, Lord Suiyang (=Zhang Xun), King Fuying (=Erlang or Wenchang), Duke Huiji, Lord Yongding, Illustrious Sir Li, Virtuous Son Zhou, the City God, all come to wish long life [to the Emperor of the Eastern Marchmount].” Elsewhere, the gazetteer specifies that “in the spring season, each temple gathers its *she* and pays court to the [Emperor of the] Marchmount”.<sup>72</sup> Thus, the ritual visit of twelve deities (represented by their statues) to the temple also involved their *she*-organizations, with obvious social implications.

We have already encountered Daishan township, which was actually nam-

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<sup>68</sup> *Lili zhi* (1805; *Zhongguo difangzhi jicheng, Xiangzhenzhi zhuanji*, Vol. 12) 4: 6a–b.

<sup>69</sup> To date no monograph has been devoted to this important Chinese cult (to be distinguished from the mountain, on which E. Chavannes published his famous, *Le T'ai Chan: Essai de monographie d'un culte* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1910). These remarks are based on my, “The Origins and Development of Guan Yu Mythology and the Guan Yu Cult”, q.v. Guan Yu started his career as just such an exorcist general in the Eastern Marchmount bureaucracy.

<sup>70</sup> Apart from the examples explicitly mentioned in this article, procession festivals for this cult—often including courtesy visits by other local cults—in *Ruizhou fuzhi* (1637) 6: 28b and 12: 6b–7a; *Shangyu xianzhi* (1891) 38: 5b–6a; *Shuanglin zhenzhi* (1917; *Zhongguo difangzhi jicheng, Xiangzhenzhi zhuanji*, Vol. 22) 5: 11b–12a, 32: 16b–18a.

<sup>71</sup> Fieldwork, January–February 1993. These relationships have been severely upset by the events of the Cultural Revolution.

<sup>72</sup> *Changshu sizhi* (1617) 3: 32b–33a.

ed after the local Eastern Marchmount cult that was the overall territorial cult of the area. At the beginning of each New Year, a procession was organized that gave ritual expression to this important fact.

From the tenth until the twelfth day of the first month, the procession festival of the Eastern Marchmount Gathering is held. The statues of the five temples, Juying Temple, Xuantan Temple, Yunsi Temple, Taiping Temple and Danshui Temple, as well as the principal deity of the Palace of the Eastern Marchmount [in Siji] and its Divine Official deity—together seven worthies—go out on an inspection journey. ... On the tenth day they assemble the gathering in Siji; when they are complete they start out from the Palace of the Eastern Marchmount, passing through ... to reach the Palace Hall of the Deity of Wealth in Dongshajiao. There they rest and pass the night. Upon the eleventh day they start out from Dongshajiao, ... pass by the Danshui Temple at Kaowang Mountain, ... and reach the Wenchang Palace at Gongmen to rest. Upon the twelfth day they leave Gongmen ... and reach the Juying temple, ... and reach the Taiping Temple at Shayang, ... reach the Palace of the Eastern Marchmount at Siji, and disperse. ...<sup>73</sup>

In this lengthy quotation I have left out most placenames, since they carry little meaning for us. The procession passed by most temples with important cult organizations (as described above). Elsewhere, we also find cases of supra-local cults with elaborate procession networks, usually only one network for each given region.<sup>74</sup>

When the ancestral cult of the deity was too far away, one had to go on a pilgrimage. However, the terms for visiting the local temple and the visitors are the same as for pilgrimage and pilgrim, namely “offering incense (*jinxiang*)” and “incense guest (*xiangke*)” respectively. Going on a pilgrimage established a link between the individuals concerned and a place outside one’s original environment, contributing to the notion of China as a larger whole. However, pilgrims always returned home and such a link remained primarily symbolic in nature. For Northern China, societies (*she*) are known

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<sup>73</sup> *Daishan zhenzhi* (1927) 18: 4b–5a.

<sup>74</sup> I have already mentioned the procession festival of late Ming Suzhou, described by Wang Zhideng. The *Xiaoyao shan wanshou gong zhi* (1878; *Daojiao wenxian*, Taipei[?]: Danqing Tushu, 1983) 11: 1a–9a, describes the cult organizations and processions of the True Man Xu cult in Jiangxi in considerable detail. Although the Eternal Life Palace (*wanshou gong*) was a Daoist monastery, the cult celebrations do not seem to have been the prerogative of monks, but rather of the local people. The *Chaolian xiangzhi*, 7: 339–49, describes the complete cult of the King of Southern Seas from Guangdong (better known as the Vast Saint cult), including its procession. See also Dean, *Taoist Ritual and Local Cults*, pp. 99–118, and Szonyi, *Village. Rituals in Fuzhou, passim*.

in which people saved money to go on pilgrimage together. As one Shandong gazetteer put it,

The small people of the cities and *li* (referring to the villages in the countryside) form various kinds of groups. Towards the east, they worship Mount Tai, towards the south they worship [Mount] Wudang. At the end of the year when the tasks [of fanning] are slack, they form societies of a hundred and ten people and go. They call these “incense societies”.<sup>75</sup>

It is unclear whether the pilgrimage to Mount Tai involved the older cult of the Emperor of the Eastern Marchmount or the cult of Bixia Yuanjun, a female deity who became popular from the late Ming onwards all over Northern China and has remained so to the present day.<sup>76</sup> Clearly such societies created ties between the participants and contributed further to local integration. Similar societies are documented quite extensively for the pilgrimage cult to Bixia Yuanjun in Beijing, but as Susan Naquin points out in her study, it would seem that such societies were atypical of China as a whole.<sup>77</sup>

A related type of supra-local linkage that I wish to mention briefly is that created by giving and borrowing incense. I have already mentioned the existence of such a link between local cults and the Eastern Marchmount temple in traditional Quanzhou. Here, the local cults had come into being independently and were devoted to other types of deity.<sup>78</sup> Better known is the variant whereby cults for the same deity split off from their parent cults by dividing incense, as described by K. Schipper in some detail for the cult of the Emperor who Protects Life from the southern Fujian region and Taiwan.<sup>79</sup> The importance of such a link derives from the fact that burning incense

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<sup>75</sup> *Sishui xianzhi* (1596) 1: 12b. Also in *Yanzhou fuzhi* (1596) 4: 7b. The author of the first gazetteer collaborated on the second one as well, explaining the almost literal quotation.

