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Local Religion in North China in the Twentieth Century

*The Structure and Organization of
Community Rituals and Beliefs*



by

Daniel L. Overmyer

BRILL

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Twentieth Century

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With gratitude to Wang Ch'iu-kuei

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FOREWORD

This book, which marks another major milestone in Daniel L. Overmyer's distinguished career, provides a detailed, colorful and, at times, even moving description of Chinese religious life. One of the most important realms of public activity in late imperial and modern China prior to 1949, not to mention Chinese communities in Taiwan, Hong Kong and overseas today, has centered on local cults and festivals. In recent years, an ever-increasing number of scholars have explored the ways in which religious beliefs, rituals, and dramatic performances both reflect yet also shape the development of communal society. Their research has shifted from top-down analyses of the state's impact on local communities, to the study of the interaction between so-called 'elite culture' and 'popular culture,' to detailed ethnographic or micro-historical case studies of the workings of local society, the roles of local elites, and the complex reverberation of power between state and society.¹

The study of Chinese religions at the communal level has been transformed as well, with scholars using interdisciplinary methodologies to conduct in-depth investigations. The past two decades have witnessed a dramatic increase in such research, led by scholars such as Adam Chau, Kenneth Dean, Prasenjit Duara, David Faure, Vincent Goossaert, Hamashima Atsutoshi 濱島敦俊, Robert Hymes, David Johnson, John Lagerwey, Susan Naquin, Kristofer Schipper, Michael Szonyi, Barend ter Haar, James Watson, Robert Weller, Yang Yanjie 楊彥杰, Yü Chün-fang 于君方, Zheng Zhenman 鄭振滿, etc. Two long-term collaborative research projects in particular have marked the progress being made in our understanding of Chinese communal religious traditions. The first is the *Minsu quyì congshu* 民俗曲藝叢書 (85 volumes, edited by Wang Ch'iu-kuei 王秋桂; the second is the *Kejia chuantong shehui congshu* 客家傳統社會叢書 (30 volumes, edited by John Lagerwey and his colleagues in China).²

¹ For an overview of these issues, see Catherine Bell (1989), "Religion and Chinese Culture: Toward an Assessment of 'Popular Religion'". *History of Religions* 29(1): 35-57.

² The importance of these projects is clearly attested to by the publication of *Ethnography in China Today: A Critical Assessment of Methods and Results*, edited by Daniel L. Overmyer with the assistance of Chao Shin-yi 趙昕毅. Taipei: Yuanliu

Overmyer has been a pioneer in this field, and one of its leaders as well. While scholars had long been interested in the doctrinal aspects of Buddhism and Daoism, the study of communal religious traditions *per se* began to take shape during the 1960s and 1970s. One of the first breakthroughs began with Overmyer's work on sectarian religious traditions like the so-called White Lotus Teachings (Bailian jiao 白蓮教), which marked a paradigm shift from the realm of political history to that of social history.³ By the 1980s, Overmyer was devoting his efforts to collecting and studying the texts that such groups had produced, particularly so-called 'precious volumes' (*baojuan* 寶卷).⁴ Another important accomplishment is the book entitled *The Flying Phoenix*, published as the result of a cooperative research project involving Overmyer and David K. Jordan.⁵ These two scholars used an interdisciplinary approach to study Taiwanese sectarian groups that practice spirit-writing, not only providing a detailed history of their development and introducing important morality books (*shanshu* 善書), but also breaking new ground by delineating the internal dynamics of such groups, especially conflicts and schisms, and shifting the emphasis from leaders to average worshippers.

Through the years, Overmyer has never lost sight of the need to undertake thorough investigations of the religious traditions of the Chinese people in both the past and the present day. For example, in the Introduction to a special issue of *The China Quarterly* entitled "Religion in China Today" (Volume 174, June 2003), and which was also published in book form, he pointed out that, "Religious beliefs and rituals are an important and growing reality in modern Chinese society,

Publishing Company, 2002. A newer series has resulted from my participation in a three-year research project organized by John Lagerwey; see the *Zhejiang chuantong shehui congshu* 浙江傳統社會叢書.

³ Daniel L. Overmyer (1976) *Folk Buddhist Religion: Dissenting Sects in Late Traditional China*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. See also Susan Naquin (1976) *Millenarian Uprising in China: The Eight Trigrams Uprising of 1813*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

⁴ Daniel L. Overmyer (1999) *Precious Volumes: An Introduction to Chinese Sectarian Scriptures from the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

⁵ David K. Jordan and Daniel L. Overmyer (1986) *The Flying Phoenix. Aspects of Chinese Sectarianism in Taiwan*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

which cannot be fully understood without taking them into account”.⁶ Most recently, he has worked with colleagues in north China to edit a new series, the four-volume *Huabei nongcun minjian wenhua yanjiu congshu* 華北農村民間文化研究叢書, some data from which is also contained in the present volume.

The present book focuses on Chinese communal religious traditions in the northern provinces of Hebei, Henan, Shaanxi, Shandong, and Shanxi, particularly as they are documented for the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This contrasts markedly with previous studies of religion and local society, which have treated China’s southern and southeastern regions. The book’s most noteworthy features include lengthy annotated translations of primary sources, new data revealing the importance of religious specialists in communal life, and accounts demonstrating the key roles played by women, both as practitioners (worshippers and pilgrims, especially for deities and rituals associated with fertility) and leaders (association heads for various Mother cults). Another striking discovery concerns the transformation of sectarian groups into community-based traditions and deified sect founders into popular gods, which shows how Overmyer’s research has come full circle since its commencement over three decades ago.⁷

Most importantly, this book challenges conventional wisdom about Chinese religions, especially C. K. Yang’s dichotomy between ‘institutional’ and ‘diffused’ religious traditions, which Overmyer correctly observes is based on Western sectarian conceptualizations that prove of little relevance for understanding Chinese society. Not only are Chinese communal religious traditions institutionalized spatially in the altars, shrines, and temples maintained by communal donations, they are also institutionalized temporally in the form of beliefs and liturgical traditions passed down through the generations. Accordingly, religion lies at the heart of communal life, yet represents the heart in terms of pumping vitality into numerous aspects of Chinese culture. Thus, it may be time for those of us who engage in the study of Chinese society to reconceptualize the object of our research by using a definition that

⁶ Daniel L. Overmyer (ed.) (2003) *Religion in China Today*, The China Quarterly Special Issues, New Series, No. 3. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁷ For more on this phenomenon, see Thomas David Dubois (2005) *The Sacred Village: Social Change and Religious Life in Rural North China*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

is grounded not on the modern Chinese term *shehui* 社會, translated from Meiji-era Japanese *shakai*, but instead the more traditional *shehui* or ‘association of the *she* 社 altar’, socio-religious groups dedicated to local deities whose activities served as a vital force undergirding a diverse range of activities.

Paul R. Katz
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Nankang, Taiwan
April 2009

PREFACE

The idea of gathering materials for this book came to me after I met and talked with John Lagerwey in Hong Kong in 1996 and began to read in some of the early volumes of his magnificent series, *Traditional Hakka Society*, which first appeared that same year and now includes over thirty volumes, all based on reports by local Chinese local scholars recruited by Lagerwey. I had just completed my research on the scriptures of Chinese popular religious sects so the rich detail of the studies by Lagerwey and his Chinese colleagues on local community religion offered the possibility of a change of focus for my own work. The work on this topic that I knew of was mostly on communities in south and east China, as is the Lagerwey series, so it occurred to me that perhaps I could try to emulate this series in a small way by cooperative work with Chinese scholars in north China. Fortunately, one of my students at the Chinese University of Hong Kong at that time was Fan Lizhu, from Tianjin, whose husband, Hou Jie, was a professor of Chinese history at Nankai University in that same city. The three of us decided to try to recruit local scholars in Hebei, their home province, a project that after several years led to our four volume series, *Studies of the Popular Culture of North China Villages*. Work and field observations involved with producing this series, along with the published work of many other scholars, led to the idea of attempting the present book.

In addition to the *Hakka Society* series, much excellent work has been done by Chinese, Japanese and Western scholars on Chinese local religion in the south, southeast and other areas of China, but not so much on the north, so this book is an attempt to survey some of what is known about that area, to encourage further work and broaden our understanding of the local foundations of Chinese culture. This is no more than a preliminary study of an extremely complex topic with a long history and much variation, but I still think it is worth trying to do. Drafts of the Introduction and Chapters One through Six have been read and commented on by Professors Wang Ch'iu-kuei and Paul Katz of Taiwan but, of course, the remaining mistakes and omissions are entirely my own responsibility. I am very grateful for their corrections and comments. I am also grateful to the many other colleagues and

friends who have over the years shared their reactions and comments on chapters of this manuscript.

I am also grateful for the help of my former and present graduate students at UBC, Tuen Wai Mary Yeung, Rosanna Tak-pui Sze and Mary May Ying Ngai, for the excellent work of my long-time word processor, Neil Parker, and for the vital computer help of Jack Yuet Chow of UBC IT Services, Mary Ngai's husband. My good friend Roberto K. Ong (Ph.D. McGill) has answered questions about translations and written an appendix on local operas for Chapter Six. Patricia Radder and Bryan Hugill at Brill in Leiden have also been helpful, together with the editor of the series of which this book is a part, Stephen Teiser of Princeton University. Of course, without the support of my dear wife Estella (néé Velazquez) I would not have survived to write this book to begin with!

This book is dedicated to Professor Wang Ch'iu-kuei, the Joseph K. Twanmoh Chair Professor of Soochow University, Taipei, not only because of the advice and guidance he has given me over the years, but also for the eighty volumes of the Monograph Series of Studies in Chinese Ritual, Theatre and Folklore he edited and published between 1993 and 2000, and for his editing over many years of the excellent journal, *Min-su ch'ü-i* (Journal of Chinese Ritual, Theatre and Folklore), often referred to in this book. Professor Wang knows more about Chinese local culture than anyone else in the world.

Dan Overmyer, May 2009

INTRODUCTION

THEMES AND CONTEXTS

For these three to five days, Dayidian is a joyful place for all, men, women, old and young... Humans and gods share their joy.¹

For many hundreds of years, community festivals for the gods in rural north China have had their own forms of leaders, deities and beliefs. Despite much local variation one everywhere finds similar temples, images, offerings and temple festivals, all supported by practical concerns for divine aid to deal with the problems of everyday life. These local traditions are a structure in the history of Chinese religions; they have a clear sense of their own integrity and rules, handed down by their ancestors. There are Daoist, Buddhist and government influences on these traditions, but they must be adapted to the needs of local communities. It is the villagers who build temples and organize festivals; Daoists, Buddhists and other specialists may be invited to participate if they are available, but only to provide what the people need and want. In the past, and even now in many places, all members of the community have been expected to participate and contribute regardless of their class or economic status; local leaders and merchants have a special obligation to do so, to support the honor of the community and its gods.

Preparations for a community ritual in Shanxi Province introduce us to the organization required:

Several months before the *sai* festival proper begins the Chief Community Head (*sheshou*) invites all the other Community Heads and the accountants (*zhangfangren*) to gather at the temple where, after a meal, they begin to decide on assigning tasks for preparations so [that] the *sai* activities are set. Next, the Community Heads cooperate with the Chief in beginning to raise funds, purchase or make [what is needed], write and deliver invitations, and arrange everything, because everything must

¹ Zhao Fuxing (2006) "Dayidian bingbao hui" (The Hail Festival of Dayidain [village]), in Zhao Fuxing (ed.) *Gu'an diqu minsu jilu* (The Temples, Rituals and Local Culture of Gu'an County, Hebei Province). Tianjin: Tianjin guji chubanshe, p. 68. In the series *Huabei nongcun minjian wenhua yanjiu* (Studies of the Popular Culture of North China Villages), edited by Ou Dalian (Daniel L. Overmyer) and Fan Lizhu.

be prepared and ready before the festival begins. Many assistants are involved in these activities. About ten days before the ritual begins, with the temple all properly arranged, increasing numbers of workers arrive. When all is as it should be, then all the Community Heads and Incense Elders go to the temple to burn incense for the chief deity and report to him, asking his permission for the villagers to conduct a three-day *sai* to congratulate him on his birthday and offer thanks for his kindness. They also ask the god to forgive them for any sins or mistakes they might commit during the festival. With this the *sai* rituals begin.²

In addition to this kind of organization, the local religion on which such community rituals are based shares a common set of theoretical assumptions, its own 'theology', which is based on the belief that the living and the dead, gods, humans and ghosts are all connected by bonds of mutual influence and response. These bonds of mutual obligation are based on a moral universe in which righteousness, respect and destructive behavior eventually bring their own rewards. Promise, efficacious response and gratitude, disrespect, cheating and punishment; all of these are manifested in specific material ways and provide the basic assumptions underlying ritual. The human counterpart and stimulus for the efficacious response of the gods is sincerity (*qiancheng*) in prayers and offerings; sincerity based in faith that the gods really exist and can indeed respond. All of this is reinforced by the beliefs that the gods were once humans, that humans can still become gods, that deities and the dead can appear in dreams and can speak or write through spirit-mediums, and that the dead live in an underworld from which they can be called up or to which their living relatives can go in séances to see how they are. Through *fengshui* and intercession with the gods, the natural world is also part of this system of influence and response. The siting of graves and buildings that recognizes and respects the flow of power in the landscape brings blessings; proper worship of the gods can bring rain or stop floods. It is this network of relationships that provides the underlying logic and coherence of local cults.

Local gods manifest flows of power that are believed to be beyond those of ordinary humans; they are present in their images, tablets or paintings, but are not fully encompassed by them, because at festivals they are invited to attend, and are ritually sent off at the end. They are invited to descend and sent back up, so they seem to have an undefined

² Qiao Jian, Liu Guanwen and Li Tiansheng (2001) *Yuehu tianye diaocha yu lishi zhuiyong* (Yuehu [ritual musicians]: fieldwork and historical investigation). Taipei: Tangshang Publishing Co., pp. 204–205.

realm in the sky, beyond their earthly incarnations. They must also be ritually implanted in new images, which are powerless before their 'eyes are opened' (*kaiguang*). They need respectful offerings of incense and food to elicit a positive response; the absence of such attention can lead to divine resentment and punishment. Some gods begin as the spirits of powerful, miracle-working persons, others are homeless ghosts desperate to be given a title and place of their own, to be located in the divine-human system. The coherence of this system resonates with patterns of relationships in local society, which are also based on reciprocal responsibility. Here society and religion are transformations of each other.

Chinese local religion is based on family worship of deities and ancestors on home altars but, as is indicated in the above quote, it also involves large-scale rituals participated in by members of the whole village or township community on the occasion of what are believed to be the birthdays of the gods or to seek protection from droughts, epidemics and other disasters. In all cases these festivals invoke the power of the gods for practical goals, namely to 'summon blessings and drive away harm'. These three-to-five day celebrations involve weeks or months of preparation, careful organization, the mobilization of large numbers of people, hiring outside specialists (such as priests, spirit-mediums, various types of musicians and dramatic performers), coordinating activities with surrounding villages, and erecting temporary sheds for images of gods brought from elsewhere, as well as sheds for operas and food. The major ritual activity is processions carrying images of the gods through the villages involved; the components and routes of these processions need to be arranged in advance. In addition, merchants come from the whole area to display their wares on mats and tables beside the roads and in the temple area. The whole affair can involve tens of thousands of worshipers and onlookers, sometimes crowded so tightly together that one can scarcely move, as I can personally attest from observations in Hebei.

The focus of this book is on these community festivals in all their dimensions—ritual, social and economic—emphasizing their organization and structure and the beliefs and values expressed by them. Since most studies of such festivals have been based on evidence from south China and Taiwan this book is on local traditions in the north, one of the founding areas of Chinese civilization. This is an important distinction, because there are significant differences between aspects of local religion in the south and north, one of which is the gods who are worshiped. In her (1990) *Changing Gods in Medieval China, 1127–1276*,

Valerie Hansen's discussions of local ritual traditions in the Southern Song period include lists of deities venerated, noting differences among southern local and regional gods and those related to Buddhism and Daoism. This last category includes Guanyin, Zhenwu, Lu Dongbin, and the God of Mount Tai; these deities, along with City Gods, Dragon Kings and Tudi Locality Gods are all found in the north as well. However, except for Tianhou, the goddess of sailors and fishermen, none of the local and regional gods Hansen names are found in the north, including the most widespread southern regional gods, Zitong, (called Wenchang in the north), King Zhang and Wuxian, the 'Five Manifestations'. In a list of ninety-two gods worshiped in Huzhou (Zhejiang), pp. 183–195, none of the local figures are noted in northern sources; not even Guan Gong is mentioned, by any of his titles! Western studies of Song society and culture tend understandably to emphasize the south, because that is where most of our sources are from, but evidence such as this reminds us that for a balanced understanding attention must be given to the north as well.

Until recently Chinese local religion has been ignored or disparaged by both Chinese and Western scholars as a confused congeries of diffuse superstitions, a residual category without any integrity of its own, discussed only in relation to the better-known traditions of Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism. A related problem is the distinction between 'institutionalized' and 'diffused' types of Chinese religions made by C. K. Yang in his 1961 *Religion in Chinese Society*, where he wrote that, "...institutional religion in the theistic sense is considered as a system of religious life having (1) an independent theology or cosmic interpretation of the universe and human events, (2) an independent form of worship consisting of symbols (gods, spirits and their images) and rituals, and (3) an independent organization of personnel... With separate concepts, ritual and structure, a religion assumes the nature of a separate social institution, and hence its designation as an institutional religion. On the other hand, diffused religion is conceived of as a religion having its theology, cultus, and personnel so intimately diffused into one or more secular social institutions that they become a part of the concept, rituals and structure of the latter, thus having no significant independent existence."³

³ C. K. Yang (1961) *Religion in Chinese Society: A Study of Contemporary Social Functions of Religion and Some of Their Historical Factors*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, pp. 294–295.

C. K. Yang's otherwise excellent study has defined its field for the last fifty years, and I owe much to it, myself, but this distinction simply applies to China a sectarian definition of religion derived from Christianity that is not relevant to the mainstream of Chinese religion which has always been community-based, inclusive and non-sectarian. In fact, this community religion is institutionalized spatially in household altars, ancestral and locality god shrines and community temples and their opera stages. It is institutionalized temporally in traditions of deities, rituals and festivals handed down by the ancestors. C. K. Yang, of course, knew this but his term 'diffused' can give a misleading impression because of its meaning, 'widespread or scattered'. Fortunately, in the last twenty years some scholars have come to understand local religion in a more integral way with many excellent and detailed studies based on the south. The present study is an attempt to extend and further clarify this understanding with evidence from the north, to demonstrate that local traditions of ritual and belief are important both in their own right and as a foundation of traditional Chinese ideas, values and social relationships. These traditions are persistent and deeply institutionalized in their own ways, and do not deserve misleading comparisons based on the experience of other cultures.

In the north, most festivals had a three-part structure based on inviting, welcoming and seeing off the gods (*qingshen*, *yingshen*, *songshen*) with local variations. For the first step a list of the names of the gods being invited might be read in the *shenpeng*, the 'god shed', set up in the host temple courtyard and with altars arranged. Next, a procession was formed of music and martial arts groups, portable tableaux with opera players or children portraying scenes from dramas, bearers of ritual banners and umbrellas, and sedan chairs carried by four or more men, all accompanied by firecrackers, front and rear. This procession first visited every temple in the village, perhaps beginning with that for the Locality God, Tudi, to invite the gods to descend from their seats and enter a sedan chair, to be taken to the host temple to enjoy the offerings and opera performances. (The images involved were smaller 'traveling images', *xingshen*, for use in processions.) Along the way villagers would set up small offering tables with fruit and incense to welcome the gods and benefit from their presence. If other villages were involved, as they often were, the procession would visit their temples as well, and then return to the god shed in the host temple courtyard, where the images would be reverently transferred to the altars, accompanied by incense and offerings from bowing worshipers. In these opening stages of the

rituals such as worshipers were usually the festival organizers and family heads from the host village.

For the second stage, welcoming the gods, the traveling image of the chief deity of the host temple would be brought out to the god shed to welcome its divine guests, again accompanied by incense, offerings, music, firecrackers, and the recitation of the names of the gods. The ritual proper, *zhengsai*, would then begin, with offerings, music, and the performance of operas for the enjoyment of both gods and people. At the end, the traveling images of the gods would be escorted back to their home temples in another procession. At this point the Community Heads might meet to choose the leader of the festival in the following year, usually by throwing divining blocks to see who received the most positive responses. So the relations between local gods and their devotees were strengthened and the life force (*shengqi*) of the community renewed.

All this is discussed in more detail in the chapters on Leadership and Organization and Temple Festivals.

Here are two of the more detailed examples of such festivals that I have learned of. The first is a rain-seeking ritual performed in 1941 in Licheng County, Shandong, summarized by Anning Jing from a Japanese report. For this Introduction, I shall omit the romanizations of Chinese terms in Jing's account:

In 1941 it rained only twice before June. In early June the village leaders and elders had a meeting and decided to hold a rainmaking ceremony in mid-June. The dates, the responsibilities of the organizers and the financial contributions from the households were discussed. Three days before the ceremony the villagers adopted a vegetarian diet, and during this time brought their monetary contributions to the Temple to the Jade Emperor [sic] in the village, where the ceremony was to be held. Ritual objects to be used in the ceremony, such as a sedan chair, banners and drums, were prepared, and the names and duties of the main players were written on a poster pasted on a temple wall. The tasks and chores assigned to them were: (1) financial management; (2) composition of the petition; (3) invitation to the god; (4) preparation of the god's sedan chair; (5) use of firecrackers; (6) serving boiled water (to people in ritual procession); (7) fetching water (and fish from the White Spring to the temple) in a bottle; (8) burning paper money (in front of the sedan chair); (9) burning paper money and kneeling by the altar (for three days and nights); (10) upholding the umbrella (over the god in the sedan chair); (11) kneeling by the altar; (12) following the god's procession and kneeling (on the way and at the White Spring); (13) handling the accoutrements (such as pairs of dragon-head standards, tiger emblems, crescent axes, long knives,

swords, clubs in the procession); (14) god's inspection tour after the rain; (15) ritual master's participation in the procession; (16) handling the instruments (such as drums); (17) handling the banners and streamers; (18) collecting monetary contributions; and (19) temporary chores.

The most important task before the ceremony was the composition of the petition to the god for rain. This was assigned to five people known to be good writers, including the village school principal. After purifying themselves and changing into formal dresses [sic], they went down on their knees while accomplishing their task. In the petition they informed the god of the suffering the villagers were enduring during the drought, pleaded for rain, and promised to thank the god with richer offerings if rain fell.⁴

The largest and most complex north China community ritual I have learned of so far is the 'Fan Drum Roster of the Gods' ceremony performed in Quwo district, Shanxi, described by Huang Zhusan and Wang Fucui in Chinese and expertly summarized by David Johnson.⁵ This ritual is described in detail in the chapter of the present book on the leadership and organization of such ceremonies. During the first decades of the twentieth century it involved scores of performers over a period of three days, following a locally produced written text that provides both ritual instructions and the names of over 500 gods to be invoked, an elaborate arrangement of eight altars made of tables stacked on top of each other, and dances and processions led by hereditary ritualists representing twelve *shenjia*, translated by Johnson as 'godly families', but perhaps better understood as 'specialists [in rituals] for the gods'. The description of this ceremony is sixty-nine pages long! This ritual complex began on lunar 1/15 (the fifteenth day of the first lunar month), but preparations for it began on 12/8 with a planning

⁴ Anning Jing (2002) *The Water God's Temple of the Guangsheng Monastery: Cosmic Function of Art, Ritual and Theatre*. Leiden, Boston and Koln: Brill, pp. 194–195, citing Uchida Tomoo (1970) *Chûgoku nôson no kazoku to shinkô*. Tokyo: Kobundo, pp. 207–210. In this context *sai* means a ritual celebration to thank the local protective deity, a more general name for which is *miaohui* ('temple assembly'). These ceremonies are usually held on what is believed to be the god's birthday.

⁵ Huang Zhusan and Wang Fucui (1994) *Shanxi sheng Quwo xian Renzhuang cun Shangu shenpu diaocha baogao* (A report on the "Fan Drum Roster of the Gods" ritual of Renzhuang Village, Quwo County, Shanxi). Studies in Chinese Ritual, Theatre and Folklore Series, No. 14. Taipei: Shih Ho-cheng Folk Culture Foundation, p. 25, and David Johnson (2002) "A Lantern Festival Ritual in Southwest Shanxi", in Daniel L. Overmyer (ed.) (with the assistance of Shinyi Chao) *Ethnography in China Today: A Critical Assessment of Methods and Results*. Taipei: Yuan-Liou Publishing Co., pp. 287–295.

meeting of lineage and community heads and *shentou*, 'heads of the gods', the leaders of the '*shenjia*'. Of this whole process we are told, "In the preceding year you must assign responsibilities and arrange and inspect the ritual implements and offerings for the altars. No mistakes are allowed." These sentences remind us again of the discipline and planning needed for such large-scale activities.

David Johnson has written eloquently about Shanxi *sai* festivals he has investigated:

In addition to being old, the *sai* were also extremely large. The sponsoring community... was completely mobilized, since the tasks were many and the costs high. In addition to the rituals... theatricals and food offerings... there was also a huge procession, and often several smaller processions, which could wind for miles through the countryside. Thousands of spectators came from nearby villages and towns...⁶

In another article Johnson adds:

... the religious life of the Chang-tzu (Zhangzi) region is extremely rich and complex, even in the 1930s after generations of economic and social decline...

The *sai*... were religious ceremonies in which the villagers asked their gods for blessings and protection. They were the product of centuries-long local development that had brought them to an extremely high degree of complexity and elaboration... For Chang-tzu County alone I have the names of twenty-six *sai*, which probably involved over 100 villages... This means that on average, there was a *sai* somewhere in [this county] about once every two weeks... This density of ritual life is remarkable... one begins to see that the whole countryside... was saturated with public ceremonial... Because both ritual and opera were involved, and because the *sai* were so ancient and presented on such a grand scale, they must have been overwhelmingly the most important influence shaping the symbolic universe of the common people. It is quite impossible to understand what the Chang-tzu villagers and (presumably) their counterparts elsewhere in north China, thought and felt about the world of politics, about Chinese history and traditions, about the world of gods and demons, or about any of the grand matters of life and death, without a close familiarity with the *sai* and their analogues...⁷

⁶ David Johnson (1997) "'Confucian' Elements in the Great Temple Festivals of Southeastern Shanxi in Late Imperial Times". *T'oung Pao* 83: 131.

⁷ David Johnson (1994) "Temple Festivals in Southeastern Shanxi: The *Sai* of Nanshe Village and Big West Gate". *Min-su ch'ü-i* 92: 647-649.

Given its assumptions and beliefs, the whole of Chinese local religion had its own forms of organization, structure and inner logic, forms that are particularly apparent in village temple festivals.

