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# ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| A | *Aṅguttara-nikāya* |
| *AO* | *Acta Orientalia* |
| *AM* | *Asia Major* |
| *As* | *Aṭṭhasālinī* |
| *BEFEO* | *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient* |
| *BHSD* | F. Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary* |
| *BM* | *Burlington Magazine* |
| *BSOAS* | *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* |
| *BSR* | *Buddhist Studies Review* |
| *CIS* | *Contributions to Indian Sociology* |
| CPD | *Critical Pāli Dictionary* |
| *CSSH* | *Comparative Studies in Society and History* |
| *CSLCY* | *Chin-so liu-chu yin*, in TC, no. 1015 |
| D | *Dīgha-nikāya* |
| Dīp | *Dīpavaṃsa* |
| *EA* | *Études Asiatiques* |
| EFEO | Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient |
| *EJS* | *European Journal of Sociology* |
| *EI* | *Epigraphia Indica* |
| *ERE* | *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, edited by James Hastings, Edinburgh, T.&T. Clark, 1911 |
| *HJAS* | *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* |
| *HR* | *History of Religions* |
| *IASWR* | Institute for Advanced Studies of World Religions |
| *IBK* | *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku kenkyū* |
| *IHQ* | *Indian Historical Quarterly* |
| *IIJ* | *Indo-Iranian Journal* |
| *IT* | *Indologica Taurinensia* |
| *JA* | *Journal Asiatique* |
| *JAS* | *Journal of Asian Studies* |
| *JHR* | *Journal of the History of Religions* |
| *JIABS* | *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* |

| | |
|---|---|
| *JNCBRAS* | *Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* |
| *JNRC* | *Journal of the Nepal Research Centre* |
| *JPTS* | *Journal of the Pali Texts Society* |
| *JRAS* | *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* |
| *JS* | *Journal des Savants* |
| Kv | *Kathāvatthu* |
| Kv-a | *Kathāvatthu-aṭṭhakathā* |
| *MCB* | *Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques* |
| M | *Majjhima-nikāya* |
| Mhbv | *Mahābodhivaṃsa* |
| Mhv | *Mahāvaṃsa* |
| Mp | *Manoratha-pūranī* |
| MSMS | Monumenta Serica Monograph Series |
| Paṭis | *Paṭisambhidā-magga* |
| PTS | Pali Text Society |
| *RH* | *Revue Historique* |
| *RO* | *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* |
| S | *Saṃyutta-nikāya* |
| SBE | Sacred Books of the East |
| Saddhamma-s | *Saddhamma-saṅgaha* |
| *SLJBS* | *Sri Lanka Journal of Buddhist Studies* |
| Sp | *Samantapāsādikā* |
| *SSAC* | *Studies in South Asian Culture* |
| T | The Taishō edition of the Buddhist Canon in Chinese (vol. no.) |
| Th | *Theragāthā* |
| *TMKFTCC* | *Tao-men k'o-fa ta-ch'üan-chi*, in TC, no. 1215 |
| *TP* | *T'oung Pao* |
| TC | The Taoist Canon, text numbered in accordance with the Harvard-Yenching Index to its titles |
| TTD | Tibetan Tripiṭaka, sDe-dge Edition |
| TTP | Tibetan Tripiṭaka, Peking Edition |
| *UCR* | *Univeristy of Ceylon Review*, Colombo |
| *VBA* | *Visva-bharati Annals* |
| Vin | *Vinaya-piṭaka* |
| Vism | *Visuddhimagga* |
| *WZKSO* | *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd- (und Ost) asiens* |
| *ZDMG* | *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* |

# Buddhism, Taoism and the Rise of the City Gods

**T.H. Barrett***

If one can learn much about a religious tradition from observing its interaction with its rivals, and particularly from the encounter of a great, well-established tradition like Buddhism with new forms of religiosity, then China is perhaps the best place of all to observe this process. This is not simply because of the outstanding Chinese historiographic traditions which allow us to put so much of its religious history into context—in fact for the type of religion examined here historiographic problems are far from absent, as we shall see. Rather, the simultaneous existence in mediaeval times of another great and established tradition, Taoism, allows us to treat the question of reactions to novelty from a comparative perspective by tracing through the same period of time the evolving reactions of both 'old' religions to the newcomer. In this study the role of newcomer is played by the so-called *ch'eng-huang* cults.

The class of Chinese deities known as *ch'eng-huang* or city gods has long excited the interest of scholars. I have only glanced at what I take to be the earliest serious studies of these gods, which appeared in 1910 and 1924;[1] as with David Johnson's recent and very stimulating historical examination of these cults,[2] the point of departure for this study goes back no further than Teng Ssu-yü's research of 1935.[3] One of Teng's aims at this time was to explore the connections between Buddhism and Taoism and the city gods in order to assess the possible influences of these religions on the appearance of the city god cults. The evidence which he uncovered, to which we shall revert, led him to believe that the origins of the city

* An earlier version of this paper was read at UCLA, October, 1989; my thanks to all those who offered comments at that time.