<sup>76</sup> On the late Ming Taishan pilgrimage, see Glen Dudbridge, “A Pilgrimage in Seventeenth-century Fiction: T’ai-shan and the *Hsing-shih yin-yüan chuan*”, *T’oung Pao* 77 (1991), and “Women Pilgrims to T’ai Shan: Some Pages from a Seventeenth Century Novel”, in: Susan Naquin and Yü Chün-fang (eds.), *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 39–64, as well as Pei-yi Wu, “An Ambivalent Pilgrim to T’ai Shan in the Seventeenth Century”, in: *idem*, pp. 65–88. John Lagerwey, “The Pilgrimage to Wu-tang Shan”, in: *idem*, pp. 293–332, deals with the Wudang pilgrimage.

<sup>77</sup> Susan Naquin, “The Peking Pilgrimage to Miao-feng Shan: Religious Organizations and Sacred Site”, in: *op. cit.*, pp. 333–7, esp. p. 367.

<sup>78</sup> For another example, see Edward Davis, “Arms and the Tao: Hero Cult and Empire in Traditional China”, *Sōdai no shakai to shūkyō* (Tokyo: Kyūko Shoin, 1985), pp. 1–56, esp. p. 21, and *Xuxian zhenlu* (*Daozang*), 1: 7a (516a), 1: 7b and 8a (516a and b). However, it is only specified in one case (*Xuxian zhenlu*, 1: 7a [516a]) that its following continued to pay court on a yearly base to the Ancestral Temple on its festival day (correcting Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 21).

<sup>79</sup> K. Schipper, “The Cult of Pao-sheng ta-ti and its Spreading to Taiwan: A Case of *fenhsiang*”, in: E. B. Vermeer (ed.), *Development and Decline of Fukien Province in the 17th and 18th Centuries* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990), pp. 397–416.

is the basic devotional act in Chinese religious life. The incense burner is the devotional and ritual centre of every cult. The incense-receiving cults subsequently continued this ritual relationship by renewing their incense yearly, usually by visiting the festival of the celebrating cult. However, like the pilgrimage in general, although one suspects that such ritual links *could* have had further social implications—especially when the distances were not too large—these cannot be documented easily on the basis of our written sources.

### Local Cults and Social Life

The impact of temple cults on social life outside the primary context of individual worship and collective rituals and festivals is difficult to gauge. Pre-modern societies have a low level of institutionalization, meaning that personal networks determine the course of local action. Such networks disappear or break into segments upon the death of the person who formed its nodal point. As a result they leave few recoverable traces in our sources. Here I restrict myself to some tentative remarks on the role of the temple cult in connecting people for other than narrowly religious purposes, followed by an analysis of some material concerning the involvement of cult organizations in collective action. I shall leave one important dimension out of my discussion, namely the socio-economic function of temple fairs, since these have been discussed exhaustively by Shiba Yoshinobu for the Song, and Wu Cheng-han for the Qing.<sup>80</sup>

#### *Social Control and Mutual Support*

The social functions of pre-Song cults are illustrated best by the extensive measures for mutual support that were carried out by the communities of the early Daoist movement in Sichuan. Tanigawa Michio has already pointed this out in his argument in favour of the “local community (*kyōdōtai*)” as the basis of local society.<sup>81</sup> From the Dunhuang evidence we know that during the Tang and before, the old style cult groups which convened regularly at the *she* altar played an important role in binding communities together and in providing social control and support.<sup>82</sup>

Historical evidence on mutual support groups in a cultic context is scarce. Some material is available for northern China from the late sixteenth century. In the “middle prefectures”, people had the custom of mutual support at times of need through “Eating Gatherings (*chihui*)”. “Each Gathering invites ten to twenty people [to participate]. On the first and fifteenth day

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<sup>80</sup> Shiba Yoshinobu *Sōdai shōgyōshi kenkyū* (Tokyo: Kazama Shobō, 1968, 1979), pp. 376–87, and Wu Cheng-han, “The Temple Fairs in Late Imperial China”, pp. 105–29.

<sup>81</sup> Tanigawa, *Medieval Chinese Society and the Local Community*, pp. 100–2

<sup>82</sup> Gernet, *Les aspects économiques du bouddhisme*, pp. 251–69. I propose to investigate these *she* in a later study and will not include further references to the rich secondary literature at this point.

of each month, they drink [liquor] in the *she*-temple and each [participant] hands in 110 pieces of loose cash to the Gathering Head.” Out of the fund that is created in this way, financial assistance is given to the members of the group, for instance in the case of funerals. Membership is often inherited.<sup>83</sup> Evidence for such mutual support groups without explicit links to a cultic context is much more common; valuable material has been collected by the Japanese scholar Shimizu Morimitsu.<sup>84</sup>

Especially from the Southern Song onwards, there has been a strong tradition of charitable activities independent of local temple cults, either in a (lay) Buddhist or Confucian context.<sup>85</sup> It may be that we see here a development in which the mutual support functions of the natural communities that worshipped the old-style *she* were coming to be neglected due to social and economic differentiation, and subsequently taken over in alternative cultic contexts. Further investigation is needed to clarify this problem.