This book is based on studies and reports concerning Han traditions of villages and townships in the northern provinces of Hebei, Shanxi, Shandong and Henan, the main sources of evidence at this point, though some studies of local temples and rituals in Shaanxi and other areas in the north will be referred to. In this area there are also some people of Manchu and Mongolian origin, as well as communities of Muslims and Roman Catholic Christians, but they will not be discussed here except for some evidence of possible Manchu influence on Han spirit-medium practices. The time period covered here is also due in part to the availability of the evidence, from the late nineteenth century to about 2002. The deeper historical background is referred to where it is available and relevant to the temples, deities and rituals being discussed. Suffice it to say here that a section of this book on the history of such traditions before the Qing refers to communal ritual activities as early as the Han period, with more evidence available from the Song onwards. As Valerie Hansen and Kanai Noriyuki have discussed, it was during the Southern Song period that community rituals began to develop the forms summarized above; since there is some early evidence for these forms being present in the north as well, what began in the south also influenced the north, but evidence for this is sparse. From the Ming period there are still remnants of a few northern local temples and stone inscriptions, but for the most part local histories and records engraved on stone tablets commenting on the repair of temples take us back to the nineteenth century, as do some accounts by Western travelers and missionaries. More detailed descriptions did not emerge until the 1930s for north China and were primarily in Japanese studies commissioned by the occupation administration after Manchuria was invaded in 1931. Some Chinese and Western-language studies for the pre-war period are also of value. Beyond these materials, the most useful are Chinese and Western-language books and articles based on the fieldwork that became possible in the 1980s and 1990s, after the destruction of the 'Cultural Revolution' period, 1966–1976. Thanks to some written materials and stone inscriptions that survived, as well as the memories of old villagers, we now have detailed evidence for some communities that extends back to 1937–1938, when the invading Japanese army prohibited large-scale festivals and destroyed some temples. In the 1980s, due in part to new economic liberalization, some local traditions revived, including those

of temple festivals. Such activities are still technically illegal, but in many areas local officials have permitted and even supported them in the name of community economic development. Temple festivals can attract tens of thousands of worshipers, onlookers and merchants, so now, as earlier, they are lively trade fairs as well.

Two other types of collective observances that are not discussed here are pilgrimages and carnivals. A pilgrimage is defined by the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* as: "A journey made by a pilgrim; a journey made to a sacred space as an act of religious devotion".⁸

There were and are many such pilgrimages to regional and national temples in China, and of course such pilgrimages cannot always be clearly distinguished from festivals for the gods or saints of local communities, because such festivals can involve participants from surrounding villages and home communities celebrating the birthdays or death days of their patron gods or saints, whatever their appeal to those from other areas. People worship and petition at both pilgrimages and local festivals for similar reasons. The chief differences between the two are the central role of a journey in pilgrimages, the size of the area from which participants are attracted, and the role of pilgrimage societies in organizing the long trips that may be involved. A more immediate reason that Chinese pilgrimages are not discussed here is that there is already an excellent book on this topic by Susan Naquin and Chunfang Yu, who share the basic definition of pilgrimage cited above. Their book makes it clear that pilgrimage in China is also characterized by extensive planning and organization both by the host temples and those visiting them.⁹

I mention carnivals here simply because I have read a recent book by a Chinese scholar that interprets temple festivals as carnivals, following the work of Mikhail Bakhtin (1968) in his *Rabelais and His World*. In this interpretation, carnivals are celebrations of irreverence, inequality and the inversion of social roles. In his *Kuanghuan yu richang-Ming Qing yilai de miaohui yu minjian shehui* (*Carnivals in Daily Life: The Temple Fairs and Local Society Since Ming and Qing Dynasties* [sic]), Zhao Shiyu emphasizes the entertainment function of such festivals

⁸ Oxford, The Clarendon Press, 1993, p. 2210.

⁹ Susan Naquin and Chün-fang Yü (eds.) (1992) *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford: University of California Press. See also Wu Xiaoqun (2006) *Miaofengshan: Beijing minjian shehui de lishi bianqian* (Mount Miaofeng: changes in the history of Beijing popular culture). Beijing: Renmin chubanshe.

with their “wild dancing and joyous singing”, exorcistic processions and operas, as well as the participation in them of those from different social classes, occupations and ethnic groups. He emphasizes that women joined in these public events.¹⁰ Entertainment is, of course, an important function of local festivals but, as is discussed throughout the present book, they include as well a wide array of rituals with elaborate organization and types of leaders, and are a reaffirmation of the order of local society; so interpreting them as carnivals is incomplete and misleading.

Village individuals and families participate in ritual activities not directly related to community-wide ceremonies, such as seasonal festivals, funerals, weddings, *fengshui*, divination and prayers and vows to the gods for healing and childbirth, but these activities are not discussed in this book except as they are related to collective festivals based in temples. Of course, there is no clear line between these categories because during temple festivals the power of the gods is believed to be especially present, so such festivals are good times for people to invoke divine power for healing and the birth of children, as well as to consult diviners. Since seasonal festivals, particularly that for the lunar New Year, are also believed to be times of heightened divine presence, many temple-based rituals are carried out during these times as well.

The most important sources for this book are the positive contributions of earlier studies in Chinese, Japanese and Western languages noted above, and four volumes of reports from local scholars in four areas of Hebei that Fan Lizhu, Overmyer and Hou Jie (Nankai University in Tianjin) have solicited, organized and edited. They have been published in Tianjin, and will be referred to below as appropriate. In 2001–2003, Fan Lizhu did fieldwork in a Hebei village and both of us have observed temples and festivals in and around Baoding, Gu’an, Xianghe and Handan in that province. All of the sources used in this book are based on fieldwork except those for periods earlier than the late Qing.

A clear understanding of the geographical, economic and social contexts is vital for the topic of this book, as it is for the study of any religious practice. The geographical setting of most of the rituals discussed here is the north China plain, which is hot in summer and

¹⁰ Beijing, Sanlian shudian, 2002, pp. 116–131.

cold in winter, with alkaline soils and low rainfall. Crop irrigation, if it exists at all, is from village wells; the rivers are not of much help as they carry so much silt that their beds are raised above the surrounding countryside and must be contained by dikes. This relative lack of water means that the major crops are those that can grow on dry fields, such as wheat, millet, sorghum (*gaoliang*) and corn. It also explains why rituals imploring the gods to send rain have long been so common in this region and why famines have been frequent. As for the physical and social structure of villages on this vast flat expanse; they consist of close groups of houses built on a raised area, surrounded by their fields, with a multi-surnamed population of families who own and cultivate their own land, though usually not much more than twenty *mou* or about three acres. Since few families owned more than 100 *mou* there were no sharp distinctions between economic classes; even the landlords had to work in their fields. Families of different surnames living in one small community meant that lineages were not strong enough to maintain lineage shrines and cross-village organizations, so, at best, they owned small burial plots and took part only in intra-village activities. The old imperial government encouraged villages to manage themselves and collect and hand over their own taxes. As Arthur H. Smith noted at the end of the Qing period, "The management of the village is in the hands of the people themselves... Every Chinese village is a little principality by itself, although it is not uncommon for two or more which are contiguous and perhaps otherwise linked together, to manage their affairs in unison... the government of China, while in theory more or less despotic, places no practical restrictions upon the right of free assemblage by the people for the consideration of their own affairs. The people of any village can, if they choose, meet every day of the year... The people can say what they like, and the local Magistrate neither knows nor cares what is said."¹¹ Village leaders were chosen from

¹¹ *Village Life in Old China*, Boston, Little, Brown and Co., 1970. Introduction by Myron L. Cohen. First published in 1899, pp. 170–172. To this Y. K. Leong and I. K. Tao added sixteen years later, "...the Chinese village folk are most capable of self-organization and self-government..." See their (1915) *Village and Town Life in China*. Westport, Connecticut, Hyperion Press, Inc. Preface by L. T. Hobhouse, p. 40.

Myron Cohen has written a good article on lineage organizations in north China, which I will refer to in the Concluding Comments chapter below. For the larger economic context, see Philip C. C. Huang (1985) *The Peasant Economy and Social Change in North China*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

among men of good reputation from landowning families; these leaders were responsible for settling disputes, dealing with local government, organizing crop protection and planning for collective ceremonies. All these factors tended to strengthen the local protective deities and their temples as focal points of village identity and activity. This social context defines North China local religion, and keeps us from wandering off into vague discussions of 'popular' and 'elite' and relationships with Daoism and Buddhism. It is only in close relationship to this specific social context that these issues can be usefully discussed. (As to the term 'religion', I follow the *American Heritage Dictionary* definition of its original sense as Latin *religio*: a 'bond between man and the gods', which is entirely appropriate for the Chinese case.)

The discussion here of the historical background of community religion in the north includes noting the antiquity of some of the deities still worshiped, evidence for earlier collective rituals in this area, and changing government policies toward local religion, particularly since the end of the Qing dynasty in 1911. In earlier periods local officials sometimes enforced laws against spirit-mediums, sects and large processions, but they shared the same basic worldview as the common people, and so could worship deities approved by the state and perform rain-seeking rituals during droughts. However, near the end of the nineteenth century some intellectuals, influenced by Western ideas, began rejecting local religious practices as superstitious, and advocated turning local temples into schools. After the founding of the Republic of China in 1911, the government carried out anti-superstition campaigns and, in some areas, temples were destroyed and public festivals prohibited. During the warlord period between 1911 and 1927, many more temples were destroyed or turned into barracks or granaries. The Japanese invasion and occupation of much of north China from 1937–1945 did much more damage, particularly in areas where Chinese resistance fighters used temples as bases. (Temples were the biggest buildings around.) Of course, much more destruction took place in the civil war that continued until 1949, and then again in the many political campaigns mounted by the government of the People's Republic of China, culminating in the 'Cultural Revolution'. This was part of a sustained effort to destroy traditional culture. According to the laws of that government, the local traditions being discussed here are all technically illegal since they are not classified as one of the legitimate 'five religions': Buddhism, Daoism, Islam and Protestant and Roman

Catholic Christianity but, as is noted above, in some areas they began to revive beginning in the 1980s.

After this Introduction the book begins with a detailed example of the organization and process of a community rain-seeking ritual, to establish at the beginning what is being discussed here and the evidence for it. Next is a discussion of the historical origins and development of local community rituals, then a chapter on their leadership and organization.

Then comes the discussion of temple festivals themselves, their preparation, planning and organization, leaders and participants, and the kinds of family and personal rituals associated with them. For these festivals public announcements must be posted, opera troupes and ritual specialists invited and temporary sheds and altars constructed. Other announcements posted on the walls list the names of those who have contributed funds, with the amounts specified. After a procession to invite the gods from temples in the area, people gather by the thousands to burn incense for the gods, pray to them for aid and vow to repay them if blessings are granted, often promising to give them new robes. Operas are performed on a stage facing the temple in its courtyard for the enjoyment of all and as an offering to the gods. All around are peddlers and food stalls, with diviners sitting on mats or at low tables surrounded by eager questioners. In front of temple altars people pray for healing, family prosperity and safety and the birth of children, with women taking clay dolls from the altars of child-delivering deities to be kept in their bedrooms to aid conception. In addition to such family and individual worship, festival leaders carry out more formal rituals involving offerings of food and wine, accompanied by music and the recitation of written invocations that include the names of the organizers and contributors. If priests are available, they might be expected to recite scriptures that name and praise the gods and ask for their blessings. At the end, the visiting deities are escorted back to their temples in another procession, the written petitions and lists of names are burned to convey them to the divine realm, and a leader for the next year is selected.

Once the community and ritual activities have been described the book moves to a discussion of the temples and deities that serve as the base of such observances. Then there is an account of the beliefs and values of local religion and the moral values related to them, based on interviews with villagers, on invocations and written materials used in

rituals, and on legends about the gods. For villagers, sincere belief in the reality and power of the gods is a condition for the effectiveness of petitions to them.

Popular religious sects with their own forms of organization, leaders, deities, rituals, beliefs and scripture texts were active throughout the Ming and Qing periods, particularly in north China. Individuals and families who joined them were promised special divine protection in this life and the next by leaders who functioned both as ritual masters and missionaries. These sects were more active in some communities than in others, but in principle were open to all who responded to these leaders and believed in their efficacy and teachings, so some of these groups spread to wide areas of the country. During the Song and Yuan periods there were times when some sects were accepted by the government, but particularly from the early Ming dynasty on they were always considered illegal and were repeatedly ordered to be suppressed, with varying degrees of effectiveness. These sects continued to exist deep into the twentieth century, but after 1949 they were more thoroughly destroyed than before, particularly during the Cultural Revolution. However, since the 1980s a few such groups have been revived in a handful of villages in Hebei, where they perform ritual services for the whole community, including non-members. In Beiqi village in Ding County, a temple named after a sect founder has become so much a place just for community worship that most local people have forgotten its sectarian connections, though its leaders remember. More significant for us here though is evidence for the residual influence of sectarian beliefs and practices on non-sectarian community religion where the sects no longer exist, particularly the feminization of deities by adding to their names the characters *mu* or *Laomu*, Mother or Venerable Mother, as in Guanyin Laomu, Puxianmu, Dizangmu, etc., based on the name of the chief sectarian deity, Wusheng Laomu, the Eternal Venerable Mother. Puxian and Dizang are bodhisattvas normally considered 'male', though in Buddhist theory such gender categories don't really apply. This practice of adding *mu* to the names of deities, found already in Ming period sectarian scriptures called *baojuan* 'precious volumes' from the north, does not occur in the names of southern deities.

The final chapter, on concluding and comparative comments, takes the discussion forward by noting family worship activities associated with community festivals, ancestor veneration, rituals performed by Daoist priests and the transformation of popular religious sects into

community-based traditions. It also comments on comparisons with community festivals in other areas of China. If anything, south and east China local traditions appear to be even more complex than those of the north, due to a stronger economic and social base and the larger involvement of Daoist and Buddhist priests invited to participate.

In summary, after this Introduction the chapters of this book deal with the following topics:

- (1) Rain rituals as an example of community rituals
 - (2) Historical origins and development of local community rituals
 - (3) The leadership and organization of such rituals, emphasizing their context in self-managing villages
 - (4) The actual practice of temple festivals in honor of the gods
 - (5) Temples and deities that serve as the base and focus of community observances
 - (6) Beliefs and values associated with these activities
 - (7) Concluding and comparative comments; north China community religion as a foundation of traditional Chinese religion and culture
- Bibliography and glossary

This thematic approach makes a certain amount of overlap in the discussion inevitable.

In a recent article, Adam Yuet Chau says the following about the contemporary situation of what he calls popular religion in northern Shaanxi Province, where he has done extensive fieldwork:

From the early 1980s onward, popular religion has enjoyed a momentous revival in Shaanbei (northern Shaanxi Province), as in many other parts of rural China. Tens of thousands of temples have been rebuilt during the reform era: local opera troupes crisscross the countryside performing for deities and worshipers at temple festivals; *yinyang* masters (geomancers) are busy siting graves and houses and calculating auspicious dates for weddings and funerals; spirit mediums, Daoist priests, gods and goddesses are bombarded with requests to treat illness, exorcise evil spirits, guarantee business success and retrieve lost motorcycles.

As its appeal rises among the rural masses, popular religion is in the process of regaining its institutional significance within what might be called the agrarian public sphere in rural China. Popular religious activities such as temple festivals (*miaohui*), spirit medium séances, and funeral and wedding banquets encourage and facilitate a kind of sociality radically different from that of the Maoist era, when political campaigns,

militarized organizations, collectivist production drives, and class struggle dictated villagers' social lives.¹²

Of the revival of such local traditions in Hebei, Fan Lizhu comments, "...local popular religion is very much alive in contemporary China... [It] indicates how communities and individuals turn to these religious practices in their search for meaning and their moral concerns... The basic features of Chinese local popular religion seem to be indestructible."¹³

Traditions such as these have provided the foundations of social cohesion and religious life for the Chinese people since the Song dynasty for over a thousand years. It is here, at its demographic and cultural foundations, that our search to understand China should begin.

¹² Adam Yuet Chau (2005) "The Politics of Legitimation and the Revival of Popular Religion in Shaanbei, North-Central China". *Modern China* 31(2): 236–237. Evidence from Chau's (2006) excellent new book, *Miraculous Response: Doing Popular Religion in Contemporary China*, will be discussed in the present book.

¹³ Fan Lizhu (2003) "The Cult of the Silkworm Mother as a Core of Local Community Religion in a North China Village: Field Study in Zhiwuying, Baoding, Hebei", in Daniel L. Overmyer (ed.) *Religion in China Today*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 56.

CHAPTER ONE

RAIN RITUALS

In his study of rural north China in the mid-twentieth century, Prasenjit Duara writes of a village in Hebei that:

Ceremonies were held on the birthdays of Tudi, the Jade Emperor, [and] Guandi, but by far the most important ceremony in the village was the collective prayer to the rain god. The god to whom the supplication was made was not the Dragon God, but the Jade Emperor, the highest god in the Chinese folk pantheon. Several committees, involving over fifty people, were set up to manage the ceremony in its various stages and aspects. These committees ranged from those who were assigned to buy firecrackers to those that handled finances and drafted the prayer. For three whole days, all the villagers participated in the elaborate rites and festivities, and before the inflation of the 1930s they also staged plays if the prayers brought rain. The entire event was financed by levying a flat rate on each household, although very poor villagers and non-residents were exempt from this levy. The identification of the religious group with the village is also suggested by the fact that funds for temple repairs and upkeep were solicited from all the households in the village.¹

This passage is a good introduction to the importance and organization of village rituals for ‘seeking rain’ (*qiu yu*) or ‘praying [to the gods] for rain’ (*qi yu*). Such rituals were practiced in many areas of China but were particularly important in the north because of the dry climate there, as discussed in the Introduction to this book and which includes a description of a rain-seeking ritual. Such rituals are a prime example of the practical nature of local community rites and their close relationships to their geographical and social contexts. Here we see people struggling with what for them was the life-or-death problem of preserving their crops in the face of drought. They used irrigation where they could, but when that failed they fell back on symbolic means to evoke help from gods, such as the Dragon King who represented natural forces.

Alvin Cohen and Michael Loewe have discussed aspects of the history of Chinese rain rituals beginning in the Zhou and Han periods, while

¹ Prasenjit Duara (1988) *Culture, Power and the State; Rural North China, 1900–1942*. Stanford, Stanford University Press, pp. 126–127.

Kenneth Pomeranz has described such rituals as they were practiced at a shrine near Handan in Hebei beginning as early as the fourteenth century.² A recent Ph.D. dissertation by Jeffrey Snyder-Reinke on rain rituals performed by officials quotes a poem from the *Book of Poetry* attributed to King Xuan in the ninth century BCE of the Zhou period, in which the king states that he had sacrificed to the gods to end a drought.³ Snyder-Reinke goes on to discuss examples of rain rituals from the Han to the Qing dynasties, making it clear that such rituals were considered important for administrators from the court down to the county level. Rain rituals performed by local officials were generally formal and restrained, but both Cohen and Snyder-Reinke point out that officials could be just as concerned for the efficacy of such rites as were the people, and sometimes were involved in fasting and dramatic self-humiliation, such as wearing chains in ritual processions.⁴ Hence, rain rituals provide a good example of the involvement of the whole community in local ceremonies, from officials on down.

According to the sources for this topic I have been able to find, there were various forms of rain-seeking rituals, some involving drawing water from a sacred spring or well to offer in petition to the gods. In some cases these rituals were part of annual temple festivals. Since rain ceremonies carried out by officials are dealt with in detail by Snyder-Reinke, I will here cite only one example, from a Hebei local historical record. In an 1877 edition of the *Tangxianzhi* we read:

For praying for rain, set up an altar and prohibit the slaughter of animals. Each morning and evening the county magistrate leads officials, gentry and merchants, wearing plain clothing and holding incense, to go together to the altar, where they perform three bows and nine prostrations (*koushou*). He orders Buddhist monks and Daoist priests to recite scriptures while standing beside the altar. After a copious rain falls, they then offer thanks

² Alvin P. Cohen (1978) "Coercing the Rain Deities in Ancient China". *History of Religions* 17(3): 4.244–265; Kenneth Pomeranz (1991) "Water to Iron, Widows to Warlords: the Handan Rain Shrine in Modern Chinese History". *Late Imperial China* 12(1): 62–99. See also M. Loewe (1987) "The Cult of the Dragon and the Invocation for Rain", in Charles Le Blanc and Susan Blader (eds.) *Chinese Ideas About Nature and Society*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, pp. 195–213. Loewe discusses rain rituals in the Han and pre-Han periods, noting exposing shamans and images to the sun.

³ Jeffrey Snyder-Reinke (2006) "Dry Spells: Rainmaking, Power and the State in Late Imperial China". Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation. University of Michigan, Chapter 4: "No Sacrifices Withheld."

⁴ Snyder-Reinke, "Dry Spells", Chapter 3: "An Unruly Order."

for its descent as at the beginning [with bows and prostrations]. When the ritual is completed, they pull apart the altar.⁵

Similar rituals were carried out here during eclipses of the sun and moon.

I have found one example of a similarly simple and subdued rain ritual carried out by ordinary villagers, in this case in Luancheng County in Hebei, where we are told that people prayed for rain at the Guandi temple on lunar 5/13, the day when Emperor Guan sharpened his sword for which he needed water. For seeking rain, they prepared incense and paper [money] offerings, and burned them in front of the temple. They prayed for three days. If it rained within three days they made offerings to fulfill their vows to the gods, and put up a poster announcing that Heaven had bestowed rain. If no rain fell, they did not fulfill their vows.⁶

However, most local rain rituals were livelier than this, with much dramatic symbolism. One example of this was in a village in Changli County in Hebei, where we are told that villagers put an image of the Dragon King in a basket and took it around to nearby villages. In front of each house in each village the participants used [sprinkled?] water with a willow branch, and spread out a piece of yellow paper with the characters on it, “The position [=tablet] of the Dragon King of the Four Seas, Five Lakes, Eight Rivers and Nine Streams” [in sum, a lord of all the waters]. They offered burning incense in front of this. Along the road, those who saw this kneeled and bowed calling out, “May it rain!” Many people accompanied this procession, barefooted and wearing headdresses made of willow branches. This procession was welcomed in all the villages it passed through, then it returned to where it had begun. At night people gathered at the Dragon King temple to pray. An account of another village in this same county adds that when seeking rain people burned incense and prostrated themselves at the Wudao and Laoye temples. Each family pasted up a sheet of yellow paper with

⁵ *Tangxianzhi*, 1877 ed., 5:14b.

⁶ Itsutarō Suehiro (ed.) (1952) *Chūgoku nōson kankō chōsa* (An investigation of Chinese village customs). Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, pp. 3:152.3–153.1 (fieldwork dated Showa 17/3 [1942]). This report is one of many by Japanese scholars who conducted interview-based fieldwork surveys between 1939 and 1943 in villages in Shandong and Hebei, in a project sponsored by the South Manchurian Railway Company. These reports were published in six large volumes. For a discussion of this material see Chapter Three below on Leadership and Organization.

this same inscription, and every year on lunar 2/2 made offerings to the Dragon King of Wells and Springs.⁷

A more complex ritual was carried out in Shangfu village of Yangcheng County in the Taihang Mountains area of Shanxi, an area where there are historical records of such rituals going back to the fourteenth century. In interviews with older people in this area Feng Junjie was told that during droughts the Community Head (*sheshou*) of the year went to the White Dragon Hall of a local temple called the Damiao (Big temple) to burn incense, make a vow and pray for rain. If it still did not rain, a young man of the village stealthily took a pair of newly-made white pants to the Five Dragon temple of a village four kilometers away, and put the Dragon King image from that temple in the pants and carried it on his back to the Damiao. There the Community Head put it on an offering table, put a willow headband on its head and then put the image outside to bake in the sun, and had people wearing willow headbands burn incense and pray before it. Then the Community Head [and others?] carried the image around the village. If they met anyone wearing a straw hat he or she had to take it off to avoid disrespect for the god. After it rained it was very important to take the god back to his home village in a procession, with the image dressed and decorated like Guangong or Zhao Gongming, with a crown on its head. It was placed in a beautifully carved and decorated sedan chair carried by four men, with four others carrying incense, cups of wine, firecrackers and yellow memorials. The Community Head sedately followed the chair, accompanied by a music troupe, to see the god off to his temple, where the participants again bowed and offered incense.⁸

Putting a god's image out in the hot sun so that it too felt the effects of a drought is a well-known symbolic act in Chinese religious practice that has been discussed by Cohen, C. K. Yang and Snyder-Reinke. It

⁷ *Chûgoku nôson*, 5:28.2, 36.2 (Fieldwork dated Showa 17/5).

⁸ Feng Junjie (1999) "Taihang yuji qushui yishi ji xieyu yanjiu minsukao" (An investigation of the folk customs of the Taihang [Mountain] area of obtaining water in rain rituals and performing a drama to express thanks for rain), in Ma Guodiao, Yang Rongguo and Du Xuede (eds.) *Jili nuosu yu minjian xisu* (Offering rituals, *nuo* exorcism customs and popular operas). *Zhonguo xiju chubanshe*, pp. 243–245. Feng Junjie provides another description of this ritual in an article in a special double issue of *Min-su ch'ü-i* on Shanxi temple festivals, No. 107–108, dated Minguo 86 or 1997, pp. 3–36. In this same issue Yan Baoquan describes a very similar tradition in another village in this same area of Shanxi in his "Yangcheng xian Zecheng cun Tangdi miao ji saishu yanjuti jikao" (A study of the Emperor Tang temple in Zecheng village of Yangcheng County and operas performed at community festivals there).

is interesting that in Shangfu village it was a god from a neighboring village that was so punished, perhaps to avoid the wrath of their own protector. Cohen makes it clear that baking an image in the sun was one of several methods employed to try to force the deity to respond, including in some cases destroying the image or its shrine.⁹ I don't know why white pants were used in the Shangfu ritual.

Another symbolic use of violence to bring rain was to ritually decapitate the 'Drought Demon' (*zhan hanba*) that was believed to cause the problem, as is discussed by Zhang Zhenman and Pu Haiyin in their report on community rituals in the Lofu area of Shanxi. Parts of this excellent and detailed article are referred to elsewhere in this book in discussions of temple festivals, local ritual leaders and spirit-mediums. For the drought demon ritual people made an image of the demon with straw, with its body tied to a frame and its head made of a gourd with eyebrows and eyes painted on it. The inside of the gourd was cut out and put in a bowl of red water, with its lid closed. Clothing for this image was made of colored paper. When all was prepared it was

⁹ In his *Religion in Chinese Society*, p. 92, C. K. Yang notes that county magistrates sometimes thrashed the city god under the hot sun, and that "...the peasant masses expos[ed] the city god in order to induce him to bring on precipitation." Snyder-Reinke in his "Dry Spells", p. 141, discusses officials "Dragging the deity from its shaded shrine into the hot sun [as] a way for the deity to experience the sufferings of the people first hand." Some magistrates so exposed themselves to the sun as well. For even more dramatic examples of strenuous actions by officials, see also the article by Cohen, cited in note 2 above. A variation on this theme was sunning scripture texts for this same purpose, as is described by Zhao Fuxing in an unpublished report intended for the book edited by Daniel Overmyer and Fan Lizhu "The Temples, Rituals and Local Culture of Gu'an County, Hebei Province", titled "Jianjie Yezhuang cun liang jing qi yu" (A brief introduction to sunning scriptures to seek rain in Yezhuang village). Mr. Zhao was told of a tradition in this village that during droughts twenty-four old scriptures were taken out of their boxes and placed in the sun, with their pages extended to a total length of ten *zhang*, about thirty feet. While they were sunning twenty-four boys aged ten and up formed two dragons which danced, accompanied by music. If no rain fell in seven days, these boys would tie the books to their forearms, which caused rain to fall in about two days. The villagers maintain that these books were brought with a copper casket of an old woman of a Ye family that migrated here several centuries ago, and that the boxes of books were kept in homes "where the Buddha was worshiped". Once during a severe drought a man dreamed of Ms. Ye, who told him that the books had the power to bring rain. This tradition continued for a long time, but in 1966 the books were confiscated and taken to a local government office in Tianjin, where they disappeared. Their names were not recorded. We asked Mr. Zhao to look for them again, but he could not find them.