[1] P.A. Volpert, "Tsch'öng huang", *Anthropos*, 5,5/6 (Sept.–Dec., 1910), 991–1026; F. Ayscough, "The Chinese cult of *Ch'eng-huang* lao-yeh", *JNCBRAS*, 55, 1924, 131–155. To judge by the last couple of pages of each study, the line of inquiry pursued here was not contemplated by these pioneers.

[2] David Johnson, "The City-god cults of T'ang and Sung China", *HJAS*, 45,2, Dec. 1985, 363–457. As an examination of the rise of these cults from the point of view of social history, this article leaves little room for additional comment; the approach adopted here, however, concentrates on the history of religion.

[3] Teng Ssu-yü, "Ch'eng-huang k'ao", *Shih-hsüeh nien-pao*, 2.2, 1935, 249–76.

gods might not be found within either traditions, and this conclusion is further underlined by Johnson's article.

Our present concern is somewhat different. I take it as more or less axiomatic that neither Buddhists nor Taoists were responsible as such for the emergence of this type of cult. I do not know who precisely was; Johnson points to the role of groups described as 'elders', whom he suspects of having had merchant connections.[4] The terminology as such does not carry such connotations; intriguingly enough we find it used at a very early date to describe the religious leadership of non-Chinese peoples of the South.[5] But merchant connections cannot be ruled out: the research of Kanai Noriyuki has uncovered direct evidence for merchant involvement in local religion during the Sung,[6] if not in support of the *ch'eng-huang* cults themselves. The only instance I have noticed in my own reading where the source of financial support for refurbishing a *ch'eng-huang* temple is specified (in the eleventh century) uses the unrevealing term *hao* to describe the man who stepped in to take over the cost from the community as a whole—in other words, a 'boss', a man of local power who was not considered by the writer (a Buddhist monk) part of the elite.[7]

This, of course, fits in well with the recent findings of Robert P. Hymes concerning Sung religion,[8] but the whole question lies rather beyond the scope of the present essay. My own question is simple: confronted with what was indubitably a novel phenomenon in the history of Chinese religion, how did the established traditions react? Convention requires that some words should be said about Confucianism also, and I have certainly not excluded Confucianism from my title because this tradition had nothing to say in response to the appearance of the *ch'eng-huang*. For though Confucianism tended to keep a low profile as a religion, it did possess a clear-cut canon, and the rise of a non-canonical cult could be treated in but two ways: either it was denounced (as those Neo-Confucian zealots, the Ch'eng brothers, preferred),[9] or it was explained away as a development implicitly present in the Confucian Classics, by means of the philological sleight of hand at which Chinese scholars have always excelled; examples of the latter can be found going back to the ninth century.[10] But during the period when the *ch'eng-huang*

[4] Johnson, "The City-god cults of T'ang and Sung China", 419.
[5] Hsü Chia-jui, *Ta-li ku-tai wen-hua-shih kao*, Hong Kong, 1979 reprint of second ed., 266.
[6] See pp. 45–6 of Kanai Noriyuki, "Sōdai no sonsha to Bukkyō", *Bukkyō shigaku kenkyū*, 18.2, March 1976, 31–56: here 'elders' actually appear to be distinguished from merchants, to include other local notables, 'patrons'.
[7] Wen-ying, *Hsiang-shan yeh-lu* 2, Peking, 1984, 26.
[8] See Robert P. Hymes, *Statesmen and Gentlemen*, Cambridge, 1986, especially ch. 7.
[9] Ch'eng I and Ch'eng Hao, *Ho-nan Ch'eng-shih i-shu* 22A, in *Erh-Ch'eng chi*, Peking, 1981, 295–6.
[10] Teng's article (n. 3 above) opens with some good examples of this. An inscription dated 840 preserved (via a Sung source) in Lu Hsin-yüan, ed., *T'ang-wen shih-i*, Taipei, 1962 reprint, 29.3a–4b, provides an excellent early instance of Confucian casuistry: this is no. 51 in Johnson's list (see next note).

spread across the land (roughly, the T'ang and early Sung), Confucianism itself underwent a transformation affecting its own self-image far more deeply than the concurrent changes in Buddhism and Taoism, thus rendering it far less suitable for purposes of comparison, albeit historiographically far more convenient.

For when one forsakes Johnson's master list of datable inscriptions,[11] in which typically a representative of the state, usually in some sense a Confucian, records his interaction with a specific community, in order to trawl through literature of an explicitly Buddhist or Taoist inspiration, precise details of time and place are often harder to come by. I would, nonetheless, like to think that I have pinned down the earliest Taoist source to mention the city gods, the *Chin-so liu-chu yin*, to the century following the An Lu-shan rebellion of 755: still a little vague, but better than can be achieved for many Taoist texts.[12] It provides, at all events, an intriguing picture of change and continuity, quite consistent with what we know of other aspects of Taoism at this time.