### *Collective Action*

Simply by virtue of offering an accessible space open to all, the local temple was the natural meeting-place to gossip, to rest and play, and to gather for the discussion of important issues. Being daily routine, this social function of the temple is rarely recorded in historical sources, but taken as self-evident in vernacular stories.<sup>86</sup> Whenever something important had to be done, the local people of Daishan township would gather in the Palace of the Eastern Marchmount, which was the “principal temple of the entire territory”, for “initiating discussions”.<sup>87</sup> During the late Qing, someone wished to rebuild a decayed stone bridge. Since he did not have sufficient capital himself, he gathered all local households to come and drink in the *she*-temple. Thereupon he took out his entire private funds and put these in a common fund, urging the others to contribute as well. In this way he soon obtained enough money to have the bridge built.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Wang Shixing, *Guangzhiduo* (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1981). Shimizu Morimitsu, (*Chūgoku kyōson shakai ron* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shōen, 1951, 1983), pp. 460–2; Shimizu, *op. cit.*, p. 500, also quotes Ming and Qing examples of money-saving clubs linked to a local temple cult.

<sup>84</sup> Shimizu, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

<sup>85</sup> For examples from a lay Buddhist context, see Barend J. ter Haar, *The White Lotus Teachings in Chinese Religious History* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992), pp. 24–8, 38, 41–3, 80–4. For examples from a Confucian context, see Joanna F. Handlin Smith, “Benevolent Societies: The Reshaping of Charity During the Late Ming and Early Ch’ing”, *The Journal of Asian Studies* 46/2 (1987), pp. 309–37.

<sup>86</sup> Wu, *op. cit.*, pp. 157–65. Shimizu, *op. cit.*, p. 118, quotes an example where the local gentry in Shaanxi settled local conflicts in the *she*-temple or a teahouse.

<sup>87</sup> *Daishan zhenzhi* (1927) 10: 1b. Similarly, in Shuanglin when there was a famine and no silk crop in 1809, local Rentry distributed rice from the Temple of the Eastern Marchmount and a local cloister. See *Shuanglin zhengzhi*, 19: 12b

<sup>88</sup> Cai Hengzu, *Chongming manlu (Biji xiaoshuo daguan)* 2: 18b. The location of this event is unclear. The point of the anecdote is that he was subsequently a poor man and received a good rebirth after he died.

Most of the time, it is indeed very difficult to link cult organizations to more specific cases of collective action. One reason for this is the vague identification of most cult groups with local people. An additional reason might be that the sources that I have primarily consulted for this study (local gazetteers, inscriptions, and anecdotal sources) is not the appropriate type of source for this kind of incident. Possibly judicial archives will be more informative.<sup>89</sup> Hence the cult group is never identified independently. In the many recorded cases in which deities came to the rescue of territorial units threatened or beleaguered by bandits or rebel armies, we can safely assume that they did so because the unit in question—or at the very least a significant part of this unit—worshipped this deity.

Some of this comes through in the case of the Divine Response Shrine of Foshan township (modern Guangdong Province), a large temple devoted to True Martiality (*zhenwu*) as the local protector. As early as 1438, “those who were Gathering Heads were not only excellent gentlemen of the locality itself. Lordships from all four directions also took part and exerted themselves ...”.<sup>90</sup> The temple was a regular gathering place for local men of standing, but by the late Ming these finally founded their own institution on a piece of land to the right of the temple.<sup>91</sup>

In 1449, pirates threatened communities all around Guangzhou. The “fathers and elders (*fulao*)” of Foshan went to the temple and asked the deity what they should do. He advised them that the bandits would certainly come, and therefore they had to prepare. Thereupon the “greybeards (*qimin*)” (evidently the same category as the “fathers and elders”) organized a force of local braves, prepared weapons, and constructed defences. Along the defensive wall they set up 25 *pu* units, each with one head and over 300 men. They “butchered a sacrificial animal and smeared blood, to swear before the deity” that they would be brave or else receive the punishment of death by the deity. The deity was undoubtedly True Martiality, given that our source is devoted to him. During the ensuing battle, they enjoyed his divine assistance and were victorious.<sup>92</sup> Whether the defence force was actually constructed along the lines of local cult organizations is unclear, but the crucial role of the deity in supporting these activities and the link between his cult groups and the organization of a local defense force is clear.<sup>93</sup> As David Faure points out, there is no evidence of a lasting effort among these

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<sup>89</sup> e.g., Charles A. Litzinger, “Temple Community and Village Cultural Integration in North China: Evidence in ‘Sectarian Cases (Chiao-an)’ in Chihli, 1860–1895” (Ph.D., University of California, Davis, 1983), has made extensive use of judicial files.

<sup>90</sup> *Foshan zhongyi xiangzhi* (1831; *Zhongguo difangzhi jicheng, Xiangzhemhi zhuanji*, Vol. 30) 12: 10b. Materials concerning this cult can be found throughout the gazetteer.

<sup>91</sup> *Foshan zhongyi xinngzhi*, 12: 37b.

<sup>92</sup> *Foshan zhongyi xiangzhi*, 12: 13b–14h.

<sup>93</sup> David Faure, “What Made Foshan a Town? The Evolution of Rural-Urban Identities in Ming-Qing China”, *Late Imperial China* 11:2 (1990), pp. 1–32, discusses this temple and its crucial role in Foshan history in much more detail and on the basis of a broader set of sources.