This sounds like a local variation on an old Chinese tradition of annually drying books in the sun.

For unknown reasons, Chinese censors deleted this article from the book manuscript.

put in a cart, and taken to an uncultivated field outside the village, led by Yuehu musicians. There a community leader set up a tablet for the Jade Emperor and offered it incense and wine. Then a ritual master (*zhuli*) recited an invocation listing the sins of the Drought Demon in bringing the drought, and then ordered it to be beheaded, which was done by a musician playing the role of a 'divine general'. On hearing the command he performed the 'Five Flower Martial Arts', and then with a single chop cut off the demon's head, with 'blood' splashing out from the bowl of red water. At this, all laughed and returned to the village.¹⁰

For rain seeking rituals in Shandong there is useful information in Volume 4 of the reports by Japanese scholars cited above, here for ritual activities in Licheng County of Shandong, during the period of their fieldwork. At a Jade Emperor temple in this county we are told that when rain was needed villagers prayed together for rain and offered chicken, fish, pork and meatballs. Collective ritual activities were decided by discussion among the men of the village. For three days before the ritual people were expected to maintain a vegetarian diet, followed by a petition to the gods to send down rain. Each family was expected to contribute 170–180 Chinese dollars for the costs of the ritual, with a list of donations pasted on a temple wall. After this petition was sent off with firecrackers, with three firings of a ritual gun, an image of the Jade Emperor was taken on a procession around the village. The procession was led by four village elders, then two rows of men holding banners and placards, then bearers of copper instruments along with more banners, who were followed by carriers of ritual umbrellas. Then came the Jade Emperor's sedan chair carried by eighteen men and accompanied by a Daoist priest on either side. People made offerings along the way and burned ritual paper money. When the procession returned to the

¹⁰ Zhang Zhennan and Pu Haiyan (1993) "Shangdang minjian de yingshen saishe" (On folk festivals to welcome the gods in Shangdang [Shanxi]). *Min-su ch'ü-i* 81: 210, 222–223, 225. For a discussion of Yuehu musicians, see the chapter of this book on local ritual leaders. On p. 225 here the authors include a prayer for rain used in local rituals:

Oh gods! There has been a drought for a long time and seasonal rains have not occurred, so summer grains cannot ripen and autumn sprouts are unable to grow. Men and women sigh in dismay; old and young are all very sad. Now the Community Head (*sheshou*) leads the people of the community in sincerely begging [you] honored gods to send down seasonal rain and everywhere sprinkle sweet continuous rain, moistening the parched earth for 10,000 *li*, thus helping all the fields to send forth sprouts so that the black-haired ones(people) will be able to live.

temple the god's image was taken out of the chair and put back in the temple. While Daoist priests read scriptures the people all bowed, prayed for rain and made vows to the god to provide an opera performance and new robes in his honor if rain fell. Then all went home to rest and eat, after which they gathered again at the temple to listen to the priests recite the scriptures of the Three Divine Officials and of the Northern Bushel (*Sanguan jing*, *Beidou jing*). After another rest, at midnight, all gathered again at the temple to hear the priests recite *The Imperial Scripture* (*Huang jing*), which was for the Jade Emperor. These ritual activities continued for three days, with processions to other villages as well.¹¹

Some rituals involving getting water from sacred wells or streams to offer to the god to encourage it to provide the same; I begin with accounts of such activities from Hebei, then turn to Shanxi and Shaanxi. An account of such a ritual in the 1931 edition of the Hebei Mancheng County Local History (*Manchengxianzhi*) reads:

To pray for rain, [villagers] first bow with incense for three days. Every family puts a pot of water by its door and sticks a willow branch into it. After three days they send someone to a [local mountain], lake or field stream to get water to offer [to the Dragon King]. When people are receiving this water each wears a willow headband and holds up a Dragon King placard. If rain falls, they consider it to be a response [from the god], so they perform an opera to thank it. This is called *sai shen*.¹²

We have a more detailed account from nearby Yi County, Hebei, in a 2000 edition of the *Yixianzhi*, where rain-seeking rituals were carried out whenever there was a drought, with local officials participating. For this people had to bare their shoulders and carry images of the City God or Guandi. They went to a cave on a nearby mountain to get holy water from thirteen deep gullies (*cao*) in it. Each gully represented a month of the year. After making offerings people took water from these gullies back to the City God or Guandi temple to offer it to the gods. The editors add, "After Liberation there was no more of this superstitious activity."¹³

In Changxin village of Zhao County in Hebei there was an annual festival in honor of a local water goddess that was performed primarily to bring rain. The details of its organization are discussed in the chapter

¹¹ *Chūgoku nōson*, 4: 17.2, 30.1–33.1.

¹² *Manchengxianzhi*, 1931 edition, 5: 261.

¹³ *Yixianzhi*, 2000 edition, 7: 1107.

on temple festivals, and the role of spirit-mediums in it is described in the chapter on local ritual leaders. Here I focus on the aspects of this festival that are especially related to the quest for rain.

A founding legend associated with this rite concerns a young woman of the Jia lineage in this village, which had a lineage shrine until it was destroyed in 1958. The story goes that Liu Xiu, the future Guangwu Emperor and founder of the Latter Han Dynasty (r. 25–58 CE), in the civil war preceding his ascension to the throne was once pursued by his rival Wang Mang's troops to the area of Changxin village, where, exhausted and famished, he fell unconscious to the road from his horse. At that time a maiden named Jia Yaru was walking on the road delivering cooked rice to her sister-in-law. When she saw the unconscious Liu Xiu, in her compassion she called to him to wake up, and gave him the rice to eat, without regard for social etiquette forbidding contact between unmarried girls and strange men. She drew water from a nearby well with a jar she was carrying at her waist, and gave it to Liu Xiu and his horse to drink, and then returned home with the empty jar. Liu Xiu remembered her name, and said he would repay her. Her sister-in-law, who had not eaten, became enraged and cursed the girl. Yaru could not bear this, so on lunar 5/29 she ran back to the well where she had helped Liu Xiu and committed suicide by jumping in to it. After Liu Xiu became emperor he wanted to repay the kindness of the girl in that village. When he learned that Yaru had died he bestowed on her the title 'Holy Empress Who Illuminates and Aids' (*Zhao ji shenghou*) and had a shrine built so that she would always be remembered. When the villagers realized what had really happened they were moved to build a temple for her beside the well where she had committed suicide, and made an image of her where incense burned day and night. (One presumes that this took place later, because there were few such temples as early as the Han period). People came to believe that the well was holy so whenever there was a drought people went to this temple from near and far to pray for rain and the goddess came to be called, *Shuici niangniang*, 'the Water Shrine Goddess'. Every year people came to worship her on her commemoration day, which gradually developed into a temple festival.¹⁴

¹⁴ Yue Yongyi (2004) "Dui shenghuo kongjian de guishu yu chongzheng-Changxin Shuici niangniang miaohui" (The regulation and reordering of living space: the temple festival of the Goddess of the Shuici shrine). *Min-su ch'ü-i* 143: 215–227.

Yue Yongyi, a scholar associated with Beijing Normal University who recently investigated temple festivals in Changxin reports that this whole area is dry, with frequent droughts, so people from several surrounding villages regularly came here during temple festivals to get water to seek rain. Before drawing the water they kneeled and burned incense before the goddess. Usually the jar or bottle they lowered into the Shuici temple well would have water in it before it reached the bottom of the well. If these vessels were full they believed there would be much rain; if half-full, a smaller amount, and if empty, no rain at all. After people had obtained water they took it back to their villages carrying the jars on their heads, and were not able to look back. If it rained, they would take a jar of water back to the well. People in this area remembered that in 1927 or 1928 there was a severe drought that lasted until lunar 5/27 but that after this ritual was carried out rain fell. People believed that water from this well could not only bring rain, but also heal illness.¹⁵

For rain rituals in Shanxi I have found accounts by Henrietta Harrison and Duan Youwen, dated 2002 and 2001 respectively, both based on a combination of textual sources and field observation and both including similar legends about water goddesses involving a strange man on a horse, as in the Jia Yaru story above. Harrison's focus is on a late nineteenth century scholar from Chiqiao village in Taiyuan County but, for our purposes here, the most valuable information she discusses is about rain rituals carried out in the town of Jinci near there, located at the source of the Jin River. The large Jinci Temple was dedicated to a 'Holy Mother' who was believed to have originally been, "a young woman with the surname Liu (Willow) who married in what is now Jinci village. At that time there was no spring [nearby] and Liu's mother-in-law made her go to fetch water. One day she met a man in white who asked her for water for his horse. She gave him the water she had fetched and in return the man gave her a whip and told her if she stirred it around in the jar water would flow. All went well until Liu returned to her parents' home; while she was gone her mother-in-law stirred the water with the whip and the water flowed out and could not be stopped. She called Liu, who sat on the jar until the water flowed quietly. The water became the Jin River and a temple was built for Liu where people prayed for rain." Harrison discusses other

¹⁵ Yue Yongyi, "Shenghuo kongjian", pp. 227-228.

versions of this story. An annual festival celebrated the goddess as the source of the Jin River, on which agriculture in the region depended. This festival involved several towns and villages associated with a network of irrigation channels fed by the river.¹⁶

The association of the Jinci Holy Mother with water led to her being frequently petitioned for rain by local officials. Harrison writes:

As late as 1916, the Taiyuan County magistrate went publicly to Jinci to pray for rain. In Chiqiao villagers placed altars and willow branches at their doors on the magistrate's orders. Other rituals carried out by officials here involved the execution of 'drought dragons' by the provincial governor for the crime of taking away rain for the people. Villagers themselves also petitioned dragon gods for rain, as in case when "...two or three hundred people from a group of plains villages set out from [a local temple], with bare heads and bare feet, to walk up to the Temple of the White Dragon on Tianlong Mountain. The people whose villages lay along the way made offerings as the procession passed and escorted the supplicants on their way. The temple of the White Dragon was beside a cave in the cliffs where there was a deep pool of water. There the supplicants prayed for rain by reciting the name of the Buddha all night and by drawing water out of the pool in the cave. They ate nothing but thin gruel."¹⁷

Duan Youwen's research was on rituals related to a goddess in a temple thirty *li* west of Linfen City in Shanxi, near a rapidly flowing stream. There are ten stone inscriptions there preserved from the Yuan, Ming and Qing periods. The main images in this temple are of the Dragon King and the Water Mother. The following legend is told about this goddess, who is called *Shuinü niangniang*, 'Water maiden goddess'. She is said to have been a girl from a Yan village family so poor that she was given to another family in Longci (Dragon shrine) village as a future daughter-in-law. She was cruelly treated by her mother-in-law, who ordered her to go a long distance every day to get water for the family. One day she met an old man riding a horse who asked her for a drink of water, which she gave him. In response he gave his horsewhip to her, telling her that if she put it in a water vat it would stay full and never run dry, and that she should never take it out. Her mother-in-law

¹⁶ Henrietta Harrison (2002) "Village Identity in Rural North China: a Sense of Place in the Diary of Liu Dapeng", in David Faure and Tao Tao Liu (eds.) *Town and Country in China: Identity and Perception*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, pp. 96–97.

¹⁷ Henrietta Harrison, "Village Identity", pp. 99–101. The glossary for this article does not include characters for all the Chinese terms and names cited.

waited until the girl returned to visit her mother's home, and then took the whip out of the vat, at which with a loud sound water flowed out like a river, flooding the whole village. Just then the girl was combing her hair at her mother's home, but when she heard this sound she knew that something was not right, so she hurried back to her mother-in-law's house, weeping and filling up some holes with stones. When she reached the house she sat on the water vat and the flood stopped, leaving only a small stream. In order to commemorate her, the village built a shrine where they venerated her as *Shuinü niangniang*. Here women sought rain, while men did so at a Dragon King temple.¹⁸

Duan Youwen's informants in this village told him that for rain-seeking rituals five or six men of good moral standing, wearing willow hats and holding up their pant legs, and carrying empty pots went barefooted to the Dragon King shrine. They ran to the temple, made offerings and prostrated themselves, then filled up the pots with water from a spring in front of the temple and took it back to the village. At some point the word 'mother' (*mu*) replaced that for 'maiden' (*nü*) in accord with a common practice in north China to address goddesses as mother. Women worshiped the Water Mother because they considered themselves to be members of her family and felt very close to her and that they could trust her. They also believed that because she was the mother of the Dragon King her power exceeded his and she could control him. If it had not rained for several months they sent widows to her temple, the Shrine That Pacifies the Waters, to pray for rain. These widows were dressed like opera performers, with special hairstyles decorated with jeweled bells, carrying a horsewhip in one hand and an empty pot in the other, with chicken feather dusters on both legs. Their leaders, called 'those who repay rain', ran back and forth urging the others to hurry.

These rituals changed somewhat during the Republican period; the women no longer needed to be so formal, and those seeking rain were not necessarily widows, but could be warm-hearted older women. They wore willow caps and carried willow branches, and set out barefooted from the village, accompanied by musicians and carrying offerings, and so went to the Goddess' temple to seek rain. If along the way they met

¹⁸ Duan Youwen (2001) "Shanxi Linfen Pingshui shenci beike ji qi shuili xisu kaoshu" (A report on the stone inscriptions and water conservation customs of the Holy Shrine That Pacifies the Waters, of Linfen City in Shanxi). *Min-su ch'ü-i* 133: 48-49.

people wearing straw hats, they hit them with willow branches, but the people did not become angry with them.

When the women entered the temple they first washed their hands, and then burned incense, set off firecrackers, prostrated themselves and made vows. In the past such women worshipers always spent a night in the temple, called 'keeping company with the maiden'. All slept on a big *kang* heated bed in the temple, which provided food for them. Perhaps because the goddess was from their home town Yan village, she always responded, and it is said that it would begin to rain before the worshipers returned home.

When making vows to seek rain, worshipers had to go to the Water Mother's temple to repay their vows; otherwise, she could become angry and no longer manifest her efficacious power. Whatever was promised had to be given, such as by having an opera sung or a story told, or by offering money or clothing.¹⁹

Rain rituals in Shaanxi could also involve widows fetching water to offer to the god, as is described in the recent book by Qin Jianming and Marianne Bujard about the cult of the Goddess of Mt. Yao in Pucheng County. The formal name for this deity is Lingying Furen, 'Efficacious Lady', whose shrine has been on Mt. Yao since the Tang dynasty. This goddess is well-known in this area for her efficacy in responding to petitions for rain and sons. One-hundred twenty villages in a surrounding area of about 100 square kilometers are organized into eleven 'godly communities' (*shenshe*), which take turns in welcoming the Goddess' image each year at the Qingming festival. Her image stays a year in each community then, the next year, is escorted back to the mountain, from where it is escorted to another community. This has been going on for about 400 years since the late Ming period, except for being interrupted between 1957 and 1992.

Both official and community rain rituals have been carried out in this area since the Song period. The authors write:

Usually during a drought the people petition for rain (*qiuyu*). For this from three to five widows go to the Yaoshan temple to prostrate themselves, burn incense, pray and make vows. Then they use vessels to get water from a mountain spring behind the temple and take it back [home] to offer. After it rains they go again to the temple to repay their vows. In

¹⁹ Duan Youwen, "Pingshui shenci", pp. 48–49. Pomeranz discusses the role of widows in Handan rain rituals in his "Water to Iron, Widows to Warlords", pp. 71–72.

the area of Taimu village, while seeking rain they beat ‘praying for rain’ drums; good men and pious women, wearing plain clothing, hold copper vessels in their hands, and beat them, *dong dong dang dang*, once for each step. The meaning of this for them is expressed in the statement, “The drought demon has done evil; there is fire on the earth, grain sprouts have withered and died, and mountain streams are dry. Efficacious Lady, quickly, quickly subjugate this demon to save the people. *O-mi tuo Fo*.” Those not holding copper vessels carry containers for water on their backs; they bow every three steps and prostrate themselves every six. When they arrive inside the temple they burn incense and make vows, praying that the Holy Mother will widely sprinkle sweet dew and defeat the drought demon to rescue the people. If it rains within three days, then [the worshipers] must provide for an opera to be performed to repay their vows and show their gratitude. Those praying for rain stay overnight on the mountain, then on the next day they get water from the spring and carry it on their backs to home. If it really rains a lot, then, beating gongs and drums, they go to houses in each village to ask for donations, which are used for a big opera or for showing a motion picture. This is called ‘boasting of rain’ or ‘thanking and congratulating for rain’. They are also to take the spring water back to the mountain.

In the past, there was a form of rain seeking called ‘horses’ (*mazi*), performed by old widows and widowers wearing willow headbands. They went to the spring on Mt. Yao to get water and put it in bottles. When they returned to the village, all the villagers bowed down to receive them. The ‘horses’ who had gone out of the village to get water held whips, wore willow hats and hit those along the way who did not bow. They had iron bits in their mouths, (which were really pierced by awls). Then they offered the water, which they took back after it rained.

There was also a custom here of washing the stone lions at the temple entrance to bring rain. To repay vows after it rained people donated placards and operas. There are many such placards in the temple noting when rain fell after a ritual.²⁰ The logic of most of the symbolism in these rituals seems clear, such as trying to evoke rain by offering jars of water, wearing and carrying the water-loving willow, and lifting pant legs to keep them from getting wet. Straw hats protect from sunlight, so perhaps wearing them during a rain-seeking ritual was taken as lack of faith in its efficacy. Chaste widows were important symbols of virtue that might help move the gods to respond. Acting as a ‘horse’ for a god

²⁰ Qin Jianming and Lü Min (Marianne Bujard) (2003) *Yaoshan shengmu miao yu shenshe* (Le Culte de la Dame du Yaoshan). Beijing: École Française d’Extrême-Orient, Centre de Pekin, pp. 3, 54–56.

and piercing the cheeks with an awl can be aspects of spirit-medium possession rituals, but that is not said here.

Kenneth Pomeranz describes community rain rituals as “lengthy, participatory, loud, strenuous and passionate” (*Water to Iron*, p. 73), which accords well with what I have learned about this topic! It is understandable that people would resort to dramatic actions and symbolism to deal with a problem that can still be found in many areas of the world today.

Invocations to gods for rain are a good example of community ritual activities organized by local people themselves. In some cases Daoist priests could be involved, but they came at the invitation of village leaders to add power to the proceedings by reciting from their scriptures. We will see in the next chapter that such local community rituals had a long history in China.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

An Outline of History before 1949

Commoners believe in ghosts and gods, and always in the fifth month, when ploughing and planting are finished, gather together singing and dancing to sacrifice to the gods. In the tenth month, when agricultural work is done, they do the same. (Biography of Ma Han, *Jin shu (History of the Jin Dynasty)*, 266–316 CE, *zhuan* 97, edited between 646–648 CE).

Local community religion in China not only has its own forms of organization, leadership and rituals, but also has its own history, a history that in many cases goes back several hundreds years. However, the sources for understanding that history are sparse and scattered, because such activities have been considered unworthy of recording and studying. Particularly before the Ming period (1368–1644) the sources for community rituals in north China do not permit the writing of a connected history; the best one can do is cite the evidence that is available to suggest what might have been going on in the light of later developments. Here I first summarize what I have learned about community rituals before the Song period (960–1279), then note the new developments in that period that set the stage for what followed, and refer to new government policies for local communities in the early Ming that influenced rituals carried out by the people. The second part of this section is a summary of government regulations for local rituals.

This historical outline focuses on evidence from the north, but for the Song period almost all we know is about the south and east, during the period when the court was moved south to Hangzhou in Zhejiang Province (1127–1279) after the old capital of Kaifeng in the north was lost to the Jurchen. During this Southern Song period China entered a new phase of growth in population and economic and cultural vitality, with increased literacy and publication, so that most of our information about this period comes from the south. A major problem for investigating the history of local religion in this period is that most scholars who do discuss it mix data from different places, with only scattered references to the north. The result is a geographical hodge-podge that is at best organized only by time, not by space. For the period following

the seventeenth century I discuss history in the context of descriptions of local temples and rituals.

A related topic is the veneration in the north of ancient deities attested to in pre-Han sources, deities such as Nüwa, Fuxi and Shennong, the legendary founder of agriculture and herbal medicine. In some instances these gods were worshiped at places believed to be where they originated, with indications of grottoes, temples and festivals for them, some of which continue to exist or have been revived. Of course, these gods were worshiped elsewhere in China as well, though perhaps not with the same sense of original geographical location. Because cults of these deities are enveloped in legend, local pride of place and later revivals and reconstructions, this is a tricky topic that I enter with a sense of diffidence but nonetheless think is worth noting, so long as I stick to the details of what I have learned.

The earliest evidence for these cults that I have found is from Henan and Hebei, modern provinces in the areas of old states going back to the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods of the mid- to late Zhou dynasty (722–481 and 403–221 BCE). In myths about the goddess Nüwa that appear as early as the fourth century BCE, she is portrayed as the fashioner of human beings and as having propped up a pillar of heaven that had been knocked askew. There is a tomb for her in Xihua County of Henan, near 'Nüwa City', which is now the name of villages in this area. There are still festivals celebrated by Nüwa's tomb on lunar 12/17–23 and 1/2–20; during these periods the special days are her birthday on 12/21 and the day she repaired heaven on 1/15. At this festival there are food offerings, scripture recitation, banners and the offering of incense and prayers for such blessings as the birth of sons, marriage, good harvests and prosperity, with answered prayers repaid with songs sung to the goddess while her worshipers prostrate themselves. These activities are similar to others practiced elsewhere since at least the Qing period, but I have no evidence as to how old they are here; at least a memory of the goddess is still alive. However, there are Song records of a Nüwa City, which has recently been excavated, with the discovery of implements and vessels from the Spring and Autumn period. At Taihao Ling in Huaiyang County, another place in Henan, there is a grotto and a temple dedicated to Nüwa. At the grotto, called 'Descendants Grotto', women seeking sons worship and rub its gate. A festival for the goddess is carried out at the temple from 2/2 to 3/3, with people attending from the whole surrounding area. We are told that at this festival a 'primitive dance' is carried out for a whole day

performed by sixty- to seventy-year-old women wearing black jackets and pants. They are in groups of four, with three dancers and one beating a clapper. While they dance they sing songs about the goddess creating humankind. According to tradition this dance was transmitted by Nüwa only to women, not to men. One of the dance steps is called ‘a snake shedding its skin’, imitating the movements of a snake, which is a symbol of Nüwa. On 2/2 people celebrate Nüwa’s repairing of the sky by making fried pancakes (*shaobing*) with flour to imitate the five-colored powder the goddess used to bolster the heavenly pillar.

In Hebei, in the area of the old state of Zhao, Nüwa is worshiped at a temple on top of Mount Zhonghuang in She County near Handan, a temple Fan Lizhu and I visited in 2004. There were two annual festivals here, on lunar 1/24 to commemorate Nüwa’s repairing the pillar of heaven and on 3/18 in memory of the night she and her consort Fuxi returned to heaven after creating humans. People stay awake on this night to wait for their divine parents to return. Local legends tell of how Nüwa and Fuxi made the first humans out of mud and of a stone left over from the goddess’ repair of the pillar.¹

Also in Huaiyang County, Shennong, the ‘Divine Farmer’ is worshiped at a Temple of the Five Grains in a village of that same name. There are four Shennong wells around this temple. There is an annual festival in the god’s honor on lunar 1/1–1/9 because his birthday is believed to be on 1/5. This festival still attracts large numbers of worshippers. Nüwa’s consort, Fuxi, is also worshiped at Huaiyang in a large annual festival carried out between lunar 2/2 and 3/3 in honor of his birthday on 2/15. This festival, at his tomb, still attracts over 200,000 people. There is a seated image of the god five meters high which wears a yellow robe, holds an Eight Trigrams symbol and has two horns on

¹ Gao Youpeng (1999) *Zhongguo miaohui wenhua* (The culture of Chinese temple festivals). Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, pp. 298–305; Zou Wensheng and Wang Jian (1998) *Chen Chu wenhua* (*The culture of Chen and Chu*). Shenyang: Liaoning jiaoyu chubanshe, pp. 22–26, 297–298; Shen Ziwen (2006) “Shexian Nüwa xinyang he Wa huang gong qiuzi xisu” (Beliefs about the Goddess Nüwa in She County and child-seeking customs at the Empress Wa temple), in Du Xuede, Yang Yingqin and Li Huaishun (eds.) *Handan diqu minsu jilu* (Investigations of popular customs of the Handan area). Tianjin guji chubanshe. A volume in the *Huabei nongcun minjian wenhua yanjiu congshu*, edited by Ou Danian (Daniel L. Overmyer) and Fan Lizhu. (*Chen* is the name of an ancient state in the area of modern Henan. *Taihao* is the name of another ancient deity who became associated with Fuxi, Nüwa’s consort. The festival in Huaiyang County of Henan is called a “Dragon-flower Assembly”, and the locals call the Goddess Wangmu niangniang, both of which are reminiscent of Ming sectarian terms).

its head. People bring fried pancakes and eggs to this festival which they throw into the incense burners to cook and then take home to eat in the belief that they can bring healing and long life.

At Tongbo County in Henan another ancient deity is worshiped, Pangu, who is believed to have created the world and all things in it. There is a Mount Pangu here on which a temple has been built where a three- to five-day annual festival is held in his honor, beginning on lunar 3/3. Gao Youpeng has written a detailed description of this festival based on his own fieldwork, noting the types of worshipers and activities involved, the petitions made to the god, etc., as will be discussed in a later chapter of the present book. In his survey of the historical and textual background of this cult, Gao notes that Pangu mythology was set in this Tongbo area in the Three Kingdoms period (220–280 CE), but we know that Pangu has long been worshiped in other areas of China as well.

The evidence for these cults of ancient deities is suggestive, but not conclusive, because while there is no doubt that the gods are old, we do not have dates for the beginnings of the festivals in their honor. Nonetheless, some of the myths and symbols in the later festivals, based on oral traditions, do remind us of aspects of earlier myths, such as the connection of Nüwa with snakes.²

The earliest notice we have of village community rituals is in Chapter 10 of the *Lunyu* (Analects) of Confucius, where we are told that when villagers carried out a *nuo* exorcism ritual the “Master put on his court robe and stood at the eastern steps of his house (to watch),” presumably to protect the spirits of his ancestors. *Nuo* is the most common early term for community rituals, rituals that were also carried out at the imperial court in the Han period, as has been discussed in detail by Derk Bodde. The court ritual, observed by the emperor, involved officials and scores of young eunuchs beating drums in a dramatic procession at the end of the lunar year to “... expel evil demons from the palace.” This ritual, called the Great Exorcism (*Da Nuo*), was led by an exorcist holding a lance and shield followed by twelve palace

² Zou and Wang, *Chen Chu wenhua*, pp. 299–300 and Gao Youpeng, *Miaohui wenhua*, pp. 279–297. For general discussions of the myths concerning these deities, see Derk Bodde, “Myths of Ancient China”, in S. N. Kramer (ed.) (1961) *Mythologies of the Ancient World*. Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday and Company, Inc., and A. Birrell (1993) *Chinese Mythology: An Introduction*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

attendants dressed as mythical animals, holding torches, dancing and shouting violent imprecations, all with the goal of driving away harmful forces to reestablish order, tranquility and harmony. Bodde comments that "...there is every reason to believe that the court Exorcism was paralleled by lesser but essentially similar ceremonies performed in private homes throughout the land."³

Indeed, by the Han there were some community shrines for local protective spirits, such as a deified local king named Liu Zhang in Langye Commandery in what is now Shandong Province, as we learn from the seminal work of Poo Mu-chou on early local religious practices. People in several areas of what is now north China built shrines for this spirit, made ceremonial carriages for him and "celebrated with feasts and songs for several days...saying that there was a deity who responds quickly to inquiries about one's fortune."⁴

During the Han, people organized *she* (local community altars) in their villages. *She* altars had earlier been for the worship of the earth, but in the Han developed into cults of the 'Lord of the She' that protected local populations and, in some cases, represented deceased humans. Some figures, known as Immortals, also came to be worshiped if they were believed to be efficacious, so some of the elements of veneration of local protective deities were already established by the Han.