The *Chin-so liu-chu yin* is nominally divided between text and commentary, the former ascribed to late Han revelation, the latter to the early T'ang. The first of its references to city-gods is in the text itself, in the middle of a long list of gods of the powers of nature (wind, rain) and of localities (mountains, rivers) who will respond to a Taoist possessed of the right magic; a note from the commentator observes that the granting of city-godships is in the gift of the Lord of the Latter Days (*hou-sheng chün*), the supreme deity presiding over the text as a whole, and quotes the Su-Wu chi (evidently a topographical text, of which no trace survives) as listing Jui, King of Wu, as an example—of him, more shortly.[13]

Later on in the commentary, in directions for how to counteract drought, we are told that anciently there were no cities, but now their spirit officers (*ch'eng-huang shen-kuan*) should head the list of local deities prayed to,[14] in dealing with epidemics and hauntings, too, another note advises adding them in;[15] and in supplications for 'journeying mercies' the note suggesting their addition remarks that such deities had already appeared in the Chin dynasty.[16] These reminders are

[11] Johnson, "The City-god cults of T'ang and Sung China", 451–7.
[12] See T.H. Barrett, "Towards a date for the *Chin-so liu-chu yin*", *BSOAS*, 52,2, July 1990. Further consideration of this text, especially in relation to its references to Buddhism, has not caused me to alter my opinion, but I should point out that this dating as yet awaits acceptance.
[13] *CSLCY* 16.5b. For the 'Lord of the Latter Days', see Isabelle Robinet, *La Révélation du Shangqing dans l'histoire du Taoisme*, Tome II, Paris, 1984, 107.
[14] *CSLCY* 18.5a.
[15] *CSLCY* 23.7b.
[16] *CSLCY* 24.7a.

followed later by a rite of exorcism in which temple-shrines (*miao-she*) and cities (*ch'eng-huang*) are, according to the main text itself, to be notified: no comment at all is offered on this.[17] The next main text reference, a method of counteracting black magic calling, inter alia, upon the spirit officers of cities, provokes a lengthy burst of aetiological commentary, as follows, in summary:

> "In high antiquity they only spoke of *she-miao*, there were no *ch'eng-huang shen*. These started from King Jui of Wu, whose tomb is in Wu. In Chin times the prefect Liu Wen-ching was building a city-wall in Wu and reached the top of the tomb. At night the walls were all broken down and the earth carted off by spirit soldiers so that it was nowhere to be seen".

After this happened seven or eight times Liu posted a watch, which arrested Jui when he came out of the ground at the head of a ghost army several tens of thousands strong. Jui complained about the disturbance to his tomb, but offered to protect the city if the wall was resited one hundred paces away. Nowadays, our text says, anywhere that has a prior burial (presumably of someone numinous) in its underworld, may, as the result of consultation between the local underworld and God (*t'ai-shang t'ien-ti*) be granted a landlord (*ti-chu*, sic!), who is appointed chief of the spirit-officials of the city.[18]

Here is a story worthy of comparison with any discussed in Johnson's article. Note in particular the attempted historical reference. I cannot at this stage comment on the historicity of Liu Wen-ching, but there never was a King Jui of Wu. Wu Jui, King of Ch'ang-sha, is however well known to history. He was a leader of the Yüeh tribes of the mid-Yangtse who distinguished himself through his constant loyalty to the founder of the Han; Ch'ang-sha was the kingdom he was granted as a reward for his services.[19] Though it is no more than a guess, I would suggest that one of the underlying reasons for the rise of the city gods was the expansion of Chinese settlement into non-Chinese areas: walls and moats (the literal meaning of *ch'eng-huang*) were needed to give a sense of security, and even more than these material and visible symbols of reassurance, in a territory thick with alien ghosts a spiritual bulwark against the psychic resentment of the land was an even greater necessity. What better champion than a local leader who in his life had demonstrated himself to be a true friend of the Chinese, especially one

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[17] *CSLCY* 25.4b.
[18] *CSLCY* 25.7b–8a. This use of the term *ti-chu* as a type of god rather than a specific god is not listed in dictionaries (except in a Japanese context in the *Engi-shiki* of 927), but *cf.* its mention in the passage dealt with below, at n. 43, in T. 21, p. 375b, and in the same volume, p. 466c in no. 1315—another one of the problematic group of texts mentioned below, n. 47. See also *Yün-chi ch'i-ch'ien* 79.19a, TC, n. 1026, the precise date of which passage is also difficult to determine.
[19] Pan Ku, *Han Shu* 34, Peking, 1962, 1894.

whose family line (according to the histories) had died out entirely, thus making him, as it were a supernatural freelance, suitable for deification?[20]

To return once more to the *Chin-so liu-chu yin*, the next note on the *ch'eng-huang* gods in the text deals with history on a grand scale. A passage on exorcism which mentions shrines to gods of the earth is interrupted with the following information: in high antiquity there were only gods of the heavens and of the earth (*t'ien-shen*, *ti-chih*, Japanese *jingi*), and no *she-miao*; in middle antiquity there was the altar of the soil on the left, of grain on the right, and still no *she-miao*; since the Han, Wei, Chin and Sung (note the Southern outlook) there had been spirit officials of the altars of soil and grain; since the Ch'i, Liang, Ch'en and Sui there had also been spirit officials of cities; spirit officials of *she-miao* and *ch'eng-huang* now cooperated in maintaining otherworldly law and order just like *chou* and *hsien* officials.[21] Two references further on in the commentary also support the view that the *ch'eng-huang* should be seen as a new force collaborating with the *she-miao*.[22] Now periodization of religious history is basic to Taoism: the Taoist religion, after all, first appeared in the late Han as a self-declared new dispensation,[23] and far from believing in a single historical revelation, the notion of a series of revelations seems, too, to have been present from the start.[24] But what reminds one (as so often in Taoism) of secular, bureaucratic parallels is the way here in which these changes are treated largely as changes in nomenclature in our text: we are presented with a fragment of an otherworldly *Li-tai chih-kuan piao*, a diachronic table of the bureaucracy in which titles of posts change, but the overall structure is alleged to be more or less constant, even if to some extent there is (as there was in the T'ang bureaucracy) a cumulation of new posts upon old.[25] It is