*pu* in the joint management of the town, despite the continuing importance of the local Zhenwu cult.<sup>94</sup> Concerning the term *pu*, it is interesting to note that exactly the same term was used for cult-based territorial divisions in Quanzhou City in the Ming and Qing. The term *pu* originally referred to local militia units for neighbourhood security and control, instituted during the early Ming in the Quanzhou region.<sup>95</sup>

In Shangyu county (modern Zhejiang) the procession festival for the deity of the Eastern Marchmount during the late Qing was considered to be a transformation of the collaborative defence by local braves organized by each village against the pirate attacks of the mid-sixteenth century. The use of the “divine way” to drive out pestilences “is also a reminder of the *baojia* [of those days]”.<sup>96</sup> To what extent this late Qing view can be considered historically correct is unclear, but the remark does reflect an underlying assumption that the two types of organization were fundamentally the same.

The practice of swearing collective oaths cemented by drinking the blood of a sacrificial animal or from the fingers of the participants was an old one. The classical term for this was “to smear blood (*shaxue*)”, but more detailed evidence shows that the blood was drunk. Local communities sometimes took this oath in a local temple such as that devoted to the City God, usually to strengthen their communal resolve in the face of some external threat or large project to be carried out.<sup>97</sup>

An especially interesting example of collective action structured by cult groups has been analysed by Hamashima Atsutoshi in his extensive studies of the organizational structures of Lower Yangzi peasant society. Thanks to the availability of detailed gazetteers for Shuanglin township, we can reconstruct the local situation in considerable detail. The local cult societies (*she*) were financed on the basis of the amount of land that one worked. Each village had a General Overseer Temple (*zongguan miao*). Every year the society organized a theatre performance, which was funded in the same way. During the performance, friends and relatives would come to visit; one was obliged to provide them with a meal. Poor households pawned their possessions in order to fulfil their social obligations. Each year all people in the “*she*-village (*shecun*)”—a revealing combination of terms—would gather to drink and eat. “There were fixed rules. When something deviated from the rules just a little, the ‘gathering overseer (*sihui*)’ would be responsible and among the broad masses there would be loud shouting to scold him.”

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<sup>94</sup> Faure, “What Made Foshan a Town?”, p. 8.

<sup>95</sup> Mingming Wang, “Place, Administration, and Territorial Cults in Late Imperial China”, *passim*, esp. pp. 40–2.

<sup>96</sup> *Shangyu xianzhi* (1891) 38: 5b–6a.

<sup>97</sup> Barend J. ter Haar, “The Creation of Myth and Ritual: The Case of the Chinese Triads” (unpublished manuscript, 1995), Chapters Two and Three. Basically, the ritual served to strengthen the power of the words that were uttered. Hence, it could also commonly serve on an individual basis.



The money that remained was set aside to gather interest per household. If money was lacking later, fines for the person who was responsible would be severe. Each village had this system.<sup>98</sup> These gatherings were of the more or less egalitarian type, as indicated by the participation of all villagers in a banquet and the use of shouting at the “gathering overseer” as a form of social sanctioning.

The sixth and seventh days of the seventh month were the birthdays of the two General Overseer temples of Shuanglin. These two days were occasions for large scale festivities by their supporting groups, to which the members of the other group would also be invited.<sup>99</sup> Their processions integrated the community of this area spatially and all inhabitants had a chance to worship the deity (though not necessarily to participate in the organization). From 1841 onwards, whenever the harvest was bad, people “would unite their hearts and worship the General Overseers; they discussed the [proper] rent quota privately and did not allow resistance [against these quota]”.<sup>100</sup> Rent resistance activities also took place elsewhere, often provided with internal cohesion by means of worship before the local deity.<sup>101</sup>

Now, why did these people select the General Overseer and not just any other local deity? Clearly, this was a highly popular local cult, but so was the cult devoted to the Emperor of the Eastern Marchmount. After the Emperor’s festival around the 28th day of the third month, until the 5th or 6th day of the fourth month, statues were carried on a procession throughout the township and the surrounding villages.<sup>102</sup> The Eastern Marchmount temple and its deities also featured in other local festivals, especially during the New Year celebrations.<sup>103</sup> However, it is explicitly noted that the temple was strongly connected with the local elites (*shen*). By the late nineteenth century the festival leader was Mr. Zhou, an experienced gambler with unspecified connections to local gentry. Hence this festival could not be appropriated easily in the context of virtually institutionalized rent resistance.

In 1900, the local magistrate wished to prohibit the nightly performances by the township people during the Eastern Marchmount festival for safety

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<sup>98</sup> *Shuanglin zhenzhi*, 15: 2b (compare also *Shuanglin zhenzhi*, 15: 11a, for the same form of financing for other religious occasions). For more background information, see Hamashima Atsutoshi, *Mindai kōnan nōson shakai no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku, 1982), pp. 539–41, and “Minshin jidai, kōnan nōson no ‘sha’ to tochibyō”, *Yamane kyōju taikyū kinen mindai shi ronshū* (Tokyo: Kyūko Shoin, 1990), pp. 1331–2, 1344–51. He discusses this case in the context of Japanese sinological debates about the natural village as a relevant unit of collective behaviour.

<sup>99</sup> *Shuanglin zhenzhi*, 15: 13b.

<sup>100</sup> *Shuanglin zhenzhi*, 13: 8a.

<sup>101</sup> Hamashima, *loc. cit.* For several late Qing examples, cf. *op. cit.*, p. 1332, and Kanai, “Sōdai sessai no sonsha to toshin”, pp. 110–11. For a late Ming example, see Oyama Masaaki, “Minmatsu shinsho no daitochi shoyū”, Part II, *Shigaku zaashi* 67/1 (1958), p. 61 (quoting the *Chongzhen Wu xianzhi*, 11).