For 3 BCE there is evidence of a large-scale procession through twenty-six commanderies by worshipers of the Queen Mother of the West, but it was not based in a local community so is not directly relevant here. Other early evidence for ritual processions concerns veneration of the Lord Buddha on his birthday by parades of images in south China in the third and fourth centuries, and in the fourth century also in the north. These images were carried on carts, as they had been earlier in India, and could also involve small platforms carried on men's shoulders. By the Northern Wei period (386–534), such processions involved banners, incense, acrobatics, musicians and chanting by monks and nuns. These large and elaborate processions were organized by monasteries, but provided an opportunity for ordinary people to gain merit by worshiping the images as they passed by. In

³ D. Bodde (1975) *Festivals in Classical China: New Year and Other Annual Observances During the Han Dynasty, 206 BC-AD 220*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, pp. 75–85.

⁴ Poo, Mu-chou (1998) *In Search of Personal Welfare: a View of Ancient Chinese Religion*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, pp. 147–148.

them we see many elements that were later included in local community observances, which also involved processions of images, musicians and floats borne on shoulders in honor of the birthday of a god. Here and elsewhere, traditional Chinese culture owed much to India.⁵

Rituals at community shrines continued in the following centuries, with their most common designation being *ji she*, 'to make offerings at the community altar', with such altars sometimes called *tushe* or 'she altar of the earth', or associated with large trees. Through such offerings people hoped to gain peace, security and longevity. There were also old temples called *miao*, such as a temple for the God of the Northern Peak that was rebuilt in the Zhenguan period of the Tang dynasty (627–650) in Ding Prefecture in Zhili Province. There was still a Northern Peak shrine in that prefecture in 1163.⁶

There is evidence for cults of three old gods in Shanxi that have recently been studied by Marianne Bujard, Tracy Miller and Anning Jing, respectively the Goddess Chenbao (Jewel of Chen) at Baoji, the Sage Mother of the Jinci shrine near Taiyaun, and the Shuishen (Water God), whose temple is associated with the Guangsheng Monastery in the Huo Mountain range in Hongtong County. Temples for all of these deities were first built by officials, national or local, but later their worship was continued by local people. We will see that such popular continuation of cults begun earlier by officials or clergy was a common pattern but here, as elsewhere, evidence for early participation by local communities is unclear. One can only suggest that the connection between earlier and later phases of these cults may have been local oral tradition.

The oldest of these three cults is that for Lady Chenbao, who was included in imperial worship as early as the Qin and Han periods, and

⁵ Lai Ming-chiu (1999) "On the Image Procession in China from the Second to the Sixth Centuries AD: An Interpretation of an Elephant Sculpture at the Kwongwangshan Site", in Frederick Hok-ming Cheung and Ming-chiu Lai (eds.) *Politics and Religion in Ancient and Medieval Europe and China*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, pp. 53–60. During the fifth and sixth centuries lay people in rural north China also participated in groups and assemblies to finance and dedicate Buddhist images and stelae. These groups, led by monks, also performed "Bathing of the Buddha" rituals in honor of the Buddha's birthday and ceremonies to dedicate new images. On this see Liu Shufen (1995) "Art, Ritual and Society: Buddhist Practice in Rural China during the Northern Dynasties". *Asia Major* 8(1): 19–49.

⁶ *Dingzhou zhi*, (History of Ding Prefecture) 1849 edition, 1: 476, 463. Of course, to orthodox Buddhists the Buddha is not a god, but for many ordinary folk this distinction was not clear, so it was not difficult for them to incorporate the example of these early processions into the worship of their gods.

for whom a temple was built at the end of the third century CE. There is evidence for temples for her in the Baoji area dated 527, 1593 and 1739, with a temple supported by local folk built in 1850. By the seventeenth century, she was associated with a male deity originally from Hebei, Lord She. Fieldwork conducted in the 1990s by Bujard and her Chinese colleagues showed “that the cult was still alive in the area where it originated 2,700 years ago” (p. 131). There are good descriptions of modern festivals for her directed by a female spirit-medium, but no evidence is presented of popular participation before the nineteenth century. These modern festivals will be discussed below.⁷

The Jinci (Memorial Shrine of Jin) is located at springs that form the source of the Jin River eleven miles southwest of Taiyuan, the modern capital of Shanxi Province. The first shrine there was dedicated to Shu Yu of Tang, the founder of the old state of Jin in the Zhou period, with offerings also made to the Spirit of the Jin Springs. In the eleventh century CE, a large temple was built on this site dedicated to a Sage Mother who was believed to control the springs on which irrigation of crops in the area depended. Her importance for the local economy and people was ratified by imperial titles bestowed on her in the Song and Ming periods, so the old cult of Shu Yu was gradually superseded.

There is evidence from the eleventh century for the participation of local villages in building an addition to this temple and for a new legend depicting the Goddess as originally having been a local girl who provided water for the horse of a figure dressed in white. For this she was given a whip and told that if she put it in a vat, water would naturally pour forth. The Sage Mother’s temple was believed to be at the mouth of this vat. We have noted above similar legends in Hebei. Such legends are certainly indirect evidence of the participation of local people in worship of the goddess in the Ming period, but more than that one cannot say.⁸

⁷ M. Bujard (1998) “Le Joyau de Chen: Culte Historique—Culte Vivant”. *Cahiers d’Extreme-Asie* 10: 131–181.

⁸ T. G. Miller (2004) “Water Sprites and Ancestor Spirits: Reading the Architecture of Jinci”. *The Art Bulletin* 86(1): 6–30. This article is based on the author’s 2000 doctoral dissertation at the University of Pennsylvania. In 2007 Professor Miller published a beautiful book on the Jinci Shrine, with many diagrams and photos, including a photo of a large hall of this shrine that was built in 1052. See her *The Divine Nature of Power: Chinese Ritual Architecture at the Sacred Site of Jinci* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007). The photo is on p. 104.

A sure sign that ritual festivals are being held is the presence of opera stages on temple grounds; there is evidence that there were such stages in Shanxi in about 1007–1020 during the Northern Song dynasty.⁹

The Water God temple in Hongtong County was first built in the twelfth century and then rebuilt after an earthquake in 1319–1324. It was dedicated to the God of Huo Springs, springs that were important to this area as a source for crop irrigation. This temple was managed and renovated by officials responsible for the Northern Canal and the irrigation that depended on it. Anning Jing's study is based primarily on the extensive murals that still exist in this temple as well as on stone inscriptions, which indicate that by the early fourteenth century there were large temple festivals in honor of the god's birthday on lunar 3/18. He translates one such inscription, dated 1319, as follows:

According to the old people, on every eighteenth of the third month, when the flowers are in full bloom, it is time for people to gather together and celebrate. People come from distant cities and towns and neighboring villages. The rich ride in carts or on horseback, the modest promenade with walking sticks. Men bring with them their wives and children, and the old and the weak. What a joyful throng! People vie with each other in offering wine, food, incense and money to the god to express their gratitude. [The administrative units of] the two canals sponsor ritual sacrifices and performances. The celebration lasts for several days. People enjoy themselves to their heart's content, and they cannot tear themselves away from the festival. This has become a custom.¹⁰

For the Northern Song period Kanai Noriyuki notes community altar rituals at Changan and Handan, but does not mention the term *miao* (temple) for such local observances.

However, in the Southern Song local practices developed the forms that have in many ways and areas persisted until the present, though how they were transmitted to the north is not yet clear to me. These forms include temples and festivals for gods believed to be deified human beings, the participation by all members of communities in festivals for these gods, including local gentry and officials, and the hiring of Buddhist monks and Daoist priests to assist in the rituals by

⁹ Personal communication from Ms. Mary Tuen Wai Yeung, November 29, 2006. Ms. Yeung is a former Ph.D. student at the University of British Columbia who has completed her dissertation on relationships between rituals and opera in Guangdong and Fujian.

¹⁰ Anning Jing, *The Water God's Temple*, pp. 22–23; cited in the Introduction of the present book.

virtue of their possession and recitation of sacred texts. The organization of temples and festivals was by community leaders, who might seek imperial recognition for their local gods. The court had granted titles to mountain gods in earlier periods but, beginning in the eleventh century, many more were granted, and to gods believed to be deified humans who had manifested miraculous power. In some cases the government provided funds for temple repair, and asked local officials to report the names of effective gods. In 1075, for example, the court granted titles to thirty-seven gods recommended in such reports. The first evidence we have for these patterns is from the South and East; since the mid-Ming period they have been found in the North as well but with different local deities. The best studies of the new developments in the Southern Song are by Kanai Noriyuki and Valerie Hansen, with Hansen more focused on the South.¹¹

A widespread local deity worshiped by both officials and commoners was the City God (*Chenghuang shen*), the first references to which were in the sixth century, and which over a long period come to replace *she* community spirits, ancient gods of local territories worshiped at outdoor altars made of earth, with stone pillars. *She* spirits were not personalized in any way and, by Han times, their worship was in the hands of local officials. City Gods, however, were believed to be the spirits of specific individuals, represented by human-like images housed in large, decorated temples. As David Johnson writes, “Prayers were offered there constantly, and worship was not controlled by officials. Furthermore, even in early times the *chenghuang shen* was believed to have a ‘birthday’, which was the occasion of the most important ceremonies in his honor... The City God signals the advent of a new religious idea in China.” Most of the earliest City God cults were from the lower Yangzi area, but “14.3 % were in the North.” Though worship of City Gods was at first promoted by officials, it came to be supported by ordinary people as well. We shall see that some City God temples came to be located in villages, beyond the county seat towns where local official lived. The importance of this cult for the history of local religious observances is that already by the Tang period participation in

¹¹ On this see V. Hansen (1990) *Changing Gods in Medieval China, 1127–1276*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, and Kanai Noriyuki (1979) “Sōdai no sonsha to shashin” (Song dynasty village communities and their gods). *Tōyōshi Kenkyū* 38(2): 218–245. The above discussion is based on Hansen, pp. 79–81.

its festivals was by the whole community, and these festivals involved large processions, which served as a model for those of other gods.¹²

Another well-known deity whose worship was supported by both officials and commoners was the God of the Eastern Peak, for whom there were village temples already in the Northern Song period, (920–1127 CE), as for example at Zhou village twenty-five kilometers west of Jincheng city in Shanxi. Here there was a Temple of the God of the Eastern Peak (*Dongyue miao*) that was repaired in 1082 and several times thereafter, with an opera stage constructed during the Ming. Several of its buildings, bell towers, the main gate and the opera stage are still extant, but the main hall is now used as a warehouse. According to a Qianlong period inscription (1736–1795), in addition to an image of the God of the Eastern Peak this temple contained images of the God Who Increases Blessings (a wealth god), King Wu, Erlang, and King Guan. An annual festival for the Eastern Peak deity was held on lunar 3/28 with operas performed to offer thanks for blessings. There are records of five other Northern Song Eastern Peak temples in Shanxi, at least two of them located in villages, so the worship of this god was widespread. These temples were constructed with official support, but the village locations, deities, festivals and opera performances indicate participation by ordinary folk as well. There was also an Eastern Peak temple in Ding Prefecture, Zhili, built in 1302.¹³

Another Song period temple in Shanxi was the Temple for King Tang that was built in 1210 at Xiajiao village in Yangcheng County, which according to thirteen stele remaining from it contained images of not only King Tang, but also of a mountain god, a Tudi locality god, and the deities of oxen and horses that were prayed to for peace and prosperity for both humans and animals. There were also images there of Yellow and White Dragons which were petitioned for rain, which was the major ritual activity here. There is, thus, ample evidence for local community temples and rituals well before the late traditional period that is the main concern of this book.¹⁴

¹² D. Johnson (1985) “The City God Cults of Tang and Song China”. *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 45(2): 363–457. Quoted passages from pp. 395–397, 408.

¹³ Che Wenming (1997) “Shanxi Jincheng Zhou cun Dongyue miao kao”. *Min-su ch’ü-i* 110: 21–38. King Wu was the deified son of a Zhou King; there are several possible identities for Erlang, but the author is not sure which one applies here. The Ding Prefecture temple is noted in the *Dingzhou zhi* 1: 462.

¹⁴ Feng Junjie (1997) “Yangcheng xian Xiajiaocun Tangwangmiao ji kaolun” (An investigation of ritual offerings at the King Tang temple in Xiajiao village in Yangcheng County). *Min-su ch’ü-i* 107/108: 3–36.

In their excellent and detailed study of Yuehu ritual musicians in Shanxi, Qiao Jian, Liu Guanwen and Li Tiansheng note the term *saishe* for community rituals in the Tang period, which can be interpreted as to celebrate the community and its gods, a term synonymous with *shehui* (community assembly). Such assemblies held on the birthdays of the gods involved offerings of special wine and cakes and the hiring of musicians. Most of the historical sources the authors discuss are from the Southern Song, but they describe in some detail court rituals ascribed in local sources they found to the time of Emperor Huizong (r. 1101–1126), court rituals that may have influenced later community festivals. Huizong was the next-to-last emperor of the Northern Song; this material is discussed in Chapter Four of this book on Temple Festivals.¹⁵

For the succeeding Yuan period (1254–1368) Kenneth Pomeranz discusses a temple for the Dragon God built in 1315 beside a sacred well near Handan in what is now Hebei Province. This temple, at Shengjing Gang (Sacred Well Ridge), was built by two local village leaders, and was repaired in succeeding centuries by similar figures. The chief deity in it was considered by local people to be the mother of the Dragon God. As is discussed in Chapter One above, rain rituals here as elsewhere could involve widows bringing water to petition the gods.¹⁶

The Ming dynasty (1368–1644) was founded by Zhu Yuanzhang, whose capital was at Nanjing in the south; not long after he died in 1398 there was a civil war between his successors which resulted in the capital being moved north to Beijing by Emperor Yongle in 1402. This war led to the depopulation of parts of north China, including the area of Zhili (modern Hebei), so the new Emperor decreed the forced migration of large numbers of people from Shanxi to Zhili who, in turn, brought their lineages, customs and gods with them; so it is that even now many Hebei villagers trace their origins to Shanxi. On another level early Ming government policies directly influenced local society and religion, because Zhu Yuanzhang as Emperor Taizu ordered that altars for tutelary gods and for appeasing wandering ghosts be installed in every county and village, ideally with one altar for each one hundred households. This system was to include earlier community religious associations, called

¹⁵ See their *Yuehu: tianye diaocha yu lishi zhuizong*, noted above.

¹⁶ Kenneth Pomeranz (1991) “Water to Iron, Widows to Warlords: the Handan Rain Shrine in Modern Chinese History”. *Late Imperial China* 12(1): 62–99.

hui. The Emperor also established a system of village elders and headmen for overseeing such community affairs as maintaining irrigation works, arbitrating disputes and punishing those who committed minor offences. These local leaders were also to promote mutual assistance in agriculture and ceremonies, and for providing advice where needed. They were responsible for units of one hundred households divided into sets of ten and were assisted by neighborhood heads. These regulations were changed or disregarded during the Ming period, but their effect of reinforcing relative local autonomy and organization remained, and was a source of the organized structures of local community religion that are the central theme of this book.¹⁷

In what follows here I will discuss a few examples of historical references in materials about local rituals in the Ming and Qing periods, and in the section on community rituals will note such references where they appear. After discussing these examples, I survey the issue of government regulations for local religion, from the early Ming to the late twentieth century. I begin with a comprehensive statement from a history of Baoding city in Zhili/Hebei:

During the Ming and Qing almost all villages [in this area] had temples. Some villages had several temples; even the smallest village has *Wudao* (Five Roads) or Locality God temples. Only one village (Baituan cun) had three large monasteries. There were more than eighty temples in Baoding City, including nine for the Emperor Guan. Except for a few Protestant and Roman Catholic Christians, almost every family worshipped Buddhas [deities]. Due to the Xinhai revolution [of 1911] and the revolution to renew the people most temples were turned to other uses or were destroyed, with a few changed into schools. According to the 1931 Mancheng County history, in the past there had been fifty-five monasteries and [Daoist] temples, all with resident clerics. But after [the reforms of] Guangxu 33 (1907) many were turned into schools, so that by 1931 there were only eleven left, with twenty-five monks, and twenty-nine nuns in four cloisters. Nonetheless, a history of Baoding states that in 1938 there were still 15,188 Buddhists (*Fojiao tu*) in the county, 7,834 men and 7,534 women, figures that include lay practitioners. In 1938 there were still four Guandi temples, another for Wenchang, the god of scholars, a Guanyin temple, and a Grandmother (*Nainai miao*) where the originally sectarian goddess Wusheng laomu was venerated. By 1949 there were just seven temples left.

¹⁷ D. Twitchett and F. W. Mote (eds.) (1998) *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 8, The Ming Dynasty, 1368–1644, Part 2*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 433, 458–470.

This history also states that while in the past there had been thirty-two Daoist temples, by 1947 only two were left, and the local Daoist priests had all changed to other occupations. In 1900 when the United Army of Eight Nations occupied Baoding [to put down the Boxer uprising] many monasteries and temples were destroyed, so at that time there were only about ten monks and nuns left [in the city].

The editors of this account add that:

Among the people worship of the [local] gods was very confused, but some people clearly distinguished between these gods and Buddhist and Daoist deities. There were gods everywhere. Everything was controlled by a deity; mountains and rivers, animals, plants and humans all could become gods for which temples were built to worship them. In Baoding and its surrounding villages there were many folk shrines (*minjian shenci*), such as those for the Horse King [god charged with protecting domestic animals], Dragon Kings, Earth and Mountain gods, the Bazha (deities responsible for controlling insects that damage crops), Guandi, [the divine physician] Liu Shouzhen, a temple to Confucius, one for Wenchang, and others for the Three Star gods [of longevity, prosperity and happiness], Zhenwu, Erlang, shrines for the worthy and good, Lord Yang and others. Most of these temples no longer exist.¹⁸

I have found only a few references to Ming period local community temples in this area, such as a temple for the Emperor Guan in Ding Prefecture of Zhili that was repaired in 1474, and another that was repaired in 1509, with evidence that it had existed as early as the Chenghua period (1465–1487). There was also a temple for the Medicine King in nearby Gu'an County that was renovated in 1623 and several times thereafter through 1942.¹⁹

The information I have found about local temples and festivals during the Qing period (1644–1911) that immediately precedes the chronological focus of this book will be noted in the discussion of ritual festivals below. For the Minguo Republican period (1911–1949 on the China mainland) specifically historical information about community temples can be found in some local histories, chiefly in lists of temples that had

¹⁸ Li Guojun and Chen Qijun (1989) *Lishi wenhua mingcheng Baoding* (Baoding: a city of history and culture). Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, pp. 376–377; *Baoding-shizhi* (History of Baoding city) (1999 edition), pp. 552–554.

¹⁹ *Dingzhou zhi* 1: 484, 457; Zhao Fuxing (2006) “Dingsheng xianghuo wubainian” (Five hundred years of flourishing worship), in *Gu'an diqu minsu ji lu* (Records of the popular culture of Gu'an [County], Tianjin guji chubanshe, pp. 69–78. (In the series noted above, note 1).

been destroyed by the dates of their publication. The information about temples in Mancheng County of Hebei noted above is corroborated in the 1931 edition of the county history, which states that by that date only eleven of an original fifty-five temples remained, those for the City God, the Daoist deity Zhenwu, the bodhisattva Dizang (responsible for the spirits of the dead), Emperor Guan, the god of a 'Dragon Spring', a Dragon Mother and a few Buddhist temples, including one for Guanyin.

The information about local temples in the 1936 history of Zhuo County in Hebei is similar to that for Mancheng; it lists the names and locations of about sixty temples. For our purposes here it is sufficient to note that twenty-nine of these temples are said to be "now destroyed" (*jin fei*), with another turned into a school and one used as a community hall. The 1932 history of nearby Xushui County tells much the same story but with more detail, as will be cited below. In Ding County, also near Baoding, there were 435 temples in 62 villages before 1882, but by 1928 that number had declined to 104, due to destruction and being replaced by schools. In another Hebei county, Raoyang, the number of temples also declined in the 1920s and 1930s, as part of a downward slide of society and economy. The Japanese invasion and occupation of north China in 1937–1945 also contributed to the weakening of local community traditions. As will be noted below, in some villages in Hebei the last temple festivals were held in 1937–1938. During the Japanese occupation Chinese military forces sometimes used temples as barracks, which could lead to their destruction by Japanese bombing and artillery. After 1945 warfare continued unabated in the civil war between Nationalist and Communist armies, so destruction of village communities continued as well. The history of local religion after 1949 is largely the history of government policies toward it, and attempts to revive temples and festivals, both of which are discussed below.²⁰

²⁰ *Manchengxianzhi* (History of Mancheng County), 1931 edition, juan 8, pp. 249–250; *Zhuoxianzhi* (History of Zhuo County) 1936 edition, juan 1, pp. 98–104; *Xushuixianzhi* (History of Xushui County, 1932 edition, juan 4, pp. 154–185; S. D. Gamble (1968) *Ting Hsien: a North China Rural Community*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, pp. 405–409. First published in 1954. Gamble relied heavily on the work of his research colleague Li Jinghan, whose book supports the figures given above, but provides much more detail about the temples and their festivals, cited below in the section of this book on community temples. See his (1933) *Dingxian shehui gaikuang diaocha* (An investigation of the general situation of Ding County society), Beijing, Daxue chubanshe, pp. 422–439; for the situation in Raoyang County, see

Government Policies toward Local Religion before 1949: A Summary

Before entering the complex world of Ming and Qing local festivals, gods and temples we need to clarify the official policies and practices that impinged upon them, the general spirit of which is summed up in statements from the Western Jin and Tang periods, dated respectively 265 and 626 CE, “[If local practices] are not in the ritual statutes, get rid of them,” and “Illegally established unauthorized sacrifices and prayers not in accord with proper ritual standards are all prohibited.” The point here is that only ritual activities endorsed by the government should be practiced, a principle that has continued to be followed in the China mainland until today. For the present book it is important to note Chinese governments have always been particularly concerned about large gatherings, such as those at temple festivals and the procession associated with them. As Susan Naquin comments, “Hostile to any form of organization among the public at large, Ming and Qing states actively discouraged public gatherings of any sort... After 1644... imperial pronouncements against pilgrimage and religious associations reflected particular concerns [such as] a recognition of the genuine power of religious ideas and organizations, their power to challenge social norms, received wisdom and the state itself, and an assumption that ordinary people were foolish and easily duped, a resulting fear and distrust of clerical and religious leaders, and a preference for monitoring, controlling, or co-opting religious activities. [Such assumptions also included] suspicions about any gathering of large numbers of people and any activities that took place in temples, disapproval of religious processions, and a general preference for women to remain within the home.”²¹

I have earlier published a study of Chinese government policies and attitudes toward what I then called “popular religion” using sources from the late Zhou through the Qing periods, but focusing on ritual regulations of the Ming. Following are passages from that article:

Edward Friedman, Paul G. Pickowicz and Mark Selden (1991) *Chinese Village, Socialist State*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, pp. 12–24.

²¹ Lei Wen (2005) “Tang Song shiqi difang cisi zhengce de bianhua” (Changes in government policies toward local rituals in the Tang and Song periods). *Tang yanjiu* (Journal of Tang Studies) 11: 269–294. The quoted lines are on pages 274–276; Susan Naquin (2000) *Peking Temples and City Life, 1400–1900*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, pp. xxx, 555.

The attitude of the Chinese state toward the religious activities of the people was an expression of its own religious commitments. From its beginnings in the Shang period (c. 1500–1050 BCE), much of the authority of the state was understood to be derived from the ancestors and deities worshiped by the ruler and his officials.

In theory, there was a state monopoly on the worship of the most powerful deities, and the right to worship other gods was delegated by the ruler. The state itself represented cosmic order in human society, and the rituals it performed were direct evocations of that order, intended to bring harmony and prosperity to the whole realm. The state recognized that some sacrifices to local deities and ancestors were also necessary, but to be legitimate, they had to be prescribed by the state and thus performed as an extension of its own ritual obligations. The rituals sanctioned by the state for emperor, officials and people were intended to take care of all religious needs; anything beyond them was superfluous and technically illegal. The religious practices of the common people were supposed to be limited to sacrifices to local gods of the soil and grain, the stove god, local abandoned spirits of the dead and two generations of ancestors. In fact, of course, there was a whole realm of unofficial popular religion the state was unable to control. There were many sporadic attempts to suppress local cults, and practices such as shamanism were at times specifically prohibited by law, but the state lacked sufficient local control to enforce its regulations consistently. Its officials turned instead to recognizing the cults of certain popular deities by giving them imperial name plaques and listing them in official registers. Such recognition began in the Han period, but was intensified during the Song. As a result, deities supported by responsible local elites were brought into the state system, thereby both extending its reach and providing additional means of legitimate worship for the people.

In general, beyond the worship of imperial ancestors the state cult was a cosmic religion, devoted to deities representing natural forces, such as the soil, mountains and rivers. The beliefs of the people, on the other hand, were personalized, devoted to deities who had once been human beings.

The best sources for our understanding of state attitudes toward the religious activities of the people is official expositions of *li*, ritual and rules of propriety, which were produced by most dynasties beginning in the Han. One of the most detailed is the *Da Ming Huidian*, the 'Collected Statutes of the Great Ming [dynasty]', the edition of 1587. In Chapter 81 of this compilation we read that all local officials are to, "... establish altars and temples and offer sacrifices to the spirits of land and grain, wind, clouds, thunder, rain, mountains, rivers, walls and moats [City Gods], Confucius, military banners and uncared for ghosts. The common people are to make offerings to such ghosts and to the spirits of their parents and grandparents. They may also sacrifice to the spirit of the stove. All other sacrifices are prohibited.

In Chapter 93 we are told that local officials are to,

...seek out spirits of heaven and earth to which sacrifices should be offered, [such as those of] famous mountains and rivers, sage emperors, enlightened kings, loyal officials and brave officers, and all who have performed meritorious service for the nation, and who have acted in loyalty and love among the people. [The names of] all [whose merits] are verified are to be recorded in the ritual statutes, and officials should sacrifice to them regularly according to the seasons.

A related decree noted that, “As for spirits who are not listed, but which in the past have made a meritorious contribution to the people, whose accomplishments are well-known, even though they are not sacrificed to [by officials], it is prohibited that their shrines be destroyed.

Here we see that some forms of unofficial local religion were protected because they supported established values. People were also permitted to worship “the spirits of the village and community”, as is described in Chapter 94 of the *Huidian*:

Each 100 families of the people of every village is to establish an altar to worship the spirits of the five types of soil and the five grains, solely to pray that the alternation of rainfall and sunshine may be timely, and that the five grains be abundant. Each year [the representative of] one household will in rotation be the group head (*huishou*) and will constantly keep the altar area clean. For the two community *she* sacrifices in the spring and fall [the head and others] are to prepare the sacrificial offerings in advance. When the day arrives [all] gather to make offerings. For these sacrifices use one sheep and one pig; wine, fruit, incense and candles may also be used as appropriate. When the sacrifices are finished, then carry out the ritual wine drinking in the assembly. At this meeting, first order one man to read the oath of restraining the strong and supporting the weak.