[20] See the preceding note, and for the significance of this information, pp. 259–60 of Alvin P. Cohen, "Coercing the Rain Deities in Ancient China", *HR*, 17, 3, 4, 1980, 224–65.

[21] *CSLCY* 25.13a–b. *Cf.* Johnson, "The City-god cults of T'ang and Sung China", 436, n. 219, though given the untenably early date Johnson accepts for our text, he is forced to indulge in some special pleading at this point.

[22] *CSLCY* 25.14b, 15a.

[23] The Yellow Turbans certainly proclaimed a new era at the time; the evidence for the Way of the Celestial Masters is lacking, but they also looked back to their founding as a new start: see D.C. Twitchett and M.A.N. Loewe, eds., *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 1, Cambridge, 1986, 815–820, 875–6; Ch'en Kuo-fu, *Tao-tsang yüan-liu k'ao*, Peking, 1963, 311–314.

[24] See Anna Seidel's study, *La divinisation de Lao tseu dans le Taoisme des Han*, Paris, 1969, for the early notions of a series of revelations. Though later Taoism chose to be cautious over the appearance of new Messiahs, the appearance of new texts (sometimes specifically labelled 'newly appeared', as with those bestowed on K'ou Ch'ien-chih in the early fifth century) continued unabated.

[25] For a brief characterization of this work (the product of a long historiographic tradition stressing the continuities behind institutional change), see S.Y. Teng and K. Biggerstaff, *An Annotated Bibliography of Selected Chinese Reference Works*, 3rd ed., Cambridge Mass., 1971, 200. For an overview of institutional change during the early imperial period, see M.A.N. Loewe, *Imperial China*, London, 1966, 150–166. The relationship between imperial bureaucracies, mundane and supernatural, in China has excited much comment; the latest treatment of the theme is Jean Levi, *Les Fonctionnaires Divins*, Paris, 1989.

this "plus ça change" response to religious change in the *Chin-so liu-chu yin* which led to its early quotation in a much more conventional work,[26] and which contrasts sharply with the 'either/or' tendency notes earlier in Confucianism.

At the same time our text is clearly not simply handing out a stock response: throughout the work one gets a strong sense of an author struggling, as if for the first time, with a problem of explanation. Subsequent early evidence for Taoist attitudes towards the city gods becomes steadily more anticlimactic, though the next earliest I have noticed, in the *Hsü Hsien Chuan* of Shen Fen, a late ninth century or early tenth century work, is a trifle startling, since in it a Taoist priest flicks nails into the eyes of a city god statue to alleviate drought.[27] This, however, cannot be taken as a sign of religious antipathy, both because of what we know of the coercing of rain deities,[28] and because the hero of this episode is a holy man of the well-known Chinese 'outrageous' variety, much addicted to wine and women—the sort of Taoist, in other words, from whom bad behaviour is expected. Shen Fen's contemporary, the great Taoist courtier and author Tu Kuang-t'ing (850–933), also counteracts any impression of early Taoist antipathy towards city gods by including a brief nod in the direction of 'the lords of the *she-miao* and *ch'eng-huang*' in a 'mass for the dead' preserved in his best-known collection of rituals.[29]

Similar passing references to the city gods may be found in materials ascribed to Tu preserved in another large collection, evidently of Southern Sung date, the *Tao-men k'o-fa ta-ch'üan-chi*,[30] in rituals devoted to combatting baleful stars,[31] and securing rainfall.[32] His Sung editor, for his part, includes them in rituals for seeking heirs,[33] invoking the Warrior God Chen-wu,[34] expressing repentance,[35]

[26] See Roman Malek, *Das Chai-chieh-lu*, Frankfurt am Main, 1985, 47, 86.
[27] Shen Fen, *Hsü Hsien chuan*, p. 1.13a, TC. no. 295; for the date of this work, *cf.* Yü Chia-hsi, *Ssu-k'u t'i-yao pien-cheng*, Peking, 1958, 19XX, 1214, where the author is identified as having served under the T'ang.
[28] See the study of Cohen cited in n. 20 above.
[29] *T'ai-shang huang-lu chai-i* 35.6b, TC. no. 507. On Tu, see F. Verellen, *Du Guangting (850–933): Taoïste de cour à la fin de la Chine médiévale*, Paris, 1989, and especially page 212 for an entry on this ritual compilation.
[30] Listed in Verellen, Du Guangting, 215. Note the reference, 63.5a, to the period 1127–30.
[31] *TMKFTCC* 9.3a.
[32] *TMKFTCC* 12.6a, 13.3a, 5b, 14.3a, 15.3a, 17.3a.
[33] *TMKFTCC* 25.4b, 26.3a, 27.3a, 28.3a.
[34] *TMKFTCC* 63.1b.
[35] *TMKFTCC* 70.2b, 71.2b, 72.2b, 73.2b.