<sup>102</sup> *Shuanglin zhenzhi*, 15: 11b–12a

<sup>103</sup> *Shuanglin zhenzhi*, 15: 10a–b, 13b–14a.

reasons. He first asked the local gentry member Cai Yizhuang for advice, who felt that the magistrate's orders should always be obeyed. Hence, the prohibition was transmitted to the Gathering Heads, including Mr. Zhou, without anybody protesting openly. Formally, the nightly performances were now moved to daytime, but then the whole proceedings were procrastinated in such a way that they took place during the dark nevertheless. It seems that Mr. Zhou had arranged for this procrastination as a form of silent resistance to the magistrate's interference in their festival. The gentry-overseers (*shendong*) were unable to do anything about it. The next day, when the procession passed by the residence of the Cai family, the tensions caused by Cai Yizhuan's advice to the magistrate escalated rapidly and the crowd attacked the residence for hours. The residence was burned and ransacked, and only with force could peace and quiet be re-established. The county magistrate arrived the next day and took up temporary office in a local temple. Total clamp-down ensued.<sup>104</sup> Apparently, the local elite controlled the festival, even if only indirectly through Mr. Zhou and others. On the other hand, the festival was still popular property and intervening in it was not tolerated easily, even when sanctioned by some local gentry.

A festival was also used as a venue for expressing protest in an incident that took place in 1643 or 1646 in Shunde County near Canton. Here, bondservant unrest had been continuing since the late Ming. One landowner against whom they bore a grudge was Pan Yeyuan.

It was the custom that at the beginning of spring one made dragon lanterns (*longdeng*) to celebrate the Lantern Festival. In the first month of that year, the bondservants made dragon lanterns independently, at each [dragon] tail the sound of drums, music, and firecrackers howled at heaven. All members of [Pan's] household went out and the group of bondservants one after another went inside with their dragon [lanterns]. Thereupon they plundered wantonly and set it alight. [Pan] Yeyuan happened to be alone downstairs, his cries for help were drowned out by the drums and music. Thereupon he died of a burst abdomen. The bondservants knew that they would not be spared [now], upon which they plundered the whole village. The neighbouring villages all suffered harm.<sup>105</sup>

Traditional forms of religious expression were used to transmit dissatisfaction, much as in the Shuanglin case of the Eastern Marchmount procession. The final comments, more specifically the phrase “[t]he bondservants knew

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<sup>104</sup> *Shuanglin zhenzhi*, 32: 17a–18b.

<sup>105</sup> Quoted from Inoue Tetsu, “Minmatsu shinsho kōtō shokō yūan deruta ni okeru shazoku dozoku no hōki”, *Shirin* 65/4 (1982), p. 132, note 6. Also see his discussion, *op. cit.*, pp. 127–8. Wu Cheng-han, “The Temple Fairs in Late Imperial China”, p. 99, translates this death as an intentional act of murder, which in my view is not supported by the Chinese text.

that they would not be spared [now]”, suggest that originally they had not intended to kill the object of their wrath. Their protest had run astray and only then did they resort to full-scale violence.<sup>106</sup>

A particular cult or festival was selected as a context for collective action because of the particular social make-up of the structures behind the cult or festival. Of all popular local cults, the City God cult was the one connected most closely to the central state. He was also an important underworld judge and in this role possessed great authority among all layers of society. His state connections are illustrated appositely in the following example. In 1846, farmers in the neighbourhood of Suzhou had prognosticated in local temples to decide whether or not they should protest against their rents. All the deities had been in favour and therefore the farmers had gathered together, beating gongs. When a thunderstorm suddenly broke out, they interpreted this as a sign from Heaven that it did not support them any more, which was confirmed by subsequent prognostication. Thunder is traditionally perceived as an impartial judge of proper moral behaviour and the autonomous executioner of all those who transgress the norms. Subsequently, the Suzhou magistrate had the statues of these local cults removed to the City God temple in town in order to demonstrate how prognostication could delude people.<sup>107</sup> How this form of punishment might have gravely upset the communities that worshipped these deities, remains implicit.

The City God cult was not the sole possession of local magistrates. Thus, a small group of local “no-goods” (*wulai*, the phrase is the source’s) gathered in the City God temple in Guihua County (Fujian) in 1697, burned incense and held a meeting. Thereupon, they beat gongs and gathered a crowd, beleaguering the local *yamen* in order to pressurize the magistrate into selling grain cheaply from the government granaries in order to stabilize market prices.<sup>108</sup> Here, the City God’s authority was used to put pressure upon the state. We can only speculate upon people’s reasoning. Did they ask for the deity’s support precisely because he was an accomplice of state suppression, or—in my view more likely—because he could also stand for social justice? In this last role, at any rate, he was commonly invoked in blood-covenant rituals. Individual plaintiffs would swear an oath before the City God that they were speaking the truth or else be punished severely.<sup>109</sup> It is also in this role as a divine judge that in 1645, during the upheavals of the Ming-

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<sup>106</sup> Sōda Hiroshi, “Shindai ni okeru engeki to minshū undō”, in: *Kimura Masao sensei taikan kinen tōyōshi ronshū* (Tokyo, 1976), pp. 392–3, quotes an example from 1779, where the eye-opening ritual of a Buddhist monastery and the accompanying theatrical performances were consciously used to gather local people and resist tax collection. However, there is no explicit use of rituals or worship to unite people. Here the protest also runs astray.

<sup>107</sup> Kanai, “Sōdai sessai no sonsha to toshin”, pp. 110–11, quoting from Zheng Guangzu, *Yibanlu zashu*.

<sup>108</sup> *Kangyongqian shiqi chengxiang fankang douzheng ziliao* (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1979), p. 575.