These instructions were rarely fully accepted or implemented by local people because they were far too restrictive and austere; they were intended to prohibit precisely the colorful and noisy celebrations that were believed to renew the vitality of both the community and its gods. Nonetheless, the organization and preparation required by these instructions formed the official background of the rituals and beliefs discussed in this book.²²

Government policies toward local communities included establishing official shrines for deities worshiped by both officials and people, which in the Ming included City Gods in cities and county seat towns, Wenchang, the Literary God, in public schools, and Guandi, the Emperor

²² This material is taken from my article (1989/1990), “Attitudes Toward Popular Religion in Ritual Texts of the Chinese State: The Collected Statutes of the Great Ming”. *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 5: 191–221. The quoted material is from pp. 192–193 and 203–207. See p. 215 for information on Song recognition of local deities.

Guan, a symbol of loyalty and righteousness. Other gods to be venerated by officials in the north that were also worshiped by local people were Zhenwu, a martial deity effective against demons, and the God of Taishan, the Eastern Peak. There were also official rituals for local mountains and rivers, and the powers of wind, clouds, thunder and rain, which the people might also worship, but in personified form. As is noted above, families and communities were of course expected to make offerings to a limited range of ancestors, the spirit of the stove, the powers of soil and grain and to abandoned ghosts. Cults of these deities were the foundation of local official worship, usually named in local histories, but of course there was a wider range of local deities who had been granted imperial titles who might also be worshiped by officials. Deities not included in the official registers might be tolerated or even supported by some officials, but were subject to suppression by the more rigorously orthodox.²³

As is noted above, one method used by the Ming government to control local ritual practices was to revive the old *she* cult in the form of community altars for groups of 110 household units where offerings were to be made to the spirits of earth and grain. However, even by the Song local people began to build shrine buildings which included both these altars and the images of local deities. Kenneth Dean provides a quote from Hu Bingwen (1250–1333), a thirteenth century local official stationed in Fujian in the South who had this to say about such practices:

The altar of the soil is part of the ancient rites. It consist of an [earthen] altar with no building upon it. It is appropriate that wood [i.e., a tree] should act as ruler of earth [in other words, the mound of earth should have a tree upon it]. Nowadays, in the *she* altars of the common people, they usually paint things inside the rooms of a house and do not set up [outdoor] altars. This is not the ancient way. They paint an old white haired man with long eyebrows and reverently refer to him as the Duke of the *She* Altar of the Soil... Moreover, they provide him with an old wife. All this is absolutely not in accordance with ancient ways.

Dean quotes additional Fujian sources discussing community *she* involving carrying local gods in processions around the territory and lamenting the practice of worshipping images of gods inside covered

²³ For examples of such suppression in the Song, see Hansen, *Changing Gods*, pp. 84–86, and Overmyer, *Attitudes Toward Popular Religion*, pp. 216–217.

buildings. So, in this area the outdoor altar to an impersonal force was superseded by temples housing images of deities. We shall see that this happened in the north as well.²⁴

Official policies toward local ritual practices remained essentially unchanged through the nineteenth century but, at the end of the Qing period, a new type of intelligentsia appeared that was influenced by foreign ideas and education, by the abolishing of the civil service examination system in 1905, and by increasing urbanization. Some of these men came to reject tradition and the rural culture of which it was a part. For them, the issue was no longer controlling unauthorized worship of unregistered gods, but discrediting such practices as superstitious obstacles to modernization. In this spirit they urged that temples be turned into schools or simply destroyed. In part due to the influence of these reformers, in 1901 a court edict “called for the building of modern schools in every county,” and in 1904 the government published new regulations for schools that approved the idea of using temple property to build them.²⁵

Views and policies such as these led to “anti-superstition” campaigns which resulted in sharp declines in the number of temples, as we have seen above in the case of Ding County. In Wangdu County of Hebei, a 1905 study revealed that 59 of 150 villages had some temple lands. Of these 30 were taken over by villages for schools, and another 23 to pay for taxes and other expenses; only the remaining six continued to be used as temples. This loss of temples of course led to a decline in the number of local festivals. This process was carried out in other areas of north China as well.²⁶

The Guomindang government continued and intensified attempts to suppress local religious traditions, particularly with a 1928 policy statement on “Standards for retaining or abolishing gods and shrines,” which began with the lines: “Superstition is an obstacle to progress, and the power of the gods is a way of keeping the people ignorant. Despite

²⁴ Kenneth Dean (1998) “Transformations of the *She* (Altars of the Soil) in Fujian”. *Cahiers d' Extrême-Asie* 10: 25–26, 34–35.

²⁵ John K. Fairbank and Kwang-Ching Liu (eds.) (1980) *The Cambridge History of China. Volume 11: Late Ch'ing, 1800–1911, Part 2*, pp. 555–569; Vincent Goossaert (2006) “1898: The Beginning of the End for Chinese Religion?” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 65(2): 307–336.

²⁶ Prasenjit Duara (1988) *Culture, Power and the State: Rural North China, 1900–1942*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, pp. 149–153.

China's ancient civilization, because education is not yet spread widely, the poison of superstition is deeply embedded in people's hearts. In this age of cultural renewal and scientific enlightenment, superstition will bring ridicule to the nation." In this document cults for all local gods are to be abolished except those for human sages such as Yu the Great, Confucius and Guan Yu. In that same year laws based on this document were passed, ordering police to abolish astrologers, shamans, geomancers and "all who make their living by spreading superstition" by making them change to other professions "within three months." People were forbidden to hire such specialists, and stores selling "superstitious books and implements" were ordered closed. Other laws were passed to control clergy, temples and monasteries. These measures were the background of the even more strict policies implemented after 1949.²⁷

The Communist Government of the People's Republic established in 1949 sought a complete re-organization of Chinese society and economic activities, a re-organization that very much included religion. Only five religious traditions were recognized as legal in their state-approved forms, Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, Roman Catholicism and Protestantism; local community traditions were ruled to be "feudal superstition", not religion, and hence continued to be considered illegal, as they had been for centuries.

During the Cultural Revolution period of 1966–1976 all religious activities were suppressed, temples were closed, images destroyed and their priests and caretakers dispersed. However, after some of the pressure was released, beginning in 1978 temples and festivals began to be restored in some areas where local officials permitted. In 1982 the Communist Party issued Document 19, which stated that its policy on religion was to protect and respect freedom of religious belief, but also continued to guarantee the freedom not to believe, and reaffirmed that only the "Five Big Religions" were legitimate. Though this document continued the old emphasis on control, against the background of the Cultural Revolution it appeared as a limited liberalization, and

²⁷ Ryan Dunch (1991) "Religion and the State in China Under Three Regimes". University of British Columbia, pp. 11–17. Unpublished; see also Prasenjit Duara (1991) "Knowledge and Power in the Discourse of Modernity: The Campaigns Against Popular Religion in Early Twentieth Century China". *The Journal of Asian Studies* 50(1): 67–83.

religious activities began to revive in many areas of the country. As will be discussed below, temples were rebuilt, some with the support of local officials, and festivals were resumed.²⁸

²⁸ For a good summary of these and later developments, see Pitman Potter, “Belief in Control: Regulation of Religion in China”, in *Religion in China Today*, edited by Daniel L. Overmyer (Cambridge University Press, 2003). First published as a special issue of *The China Quarterly, New Series*, no. 3 (2003). The situation of local religion in China after 1980 is referred to in the following chapters.

CHAPTER THREE

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

As indicated in the Introduction, the order and organization of north China community rituals were rooted in that of the families and communities themselves, which were organized as much as possible for their mutual survival, survival that depended on cooperation and leadership. Water and good land were usually scarce, and disease, bandits and political disorder were often a threat, so people had to focus on what seemed to further their security. Until well into the twentieth century, this task was carried out in villages that were largely self governing, with leaders selected by the local people themselves who served as intermediaries between them and the county government. County magistrates and their limited number of assistants were responsible for tens of thousands of people living in hundreds of villages, so they welcomed such local cooperation. In addition to assisting in collecting their own taxes, people were responsible for organizing their own associations for crop watching and protection from bandits, irrigation and the expenses of weddings and funerals. Village mediators dealt with all kinds of local disputes, including those involving accidental deaths; everything short of murder and suspected rebellion against government authority. It was in this context that villagers built temples for protective deities and organized festivals to support them and petition their aid. What we call religion was here, as elsewhere, an aspect of a larger effort for individual and community survival, for which planning and organization were essential.

After a brief discussion of village governance, this chapter discusses the types and activities of the leaders of community-wide rituals as a kind of sub-set of that governance focused on trying to gain access to what people believed was another dimension of effective power. This discussion proceeds by geographical areas, beginning with Hebei, then moving to Shanxi, Shandong and beyond. Of course there is unavoidable overlap among the categories of festival leaders, the rituals they organized and the beliefs associated with them, but in this book these

topics are discussed in separate chapters in the interest of clarity for those of us looking on from the outside.¹

Huaiyin Li has written a detailed study of village governance in north China based primarily on research concerning Huailu County in Hebei from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries. Li notes that "... a simple peasant in pre-Revolutionary China had little contact with government officials. Unless involved in a lawsuit or criminal case, he never visited the office of the county magistrate, the lowest level-appointee of the regular bureaucracy who oversaw hundreds of villages and an average of 250,000 people." However, "... the villages were not totally out of the government's reach... In fact, during most of imperial times, the state was able to extract enough taxes to meet its normal needs and maintain social order in most of the country. What made this possible was a wide variety of informal institutions in local communities that grew out of the interaction between government demands and local initiatives to carry out day-to-day governmental functions."²

During the Ming and Qing periods the government promoted systems of local community self-monitoring and defense called *baojia*, translated by Hucker as "Security Groups and Tithings," that were responsible as well for collecting local taxes. In the Qing period, this system co-existed with the Ming-style *lijia* 'Community Self Monitoring System', being especially responsible for local police and militia work. Ten households constituted a 'Registration Unit' (*pai*), ten such units constituted a 'Tithing' (*jia*), and ten Tithings constituted a 'Security Group' in theory encompassing 1,000 households, ideally, in a cohesive, natural geographic area.³

By the late nineteenth century this system no longer functioned, but its focus on community self-management remained. In this period, "What prevailed in local communities was a form of voluntary cooperation among villagers who shouldered administrative tasks that had been performed by the *baojia* and *lijia* personnel. The key position in the cooperation was the *xiangdi*, who acted as an intermediary between the county *yamen* [office] and his village. Chosen from local dwellers

¹ Some of the material in this chapter was published in my (2006) "Ritual Leaders in North China Local Communities in the Twentieth Century: a Report on Research in Progress". *Min-su ch'ü-i* 153: 203-263.

² Huaiyin Li (2005) *Village Governance in North China 1875-1936*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, p. 1.

³ Charles O. Hucker (1985) *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, p. 367, entry # 4465.

by annual rotation, the *xiangdi* performed a variety of tasks delegated by the county magistrate... However, the *xiangdi* was not just an agent of the government. He also served the needs of his fellow villagers and represented his community before the county *yamen*... Unlike the statutory tax system that required villagers to pay taxes individually, a common practice in Huailu and neighboring counties was for the *xiangdi* to pay in advance all of the taxes of the community members during the collection period, using public village funds or loans; he then collected his monies from individual households after the taxes had been paid... most villages in the area under study were highly cohesive communities of predominantly owner-cultivators. Endowed with a secure ecological setting where the absence of frequent natural calamities minimized migration, the villages developed over time tight kinship networks and a strong identity with the community. With the support of village conventions and shared principles, they cooperated in community projects that benefited all members.” Li notes that similar cooperative practices were common elsewhere where ecological and social factors permitted. He adds that, “The social behavior of the peasants may be seen as combining their pursuit of self-interest with their moral commitment to community norms and conventions... [which were] known to local residents as ‘village regulations’... ‘local regulations’... or ‘old regulations’ (*cungui, xianggui, jiugui*)... In dealing with complaints... the magistrate normally instructed the community leader (usually the village head) to mediate the dispute in accordance with local regulations... The villagers chose to abide by local regulations under normal conditions because conformity to such arrangements was necessary to maintain one’s social standing and economic security in the community. Anyone who failed to perform his duties as prescribed by the regulations ran the risk of being denounced by and isolated from the rest of the community, and consequently being denied access to the collectively produced goods of the group.” One might add that all of this was basic to the production of community rituals as well.⁴

During the late Qing and early Republican period of 1904–1927 the government promoted the establishing of village heads (*cunzhang*) and village primary schools, and in the 1920s and 1930s village governments were re-organized as *xiang* (townships) and taxes and levies were increased, but these heads still “... owed their loyalty primarily to

⁴ Huaiyin Li, *Village Governance*, pp. 8–14.

the community rather than the magistrate.” The central government’s continuing goal, however, was to increase its control below the county level.⁵

The titles of village leaders could differ in different areas of north China, but the tradition of village self management was much the same. Community rituals were organized primarily by family and community heads who both participated in the rituals themselves and hired Daoist priests or Buddhist monks, spirit-mediums, musicians and opera troupes to assist with them. There were resident temple managers called *miaozhu* in some local temples in China but, by the period covered by this book, they were not common. In any case, such managers were normally responsible for temple upkeep and assisting individual worshippers, not for organizing large scale festivals.⁶

Chinese local religion is based on family worship of deities and ancestors on home altars, but it also involves large-scale rituals participated in by members of the whole village or township community, on the occasion of what are believed to be the birthdays of the gods or to seek protection from droughts, epidemics and other disasters. In all cases these collective rituals invoke the power of the gods for practical goals, to ‘summon blessings and drive away harm’. Temple festivals last from three to five days, involve weeks or months of preparation, careful organization, the mobilization of large numbers of people and hiring outside specialists such as musicians and opera troupes. They also involve coordinating activities with surrounding villages and erecting temporary sheds for images of gods brought from elsewhere, as well as sheds for operas and food. The major ritual activity entails processions carrying images of the gods through the villages involved; the components and routes of these processions need to be arranged in advance. In addition, merchants come from the whole area to display their wares on mats and tables beside the roads and in the temple area. The whole affair can involve tens of thousands of worshipers and onlookers, sometimes crowded so tightly together that one can scarcely move, as I can personally attest from observations in Hebei.

As is noted in the introduction, in the north, most festivals had a three-part structure based on inviting, welcoming and seeing off the

⁵ Huaiyin Li, *Village Governance*, pp. 15–17.

⁶ On temple managers, see Vincent Goossaert (2006) “Resident Specialists and Temple Managers in Late Imperial China”. *Min-su ch’ü-i* 153: 25–68.

gods (*qingshen*, *yingshen*, *songshen*), with local variations. For the first step a list of the names of the gods being invited might be read in the *shenpeng*, the 'god shed', set up in the host temple courtyard, with altars arranged. Next a procession was formed of music and martial arts groups, portable tableaux with opera players or children portraying scenes from dramas, bearers of ritual banners and umbrellas, and sedan chairs carried by four or more men, all accompanied by firecrackers, front and rear. This procession first visited every temple in the village, perhaps beginning with that for the Locality God, Tudi, to invite the gods to descend from their seats and enter a sedan chair, to be taken to the host temple to enjoy the offerings and opera performances. (The images involved were smaller 'traveling images', *xingshen*, for use in processions). Along the way villagers would set up small offering tables with fruit and incense to welcome the gods and benefit from their presence. If other villages were involved, the procession would visit their temples as well, and then return to the god shed in the host temple courtyard, where the images would be reverently transferred to the altars, accompanied by incense and offerings from bowing worshipers. In these opening stages of the rituals such worshipers were usually the festival organizers and family heads from the host village.

For the second stage, welcoming the gods, the traveling image of the chief deity of the host temple would be brought out to the god shed to welcome its divine guests, again accompanied by incense, offerings, music, firecrackers, and the recitation of the names of the gods. The ritual proper, *zhengsai*, would then begin, with offerings, music, and the performance of operas for the enjoyment of both gods and people. At the end, the traveling images of the gods would be escorted back to their home temples in another procession. At this point the Community Heads might meet to choose the leader of the festival in the following year, usually by throwing divining blocks to see who received the most positive responses. So the relationships between local gods and their devotees were strengthened and the life force (*shengqi*) of the community renewed.

The performance of temple festivals and community rituals to petition for rain are discussed in other chapters of this book; here my focus is on leadership and organization. This chapter also includes a section on the activities of spirit-mediums in festivals in various places in the north.

Ritual Leaders in Hebei Local Communities

Since at least the early twentieth century most Hebei community rituals have been organized and led by the people themselves. Their leaders are selected from male heads of families or lineages who have good reputations and own land. These leaders at the same time may be village heads playing ritual roles. Some are involved primarily in preparation and organization, others in the performance of rituals, but these roles can overlap. Local histories reveal that there were Buddhist and Daoist temples in this area through the nineteenth century but their numbers declined due to warfare, campaigns to turn temples into schools and, after 1949, because of confiscation of temple land and the forced return of clergy to lay occupations. There is evidence for the involvement of Buddhist monks and Daoist priests in some community rituals until the 1920s and 1930s, but not much after that. The one exception to this that I know of so far is Daoist priests performing rituals and reciting scriptures at a *jiao* festival in honor of the Jade Emperor carried out jointly by five villages in Handan County in 2002, sixty years after its last performance in 1942.

On April 11, 2001, I went to Mt. Qingxu in Tang County of Hebei to observe a temple festival, accompanied by a local scholar from Baoding and Hou Jie. We traveled by jeep thirty-one kilometers from the county seat to a steep, rugged and dry mountain about 800 meters high on which there were many small temples and shrines. Thousands of people were climbing to the main complex of temples on the peak, stopping to bow and offer incense at other shrines as they went. There were no monks or priests to be seen; we were told that this festival was carried out by the people themselves, organized by heads of villages below the mountain, one of whom led the way for us. The Baoding local scholar, Shi Bing, has written a detained thirty-nine page report on this festival based on local histories, stone inscriptions and interviews with nine people aged fifty to seventy-nine. Her report is titled *Tangxian Qingxu shan miaohui yu Ge Gong cun* (*Temple Festivals on Mount Qingxu in Tang County and Ge Gong Village*, 2001). (This village is named after the fourth century scholar Ge Hong, whose family lived there. There is a temple on the mountain dedicated to him and his wife as protective deities.)

The material in this report about the leaders of these festivals reads as follows:

In the past Buddhist monks and Daoist priests lived in [local] temples, and temple festivals were always organized by them. Each temple managed in its own finances. At that time temples and their locations all had caretakers. However, when the 'Eight Nation Army' invaded [during the Boxer uprising], many temples were destroyed and the number of monks and priests declined. Thus, in the 1920s and 1930s temple caretakers were not all monks and priests; very many were villagers living below the mountains [on which temples were built].

Now there are no monks or priests in the temples [here on Mt. Qingxu]; these temples are cooperatively cared for by the more important villages below the mountain, with villages responsible for specific temples... Most villages have management committees with thirty or forty members, including some who are specifically responsible for the order and safety of the community and temple festivals. Some are in charge of temple finances and some of food, which means providing food for worshipers at festivals. Each village is responsible for preparing food for worshipers in a kitchen in a big festival shed. In the past they prepared rice gruel (*zhou*), *mantou* and rice; now, rice and salted vegetables. Each worshiper pays five *yuan* or more for a meal ticket... There is also a place in the shed where boiled water is available.

The several tens of people involved with managing the temple festival divide up their responsibilities in an orderly fashion... For example, a main responsible person for the temple festival is the Chair of the Mediation Committee of Ge Gong village... while the village Party Secretary and Village Head share in general management. The Assistant Village Head is in charge of the festival kitchen, and the Village Accountant is responsible for festival finances. For each temple there are eight people especially responsible for its expenditures and donated offerings ('lamp oil money'). The Chair of Village Security is responsible for public order at the festival, assisted by members of the Security Committee responsible for each temple. So, for each temple there is a village committee member responsible for general order and for keeping an eye on spirit-mediums. During festivals male and female mediums live in temples, so it is necessary to prevent them from doing anything illegal. After the festival ends, the village cadres who manage the festival are responsible for buying lumber to repair the temple.

These passages from Shi Bing's report well represent the activities of village leaders in Hebei village rituals.⁷

For another area of Hebei our reports on local traditions are all by Zhao Fuxing, a very active official, historian and writer in Gu'an County. Of the seventeen reports he has written for our Gu'an volume the one

⁷ Geng Baocang (ed.) (2007) *Baoding diqu wenhua yu minsu jilu*. Tianjin guji chubanshe, pp. 337-344.

with the most useful information on local ritual leaders is *Dayidain bingbao hui* (*Hail [Prevention] Festivals in Dayi Village*). My summary of this report reads in part as follows:

This report is on the Hail Festival of Dayidian village, with detailed discussions of the history, purpose, organization and rituals of this festival. Dayidian is south of Gaobeidian city; it was established in the early Ming period and now has a population of 1,325, and at one point had seven temples, all on the main street. The Hail Festival, which began about 300 years ago, is similar to those of other villages in this area, where hail storms frequently damage crops. The original ritual was carried out at the beginning of summer, May 5, and involved only sacrificing three pigs and making offerings in a field north-west of the village. Here the ‘incense head’ ritual leader (*xiangshou*) led all in prostrations, bowing and praying to the gods. Then the offerings were taken back to the village for a noontime feast. Later the date of the ritual was changed to the 13th of the first lunar month at the suggestion of a visiting Daoist priest who said that the gods had more time to listen in this New Year holiday period [!]. The goals of the ritual expanded beyond preventing hail to include avoiding harm and increasing blessings, increasing lifespan, preparation for marriages, and family prosperity. Eventually this festival also incorporated two other local celebrations, the ‘Road Lantern’ and ‘Ten Banners’ which involved processions with many musicians. In this way the Hail Festival became a very lively affair with complex organization and rituals, including the performance of operas. The chief deity worshiped is the bodhisattva Dizang, traditionally a god who cares for the dead and here is a symbol of filial piety.

The annual ritual is carried out over a four day period, from lunar 1/13–1/16. On the first day an image of Dizang is hung on the north wall of the main room of the ritual leader’s house, with offerings of fruit and vegetables placed before it. Then the chief worshipers wash their hands and offer incense, holding ‘sacred documents’ (*shenshu*) naming the gods who are invited to descend and take part in the festival. These documents are then burned while people offer wine and call out the name of the bodhisattva. The report describes all this in detail. The next day a temporary shed (*shenpeng*) for inviting the gods is erected in a field northwest of the village. Here more documents inviting the gods are written, and a sedan chair for the deities is prepared, together with offerings and firecrackers. Mr. Zhao provides the text of one of the *shenshu*. The people inviting the gods are organized into groups of

about fifteen, all of them with specific tasks such as committee leader (*huizhang*), masters who invite the gods, bearers of banners, lanterns and sedan chairs, musicians and other roles. These groups accompany the Dizang image in a procession through the village and nearby fields. Many people join this procession as it stops to invite the gods from all the temples in the village. Then the procession returns to the shed for the gods, where the images of the invited deities are all arranged according to precedence. The report includes the names of thirteen categories of deities, the first of which is a 'Hail Messenger' god. This is a good list of deities worshiped in Hebei villages.

There are three types of worshipers of these deities, members of the Hail Festival Management Committee from Dayidian village, other members of this committee from four nearby villages, and ordinary people. On 1/15 the Management Committee first worships in the god shed, then at all the seven village temples. Ordinary people worship in the shed with incense, prostrations (*ketou*) and steamed *jiaozi*, praying for peace and blessings. Operas, Yangge plays, music and dancing are performed throughout the festival. There are guests in every household, young women return to their mother's homes, and nephews and nieces to their grandmothers. "For these three to five days, Dayidian is a joyful place for all, men, women, old and young... Humans and gods share their joy." The Hail Festival ends with a ritual of seeing off the gods in the god shed on the night of 1/16.

Zhao Fuxing adds:

The present planner for this festival is Xu Yushan. At first he did not have much desire to do this; because he is a school teacher he felt he should not become involved in such activities, but his grandmother told him, "You should give up teaching, because being in charge of the Hail Festival is a very important responsibility. Many old people are asking you to do this, which is a vote of confidence in you. This is a high honor. You should not only do it, but do it well." He could not bear to refuse to accept this position, which he has now had for sixteen years.

This festival stopped during the Cultural Revolution, but has been revived since 1985. Since then there have been three *huizhang*... In managing the festival they must be good people who maintain moral purity and fairness. They spend more than a month preparing; they are only concerned to serve, and do not expect special treatment. They do not smoke festival cigarettes, drink festival wine or eat festival food [for themselves personally]. During the festival they go home to eat lunch. They believe that this is the fundamental way those responsible should act, and humans and gods would not allow them to do otherwise. Incorrect

behavior will always have bad results. To discipline themselves, they take an oath that if they manage affairs in an unjust and incorrect way, may they be punished with many serious consequences.⁸

Another area for which our Hebei local reports provide information about community ritual leaders is Handan County. Handan is an ancient city that was the capital of the old state of Zhao until the state was destroyed by the Qin armies in the third century BCE. We have fourteen reports by Handan local scholars. One of them, Li Wei, describes rituals to welcome the gods in She County during the Republican period. In Shangqingliang village there on lunar 1/15 a village leader called an 'Incense Head' (*xiangshou*) led several people to worship at the Mountain God temple to petition the god to come to the village to 'trample the monthly taboos' (*cai yueji*), send down blessings and prevent fires. For this they set up a small offering table in front of the mountain, covered it with a red cloth, and offered peanuts and fruit to invite the god. A 'god welcoming team' (*yingshen duiwu*) left at nine o'clock in the morning with six men carrying sacred spears, followed by people with colored banners and drums and gongs, opera performers, and *yangge* and martial arts groups and stilt walkers (*gaoqiao*), a total of more than 100 people. After going through the village streets they performed in front of the Mountain God's tablet, and then returned in two columns that rejoined back at the village. (On lunar 12/29 they also invited the Mountain God to the village to pass the New Year.)

For the second series of rituals, on lunar 1/10, they used pine and cedar branches to build memorial arches along the road from the village to the Mountain God shrine. On the morning of 1/14 the god was taken to a courtyard in the middle of the village in his 'sacred carriage'; there he was worshiped and an opera performed, after which his image was taken back to the shrine. Another village in She County was Tanyin, where there were temples for the goddess Nüwa, a Mountain God, a 'Solitary Peak' (*Gufeng*) and the Venerable Mother Guanyin. Nine villages joined together to celebrate the festival for Nüwa on lunar 3/18. During the Republican period a Daoist priest was in charge of her temple but was driven out by the Eight Route Army. Some of these temples were destroyed during anti-superstition campaigns in the Republican period. In Tanyin the Mountain God was also worshiped on 1/14 in ways similar to those in Shangqingliang, but here there was a

⁸ Zhao Fuxing's report on the Hail Festival is in *Gu'an diqu minsu jilu* (pp. 17-19 [English summary] and pp. 57-69 [Chinese text]).