and achieving immortality.[36] From other rituals, though, they are excluded. It is not, however, possible to make much of this pattern of inclusion and exclusion, since it covers not only the city gods but also other lesser local divinities: what one can say is that within this source the city gods are firmly ensconced among the ranks of such lower-order spiritual powers. There is indeed ample evidence from the Sung for the incorporation of the city gods cults into the Taoist liturgy: one can point to *pro forma* petitions to them[37]—precursors of a whole Ming text devoted to their supplication[38]—and even a lengthy note on why the *ch'eng-huang* god in the capital could not (contrary to common opinion) be held to have empire-wide responsibilities.[39]

This last discussion seems to have convinced Teng Ssu-yü that the city gods could not be Taoist in origin: if the Taoists had invented them, they would not have been so divided over their beliefs concerning them.[40] This argument appears not entirely sound—it could be used, for example, to prove that the eucharist was not in origin a Christian ritual—but the conclusion reached is beyond dispute. Equally admirable are his conclusions concerning the non-Buddhist origins of the city gods, though here he does linger over the legend of the Buddhist warrior king Vaiśravana, P'i-sha-men, who is depicted in China as a defender of Chinese city walls.[41] This legend has intrigued others, too, since it could be taken to indicate some connection with the city gods, but a recent study by Yoritomi Motohiro reveals that it draws upon a number of separate sources, and emerges too late to have itself prompted the *ch'eng-huang* cults.[42] For reasons which will become clear shortly, I am not even sure that it could have been promoted by Buddhist monks as a deliberate alternative to the new gods, either.

For in the case of Buddhism again it is not possible to find any signs of religious antipathy to the *ch'eng-huang* deities: in ritual, and in anecdote, the new gods simply turn up and make themselves at home—or are made at home. The only problem is when. The text which in all likelihood marks the earliest Buddhist occurrence of the new cult, the *Yen-lo wang kung-hsing fa tz'u-ti*, ascribed to

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[36] TMKFTCC 75.3b, 76.2b, 77.2b, 78.2b—the first reference is actually under Tu's name, but the rest are not attributed to him.

[37] *Tao-men ting-chih* 2.19b etc., TC. no. 1214. On this text, see Judith Boltz, *A Survey of Taoist Literature: Tenth to Seventeenth Centuries*, Berkeley, 1987, 50–51.

[38] *T'ai-shang Lao-chün ch'eng-huang kan-ying hsiao-tsai chi-fu miao-ching*, TC. no. 1435. My judgement on the date of this text is based on the administrative geography which it mentions.

[39] *Shang-ch'ing ling-pao ta-fa*, in 44 ch., TC. no. 1213, 27.25b–26b. For this text, see Boltz, *op. cit.*, 45–46.

[40] Teng, "*Ch'eng-huang* k'ao", 272: I may be characterising his remarks a little unfairly. Teng provides a number of references to Sung ritual compilations of the type I have touched on more briefly.

[41] Teng, "Ch'eng-huang k'ao", 269.

[42] Yoritomi Motohiro, *Chūgoku Mikkyō no kenkyū*, Tokyo, 1979, 147–159.

Amoghavajra (Pu-k'ung, 705–774),[43] has defeated the best efforts of the most erudite Japanese scholar Osabe Kazuo at achieving any precise dating for it.[44] Its subject is the abode of the dead, here organized according to a scheme already attested in the seventh century in which the Buddhist King Yama ranks higher than the Lord of Mount T'ai, who ranks higher than the generals of the Five Ways in their government of the underworld.[45] Yet the text, presumably, is later than Amoghavajra, since though that master himself may conceivably have sponsored such a highly syncretic form of religion,[46] it forms one of a number of highly sinified works surveyed by Osabe which, far from having been part of the canon in China, are never mentioned, and only show up in Japan, usually in fairly late copies.[47] But in many cases they cannot be Japanese forgeries: their terminology (as here) relates distinctly to Chinese forms of religion the Japanese never practised. Despite the lack of bibliographical supporting evidence, this text is perhaps late T'ang, since (as Osabe points out) we must provisionally assume that it antedates the development of a new vision of hell associated with the cult of the Ten Kings, which rose to prominence in the tenth century.[48] Admittedly, such a judgement ignores the possibility of regional variations in the speed of development of the Ten Kings system, and assumes that their domination became total, though conversely the failure of Tsung-mi (780–841), our chief authority on T'ang Buddhist ritual, to mention the city gods in the list of minor deities he uses