<sup>109</sup> ter Haar, “The Creation of Myth and Ritual”, q.v., Chapter Two.

Qing transition, bondservants in Jintan county carried out a trial of their master in the local City God temple. In the same manner as “real” trials in the underworld, this one was also carried out in a most violent way.<sup>110</sup>

In this section I have intentionally limited myself to forms of collective action that were explicitly based on local cults and festivals. Given the limited amount of evidence that is presently available, it is not possible to make any conclusive statements about the significance of local cult organizations for binding people together in collective action.

I do wish to offer some speculative remarks on the link between the internal structure of local cult organizations and the (lack of) possibilities for exploiting such organizations for protest. As I have suggested, there were roughly two types for organizing cults and festivals, either on a more or less egalitarian basis or under the leadership of local elites and their representatives. One suspects that the appearance of these types was linked to the degree of local socio-economic differentiation. The Shuanglin evidence suggests that there always remained room for shared, egalitarian cult organizations to bind people together against the local elites.

When local elites controlled the local cult and festival organizations, the possibilities for expressing collective protest in a cultic context would be severely obstructed. This suggests that increasing elite polemics against and detachment from local cults, retreating to the more private and solemn spheres of Confucian academies and ancestral worship, may also have resulted in decreased opportunities for local control. The net result would be that the remaining local people could increasingly organize themselves against local elites. The available evidence on the role of cult organizations in local protest in the economically more advanced Lower Yangzi region with the strongest elite detachment from local religious life, fits such a scenario, although the small amount of explicit sources makes all hypotheses rather speculative.

Nevertheless, none of these cults could ever hope to serve as the basis for supra-local protest. The regional cults that might have served as a focal point were all in the hands of the local elites, as the organizers and funders of their festivities, and were also ideologically strongly tied to the central state by means of their titles and cult mythology. Therefore, we find that larger scale protests and uprisings generally took place on the basis of the ideologies provided by messianic or millenarian religious movements or by alternative political prophecies.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The principal conclusion of this still preliminary study must be that temples or festivals should not be seen solely as serving individual religious needs, but also as the focal points of local communal organization. This has already

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<sup>110</sup> Fu Yiling, “Mingmo nanfang de dianbian nubian”, (*Lishi yanjiu* 1975: 5), p. 66.

been abundantly clear for a more recent period, largely on the basis of twentieth century fieldwork, and can now be extended to earlier periods as well. The analysis of local social, economic and political history should include these institutions and the sources that deal with them. Many questions still remain, especially pertaining to the building of personal and village networks through cult and festival activities, but here I wish to look at some other implications of this type of approach.

When we accept that local processions integrated a territory, the question arises whether there exists a relationship between the size of this territory and more generally the size of pilgrimage networks on the one hand and the integration of the territory on the other. One would expect to find more supra-local processions and pilgrimage networks in socio-economically better integrated advanced regions. A problem in investigating this question is that the sources for less advanced regions are insufficient. It is therefore unclear whether the absence of such processions and pilgrimages in such regions is real or the result of our lack of sources.

Local cults provided different occasions for gathering the entire community throughout the year. The temple as a meeting place can be documented best of all in vernacular literature. This type of source was not consulted in the present study and I suspect that we find more information here on the role of temples and festivals in bringing together people for marriage or discussions. I should stress, however, that by and large I have found no evidence that these cults function as purposeful structures for communication and decisionmaking in a way that could be intergrated in the “civil society” debate.

When cults keep communities together, directly by means of the more or less institutionalized organizations (viz. the “societies” and “gatherings” discussed in this study) or indirectly by providing opportunities for creating persona] networks, then attacks on these cults also meant attacks on the cohesion of local society. Here we should pause to consider what the implications could have been of the recurrent attacks by local magistrates on “licentious (*yin*)” cults, destroying their temples and denying them respect. Certainly, these attacks did not result in the long term disappearance of local temple cults, because they were not institutionalized. Most officials had a more *laisser-faire* approach towards temple cults and more alternative forms of religious organization as long as these did not evolve into overly public institutions. This relatively tolerant attitude only changed with the late Qing movement to adapt temple buildings for use as schools.<sup>111</sup> The frequent state-imposed sub-county level self-governance schemes which were placed on top of existing units of communal worship may also have hindered the independent development of these cult organizations. These schemes often entailed duties that could become a heavy burden on local people, hence

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<sup>111</sup> Tsukamoto Zenryū, “Chūka minkoku no Bukkyō”, in: Tsukamoto Zenryū, *Chūgoku kinsei Bukkyōshi no sho mondai* (Tokyo 1976), pp. 253–90.

acting as a force against co-operation through such organizations.

When we realize that local cults generally stood for local communities, the nineteenth and twentieth century iconoclastic movements become much more than ideological events. When fighters of the later Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace destroyed local temples and deities in Guangxi, these were not merely ideologically or religiously inspired acts, but also attacks on the heart of the surrounding local communities. The Heavenly Kingdom iconoclasm was only the beginning of a wave of destruction of local cults by the nationalists and communists alike, which was apparently more successful than earlier Confucian attempts. It is no coincidence that, conversely, on Taiwan after 1945 the main channel for maintaining local cohesion and an independent (Taiwanese) identity were local cults (and the new religious movements of lay Buddhist provenance, such as the Unity Teachings (*yiguan dao*)). A process of temple cult revival can be witnessed presently in the countryside of Southern China, despite continuing political and ideological pressures.<sup>112</sup> In the North, destruction seems to have been more permanent, perhaps because it had been going on for longer before the final communist victory of 1949.