‘Clapper Drum Troupe’ (*Bangzi dui*) and female spirit-mediums recited scriptures while on their knees before the god’s image, scriptures on ‘burning incense’ and for Emperor Guan (Guandi). Some of the female mediums and *yangge* troupes and other worshipers would go to where the Nüwa temple had been before it was changed to an elementary school. There was still a stone tablet from the temple there, and people hung on it a grass screen four meters high and three meters wide, with the Empress Wa’s image painted on it. Here people offered incense, melons and fruit, and sang a ‘vow opera’ (*yuanxi*) to the Empress, an opera performed to fulfill a promise to a deity for aid bestowed. About six female mediums wearing green belts sang and danced, reciting scriptures in honor of the ‘Holy Empress Wa’ for seeking the birth of sons, and in honor of Guanyin and the ‘Nine Dragon Holy Mother’. Li Wei includes a passage from the Nüwa scripture. When the female mediums finished reciting, a ‘dialogue opera’ (*duixi*) troupe performed in front of the goddess’ image. Then the *yangge* and music troupes performed, after which all went home to eat.⁹

In Dongtianchi village in Handan County, a ‘festival to welcome the gods’ was revived in 1984 with the support of the Hebei Provincial Cultural Affairs Bureau, but with its ‘superstitious elements’ removed. Through his interviews with old performers and his study of texts and inscriptions, a local scholar named Wang Yongxin learned that the last time the complete traditional festival had been performed was in Minguo 33 (1944) on lunar 2/13–17. There had been a serious drought at that time, with no harvest at all, though in any case the festival was carried out every six years. It was revived later because of the new prosperity of the local villages after the end of the Cultural Revolution.

The leaders of the 1944 festival were the heads of twenty-three village families called *bantou*, with the chief called *Laobantou*. These leaders were in charge of rituals and finances, for which they had to contribute grain and money. In the center of the village they built an opera stage and sheds for the gods (*shenpeng*) and for the main altar.

When all was prepared, the *Laobantou* stood in the middle of the altar shed with all the other *bantou* behind him, to invite the gods. The *Laobantou* said, “We invite all the gods of heaven and Earth to enter

⁹ Li Wei (2006) “Shexian Shangqingliang, Tanyin, deng liu cun ying shen yishi yu saixi yanchu” (On the performance of rituals and operas to welcome the gods in six villages of She County, including Shangqingliang and Tanyin), in Du Xuede and et al. (eds.) *Handan diqu minsu*, Tianjin guji chubanshe, pp. 5–10. The discussion of rituals in Tanyin is on pp. 10–20.

their altar tablets.” The gods were asked to provide blessings, prosperity and protection for the village. There were also specific invitations to individual deities such as the City God and Tudi. This report includes the words used in the invocations to the gods, such as one to Tudi, “Your awe-inspiring efficacy shakes the whole village; we respectfully invite you to come to this assembly, and bestow blessings on all the people. You report above the good and bad [deeds] of the village, and control the lives of all in this area. [Please] approach the altar, be seated and protect the peace and harmony of the ritual drama.”

The god who ‘inspects the feast’ was in charge of preparing the festival food in the kitchen and blending its flavors. The invocation to him read, “When outside danger arrives at the gates you stand up and fight and send forth 10,000 [divine] troops. We offer you the beauty of incense and flowers and entirely rely on the essences [produced by the kitchen and stove]. May all the gods rejoice [in the food] and may [name] village forever be at peace.”

Most of these invocations seek rain and protection from the gods, inviting them to “Eat well, drink to the full and quietly watch the drama.”

There was also a ritual before a banner in the middle of the opera stage that represented Heaven and Earth. In this ritual the *Laobantou* thanked these cosmic beings for creating the universe, the sun and moon, the coming and going of the seasons and the autumn harvest, all accompanied by prostrations. All of these rituals were performed by the *bantou* with the other villagers looking on. No priests, monks or ritualists (*lisheng*) were involved. The invocations are written in classical Chinese so good literacy was required. In the festival drama (*saixi*) the gods were represented by actors on the stage. At the end of this ritual the deities were thanked and seen off.

When the festival ended on the seventeenth, the performers put their costumes, ritual implements and musical instruments back into their storage boxes, saw the gods off (*songshen*) with bows and prostrations, and took down the stage and sheds. Then, “Everybody in the village was very happy, and began a new life.” There was also a feast for all the *bantou* and other participants to which people brought yellow slips of paper on which they had written the name of the person they wanted to be the *Laobantou* for the next year, and so someone was elected.¹⁰

¹⁰ Wang Yongxin, “Handanxian, Dongtianchi cun yingshen saihui shilu” (A true record of the festival to welcome the gods in Dongtianchi village of Handan County), in *Handan diqu minsu*, pp. 30–44.

In his “Wu’an shi, Guyi cun yingshen jisi shehuo nuoxi” (“The festival nuo drama to welcome and worship the gods at Guyi village of Wu’an city”, 2004), Du Xuede, a well-known Handan scholar, writes that the gods worshipped in this festival were the Third Gentleman with White Eyebrows (*Baimei sanlang*), and the Dragon King of Ice and Rain. Its most important function was driving away the Yellow Demon (*Huang gui*), a symbol of all kinds of harm, difficulty and bad behavior. More than 600 performers were involved, with about 400 assistants, organized into groups/troupes for Masked Drama, *Sai* (Repayment) Drama, Flower Carts, Drought Boats, and Dragon Lanterns, and lion dancers, martial arts, yangge performers and the Hegemon King Whip (*Bawang bian*). *Sai xi* is defined as *baosai xi*, dramas to repay the gods for their help. Driving off the Yellow Demon was a street procession drama with King Yama and other judges from the underworld and several different kinds of demons. The Yellow Demon was believed to cause floods, droughts, insect infestations, epidemics and other disasters. It was also a manifestation of bad human actions, such as being unfilial and cheating the weak and young. This demon was represented in the procession by a person wearing only yellow pants, with his hair, face and body colored yellow. Mr. Du writes, “These rituals expressed the people’s struggle against natural disasters and their hopes for good weather, abundant harvests, peace and security for humans and animals, and peace in the world. They also expressed the villagers’ moral principles of honoring the old and loving the young.”

Guyi village is 55 kilometers southwest of Handan city, with a population of 2,700. Most of its people are farmers, but some work outside the village in coal mines or as merchants. The ancestors of most of the village families migrated to here from Shanxi in the Ming period. In the past, big families had lineage shrines, with genealogy scrolls and painted images of ancestors; families gathered at these shrines during the New Year celebrations. Now only the Li family shrine still exists, used only for weddings and funerals.

In the past there were about ten temples in the village, most of which still exist, such as those for Guandi, the River God, Fire God, Tudi, the Old Gentleman (Laoye), Wudao (Five Roads), Patriarch Lü (Lü Dongbin) and Guanyin. Also there were a Three Teachings Hall and a Hall of Immortals. At each temple there was an ‘incense fire association’ (*xianghuo she*) organized by pious men and women who cared for the temple.

The Guandi temple in the village had forty-five *mu* of temple land. Poor people who had lost their own land could rent a limited amount

of this land for a time, then return it later so it could be used by others. There were also tables and benches in this temple that people could rent for weddings and funerals. New Year festival activities for the community were organized by wealthy and able representatives of twenty-five households of three lineages in the village, called *sheshou* (community heads). The twenty-five households were divided into five groups of five, with five *sheshou*. At the end of the festival on 1/17, the five leaders of next year's festival were selected in a ritual called 'passing the kitchen' (*guochu*). *Guochu* was a ritual congratulating the *sheshou* for their leadership in the coming year. Actors representing the gods Guan Gong, Zhou Cang, Guan Ping, Songzi Guanyin and others went to the community head's house. A *zhangzhu* 'Bamboo Holder' recited an invocation to bring protection, good health, prosperity and blessings to the family, petitioning these gods and the household's gods of the gate, wealth and stove, concluding with "may all the gods in this house pass by the kitchen." Then a Yellow Tiger rolled on the *kang* family bed, which was believed to drive away harm and bring protection. Songzi Guanyin then placed cloth dolls on the bed to bring sons.

The *sheshou* leaders were all from families who had this responsibility on a hereditary basis, from fathers to sons. For those with no sons the tradition was continued by their nephews or sons-in-law.

The financial costs of the festival were paid for by the villagers themselves, with the wealthy contributing more, and poor contributing their labor. If the income was not sufficient, the extra funds needed were paid by the *sheshou* of the twenty-five families. The major expenses were for costumes, firecrackers, ritual implements and payments to the participants. When this New Year festival was revived in 1987 the old masks for performers had been destroyed, so they relied on the memories of old people to make new ones. Since the Yellow Demon dramas were considered inauspicious, families with both wives and children did not perform in them. In the past beggars or destitute opium smokers were hired as performers; however, in recent years, the main role has been played by a single man from Henan who doesn't care about 'polluted *qi*'.

There were four stages of the ritual: inviting the gods, welcoming the gods, making offerings to them and seeing them off (*songshen*). The gods were represented by masks. First the masks were taken out of storage and cleaned with a white cloth with white wine sprinkled on it. The masks were then invited into a *juanpeng* 'scroll shed', which is a temporary open-ended structure erected in front of a temple main

entrance. In the past over sixty gods were invited to sit on an altar in the Immortals' Hall temple, including the Yellow Emperor, the City God, the Wealth God, the Lord Guan, God of the Five Roads, Tudi, God of Longevity (Shouxing), the Three Meritorious Officials (Gongcao), the Four Commanders (Si wei), and 'green-faced small demons' The gods were invited on 1/14 and seen off on 1/17.

The roles played in the dramas were of the sun, moon, deities and demons, the Eight Immortals, and characters from novels like the Romance of the Three Kingdoms and the Journey to the West. A special characteristic of the masked dramas in Guyi village was a person in a special costume holding in his left hand a bamboo pole two *chi* (feet) long. This person, called a *zhangzhu*, sang and recited to explain the drama as it went along; he was neither an actor nor a spirit-medium. He was always on stage when the gods were invited, worshiped and seen off, singing songs connected to the performance. He introduced deities and what they do, and also recited at rituals for protecting a house, choosing the leader for the next festival, etc. He usually recited only at the beginning of a drama, but in some cases recited the whole narrative. At the beginning of the drama, "Driving Away the Yellow Demon," on 1/15 he stood beside King Yama's desk and said, "I exhort people not to cheat their parents; stop forgetting the foundation that gave you birth. Those who are rebellious and unfilial will be punished by two demons that will tie them up, pull out their entrails and peel off their skin. Good and bad actions will always be repaid; why don't you respect your parents?"¹¹

A major ritual activity in this area was petitions to the gods for rain, particularly the Dragon God. Yang Xinmin has written about one such ritual in which spirit-mediums were involved.

In rain rituals the *huishou* first knelt to read a petition asking for rain. If this didn't bring results, a spirit-medium might say on behalf of the god that, "Rain is difficult to seek; the Jade Emperor is unwilling to give us rain." Drastic measures might be used to appeal to the gods, with people risking harm to themselves to force the god to appear by possessing a medium. Here mediums were called *mapi*. In one story we are told that in the Qing period a man filled a basin full of gunpowder,

¹¹ This summary is taken from Du Xuede's detailed discussion of this ritual and its organization on pp. 53-64 and 74-84 of the *Handan diqu minsu* book. He identifies the Third Gentleman as a son of King Zhuang of the old state of Qin.

on top of which he put a stick of lighted incense. He knelt before this image in appeal to the god. If a medium were possessed, the man would put out the fire with water. If not, he would wait until the incense burned down to ignite the gunpowder and so be killed. Those possessed would dance and sing as if they were intoxicated, but were not insane. They spoke words that were difficult to understand. Sometimes people were possessed in the ritual area, but in other cases people asleep in their homes would be awakened by the ritual gun and jump up, run to the ritual area and become possessed, as would some who heard the gun while out in the countryside. The speech and movements of such mediums were unusual, but without regard to their social status they received the special regard of others and were respected and worshiped like gods. Since they manifested divine power they could cut open their bellies with knives, damage their internal organs and stab themselves, all of which caused the people to feel the majesty of the gods and to believe without doubts. So, whether or not these *mapi* were able to cause rain to fall, they were still believed to speak for the gods and use spirit-writing to convey the gods' intentions. After the *mapi* transmitted the god's message, he fell down, "like a ball that loses its air." The *huishou* helped him down and cared for him.

If rain fell after a ritual, the people repaid their vows with a three-day opera on a stage in front of the Dragon God temple, and draped the god's image with red cloth and flowers. He was carried through all the villages that benefited from the rain in a procession lasting up to nine days, accompanied by groups for martial arts, big swords, drought boats, fan drums, music and stilt walking.¹²

From 2002–2003, Jiafuxiang, Dongfuren and three other villages in Handan County celebrated a *jiao* festival in honor of the Jade Emperor. This festival in Dongfuren is managed by a Daoist priest leading a music group, assisted by the association heads (*huishou*) of the five villages. This festival began to be revived in 1999, for the first time since 1942, to be carried out over a period of four years. Preparations began about ten days in advance with committees for finances, food, offerings, drum and gong groups and the ritual activities of Daoist priests and *huishou*. Altars and a memorial arch were erected. The arch was eight meters high

¹² Yang Xinmin, "Ji nan de Longshen chongbai ji qiyu wenhua" (Worship of the Dragon God in Ji nan (southern Hebei) and the culture of praying for rain), in *Handan diqu minsu*, pp. 92–102.

and five meters wide; the altar in front of the temple was five meters high and fourteen meters wide, with the words on it, "May the myriad immortals all gather." There was also an altar for making offerings for the salvation of the spirits of ancestors. Three opera stages were set up in different parts of the village, for performances by three troupes.

The first period of the *jiao* was from 2/17–2/20. On the morning of 2/17 more than 135 scrolls with gods' images painted on them were hung in the *jiao* altar, to invite them to come to the festival. Guided by a Daoist priest, 135 people each hung a god scroll in its proper place according to a definite sequence. At first they did not unroll the scrolls, but then at the sound of firecrackers gradually unrolled them, first revealing the god's head, then its body, and then at the third sound the whole scroll was opened. At this point the priest, *huishou* and others taking part all gathered outside the altar and *ketoued* toward the gods.

Next the priest, musicians and *huishou* walked to the front of each temple in the village to invite their gods to the festival. There was a special procession to get the spirit tablet of the Celestial Master from the home of a farmer in the village. The Celestial Master was invited and seen off three times during the festival. On the way back to the farmer's house the procession stopped at the home of the chief *huishou*, where the priest blessed his family. During some of these rituals the priest read scriptures: the *Kaitan jing* to open the heavens, the *Jade Emperor Scripture* to bring blessings to the people, the *Scripture of the Ten Kings* of the underworld to save the ancestors and a *Scripture for Seeing off the Gods*. Another procession took *mantou* steamed bread, cakes, cookies, fruit and noodles to all the temples in the village to invite the gods to eat, with the food carried on little tables. Next there was a ritual in honor of the Northern Bushel, represented by an image of the seven stars of the Bushel made with rice and small lamps. While all the *huishou* and devotees knelt, a Daoist recited the *Northern Bushel Scripture* (*Beidou jing*).

On the morning of 1/20 the priest recited *The Scripture of the Ten Kings* to save three generations of village ancestors. That afternoon the end of the festival took place in several steps. First, a Daoist priest in front of the temple recited *The Scripture for Seeing off the Gods* (*Songshen jing*), then the images of the gods were returned to their temples in a procession. Next the *jiao* altar was opened to everyone so that all could enter and reverence the 135 god images hung there. All these worshipers had to maintain a vegetarian diet during the festival, abstaining as well

from the five bitter plants. Next was a ritual for destroying the Fengdu underworld and the Naihe bridge to it, so that all those with good merit would not need to go there. For this ritual an outline of Fengdu city was drawn with lime powder on a field outside and west of the main gate of the Jade Emperor temple. The Naihe bridge was represented by four long wooden boards put on two benches. Then the Daoist priest performed a complex ritual which is described in detail here.

On the evening of this last day of the festival offerings were given to orphan ghosts at the altar for ghosts and spirits in the southwest part of the village. During the festival people brought small bags of paper spirit-money to this altar, with the names and eight-character horoscopes of their ancestors written on them. On this night a Daoist priest recited the *Three Yang Scripture of the Charitable Donations to Rescue from Suffering* (*Sanyang shishe jiuku jing*) to save all the ancestors so that they leave the underworld and ascend to the realm of the immortals. Then all the bags of paper money were burned. So ended the Jade Emperor *jiao* ritual.¹³

Other evidence for ritual leaders in the Handan area includes the terms *tanzhu*, *huishou* and *xiangtou* (altar masters, assembly heads and incense heads) at temples and festivals in Congzhong village. Altar masters were believed to have a close relationship with the gods, whose power they used to heal the sick. They were the chief ritualists in local temples, including the large temple for the Holy Mother of Mt. Tai, where they organized *jiao* festivals at which Daoist priests, Buddhist monks and musicians were invited to recite scriptures and perform music. These festivals included paintings on cloth of 120 deities hung inside a temporary altar shed to which the gods were invited. This temple was destroyed in 1948, along with the others, and its remaining stone inscriptions and sculptures were destroyed in 1958 and 1967.¹⁴

Other Handan reports note festivals led by *sheshou* community heads who must own at least thirty *mu* of land and serve three years. In another community before 1949, a ritual invoking the protection of a new born child by Holy Mother Nüwa was done by a Daoist priest,

¹³ Du Xuede, "Handanxian, Dongfuren, deng, wu cun de Yuhuang shengjiao yishi" (Rituals of the Jade Emperor sacred *jiao* of five villages, including Dongfuren and others in Handan county), in *Handan diqu minsu*, pp. 103–115.

¹⁴ Zheng Quanxi, "Handanxian Congzhong cun miaohui yu minjian xinyang," (The temple festivals and popular beliefs of Congzhong village in Handan County), in *Handan diqu minsu*, pp. 116–146.

who would tie a string around the neck of the child to signify that its spirit was firmly attached to the Mother, so that demons could not harm it. Now there are no Daoist priests available, so this is done by a female spirit-medium.¹⁵

Other evidence for ritual leaders in Hebei local communities is that in the *Chūgoku nōson kankō chōsa* (*An investigation of Chinese village customs*, six volumes, edited by Itsutarō Suehiro, Tokyo, Iwanami shoten, 1952). As is noted above, these large and detailed volumes contain reports of fieldwork done by Japanese scholars in four villages in Hebei and two in Shandong between 1939 and 1943, a project sponsored by the South Manchurian Railway Company. The evidence in these Japanese studies is in harmony with that from the reports by the Hebei local scholars discussed here; it is based on mid-century interviews, but on the whole provides less detail about ritual activities.

My discussion of this material follows the order of volume, page number and column on the page for each village discussed, the first of which is Shajing in Shunyi County, just north of Beijing.

There was a temple caretaker for the Guandi / Laoye temple there, but no monk. Worship during the New Year period was by a *huishou*, also called a *xiangtou* or *xiangshou* “who bought fruit and offered it at the Guandi miao” (1.78: 2–3), so here these titles were interchangeable. The temple caretaker at the Shajin Guanyin si temple was called a *laodao*, but he was a householder, not a Daoist priest.

Volume 3 of the *Chūgoku nōson* contains material on our topic from Sibeichai village of Luancheng County in Hebei. Here we are told that on festival days at local temples villagers made offerings, burned incense and recited scriptures. “The villagers themselves recited scriptures; there were no monks. Monks disappeared during the Minguo period; there were some monks before then, but not in this village. Temple repairs were led by Village Heads (*cunzhang*), who collected funds from the villagers. At the local Guanyin temple, before the Minguo period there were *huishou* selected each year by divination and ‘protected by the Buddha’” (3.43: 1–2).

Volume 5 includes a discussion on Houjiaying village in Changzi County, Hebei which indicates a transition from ritual to administrative titles. At a temple for Guandi and the God of Wealth the old title

¹⁵ On this see the report by Shen Ziwen, “Shexian Nüwa xinyang he Wahuang gong quizi xisu”, noted above.

of ritual leaders was *huishou*, but by the time of the interview rituals were led by local officials with the titles *baozhang* ‘Security Group Head’ (Hucker, 1995: #4451) and *jiazhang*, ‘Tithing Head’ (Hucker, 1995: #650); they “represented the village in prayers to the gods” (5.34: 2, 35: 1–3).

Volume 6 provides a bit of information about ritual leaders in Dongwang village in Xingtai County, Hebei, leaders called *dahuishou* and *xiaohuishou*, a large and small association heads. They were in charge of funds for incense, lamps and temple repairs, and were required to have some money themselves. At another village we are told that there was a *she* ‘community cluster’ at each temple, and for each *she* there was a *huishou*, responsible for incense and temple repairs (6.120: 2–3; 238: 1).

In a study based on these reports, Prasenjit Duara translates the term *xiangtou* of Shajing village as ‘temple councilors,’ “... [‘temple councilors’ who] acquired special blessings by their closer proximity to the gods... lit the incense stick and led the villagers in the five annual religious ceremonies. One became a temple councilor... by contributing more money to the ceremonies or to temple repairs than did others.” Before 1900, temple councilors also dealt with other public matters that came up in the village... Since collective village expenses were paid from the income of temple lands, these leaders managed the village finances as well.

Duara provides a description of a ceremony from another Hebei village that further illustrates the role of village leaders in community rituals.

For three days before the ceremonial prayer for rain to the Jade Emperor in Cold Water Ditch, the villagers ate no meat, fish, garlic, leeks, or onions and abstained from all sexual contact. The ceremony began with four men leading a procession carrying the image of the Jade Emperor to a nearby spring, where he was reconsecrated and brought back to the village. Thereafter, a committee of five in charge of drafting the supplication, consisting of the most literate and prestigious people, performed their ceremonial duty. With ‘pure’ (*jie*) bodies clothed in ceremonial robes, they knelt in front of the altar and drafted the prayer (the actual writing was done by the school principal) in the form of a petition to the Jade Emperor. They wrote about the depth of suffering of the people as a result of the drought and asked for rain to relieve it. The village headman then offered up the petition (*sheng biao*) to the god three times by burning it together with other ritual objects, to the chanting of a resident Daoist

priest. The villagers, who were all witness to the events, then paid their respects and drew lots from bamboo slips that forecast the weather.¹⁶

Shanxi: Leaders of Communities

Though Shanxi stretches north to south along the western border of Hebei, and though there was large-scale migration from Shanxi to Hebei near the beginning of the Ming dynasty, there are significant differences between the local ritual traditions of these two areas. As was the case in Hebei, from the late nineteenth through the twentieth centuries few priests or monks took part in local traditions in Shanxi but, nonetheless, on the whole they were more complex than those to the east. In particular, there were more types and levels of ritual leaders. I am not sure why this was the case, but one reason was the presence in some areas in Shanxi of lay ritual specialists called *yuehu* (music households), defined by David Johnson as: “hereditary low caste musicians and actors.”¹⁷ *Yuehu*, whose traditions go back to the Song dynasty, play music to accompany local rituals, perform ritual operas and represent gods in processions. They are particularly active in the Shangdang area in southeastern Shanxi, near Changzhi and Zhangzi Counties. Most of the materials I have found concerning Shanxi local rituals are based on research in this area.

I begin this section with a discussion of evidence for our topic from Hongtong County further west, then move to that from Changzhi and Zhangzi, and end with Shangdang and the *Yuehu*.

In Hongtong County there has long been a Water God Temple by a large spring from which water flows through canals to the surrounding area. Each canal was managed by a director, manager and several assistants. These officials “... were responsible for organizing the villagers to contribute money and labor to maintain the canal and the temple of the god, and for sponsoring ritual sacrifices and performances for the god.”

¹⁶ Duara, *Culture, Power and the State*, pp. 133–136. Two other good studies in English of rural north China based on the *Chūgoku nōson* volumes that discuss village leadership are Ramon H. Myers (1985) *The Chinese Peasant Economy: Agricultural Development in Hopei and Shantung, 1890–1949*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, and Philip C. C. Huang (1985) *The Peasant Economy and Social Change in North China*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

¹⁷ David Johnson, “Temple Festivals in Southeastern Shanxi”, p. 643. Johnson’s articles use the Wade-Giles Romanization.

The god involved was a Dragon King for whom rituals were performed to petition for rain. Anning Jing's account of the history and murals of this temple does not include much detail about rituals performed there, but the above quote is a good statement of the interrelationship of administrative and ritual functions in local communities.¹⁸

For temple festivals in Changzhi and Zhangzi Counties we have two fine studies by David Johnson. In these areas such festivals, called *sai*, are led and organized by local people; no priests are involved. Johnson defines *sai* as "...village ceremonials of thanksgiving to the gods, as is attested in Sung texts." In the Zhangzi area, "...the most important *sai* invariably had operas by *yueh-hu*, which were considered most efficacious in pacifying the gods." He quotes a local history, "*Sai* is when *yueh-hu* gather in a temple and sing and dance before the gods." *Sai* here were "led by a ritual specialist called a Master of Ceremonial (*chu-li/zhuli*), also known as a *yin-yang hsien-sheng* or *k'an-yü chia*." Johnson has the following comment about leaders of *sai* in Nanshe village of Lucheng County near Zhangzi city. The last time this festival was carried out before Johnson observed it in the early 1990s was in 1937–1938, just before the Japanese invasion.

Every aspect of the *sai* was directed by representatives of the village. The village was divided into four *she*, or neighborhoods: the Central, West, Li Family, and East. The first three shared responsibility for the *sai*, while the Wang and Wu families (or lineages) of East Shê provided only two troupes of *shuang-tui suo na* musicians. The *sai* was run by the heads of the *shê*, the *shê shou* (of whom there were probably three), and by representatives of twelve families, or lineages, known as the *k'o-t'ou* families. (*K'o-t'ou* is a term frequently used in southeastern Shansi ritual affairs, usually with the sense of 'leader' or 'chief'). These men appointed a manager (*tsung-li*), an assistant manager (*fu tsung-li*), a secretary (*shu-chi*), a purchasing agent (*ts'ai pan*), and a handyman (? *ch'in tsa*). Eight of the *k'o-t'ou* dealt with matters relating to the operas, the remaining four with off-stage affairs, probably ritual.

Leaders of the opera actors were called *qianhang*. Leaders of *sai* in Zhangzi city are described as follows:

This *sai* was sponsored in turn by four *shê*, which were neighborhoods of Chang-tzu City: East Street, West Street and Little West Street, South Street, and North Street. [I have not been able to determine the size of

¹⁸ Anning Jing, *The Water God's Temple*, pp. 75–76 (the second character of the name for Hongtong County is usually pronounced *dong*).

these neighborhoods or their exact locations]. About a month before the *sai* was to begin, a respected and influential man—presumably a resident of the sponsoring *shê*—was selected to be the Libation Master (*chu ch'ang*), also known familiarly as Old *Wei* Head (*lao wei-shou*) and Old *Shê* Chief (*lao shê-t'ou*). He was responsible for selecting the acting troupes both for *sai* opera (Tui Opera or Yueh[-hu] Opera) and regular *Shang-tang pang-tzu*, the ritual chef or chefs, the bands (of which many were needed), and the Master of Ceremonial. Other workers also had to be hired, such as painters, carpenters, paperworkers, kitchen helpers, and so on. Finally, men had to be selected for the manifold roles that the performance of the offering rituals required: eleven Pavilioners, four Overseers of Incense (*ssu hsiang*), four [?] Overseers of Candles (*ssu chu*), several Incense Elders (*hsiang lao*), several Attendants (*wei shih*), four Water Officials (*shui kuan*), and ten to thirty Incense Holders (*chih hsiang*). A notice was posted in the temple giving the names of all who were selected.