[43] *Yen-lo wang kung-hsing fa tz'u-ti*, p. 375b, T.21, no. 1290.
[44] Osabe Kazuo, *Tō-Sō Mikkyōshi Ronkō*, Kobe, 1982, 41-48.
[45] See S.F. Teiser, *The Medieval Chinese Ghost Festival*, Princeton, 1988, 188.
[46] As has been argued most recently by Charles Z. Orbach, "Seeing Chen-yen Buddhism: Traditional Scholarship and the Vajrayana in China", *HR*, 29,2, Nov. 1989, 87–114; see also the earlier remarks on page 642 of Iyanaga Nobumi, "Récits de la soumission de Maheśvara par Trailokavijaya, d'après les sources chinoises et japonaises", in M. Strickmann, ed., *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of R.A. Stein*, vol. 3, *MCB,* Brussels, 1985, 633–745. The monograph of Yoritomi, cited above, n. 42, also reinforces the point.
[47] See Osabe's listings on page 214 of *Tō-Sō Mikkyō*, and quotations, pp. 228–231; note for comparison his conclusion on no. 28 in his list, pp. 229–230.
[48] Osabe, *Tō-Sō Mikkyō*, page 50. *Cf.* Teiser, Ghost Festival, 182–5, from whom a more detailed study is forthcoming.

in his work may equally be due to his own regional or sectarian biases.[49] There is room, as they say, for further research on this point.[50]

The first appearance of a city god playing a Buddhist role in anecdotal literature, on the other hand, coincides fairly exactly with Shen Fen and Tu Kuang-t'ing, for as David Johnson notes, the collection including the tale, the *Pao-ying lu*, dates to the late ninth century,[51] or at the most pessimistic to the early tenth.[52] Another tale in which a city god appears as part of the otherworldly mechanism of the karmic system turns up in the *Sung Kao-seng chuan* of 988, but appear to be set in about the same period as the *Pao-ying lu*.[53] And even if the text discussed earlier attributed to Amoghavajra is actually the product of some conservative out-group of an unusually late date, the city gods were definitely incorporated into Buddhist ritual by round about the year 1000 of the Western calendar, since they are included in a text by Tsun-shih (946–1032).[54]

As in the case of Taoism, acceptance thereafter appears to have been total: they have kept their place in Buddhist ritual into modern times,[55] and Buddhist clergy seem actively to have supported their cults. I have already referred to one Buddhist author of the eleventh century who gives some information on the source of financial support for one temple restoration, and this cleric, Wen-ying, tells us that he tried to secure support for an inscription recording a miracle associated

[49] Kamata Shigeo, *Shūmitsu kyōgaku no shisōshiteki kenkyū*, Tokyo, 1975, 512.

[50] The questions raised by T. 21, no. 1290 and similar texts are at the moment virtually insoluble, unless perhaps art historical evidence is used to break the impasse. We do find at Tun-huang false attributions to Amoghavajra, dating perhaps to the early tenth century: see Tanaka Ryōshō, *Tonkō Zenshū bunken no kenkyū*, Tokyo, 1983, 644–48. But how late might such attributions occur? Orbach's article (note 46 above) strongly contests the idea that interest in Amoghavajra waned after the T'ang; even such standard works as Kamio Katsuharu, *Kittan bunkashi kō*, Dairen, 1937, 102–106, attest that an interest in Tantric Buddhism was still live and well under the Liao dynasty in the eleventh century. Again, if this and other doubtful works attributed to Amoghavajra were from the start (perhaps even from their genuine composition by Amoghavajra) only transmitted secretly, this would explain their late appearance. By the same token, however, works transmitted because they were in constant use for ritual purposes would have been more susceptible to interpolation designed to update the religious practices involved to accord with shifts in the surrounding religious environment than works enshrined in the imperially-sponsored canon, which was in theory tamper-proof. By far the best discussion of the problem of authenticating late Tantric works is in Osabe, *Tō-Sō Mikkyō*, 150–181 (note especially his conclusions concerning Amoghavajra, pages 177–8), but even this is only a beginning.

[51] Johnson, "The City-god cults of T'ang and Sung China", 446.

[52] The author of the collection, Wang Ku, was an examination graduate (*chin-shih*) of 898, according to the *T'ang ts'ai-tzu chuan*, as quoted in Hsü Sung, *Teng-k'o chi k'ao* 24.20b, Taipei, 1972 reprint; other sources agree in putting his career at this time.

[53] *Sung Kao-seng chuan* 11, 771c–772a in T. 50: the tale is dated *circa* 920.

[54] *Ch'ih-sheng-kuang tao-ch'ang nien-sung*, page 980b, in T. 46.

[55] Kamata Shigeo, *Chūgoku no Bukkyō girei*, Tokyo, 1986, 700.

with this 1067 rebuilding.[56] Kanai Noriyuki has noted in an early-fourteenth-century gazetteer a reference to a monk actually organizing the construction of a *ch'eng-huang* temple in the early twelfth century.[57] Though I have not searched systematically in Sung sources, I have not so far found like examples of Taoist support.