Clearly, more work should be done on the role of organizations tied to Buddhist monasteries, especially in those centuries when their role was much greater than during the late imperial period. After all, both the terms *she* (society) and *hui* (gathering) for institutionalized forms of religious organization first appear in a (lay) Buddhist context. Such forms of organization did not disappear later on. The White Lotus movement and the White Cloud tradition of the Southern Song and Yuan periods are eloquent evidence of the significance of this phenomenon. Though not general communal organizations, they provided substantial social integration for their members and, through charitable works, also for society as a whole.

From the late sixteenth century onwards, we can again document such lay Buddhist-inspired movements, in the form of the new religious movements of the late Ming. The Luo Teachings among the Grand Canal labourers are a case in point with respect to the social integration that could be provided by these movements.<sup>113</sup> Generally speaking, such movements covered people from different territorial communities who created new communities that remained in contact with each other over considerable distances.

Due to the lack of sources, it will be difficult to obtain more precise information on the membership and leadership of the societies and gatherings addressed in this study, especially for the pre-1800 period. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries written sources on local culture in general improve dramatically; we can also hope to recover additional information by

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<sup>112</sup> Dean, *Taoist Ritual and Popular Cults*, *passim*.

<sup>113</sup> e.g., David E. Kelley, "Temples and Tribute Fleets: The Luo Sect and Boatmen's Associations in the Eighteenth Century", *Modern China* 8/3 (1982), pp. 361–91.

interviewing the older generations in the Chinese countryside. I think that much more could be done with respect to the activities of single cults, such as the organization of rituals, festivals, and restoration and building projects. An attempt must be made to move beyond general labels such as “the elders (*fulao* or *qilao*), “the people of the *li* (*liren*)”, “city people (*yimin*)”, “local people (*xiangren* or *xiangmin*), and so forth. I suspect that the detailed analysis of the specific names and kinds of social category mentioned in records of donations, in anecdotes, and in miracle stories might yield more specific information. Furthermore, an attempt should be made to fit specific cults within their larger social, economic, and political contexts,

All things considered, the cultural nexus (*kyōdōtai*, cultural tissues) that kept local society together needs much more detailed research, which should not confine itself to kinship structures or the literati elite within the social elite. The descriptions of festivals that we have summarized here indicate that these were indeed occasions for showing communal feelings, for creating a heightened feeling of “togetherness” (*communitas*, if one wishes). There is no reason to assume that this covered up all social, economic and political contradictions (as far as people were explicitly aware of these), but at the same time the lack of cult-centred protest remains remarkable.

We must in fact seriously consider the possibility that by engaging in the support—and at times also persecution or re-structuring of local cults—the Chinese imperial state had found a remarkably effective means of creating local and regional stability. On top of these local cult organizations, sub-county self-administrative schemes were built, and at a further remove an elaborate bureaucratic structure. Even when these did not function, a minimum of symbolic nationwide integration (centred on royal and imperial symbolism, perhaps even more than the oft-quoted bureaucratic metaphor) and strictly local institutionalized integration always remained.

### List of Characters

*For reasons of space, I have not included the characters of very local deities, villages, and other place names. Higher level place names are usually included in the form of the title of the relevant Local gazetteer. Terms are arranged in strict alphabetical order.*

<i>Bumin tongzhi</i>	八閩通志
<i>bao</i> (fortress)	堡
<i>bao</i> (unit of self-rule)	保
<i>baojia</i>	保甲
<i>bailian she</i>	白蓮社
<i>Beiqi daquanji</i>	北溪大全集
Bingling	炳靈
Bixia yuanjun	碧霞元君

Cai Hengzi	采蘅子
Cai Yizhuang	蔡亦莊
<i>cha</i>	差
<i>Chang'an zhi</i>	長安志
<i>Changshan xianzhi</i>	常山縣志
<i>Changshu sizhi</i>	常熟私志
<i>chao</i>	朝
<i>Chaolian xiangzhi chaoyue</i>	潮連鄉志
Che Xilun	車錫倫
Chen	陳
Chen Chun	陳淳
Chen Qiyuan	陳其元
<i>chenghuang wang</i>	城隍王
<i>chensheng</i>	陳生
<i>chihui</i>	吃會
Chiyou	蚩尤
<i>Chongming manlu</i>	蟲鳴漫錄
Ciwei	紫微
<i>Cixi xianzhi</i>	慈溪縣志
<i>Daishan zhenzhi</i>	岱山鎮志
<i>dangnian huizhang</i>	當年會長
<i>Danzhou zhi sanlue</i>	儋州志三略
<i>daxing</i>	大姓
<i>deng</i>	燈
<i>Ding</i>	丁
<i>dongyue dadi</i>	東嶽大帝
Du Zheng	度正
Erlang	二郎
Fan Yu	範宇
<i>fenxiang</i>	分香
<i>Foshan zhongyi xiangzhi</i>	佛山忠義鄉志
Fu Yiling	傅衣凌
<i>fulao</i>	父老
<i>Gaoling xianzhi</i>	高陵縣志
Guan Yu	關羽
<i>guandi</i>	關帝
<i>Guangdong xinyu</i>	廣東新語
<i>Guangzhiduo</i>	廣志鐸
<i>guozuo</i>	國祚
<i>Hanyu dacidian</i>	漢語大詞典
Hong Mai	洪邁
<i>hongsheng</i>	洪聖
Houtu	候土