The model for a great *sai* was the birthday banquet of a powerful person. Accordingly one of the first ritual acts of the West Gate *zi* was the invitation of the guests.¹⁹

Johnson's second report of his research on *sai* in this area provides similar names for festival leaders. They were also led by *zhuli*. He provides the following statement by a *zhuli* from a ritual handbook preserved by a local family:

To the honored god, the Jade Emperor, Supreme Thearch of Vast Heaven:

Today the individuals with responsibilities [in the *sai*] make obeisance before you at the foot of the steps. The preliminary courtesies are finished; let every rank listen to the commands [of the Jade Emperor]. Let no one dare act on his own authority; humbly waiting [to learn] your sagely intentions, they receive your divine commands.

The honored god, the Jade Emperor, Supreme Thearch, issues his decrees and instructions:

Let all those in the hall and at the foot of the steps, before the god and behind the god, the greater and lesser *Shê* Leaders, the [heads of the] Six Offices and the Chefs, the Pavilioners, the Attendants, the Libationers, the Servers, the Monitors, the Umbrella Men, the Grooms, the Sunshade Handlers, the Incense Elders of the Left and Right, the Platter-bearing Pavilioners, the responsible Musicians and Actors—let all proceed to the Cinnabar Courtyard to listen to the [divine] commands. Bow down and attend!

¹⁹ David Johnson, "Temple Festivals in Southeastern Shanxi", pp. 642–43, 651–52, 671–72.

I have heard that prayers in the spring and thanksgiving in the autumn, the *sai* in the summer and the sacrifices in the winter, have come down to us from ancient times. Today it is our good fortune to encounter the birthday of the honored god so-and-so. The rich mats have been spread, the umbrellas have been opened and turned. The sagely host of August Heaven has been respectfully invited to draw near the precious hall; all the gods of Sovereign Earth have descended to the incense altar. The chief *She* Leader stands respectfully in the front, all the Incense Elders are deeply reverent.

Johnson adds the following in his concluding comments for this article:

Some *sai* were sponsored by local officials, who also participated in them. But most *sai* were sponsored by the people, not officials, though there is every reason to believe that the two types were very similar. The organizational building blocks of the *sai*, the sponsoring entities, were natural villages, town neighborhoods, and alliances of such villages and neighborhoods. There was nothing in the organization of the *sai* that undermined existing communities; on the contrary, the *sai* reinforced them.

The lay leaders of the *sai*—county magistrate, village elites—belonged to the established political hierarchy. The people who were responsible for the administration of the *sai* were the very ones who were responsible for the administration of the towns and villages in which the *sai* took place. The structure of local power was in no way challenged by the *sai*, because the local elites, and in some cases even the officials, were fully engaged in them, and the ritual specialists, including the *yueh-hu*, were not representatives of a separate and competing source of spiritual authority.

...

The ritual technicians of the *sai* were not priests. They had special knowledge of how the rituals ought to be carried out, not of how to summon the gods or save souls. They worked in the community when they were not performing at *sai*, the *chu-li* serving as diviners and geomancers, the *yueh-hu* as musicians at funerals and other domestic ritual occasions. The other ritual leaders were simply the local elite displaying their authority in a different setting.²⁰

For another area of Shanxi, Quwo County in the southwest, we are fortunate to have a wonderfully detailed report in Volume 14 of the *Min-su ch'ü-i ts'ung-shu* (*Studies in Chinese Ritual, Theatre and Folklore Series*), under the general editorship of Wang Ch'iu-kuei. David Johnson has written a helpful review of this book. The rituals involved,

²⁰ David Johnson (1997) "Confucian' Elements", pp. 142, 157–159. Johnson provides Chinese characters for all the special terms and names in his articles.

performed during the Lantern Festival in the first lunar month, were called the *Fan Drum Roster of the Gods*, after fan-shaped drums used to accompany the dancing. A manuscript preserved in Renzhuang village here contains the names of over 500 gods, all of which were invoked near the beginning of the ceremony. This ritual was performed in 1989 for the first time since 1938.

This ritual was not held every year, so near the end of the old year, on lunar 12/8, the [leaders of] the Community Compact (*xiangyue*), the Xu lineage leader and lineage elders of good repute, the head of [the specialists in] the gods (*shentou*), and community heads (*sheshou*) met to decide whether or not to hold the ritual in the New Year. This depended on economic conditions and the wishes of the people; a positive decision indicated accord with the gods (*he shen*). A decision to proceed was announced to the village, and villagers volunteered to provide offering tables, ritual implements and offerings. "Some provided help and others donated things. People all wanted to with respectful and sincere intentions accord with the gods." Responsibilities for preparations were assigned. The person in charge was the leader of the Xu lineage, the dominant clan in the village. As we read, "In the previous year [we] must decide responsibilities for those involved, arrange the altars, and inspect the offerings and ritual implements; no mistake are allowed."

The major ritual performers here were the twelve 'specialists in the gods' (*shenjia*), who inherited their positions from their fathers. They invited the gods by reciting their names from the ritual manuscript, escorted them in the procession and performed short ritual dramas. In the 1989 performance one of the *shenjia* played the role of a spirit-medium called a *mamazi*. David Johnson describes his activities as follows:

The next important event was an exorcism called Collecting Disasters. The exorcist was a spirit-medium, or rather (in the 1989 performance), a man playing the part of a spirit-medium without actually being possessed. He was called *Mamazi* and was one of the *shenjia*, not a local spirit-medium. The Collecting of Disasters began with eleven *shenjia* dancing and drumming in a circle around the twelfth, the *Mamazi*, in front of the main (north) altar. The *Mamazi* was stripped to the waist, wore red trousers and a short red apron, and had a plain yellow cloth wrapped around his head. He brandished his 'sounding knife' and cracked his whip toward each of the altars, and then left the courtyard of the Guandi Temple and went to the Xu lineage hall, which was in the southeastern corner of the

Guandi Temple complex. [These buildings no longer exist]. There he engaged in a dialogue with the lineage elders, speaking in the voice of the goddess Houtu.

After sacrificing a rooster and pouring out three cups of wine, he set off to visit every house in the village. During these visits he received offerings from each family and provided them in return with a charm on which was written in red, “Accept the Command to Behead Demons,” and in black, “Secure the Family—Increase Good Fortune.” During the two hours or so that it took for the *Mamazi* to visit every household, the gong and drum troupe and the flower-drum troupe performed at the Eight Trigrams Altar. The report does not indicate how many songs originally were in the repertoire of the flower-drum troupe; only two titles are mentioned, and only one could be reconstructed (there were no written scripts). When the *Mamazi* finished his visits to the village households, he and his entourage returned to the Eight Trigrams Altar. The flower-drum troupe then concluded its performance and the first day’s activities came to a close.

Huang Zhusan and Wang Fucui comment in their conclusion, “These Fan Drum exorcism ritual activities of Renzhuang village did not come from outside; they have been locally produced and developed.” This is true as well of the elaborate ritual manuscript, which appears to have been written in the village.

As for the *shenjia*, their roles in the rituals were fixed, handed down from fathers to sons, who were trained and influenced by them. If a *shenjia* had no heir, or if a son for some reason could not do it, then the lineage leaders sought advice from people to select a substitute, who must be a member of the Xu lineage. His age and wealth are not important. “His most important qualifications are enthusiasm for the *shenjia* role and being of good moral character.” A son took over this role when his father was too old or sick to perform it.²¹

The Yuehu were traditionally considered a type of the ‘mean people’ (*jianmin*) at the bottom of society along with slaves and other entertainers. They had no surnames, were not permitted to participate in lineages, had no genealogies, and no ancestral tablets except those for their deceased parents. The term *Yuehu* first appears in sources from the fifth and sixth centuries CE as a type of musicians with their own instruments, who by the Tang had become professional musicians.

²¹ Huang Zhusan and Wang Fucui, *Shanxi sheng Shangu shenpu diaocha*, pp. 24–26, and David Johnson, “‘Lantern Festival’ Ritual”, pp. 287–295. The quoted passage is on p. 290.

Their occupational deity was the Throat God (Yanhou shen), perhaps related to their work as singers and players of wind instruments. Images of this god were placed on Yuehu family altars. Almost all the Yuehu had disappeared by the 1990s except in Shanxi. In their fieldwork in the Shangdang area near Changzi City, beginning in 1993, Qiao Jian, Li Guanwen and Li Tiansheng discovered 151 Yuehu families.

Community *sai* rituals in Shangdang lasted from five to six days, with the usual structure of inviting and welcoming the gods, the main part of the rituals (*zhengsai*), and then seeing off the gods. Its leaders were *sheshou* from the participating villages, the *zhuli* Chief Ritualist, who was a Yin-Yang Master, and a rich variety of ritualists, beginning with *lisheng* who assisted the *zhuli*, *tingshi* who cared for and carried the tablets for the gods (*ting* here is a measure word for images), *weishi* who held umbrellas over the god images to protect them from the rain or sun, and *paijun* guards armed with staffs to maintain order and clear the way for processions. There were also *baoshi* responsible for offering food and drink to the gods on bended knees, *yazhan* cup guards dressed like generals with swords who protected the offerings, and *qianhang* holding bamboo poles about three feet long with red cloths tied at their tops who preceded the groups of musicians. The *qianhang* recited invocations at performances of ritual music. Beyond these were the musicians, cooks, and 'incense elders' (*xianglao*), villagers of good reputation who offered incense and ketous day and night. There were also people in charge of tea, wine, banners, umbrellas, sheds and the ritual guns (*tongpao*) fired to announce the beginning of the ceremonies. It was a very complex affair!²²

Three articles in the journal *Min-su ch'ü-i* on rituals in the Shangdang area corroborate the information provided by Qiao Jian and his colleagues discussed above, but with a few additional titles of ritual participants. These articles, all based on fieldwork, were published in 1997 and 1998. The first, by Duan Youwen, is about a four-day festival in Nanlucheng last held in the fourth lunar month of 1938. It was conducted in a temple for Tianqi, a title of the God of the Eastern Peak, and led by a *weishou*, a title that might be translated as 'Regulation

²² Qiao Jian, Li Guanwen and Li Tiansheng, *Yuehu*, pp. 1–34, 147, 199–204. For a more detailed discussion of the Yuehu and their history see Xiang Yang (2001), *Shanxi Yuehu yanjiu* (translated by the author as Study of Yuehu of Feudal China in Shanxi). Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe. There are no detailed discussions in this book of Yuehu performance of rituals.

Head,' based on the meaning of *wei* as 'to tie, to hold together'. There were two *weishou* responsible for each of the city's four streets. They were supported by *ketou* (Section Heads) who were responsible for the details of organization. Here a Yin/Yang Master in charge of the rituals was called a *zhulisheng*. Other titles noted here are *xianglao*, *tingzi*, *weizi*, *sanfu* and *paoshe*. *Tingzi* were boys under fifteen who carried food offerings and vessels. *Weizi* carried bamboo poles with copper coins tied to them, which served as weapons to protect the offerings. *Sanfu* carried small umbrellas to protect the gods' images and offerings from the sun, and to prevent birds from eating the offerings. *Paoshe* ('those who busy themselves with the community') were responsible for notifying people of the coming festival.

Another community here had a large Jiutian shengmu temple organized by *she* communities, each with a Community Head (*sheshou*). Here the *paoshe* are described as festival organizers. According to two informants aged sixty-eight and eighty, preparations for the annual festival at this temple began with a meeting on lunar 1/8 at which the *paoshe* divided up the tasks that needed to be done. On the evening of 1/16 a poster listing assigned work was put up and all gathered to look at it. These tasks included making ritual parasols, sedan chairs and flag poles, done according to economic abilities. The better off were responsible for sedan chairs and the poor for small banners and gongs; those of middle income made parasols.²³

A 1998 article by Li Tiansheng and Tian Sulan provides the same ritual titles as those noted above, with useful definitions for them all. The term *xizhu* (drama bamboo) here is a variant on the *zhangzhu* (holder of bamboo) noted above in the section of this report on Hebei. The *xizhu*, who preceded the music troupes, recited invocations when cups were offered and narrated stories and statements of praise during the rituals.²⁴

²³ Duan Youwen (1997) "Jin dong Nanlucheng yingshen saishe xisu kaoshu" (An investigation of festivals to welcome the gods and Nanlu city in Eastern Jin [Shanxi]). *Min-su ch'ü-i* 110: 4-8.

²⁴ Li Tiansheng and Tian Sulan (1998) "Saishe jili yu Yuehu jiyue" (Festival rituals and Yuehu skills and music). *Min-su ch'ü-i* 115: 218.

Shandong

The most important information I have about community ritual leaders in Shandong is about their connections with village administration. The best study of Shandong village leaders in the first half of the twentieth century is Martin Yang's book on his home village of Taitou. Those with some official status were first the *shezhang*, defined as "the head of the rural district, the highest official post," who lived at home but were responsible for several villages in a district. The 'village head' was called a *zhuangzhang*, who "was always a native of the village in which he held office. He was elected only for one year but could be re-elected continuously for a number of years." In addition there were *xiangyue*, the old conveyor of imperial moral instructions who by the mid-twentieth century had become tax collectors responsible for several villages. Finally, there were the *difang*, village policemen responsible for arresting and investigating criminals, settling disputes and organizing night patrols. The 'election' of a village head was by family elders who selected someone by discussion and consensus. Neighborhood leaders called *linzhang* were also selected at these meetings. Martin Yang does not provide any information about ritual activities, but notes that a village head's responsibilities could include discussing "with one or two neighboring villages a collective sponsorship of opera practicing or a religious parade." Yang also discusses 'village gentry' and 'lay leaders', such as lineage heads, school teachers and businessmen who have performed some service for the community.²⁵

Volume 4 of the *Chūgoku nōson* includes a bit of information about local leaders of rain-seeking rituals in Licheng county of Shandong, leaders called *shoushi* (heads of activities) who owned land and had contributed to repair the temple. This was an unpaid position that in the past had been hereditary but was no longer, because of economic difficulties and the division of households among brothers. This position was formerly called *sheshou* or *huishou*. The *shoushi* was responsible for village funds and for discussing local problems with the residents.

Rain rituals at a Jade Emperor temple involved those who wrote memorials, invited the gods, repaired sedan chairs, set off firecrackers,

²⁵ Martin C. Yang (1945) *A Chinese Village: Taitou, Shandong Province*. New York and London: Columbia University Press, pp. 173–183. No characters are provided for the Chinese terms in this book.

drew and heated water, carried water jars, offered incense and carried umbrellas, and those responsible for ritual implements, banners and finances. All of these duties were decided by discussion. Daoist priests burned ritual money and recited scriptures during the ritual, and walked beside the god's sedan chair in a procession. The scriptures they recited were the *Sanguanjing*, *Beidoujing* and the *Huangjing*, respectively those for the Three Officers of heaven, earth and water, the Northern Bushel asterism and the Jade Emperor.²⁶

Shaanxi and Heilongjiang

For Shaanxi to the west we are fortunate to have excellent articles and a book by Adam Yuet Chau, based on fieldwork there between 1995 and 1998 that was part of his dissertation research. The focus of his research was a large temple dedicated to the Black Dragon King in Yulin Prefecture in northern Shaanxi. Chau describes in detail the organization and rituals of this temple, its relationship to local government, and the activities of spirit-mediums in this area. He writes:

It is no exaggeration to characterize temples as the motor of popular religious revivals and a major locus of peasant cultural productions. As a result, the most significant institutional player in Shaanbei's peasant cultural revival is the temple association, which in every temple ensures that temple's smooth running and stages festivals in honor of the deity (or deities) enshrined there. Typically, a temple association is composed of a small group of generally respectable adult men (called *huizhang*; lit., 'association heads') who are willing to serve the deity and the community. Their leadership roles are often confirmed not just by communal acceptance but by divination, indicating approval by the deity as well. Each temple association customarily has a leader (*dahuizhang*; lit., 'big association head')—that is, the temple boss—who is usually the person who is most capable, as well as most respected by members of his community.

...

Like most village-level temples in Shaanbei, the Heilongdawang Temple is a popular religious temple run by ordinary villagers and has no professional clergy. Even at temple festivals, no Daoist or Buddhist liturgies are conducted.

²⁶ I. Suehiro et al. (ed.) *Chūgoku nōson* 4: 30.1–34.3. On pp. 356.3 and 410.1 of this volume there are references to village heads in Shandong villages leading collective rituals, one of them acting as a *huishou* for this purpose.

...

In Shaanbei, some temple leaders are current or former village Party secretaries. In many cases, Party secretaries are the most genuinely respected and knowledgeable members of the community, so their being elected to be temple bosses is not surprising. They also have a great deal of experience in organizing large-scale communal activities, and their skills are easily transferred from organizing brigade production and political campaigns to organizing temple festivals. Sometimes they have become temple bosses because no one else has the know-how and connections to the local state to negotiate with, for example, the local religious affairs bureau.²⁷

Chau also discusses the role of *yinyang* masters in family rituals. On Buddhists and Daoists he has the following comments:

Besides *yinyangs* and mediums, there are a small number of Buddhist monks, nuns, and Daoist priests in Shaanbei who occasionally conduct rituals, especially at funerals. Buddhism used to have a strong presence in Shaanbei before the twentieth century, but today only a few monasteries in Shaanbei have permanent clergy. Their numbers are very small. Sometimes the monks are called to conduct funeral services, but often lay villagers are hired to do similar Buddhist funeral ceremonies (the latter eat meat and drink alcohol at the funeral banquet just as the other guests). There are even fewer Daoist priests, who are mostly concentrated in the White Cloud Mountain Daoist shrines in Jia County.

Despite the fact that both Buddhism and Daoism are 'official religions' recognized by the State, their institutionalized expressions are extremely hampered by the latter. Ironically, it is the 'feudal superstitious' elements of religion that enjoyed the most vigorous revival during the reform era. A *yinyang* once told me proudly that they (i.e., the *yinyangs*) were the key actors in reviving rituals in Shaanbei whereas the monks and priests were pretty much useless.²⁸

Spirit Medium Activities in Festivals

Local leaders of community rituals are integral parts of their communities, selected because of their reputations and economic status. They represent these communities in festival activities and worship of the gods. Spirit-mediums, on the other hand, act as individuals who represent the gods believed to possess them; they can be from the village where a festival is being held, or they may come from elsewhere. Their

²⁷ Chau, "The Politics of Legitimation", pp. 238, 254, 250.

²⁸ Adam Yuet Chau (2003) "Popular Religion in Shaanbei, North Central China". *Journal of Chinese Religions* 31: 60.

status depends on how well they solve people's problems, though they may also participate in community rituals, as we have seen in Yang Xinmin's report above. In Shi Jian's report on temple festivals on Mt. Qingxu, cited above, there is also some interesting information about the activities of female and male spirit-mediums during temple festivals, mediums called *wupo* and *shenhan*, who danced while possessed by the gods, singing and beating ritual drums. The female mediums burned yellow incense paper in incense flames; when the ashes flew about they seized a piece, saying it was divine medicine that could heal illness. They had worshipers drink the ashes in infusions of water or tea. After they drank it, the worshipers gave them money to thank them.²⁹ This information is corroborated by a 1999 edition of the Tang County local history (*Tangxian zhi*), p. 631, which says that dancing female mediums (*wupo*) were very common at temples there during the Republican period. They danced in a figure eight, singing as they danced. Prohibited during the Cultural Revolution, this practice began to revive in 1983. The local history of nearby Yixian reports that in the late Qing and early Minguo period there were more than 300 male and female mediums who "made offerings to gods and Buddhas to repay vows, drew paper talismans and used swords to drive away demons."³⁰

The most detailed information I have seen about a spirit-medium in a Hebei village is in the 2003 article by Fan Lizhu noted above concerning an elderly woman in Zhiwuying village near Baoding, here designated as a Mrs. Wu. Mrs. Wu is believed by her devotees to manifest healing power given her by an ancient goddess, called the Silkworm Mother. Since Professor Fan's article is readily available in English I will not cite it extensively here. Suffice it to say that at the age of sixty Mrs. Wu began to suffer serious leg pains that could not be healed. She had a dream in which several gods talked to her, and the Silkworm Mother summoned her to heal the sick. Both she and her family resisted this, but eventually she accepted her vocation, upon which her leg pains ceased. She loudly proclaimed, "I am the Silkworm Mother; I am coming here to heal people who have disease. Nobody can stop me." For over twenty years people have come to Mrs. Wu's home to be healed, believing her to be the goddess in living form. Her role in the community has been to organize the rebuilding of several small

²⁹ "Tangxian Qingxu shan," (see note 7 above).

³⁰ *Yixian zhi*, 2000 edition, p. 1100.

temples, including one dedicated to Guanyin next to her home, which we visited in 2000. Fan Lizhu's article includes several testimonies by people who believe they were healed by this medium.³¹

The most comprehensive study of a single county in north China remains that of Li Jinghan and several Chinese colleagues on Dingxian, where cooperative fieldwork was carried out by them and Sydney Gamble in 1926–1933. I visited villages and temples there in 2000 and 2001 together with Fan Lizhu, Hou Jie and local scholars, and observed a large temple festival. There is interesting information about rituals for ill family members by Ding County spirit-mediums in Li Jinghan's 828 page fieldwork report, but nothing specifically concerning the activities of such mediums in community-wide ceremonies.³²

Another account of Hebei spirit-mediums who were active in such festivals can be found in an article by Yue Yongyi about community rites at the Water Goddess temple in Changxin, Zhao County. Here the major activity by such mediums is called 'observing incense' (*kan xiang*), which means observing how three sticks of incense held in the hand are burning to learn if the response to what is prayed for is auspicious. This is described as an essential element of the festival, done for worshipers by mediums called *xiangdao de* 'those of the incense way' who can be possessed by gods. They are men or women, most fifty or older and illiterate. They are all from farm families for whom serving as mediums is a secondary activity. Most become *xiangdao* because they believe the goddess healed them of a chronic illness, but some get started as disciples of *xiangdao* masters. On the whole, this is not a hereditary role. In the homes of these mediums are *shenma* (divine horse) paintings of the gods on cloth hangings about two meters high and one wide, with depictions of seventy to eighty gods in ten rows. These paintings are mounts for the gods. Among them are local gods believed to be able to possess people. Every morning and evening the mediums offer incense to these gods, bow and recite silently to communicate with them. Each medium can be possessed by particular gods, depending on the nature of the problem or illness to be dealt with. Except between disciples and masters, *xiangdao* do not much communicate with each other. They all emphasize that they are doing good for both gods and people and

³¹ Fan Lizhu, "The Cult of the Silkworm Mother as a Core of Local Community Religion", pp. 53–66.

³² Li Jinghan (ed.) *Ding xian diaocha*, p. 398.

are not seeking profit for themselves. They despise those who ‘observe incense’ for money or reputation. These mediums go to temple festivals where they have good mutually supportive relationships.³³

In his study of Hebei villages where popular sectarian traditions have revived, Thomas DuBois observed and interviewed spirit-mediums called ‘incense heads’ (*xiangtou*) “who heal through the power of fox spirits.” They are “very much in demand... Most villages in this area have at least one *xiangtou*; as many peasants put it, ‘there is no such thing as a village without a *xiangtou*,’ and some have as many as ten.” They heal illnesses believed to be caused by bad deeds such as unfilial behavior or not repaying debts during the New Year period, which are punished by ‘supernatural powers.’ Such illnesses are called *xu* (empty) as distinguished from bodily ailments called *shi*. DuBois discusses such mediums in detail, but they appear to act primarily on behalf of afflicted individuals, not as part of community festivals, so I do not describe their activities here.³⁴

A tradition closely related to spirit-mediumship is spirit-writing, once widespread. A deity closely associated with it is the Daoist immortal, Lü Dongbin, for whom there is a temple in Huangliangmeng (Yellow Millet Dream) village in Handan County that Fan Lizhu, local scholars and I visited in 2004. This village is named after a dream Lü Dongbin had here while he was waiting for a bowl of yellow millet soup. In the dream he lived a lifetime, but when he woke up the soup was still warm.

The temple at this village for the immortal Lü was rebuilt and enlarged in 1554, repaired several times after that, then rebuilt again in the 1986–1992 period. Older villagers remember that in the past a Daoist priest and two of his disciples lived there, but after Liberation they were all sent home and have since died. This shrine at one time had 360 *mu* of land that was managed by these priests and rented out to villagers. The rental income was used for temple expenses, and twice a year to give rice to villagers in the spring and winter. Spirit-writing (*fujī*) was carried out at this shrine by the Daoists, who used a kind of ring used for grinding flour (*luoquan*) and a wooden box on a table with a layer of sand or rice in it. This is all most interesting but again

³³ Yue Yongyi, “Changxin Shuici Niangniang miaohui”, pp. 240–241.

³⁴ Thomas David DuBois (2005) *The Sacred Village: Social Change and Religious Life in Rural North China*. Honolulu, Hawai’i: University of Hawai’i Press, pp. 65–75.

was carried out for individuals and families, not for the community as a whole.³⁵

Spirit-mediums are also active in the Shangdang area of Shanxi, as discussed in an excellent article by Zhang Zhennan and Pu Haiyan, “Shangdang minjian de yingshen saishu” (1993). Here, as in Hebei, mediums are called *mapi*, *wupo* or *shenhan*. This article includes the following description of a spirit-medium séance during a festival in Nanjia village of Luchen. The medium was called a *mapi*.

When possessed, the medium “acted strangely in a divine manner,” with his eyes crossed and his body shaking, spitting white saliva. He was oblivious to normal activities. In about half an hour he jumped up and took off his clothing and shoes except for a pair of shorts. He pierced both cheeks with a seven inch awl until the blood flowed down his chest. He then took a big steel awl five *chi* long with nine rings around it, and moved to the front of those offering incense, acting like a madman. People did not dare to look at him, but heard the sound of the rings.

For this performance it was said that the medium received half a year’s wages. In another village in this area *mapi* pierced their wrists.³⁶

Shandong spirit-mediums active in festivals are described in sections of a Japanese book edited by Sasaki Mamoru on modern Chinese society and popular culture, with an emphasis on north China villages (1992). This book is based on field research conducted in the 1980s; I begin with his account of ritual activities in Pingyuan County, southeast of Dezhou city not far from Hebei. There was a variety of temples there, with Daoist priests participating in some of their *jiao* festivals, as well as female and male mediums who could ‘bring down the gods’ (become possessed). The female mediums were called *shen momo* and the male, *shenhan*. In one village there was a female medium aged 76–77 who could heal illness by the power of the gods, and who performed acupuncture. Following is a summary of Sasaki’s report:

Mediums in this area had *louzi* ‘little towers’ made of paper that served as spirit tablets. They leaped in front of these *louzi* while moving their hands and feet, and made offerings and burned incense, with their bodies

³⁵ Wang Yongxin, “Handan xian, Huangliang meng Lüxian ci Guangji gong miaohui yu xinyang” (The temple festivals and beliefs of the Guangji temple and the shrine of the Immortal Lü of Huangliangmeng (Yellow Millet Dream) [village] in Handan county). *Handan diqu minsu*, pp. 147–165.