Nor, looking back, is it possible to see in any of the early references I have found any of the sense of innovation detectable in the *Chin-so liu-chu yin*. That such a phase never existed for Buddhism may in one sense be an *argumentum ex silentio*, given the historiographical thinness of my evidence. But there is material to support the claim that the absence of a Buddhist source similar to the *Chin-so liu-chu yin* is no accident. For a reading of the Buddhist canon, as translated for Indian sources, reveals that the cult of the *ch'eng-huang* gods can only be termed a Buddhist cult from the start—not, it should be stressed again, a Buddhist cult in origin, but a Chinese cult for which there was a ready-made place in Chinese Buddhism—because Indians, too, worshipped city gods. Look into any type of Buddhist source and you will find them: vinaya,[58] Mahayana *sūtra*,[59] Tantric text,[60] biography of the Buddha.[61]

Mostly they are just faces in a crowd of lesser gods, in the same sort of minor league as the dryads and hamadryads of our Classical World, but in the last-named type of materials, the biographies, they are sometimes assigned brief speaking parts. Typical is a story later included in the T'ang Buddhist encyclopaedia *Fa-yüan chu-lin*, in which the Buddha-to-be, having decided to forsake his father's palace for a religious career by leaving the city at the dead of night, is accosted by the god of the city wall (in another version of this incident, the god of the gate in the wall),[62] and is assured by him that over this thirteen *kalpa* career as a *ch'eng-shen* he has seen all the past Buddhas behave in just the same way—and here is a present from one of them.[63]

In the massive, and yet in China highly popular *Hua-yen ching* (that is, the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra*), the role of the city-god, as Teng Ssu-yü noticed (up to a

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[56] See n. 7, above.

[57] Kanai Noriyuki, on page 402 of his "Sōdai no gōsha to tochishin", *Nakajima Satoshi sensei koki kinen ronshū*, vol. 1, Hamamatsu-shi, 1980, 385–407.

[58] *Ssu-fen lü* 46, 911a, in T. 22: this vinaya became standard in China.

[59] *Lo-mo-ch'ieh ching* 3, 871c in T. 10: this is actually an early translation of part of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, dealt with below.

[60] *P'u-ti-ch'ang so-shuo i-tzu ting lun-wang ching*, 193c, in T.19 (translated by Amoghavajra); in the same volume, 225a, is the same passage as translated by Bodhiruci.

[61] *Ta chuang-yen lun ching* 15, 344c in T. 4.

[62] *Hsiu-hsing pen-chi ching* 2, 468a in T. 3; *cf.* also *Te-kuang t'ai-tzu ching*, 417c–418a, in the same volume.

[63] *Fa-yüan chu-lin* 35, 562 in T. 53.

point),[64] is unusually prominent. Here the Buddha himself declares that in the distant beginnings of his spiritual career in earlier incarnations, he too had spent some time as a *ch'eng-shen*.[65] Under the distinctive name *chu-ch'eng-shen*, gods in charge of cities, this type of divinity is mentioned in many other places in the text, and in the section known as the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, usually dubbed a Buddhist equivalent to Pilgrim's Progress, a specific *chu-ch'eng-shen* named Ratnanetra delivers a brief homily to the young seeker Sudhana on guarding the city walls of one's mind,[66] a passage which in due course attracted a considerable amount of Chinese commentary. The existence of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* in Sanskrit even enables us to establish the original terminology upon which the Chinese translations are based: 'city of the mind' is revealed (not very surprisingly) as *cittanagara*;[67] 'gods in charge of cities' renders *nagaradevatā*.[68]

Yet not all these are *ch'eng-huang* gods: throughout such translated Buddhist sources the native term is either studiously avoided, or was perhaps simply unknown. The closest one gets is in a text translated *circa* 400 A.D., which speaks of *ch'eng-ch'ih shen*, gods of city wall and pond (meaning moat?).[69] But the existence of these miscellaneous Indian deities, even if functionally different from *ch'eng-huang* gods (they do not in India seem to connect with the world of the dead, for example) must nonetheless have made it easier for Buddhists in China to accept the new cults as compatible with their own religion. Or is this the right way to look at it?

If we review the admittedly somewhat slender evidence discussed so far once more from our initial standpoint of reactions to the *ch'eng-huang* gods, we may now be able to make one or two provisional and not particularly exciting generalizations. In Buddhism, for example, the new gods take their place in the organization of the afterlife, in line with Buddhism's primary religious concern

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[64] Teng, "Ch'eng-huang k'ao", 269–70: he seems to have been aware of some Hua-yen materials, but does not systematically exploit the resources contained in the Buddhist canon.

[65] *Ta-fang-kuang Hua-yen ching* (T'ang version) 73, 400b in T. 10; *cf.* also the same text, 1, 2c; 4, 19b; 61, 330c; 75, 408b. For the popularity of this scripture, see Kamata Shigeo, *Chūgoku Kegon shisōshi no kenkyū*, Tokyo, 1965, 17–50.

[66] *Hua-yen ching* 76, 413c–414a. *Cf.* the English translation by Thomas Cleary, *Entry into the Realm of Reality: the Text*, Boston and Shaftesbury, 1987, 306–7. The name of the goddess is found in P.L. Vaidya, ed., *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra*, Darbhanga, 1960, 339, 1.14. Here and below I am indebted to Dr. T. Skorupski for checking the Sanskrit reference on my behalf.

[67] Vaidya, *op. cit.*., 36, 1.12; 239, 1.20; 339, 1.16; etc. Passages such as these, too, excited considerable comment within the Chinese Hua-yen school and among Japanese commentators also.