Huang Zhen  
*huanglu jiao*  
*Huangshi richao*  
*huangzi huangsun*  
*Huayin xianzhi*  
*hui*  
*huigan*  
*huijing*  
*huishou*  
*jia*  
*Jianghu ji*  
*Jiannan shigao*  
*jiashen*  
*jing*  
*Jing'an xianzhi*  
*Jinshi yuan*  
*jinxiang*  
*jiu*  
*juan*  
*juren*  
*Kangyongqian shiqi chengxiang fankang*  
*douzheng ziliao*  
*Kyōdōtai*  
*li*  
Li Gang  
Liao Ben  
*lihao shixia*  
*Lili zhi*  
Lin Xiaoyao  
*Lin'an zhi*  
*liren*  
*lishe*  
Liu Xun  
*Liuhe xianzhi*  
*longdeng*  
*Longyan xianzhi*  
Lu You  
Lü Nan  
Mazu  
*Mengliang lu*  
*miaogui*  
*Ningbo fuzhi*  
Ouyang Hu  
Pan Yeyuan

黃震  
黃籙醮  
黃氏日抄  
黃子黃孫  
華陰縣志  
會  
會幹  
會境  
會首  
家  
江湖集  
劍南詩藁  
家神  
境  
靖安縣志  
金石苑  
進香  
酒  
卷  
舉人  
康雍乾時期城鄉反抗鬥爭資料  
  
共同體  
里  
李崗  
廖奔  
里豪市俠  
黎里志  
林逍遙  
臨安志  
里人  
里社  
劉壩  
六合縣志  
龍燈  
龍岩縣志  
陸游  
呂柟  
媽祖  
夢梁錄  
廟鬼  
寧波府志  
歐陽祐  
潘掖垣

<i>pu</i>	鋪
<i>pusa</i>	菩薩
<i>qiandu quanyuan</i>	簽都勸緣
<i>qilao</i>	耆老
<i>qimin</i>	耆民
<i>qishen</i>	耆紳
<i>qu</i>	區
Qu Dajun	屈大均
<i>quanshou</i>	勸首
<i>Ruizhou fuzhi</i>	瑞洲府志
<i>Shangyu xianzhi</i>	上虞縣志
<i>Shanyou shike congbian</i>	山右石刻叢編
<i>shaxue</i>	歃血
<i>she</i>	社
<i>shecun</i>	社村
<i>shehuo</i>	社火(伙)
<i>shen</i>	紳
<i>shendong</i>	紳董
<i>sheng</i>	升
<i>Shijian ji</i>	石澗集
<i>Shike shiliao xinbian</i>	石刻史料新編
<i>shimin</i>	市民
<i>Shuanglin zhenzhi</i>	雙林鎮志
<i>sihui</i>	司會
<i>Sishui xianzhi</i>	泗水縣志
<i>Songyuan fangzhi congkan</i>	宋元方志叢刊
<i>Songyuan xiqu wenwu yu minsu</i>	宋元戲曲文物與民俗
<i>Tangwanxiang jiushiyitu lizhi</i>	塘灣鄉九十一圖里志
<i>Tangxi zhi</i>	唐溪志
<i>tiancao shenhui</i>	天曹神會
<i>Tongzhi tiaoge</i>	通制條格
<i>tuan</i> (group)	團
<i>tuan</i> (hamlets)	疇
Wang Shixing	王士性
Wang Zhideng	王稚登
<i>Weishi xianzhi</i>	尉氏縣志
Wenchang	文昌
Wu Zimu	吳自牧
<i>Wujiang xianzhi</i>	吳江縣志
<i>wulai</i>	無賴
<i>Wushe bian</i>	吳社編
<i>Wuwei zhouzhi</i>	無爲州志
<i>xiangke</i>	香客
<i>xiangmin</i>	鄉民

<i>xiangren</i>	鄉人
<i>xiangyue</i>	鄉約
<i>Xiangzhenzhi zhuanji</i>	鄉鎮志專輯
<i>Xiaoyao shan wanshou gong zhi</i>	運遙山萬壽宮志
<i>xiashen</i>	下神
<i>Xiezhou fuzhi</i>	解州府志
<i>Xinghua fuzhi</i>	興化府志
<i>Xingshantang ji</i>	性善堂集
<i>Xiuning futan zhi</i>	休寧孚潭志
<i>Xu</i>	徐
<i>Xuxian zhenlu</i>	徐仙真錄
<i>yanwang</i>	閻王
<i>Yanzhou fuzhi</i>	嚴州府志
<i>Ye Chunji</i>	葉春及
<i>Yibanlu zashu</i>	一斑錄雜述
<i>yiguan dao</i>	一貫道
<i>Yijian zhi</i>	夷堅志
<i>yimin</i>	邑民
<i>yinci</i>	淫祠
<i>ying</i>	迎
<i>yingshen zhi hui</i>	迎神之會
<i>Yinju tongyi</i>	隱居通議
<i>Yinxian tongzhi</i>	鄞縣通志
<i>Yongjianzhai biji</i>	庸間齋筆記
<i>yu</i>	於
<i>Yuanwu xianzhi</i>	原武縣志
<i>Yuyao xianzhi</i>	余姚縣志
<i>zaju</i>	雜劇
<i>Zhang Xun</i>	張巡
<i>Zhao</i>	趙
<i>Zheng Guangzu</i>	鄭光祖
<i>Zhenjiang zhi</i>	鎮江志
<i>zhenwu</i>	真武
<i>zhong</i>	衆
<i>Zhongguo difangzhi jicheng</i>	中國地方志集成
<i>Zhongguo minjian meishu quanji</i>	中國民間美術全集
<i>Zhongguo minjian wenhua</i>	中國民間文化
<i>Zhongguo shixue congshu</i>	中國史學叢書
<i>Zhou Zhengliang</i>	周正良
<i>zhu</i>	柱
<i>Zhu Xi</i>	朱熹
<i>Zhu Yuanzhang</i>	朱元璋
<i>zongguan miao</i>	總管廟