[68] Vaidya, *op. cit.*., 36, 1.13; 278, 1.26; 339, 1.14: *cf.* Cleary, Entry into the Realm of Reality, 45-6; 254; 306, respectively, for a sample of such passages.

[69] *Mi-lo ta ch'eng-fo ching*, 431c, in T. 14.

with the fate of the individual (or non-individual); Taoist reactions encompass a somewhat broader spread of roles, including rain-maker, in line with Taoism's more general aim of providing expertise on the occult. But is there, after all, still something we can say about influence on the cults, at any rate in the case of Buddhism?

I would like to conclude by raising the possibility that Buddhism may have played a part in promoting a sense of unity between diverse phenomena. I am aware that I touch here upon one of the most sensitive topics in the study of Chinese religion.[70] I am also consciously recycling here an argument of Japanese origin, which I accept, concerning the importance of Buddhism in providing a model of unity for Taoism, an argument that not everyone would accept.[71] But the notion that listings in well-known Buddhist texts of a class of city gods, which (in the *Hua-yen ching*, at least) are given individual names and (minimally) personalities but are usually subsumed into one lump, might have provided the means whereby a diversity of local cults concerned with the protection of walled communities came to be treated as expressions of a single idea—that does have its appeal.[72] Such classifications of gods are not unknown in earlier Chinese history: perhaps 'mountain gods' and 'river gods' were dealt with both as individual cults and also as a group even before the arrival of Buddhism; the rise of the *ch'eng-huang* cults as a group would, I think, be quite conceivable without Buddhism.[73]

[70] The problem is confronted e.g. by Robert Weller, *Unities and Diversities in Chinese Religion*, Seattle, 1987, one of a number of recent studies reviewed by Catherine Bell, "Religion and Chinese Culture: Toward an Assessment of 'Popular Religion'", *HR*, 29.1, Aug. 1989, 35–57. From the historian's standpoint, I would suggest that what has been missing from discussion so far is an awareness that as Chinese religion grew in complexity, it presented conceptual problems for the Chinese themselves, and that a study of these historical attempts to cope with unity and diversity can yield important clues to guide our own contemporary analytical efforts.

[71] My argument is presented (in severely compressed form) in an essay, "Religious Traditions in Chinese Civilization: Buddhism and Taoism", in Paul S. Ropp, ed., *The Heritage of China: Essays on Chinese Civilization in Comparative Perspective*, Berkeley, 1990.

[72] There are certain hints that the *ch'eng-huang* cults became over time far more standardized than they were at the start. Thus one late Ming author, commenting on inscription no. 1 on Johnson's list (see n. 11 above), notes that it implies a temple outside the city walls, which was only a highly localized phenomenon in some large villages to the west of Sian in his day: see Chao Han, *Shih-mo chien-hua* (*Chih-pu-tsu-chai ts'ung-shu* ed.) 4.8a. Wen-ying's temple (see n. 7 above) also appears to have been some way from the community it protected.

[73] In favour of this supposition, it must be pointed out that in the earliest texts used above, Buddhist and Taoist, *ch'eng-huang* appear primarily in long lists of such 'class' divinities. But (to put the problem one stage further back) long lists of 'class' divinities may themselves be an innovation brought in by Buddhist translations—they are not conspicuously present in early Chinese literature, though perhaps examples could be found.

But cults associated with mountains and rivers go back to the dawn of time in China; as far as we are aware on current evidence cults centred on cities as such do not.[74] I still believe that the *ch'eng-huang* gods were an East Asian development, and one probably intimately linked to the tensions between an expanding China and the non-Chinese south. In coming to terms with this novelty, however, the Chinese would have found in the Indian experience a ready, if imprecise analogy for what was before them.

For, after all, Buddhism had once been in India a 'new religion' itself, a religion 'in opposition' to existing beliefs. In cutting down to size its opponents and assigning them to the 'other ranks' of figures worshipped it had evolved a technique which was suitable in theory to any time and any place. True, observers of the *ch'eng-huang* cults in China such as those cited at the start of this study suggest that the city gods obstinately refused to play the extremely minor role assigned to them by Buddhist texts—Taoism seems to have been prepared to be more realistic in that respect—but as a normative statement of religious priorities the Buddhist writings we have examined cannot be faulted. Some further cross-cultural comparisons of Buddhism's relations with other religions might, however, prove illuminating; one suspects, for example, that Buddhism and Shintō in Japan interrelated in a somewhat different fashion. And on this point the forthcoming 1990 Jordan lectures will doubtless provide much food for thought.

[74] Art-historical evidence has not been used in this essay: as noted above (n. 50) it remains our best hope of locating problematic textual materials in their correct context, but the constant advance of Chinese archaeology may yet clarify many more aspects of the appearance of the *ch'eng-huang* cults—perhaps, indeed, it has already done so. Any reconsideration of the problem will, however, surely have to take into account the materials presented here. They, for their part, have largely been located by means of the existing indexes and concordances to texts of the period covered, rather than a comprehensive search of all conceivable sources: doubtless a number of passages of potential value have been missed.