³⁶ Zhang Zhennan and Pu Haiyan, “Shangdang yingshen saihui”, pp. 220–222.

convulsed. They had divine messages from the gods; since illness was believed to be caused by the ghosts of the dead, they prayed to drive them away. These rituals, which were not carried out frequently here, were performed by women in one poor family of four people, who were not paid with money, but kept the offerings to the gods, such as chickens, fish, meat, fruits, melons and rice candy. However, those who had been healed gave them thank you money in the first month of the year.³⁷

Of course, no report on spirit-mediums in Shandong would be complete without a reference to the *Yihe quan* (Boxer) movement at the end of the nineteenth century, for which a standard treatment in English is that by Joseph W. Esherick. Boxer possession rituals could involve several people at the same time, but they were not a part of community festivals. Nonetheless, the ‘mass character’ of these rituals is worth noting. Esherick writes:

But what differentiated Spirit Boxer ritual from all of these earlier forms was the mass character of the possession. It was not just the leaders who were possessed, using their unique access to the gods as a divine source of authority. The Boxers were particularly egalitarian in their possession ritual: any young man with a pure heart could be possessed. Furthermore, consistent with usual shamanistic practice for exorcism or communication with the dead, the possessed person would be associated with one particular spirit who would always come to possess him. As the contemporary accounts make clear, the popularization of the possession ritual was fundamental to the Spirit Boxer appeal: it held out the promise that ordinary men could assume, for a time, the attributes of gods. For the poor peasants of northwest Shandong, that was an extremely attractive promise.³⁸

For Shaanxi we have detailed discussions by Adam Chau:

According to my informants and my own observations, there are two broad categories of spirit mediums in Shaanbei. Both kinds are categorically called ‘horse lad’ (*matong*), the Shaanbei equivalent of the *jitong* or *tang-ki* in Taiwan. When a deity possesses the medium it is said that the deity “descends from [or with?] the horse” [*xicama*]. Temple murals often portray the deities as mounted on horses in the clouds. When possessed the medium makes frequent horse snorting sounds.

³⁷ Mamoru Sasaki (ed.) (1992) *Kindai Chūgoku no shakai to minshū bunka: Nitchū kyōdō kenkyū, Kahoku nōson shakai chōsha shiryōshū* (The society and popular culture of modern China; cooperative Japanese and Chinese studies. Collected materials on investigations of north China village society). Tokyo: Tōhō Shoten, pp. 34b, 54b–55a.

³⁸ Joseph W. Esherick (1987) *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, pp. 217–219.

One kind of medium is called a *wushen*, whose tutelary deities are so-called 'proper gods' [*zhengshishen*] such as the Monkey King, etc. When they get possessed, the occasion is called 'tripping [on?] the altar' [*dietan*]. The *wushen* often uses a heavy, three-pronged wrought-iron sword [*sanshandao*] as ritual paraphernalia, which he shakes and waves. Some *wushen*, however, do not use the wrought-iron sword but merely fall into an altered state of consciousness when possessed. The other kind of medium is called *shenguan*... whose tutelary deities are typically immortals [*daxian*], who evolved from the spirits of dead people (typically those who died a bad or premature death). As for ritual paraphernalia a *shenguan* usually uses a heavy drum made of wrought-iron and goat-skin [*yangpi gu*] as he chants and dances. The dancing and performing is colloquially called 'dancing the great god' [*tiao dashen*].

...

People go to see the mediums for all kinds of problems but mostly for treating illnesses. Regardless of the kinds of deities possessing them, all mediums seem to be able to cure illnesses. They are especially effective in treating illnesses that are considered 'weird' and 'wayward' [*xiebing*], not the kind that regular doctors can deal with. These illnesses include soul loss and disturbances by bad spirits such as *maoguishen* [hairy ghost gods] mentioned earlier. So exorcism is an important component of their repertoire.

The mediums are often the ones who initiate the building of temples for their tutelary deities. Many temples have 'resident' mediums whom the clients can consult. The mediums usually do not live in the temple but at home, which is never far from the temple. The mediums can conduct séances either at home or at the temple, and they can always make house-calls if the clients cannot come to visit them. When a deity uses a medium, the reputation of both the deity and the temple depends upon that of the medium. Popular mediums bring more donations to the temple, and the retirement or death of a medium always means a crisis for the cult unless a new medium is quickly chosen by the deity, which might not happen for years. Some mediums can attain considerable fame as healers and diviners, thanks to the efficacious power of the deities that come down to them; and Shaanbei people love spreading and swapping tales of divine efficacy, such as a miraculous healing, thus generating a whole lore regionally about famous mediums and their tutelary deities. Typical criteria of fame of a medium include how crowded his or her 'consultation sessions' are, from how far away people come to seek help (especially from outside of Shaanbei), and how many sedan cars (*xiaochē*, literally 'small cars', signaling rich or high official patrons) often line up outside the medium's home.³⁹

³⁹ Adam Yuet Chau, "Popular Religion in Shaanbei", pp. 57–59.

Adam Chau has kindly sent the following response to my question about whether or not these activities of spirit-mediums were connected to community rituals; his response demonstrates that these connections could be quite complex:

I really wish I knew more about spirit-mediums in Shaanbei and their role in temple festivals. As far as I know they are usually not the leaders in the temple associations, though they might serve as the focus of fund raising efforts (the efficacy of the deity being dependent on the spirit medium's power and skills). The leaders of the temple associations and temple festivals would consult the spirit medium (in trance as the deity) on certain important matters such as the choice of opera troupes for temple festivals or whether or not to build a larger temple. The deity sometimes responds through possessing the small sedan chair (similar to the practice found in Taiwan) held by two persons or four (mostly yes/no questions). I witnessed a general consultation session in Shaanbei in which at the end of the temple festival the spirit medium got possessed and summoned all the temple association leaders [to] a large meeting to review/assess the festival... The leaders all gathered and showed due respect, reporting to the deity the performance of the festival in terms of finances and other things (e.g., enough income to cover the expenses, good opera performances, no trouble-makers). During the festival the medium went on trance for consultation multiple times both at his home and at the temple, and he officiated at some animal sacrifices at the temple. But he did not seem to be involved in the actual organization of the temple association or the temple festival. But this is based on limited observation. A lot more research on this topic needs to be done. (personal communication, January 23, 2006. Quoted by permission)

Huang Qiang's article on female spirit-mediums in a mixed Han and Manchu village in Heilongjiang provides rich detail on such activities carried out during festivals. The village is Fenjiatun near Shuangcheng City on the southwest border of Heilongjiang with Jilin Province. Here the author observed an annual festival on lunar 3/3 involving several female mediums led by their master at her home. The master's name was Du Huiping.

Three types of rituals were carried out, bringing down the gods (*jiangshen*), sending out the horse (*chu ma*) and releasing the horses fetters (*kai ma ban*). *Chu ma* is an initiation ritual for becoming a medium. Another ritual, carried out at a person's home to heal illness, was called *po guan* (breaking open barriers).

The festival rituals proceeded as follows: 'Bringing down the gods' began at eight o'clock in the evening; in the festival observed by Huang Qiang this was done by six mediums and their assistants. Drumming

and chanting helped the mediums go into trance states in which some of them appeared to lose consciousness. Some went on their knees to run like horses, others shook their heads from side to side and beat on their arms and thighs. Then their behavior changed and they started to speak the words of the god who had descended into them. The god engaged in dialogue with a musician called 'second spirit' (*ershen*).

In this state some mediums asked for wine and cigarettes, some danced and sang, and then they gradually regained their normal behavior.

Some mediums are possessed by just one deity, others by several, usually gods named Hu, Zhang or Huang. Periods of possession usually continued for about two hours, to ten o'clock at night, but new disciples of the chief female medium might carry out the *chuma* initiation rituals until dawn. On that second day the master made offerings to the gods at her home altar and carried out more initiation rituals. She told the author that the deities could enter people's bodies through the tops of their heads, the soles of their feet, or their waist, chest or vagina, depending on which deity was involved. Mr. Huang provides two lists of the names of scores of deities depicted on large prints displayed at two altars in the home of the chief medium. Of these deities it is Immortals (*xian*) named Hu, Huang and Zhang who are most frequently called down by Master Du, who said that Hu was a fox deity, Huang was the Weasel God and Zhang was a snake deity (whose name should perhaps be pronounced *chang* or 'long?'). These animal spirits were believed to have attained enlightenment and so had spiritual power to dispel disasters, heal illness and protect granaries. In a passage from the *Local History of Hailong County* cited by Huang Qiang, we are told that female spirit-mediums worshiped foxes, yellow marmots (*huangshu*) or oxen, calling them 'godly sages' (*shensheng*). They also made offerings to other animals such as snakes, wolves, turtles and pythons. "When villagers are sick they always go to the place where the god is with incense and coins, or invite it into their homes, where they invite it by burning incense. While worshipping, the female medium offers incense, beats drums and utters words while standing in front of the sick person. When the god possesses them they move their heads back and forth with their eyes and mouth closed. After a time, her assistant, the *ershen*, helps the god by responding on its behalf. For healing, [such mediums] use [acupuncture] needles, medicine and prescriptions, and write talismans." Would that all local histories provided such ethnographic detail!

Huang Qiang provides six cases of mediums undergoing initiation, but I fear they give more detail than is appropriate here.⁴⁰

In sum, since at least the early twentieth century the majority of local ritual leaders in north China have been products of their own or nearby communities. They have special skills in organization, ritual performance or interaction with the gods, but none are full-time ritual specialists; they have all ‘kept their day jobs’! As such they are exemplars of ordinary people organizing and carrying out their own cultural traditions, persistent traditions with their own structure, functions and logic that deserve to be understood as such.

⁴⁰ Huang Qiang (1999) “Wu xi yu shouhu, fuzhu ling: guanyu Dongbei diqu wuxi de huxian xinyang zhi kaocha” (Spirit-mediums and protective and supportive spirits: an investigation of Fox Immortal beliefs of spirit-mediums in the Northeast). *Min-su ch’ü-i* 118: 281, 296.

CHAPTER FOUR

TEMPLE FESTIVALS

As is noted in the Introduction, Chinese local religion is based on family and public worship of deities and ancestors on home altars, but it also involves large-scale rituals participated in by members of the whole village or township community, on the occasion of what are believed to be the birthdays of the gods or to seek protection from droughts, epidemics and other disasters. In all cases these collective rituals invoke the power of the gods for practical goals, to “summon blessings and drive away harm.” These three-to-five day celebrations involve weeks or months of preparation, careful organization, the mobilization of large numbers of people, hiring outside specialists such as priests, spirit-mediums, and various types of musicians and dramatic performers, coordinating activities with surrounding villages and erecting temporary sheds for images of gods brought from elsewhere, as well as sheds for operas and food. The major ritual activity is processions carrying images of the gods through the villages involved; the components and routes of these processions need to be arranged in advance. In addition, merchants come from the whole area to display their wares on mats and tables beside the roads and around the temple, so that temple festivals are also trade fairs. The whole affair can involve tens of thousands of worshipers and onlookers.

As has been outlined in the preceding chapter, in the north, most festivals had a three-part structure based on inviting, welcoming and seeing off the gods (*qingshen*, *yingshen*, *songshe*), with local variations. For the first step a list of the names of the gods being invited might be read in the *shenpeng*, the ‘god shed’, set up in the host temple courtyard, with altars arranged. Next a procession was formed of music and martial arts groups, portable tableaux with opera players or children portraying scenes from dramas, bearers of ritual banners and umbrellas, and sedan chairs carried by four or more men, all accompanied by firecrackers, front and rear. This procession first visited every temple in the village, perhaps beginning with that for the Locality God, Tudi, to invite the gods to descend from their seats and enter a sedan

chair, to be taken to the host temple to enjoy the offerings and opera performances. (The images involved were smaller ‘traveling images’, *xingshen*, for use in processions). Along the way villagers would set up small offering tables with fruit and incense to welcome the gods and benefit from their presence. If other villages were involved, as they often were, the procession would visit their temples as well, and then return to the god shed in the host temple courtyard, where the images would be reverently transferred to the altars, accompanied by incense and offerings from bowing worshipers. In these opening stages of the rituals such worshipers were usually the festival organizers and family heads from the host village.

For the second stage, welcoming the gods, the traveling image of the chief deity of the host temple would be brought out to the god shed to welcome its divine guests, again accompanied by incense, offerings, music, firecrackers, and the recitation of the names of the gods. The ritual proper would then begin, with offerings, music, and the performance of operas for the enjoyment of both gods and people. At the end, the traveling images of the gods would be escorted back to their home temples in another procession. At this point the Community Heads might meet to choose the leader of the festival in the following year, usually by throwing divining blocks to see who received the most positive responses. So the relation between local gods and their devotees was strengthened and the life force (*shengqi*) of the community renewed. The most common name for these festivals is *miaohui* (temple gatherings), but people in the north call them *xianghui* (incense assemblies), or *saishe/hui*, with the term *sai* indicating rituals to thank the gods and *she* a community deity. As is discussed above in the chapter on leadership and organization, such festivals are a prime example of the organization and structure of community rituals and the detailed preparations necessary for them.

David Johnson’s description of the Shanxi *sai* festivals he has investigated is cited above in the Introduction to this book. Beyond what is quoted there, his excellent articles continue with discussions of temple festivals carried out in the 1930s, with detailed descriptions of temples and deities, preparation and rehearsals, invitations to the gods, operas and musicians, processions, offering rituals and food, and decorated walls fifteen-feet long and nine feet high made of pieces of fried pastry.¹

¹ Johnson, “Confucian Elements in the Great Temple Festivals of Southeastern Shansi”, pp. 131–132, and his “Temple Festivals in Southeastern Shansi”, pp. 647–649.

Some of these festivals were sponsored by single villages, while some involved cooperation among several. They were held every year or every few years, lasted several days and attracted thousands of worshipers and onlookers. Their goals are well-summarized in a concluding comment by a *sai* leader: “A good *sai*. The *sai* is finished. There will be gentle breezes and timely rains, the five grains will produce abundantly, men and horses will be untroubled, the fields will be verdant, buying and selling will be harmonious, and affairs will enjoy success. Sweep clean the courtyard, burn a full burner of incense; let the gods return to their places, and keep all misfortunes away!”² Beliefs and intentions associated with these rituals are discussed in Chapter Six below.

The organization and leaders of these festivals are discussed above in the chapter on ritual leaders. Since Johnson’s studies are published in English, I see no need to quote them further here. The reader is also referred to his introduction to such festivals on pp. 130–133 of his article on “Confucian Elements in the Great Temple Festivals of Southeastern Shansi” cited above.

Gao Youpeng, whose description of festivals in Henan is discussed later in this chapter, says of such festivals that the major goals of those who participate in them are to realize communication between gods and humans, express their hopes by praying for blessings and for the prevention of difficulties, and to respectfully worship the gods. Such worship must be sincere, or those who offer it will be punished. The main ritual activities are, first, prayers and vows for protection and peace, prosperity, having sons and similar practical goals, all offered in the spirit of: “If you give me what I wish, I will give you a valuable offering.” Other ritual actions are singing and dancing before the gods, seeking ‘divine medicine’ for healing, and making offerings. The functions that Mr. Gao attributes to such rituals include providing entertainment for gods and humans, increasing friendship and social unity, educating children in local traditions, and stimulating economic activity.³

The most detailed information I have read about north China temple festivals is in reports about them in the area around Zhangzi City in

Li Jinquan provides texts supporting three definitions of *sai*, as thanks to the gods for answered prayers, to repay the blessings of the gods and in honor of a god’s birthday. See his (1999) “Guyi duixi que xi Song Yuan jieyi xiaokao” (A minor investigation of troupe dramas in Guyi as a remnant of the Song and Yuan), in *Jili nuosu yu minjian xiju* (Rituals, exorcism and folk operas). Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, p. 121.

² D. Johnson (1994) “Temple Festivals in Southeastern Shanxi”, pp. 697–698.

³ Gao Youpeng (1999) *Zhongguo miaohui wenhua* (The culture of Chinese temple festivals). Shanghai: Wenyi chubanshe, pp. 85–91.

east central Shanxi. These reports, supplemented by information from Hebei, Shandong and Henan, will be the database for this chapter. They are based on local records and interviews with elderly residents. Most of these festivals were last performed in the late 1930s, though some have revived since 1980. Because of similarities among these festivals there is of course some repetition in my account of them. Festival details are provided here to further demonstrate the organization, complexity and vitality of community rituals.

In antiquity this area of modern Shanxi was the Shangdang Commandery of the old state of Jin, a name that is still used to indicate it. There were three types of temple festivals held here, *guan* [official] *sai* involving officials at a City God temple in a county seat, *xiangsai* township festivals often held at temples for the Goddess of Mt. Tai, Bixia yuanjun, and *cunsai*, festivals in single villages typically held in Jade Emperor temples. Preparations for such festivals began several months in advance, with the head of the host community inviting other community heads and accountants to meet at the temple of the god to be honoured. After first deciding on responsibilities and plans, they drank wine together to settle the matter. Then the community heads began to raise funds, buy needed supplies and write and deliver invitations. About ten days before the beginning of the festival the community heads and assistants called ‘incense elders’ burned incense and an announcement before the chief deity and prayed that it would permit the villages involved to carry out a three-day *sai* to celebrate its birthday and show gratitude for its kindness. This announcement also asked the god to forgive any errors that might be committed during the festival. We are told elsewhere that ritual participants must “bathe, purify themselves, wear new clothing and caps, and be sincere in what they do, to avoid incurring guilt. They must examine their hearts... On the day for welcoming the gods, each village is to prepare banners, umbrellas, floats and ‘divine horses’ (conveyances for the gods), with everything upright and sedate. If they use improper things that defile the gods, they will bring guilt upon themselves. Be careful! Be careful!”⁴

⁴ Qiao Jian, Liu Guanwen and Li Tiansheng, *Yuehu*, pp. 204–205. The quoted passage is from a Shangdang area ritual placard dated 1726, cited in Yang Mengheng (2006) “Shangdang gu sai yidian kao” (An examination of old sai festival rituals in Shangdang). *Min-su ch’ü-i* 151: 104. Yang’s article is an excellent detailed study of its topic.

As is introduced above, most festivals lasted for three days, and were in three stages (*chang*), the first, main and closing. In a township festival, before the formal rituals began on the second day the gods had to be invited to descend to the festival area and be welcomed. This was called *xiaqing* (inviting to descend), which was done by the Community Head (*sheshou*) posting an announcement of all the gods to be invited. Then the Community Head, village elders and other participants offered incense and cups of wine, after which all of the people of the host village went in a procession to invite the gods of all the other villages involved, bearing banners, ceremonial umbrellas, decorated tableaux, and 'divine horses', paper mounts for prints of the gods. The term I translate as tableau is *gushi* (story), in this case a scene from an opera represented on a small tray that is usually carried on frames fitted to the backs of men in a ritual procession. *Gushi* can be found in south China as well as the north.

The second step was 'welcoming the gods' (*yingshen*) or 'receiving the gods' (*jieshen*), for which the host temple leaders bowed and burned incense at the temples being visited, and put offerings on their offering tables, then with the sounds of drums and music circled the temple once. Then a *lisheng* ritualist (in this area a *yinyang* master) recited the 'text for mounting the horses' to invite the gods to mount. Then the gods' images or prints were put in sedan chairs or carts, or on horses, and taken to the host temple. There they descended from their mounts and were taken into the temple, at which all burned incense and made offerings.

The third step was 'enjoying the sai', the main sequence of the festival, during which cups of wine were offered in a prescribed sequence, first seven, then twelve, with eight at the end for a total of twenty-eight cups, including one offered to the sun at the conclusion of this ritual. All of this was accompanied by music played by Yuehu musicians (as introduced in the chapter on ritual leaders), and the recitation by the main ritualist of offering texts, with the Community Head and elders offering incense. During this time operas were performed on the village opera stage.

The fourth step was 'seeing off the gods' (*songshen*). For this the ritualist first 'settled yin and yang and the Five Phases' (representing the order of the universe) by painting a talisman and reciting an invocation. He also bowed and prayed for harmonious wind and rain. Then all the participants offered food to the gods to see them off while the Yuehu

played music, danced and performed short theatrical performances called *duixi*, which can be performed in an altar area. At the end the paper images of the gods and their mounts were burned to indicate that they had returned to heaven. With this, the festival came to an end.⁵

At the Jade Emperor temple in Xinancheng village in Zhangzi County a large-scale temple festival was held on lunar 3/15–17 every five years, with preparations beginning a few days before that. Zhang Zhennan and Pu Haiyan report that during this festival Yuehu offered cups of wine and performed operas on an old stage outside the temple gate. In an ‘incense pavilion’ in front of the temple people offered cups of wine, set up a wind screen and spread out straw mats, and also built a large shed. Here the chief ritualist chanted ritual texts while the *qianhang* opera leader read invocations and Yuehu played music and performed *duixi*. The *zhuchang* in charge of sacrificial wine, the ‘water officer’ and others organized the festival activities, which were carried out in proper sequence. The Village Head first carried out a three-day ritual at another, smaller temple in the village devoted to Patriarch Zhenwu, then went to the Jade Emperor temple, where he pasted up a poster listing all the names of those responsible for festival activities and stating the rules and process of the festival. He sent Yuehu to invite all the thirty-two gods from temples in surrounding villages to come and enjoy the feast and listen to operas, deputing thirty-two *tingzi* to carry tablets for them. These were boys from eight to ten years old. A ‘god arena’ (*shenchang*) ten *mu* in extent was arranged for the festival. Two Yuehu were sent about with a gong and drum for three days to encourage people to participate. On the morning of the thirteenth, all of those involved with the rituals, tableaux and music gathered in rows in the god arena. This arena was divided into three sections marked off in straight lines with lime. On these lines were placed three-cornered banners four meters high, with white centers and green borders. In their centers were written the names of gods and tableau teams.

In the middle section were placed thirty-two tables painted with red lacquer, with tablets for the gods on each. There were also a Daoist

⁵ Huang Zhusan (1998) “Tan Duixi” (On “Troupe dramas”). *Min-su ch’ü-i* 115: 254–256. Duixi can be performed during festival processions, offering rituals and on stage after the main rituals are completed. Those performed during offerings are wordless.

music troupe, a Jade Emperor ritual troupe, assistants for wine offering, and others. In the first section there were lined up a gong and drum troupe, [actors representing] four county officials, an 'old general', eight 'Great Celestial Marshals', several other opera characters in costumes, a music troupe and a copy of an opera text. In the third, rear, section there were several tens of large five-colored parasols with flat tops, a 'golden tower' and a silver parasol, as well as a 'golden drum banner' and a military officer from an opera. Following this there was a yellow parasol decorated with five flowers and eight gates, and another banner, with several tens of mounts for the gods called 'divine horses' following behind, whose bells made a tinkling sound.

When all of these were lined up the procession began, a god-welcoming procession that opened with three shots from a ritual musket. At the front of the procession were two people on horseback carrying spears with which they stabbed left and right to clear the way because there were so many onlookers. Then there was a Daoist music group with gongs and drums, closely followed by the four county officials inspecting the township. They were wearing black official robes, purple pants and black shoes. Then there were four servants in black and five men riding horses (as part of a *duixi*), who were followed by five horses ridden by generals, with old General Yang Lin in the middle wearing a golden helmet and yellow armor. Then came eight old gentlemen wearing five-colored clothing and face masks, all different. According to tradition, they represented celestial marshals from the novel *The Investiture of the Gods*. In front of them was a 'divine horse'; behind they were covered by a parasol. Next came several tableaux, each preceded by musicians, all with decorated costumes with small pennants inserted in them naming which village groups they were from. Following these, came other troupes with golden towers, silver parasols and paper men and horses, several with gold and silver [colored] decorations.

At the end of the procession was a great sedan chair carried by eight men bearing the image of the Jade Emperor. A music troupe led thirty-two *tingshi* carrying tablets of thirty-two gods, with a 'divine horse' in front and a big parasol behind. There were also other parasols, fans, banners and pennants, and then a flute-playing music troupe composed of two rows of Daoist priests and Buddhist monks, then a costumed military officer from an opera. Last were the ritual wine steward and his assistants, and finally the Jade Emperor's 'Dragon Chair', with a large yellow gauze parasol.

This procession made a tour of the village twice on the first day of the festival, morning and evening, and in the afternoon went outside this village to a temple in another, with people crowding the road for five *li*. Here they stopped, the *yinyang* Master, the temple cook and Yuehu offered three cups of wine, and then the procession returned to its home village, considering that all the gods had been invited back. The rituals on the next day were similar to these.

The authors add that these festival activities ended in 1937.⁶

Zhang Zhennan and Pu Haiyan have also published a longer study of temple festivals in the Shangdang area of Shanxi, which begins by saying that such festivals flourished in several counties in this area during the Ming and Qing periods. At these festivals not only were there ‘cup offerings’ and the performance of troupe dramas inside the temples, but also presentations of large-scale operas on outside stages. The festivals also involved large trade fairs for selling farm implements and goods from Beijing and Guangdong, as well as tea houses, wine shops, food stalls, book displays, toys, etc. Sometimes race horses were sold, as well as artwork by local artists. At each festival there were crowds of people who demonstrated their sincerity and hopes to the gods by making for them various types of decorated offerings and hanging ‘multicolored pagodas’ in the festival area. They also formed societies for offering incense and cart racing, and enacting such stories as *Zhou Cang beheads the drought demon* and *The masked exorcist (fangxiang) Fang Bi drives away the Yellow Disease Demon*. At each festival, families came to worship from villages as far as fifty *li* away.

There were both large and small festivals, with the large ones involving cooperation among several villages and carried out by rotation once every three to five years. The authors provide examples of eighteen villages in this area forming six sets of three, each of which carried out a festival every five years. In another group of seven villages the *sai* rotated among them, with each passing it on to the next, so that each held a festival every six years (sic). For all such groups of villages there had to be a host temple for each *sai*.

The authors provide rich details about *yingshen* god inviting ceremonies at a temple for the god Sanzong in Zhangzhi that were usually carried out on the day before the festival proper began, in this case on

⁶ Zhang Zhennan and Pu Haiyan (1997) “Shangdang Xinancheng miaosai” (Temple festivals in Xianancheng village in Shangdang). *Min-su ch’ü-i* 107/108: 353–357.

lunar 6/5. For this a large 'Dragon Sedan Chair' carried by eight men and bearing a traveling image of the god was sent out to invite the gods in all directions to attend the festival. In a 'god arena' for the festival, carefully selected in advance, receptacles for the tablets of the gods invited from the surrounding villages had already been placed. After the visiting gods were put there, all the participants returned to the temple for a feast. The procession to invite the gods was led by a ritual master accompanied by his assistants and music troupes. There were also many types of tableau troupes, which local people called 'incense offering societies'. Onlookers gathered along both sides of the route, all wearing new clothing, "looking as happy as at the New Year festival." Young children wearing fancy clothing and caps were lifted high into the air so they could see. It was a very festive affair!

Gong and drum troupes led the way for the procession, followed by martial arts groups wielding swords and spears as they danced along. The martial arts performers were closely followed by a large drum, then conveyances for five gods made of plaster on wooden frames, clothed and capped with faces painted green, white, blue, black and yellow, said to be five Dragon Kings who came in response to being invited. Each was carried on a man's head. Then there was an 'Eight Note Music Troupe' playing flutes and panpipes. Then came finely constructed and decorated tableaus, [the bearers of] some of them jumping up and down. Following each tableau was a music troupe. The tableaus were of opera scenes represented by actors in costume who were carried on platforms on iron frames borne on the shoulders of strong young men.

There were also stilt walkers in the procession representing popular stories. The tableaus also included 'divine horses' made of silk for the gods to sit on. The god's sedan chair was at the end of the procession, accompanied by Yuehu musicians. Sanzong's traveling image had a red face and long beard, was finely dressed and sitting on a tiger skin.

When the procession reached its destination all the tableau groups stopped in front of the opera stage and took off their costumes. With Yuehu playing, the ritual masters and the assistants led the sedan chair to the temple, where they performed the ritual of 'securing the god in its place' (*an shen*). With this the god-inviting procession ended.

Small scale *sai* in this area were carried out by one village, with no offerings or cups of wine, no ritual invitation of gods from other villages and no invited musicians. People engaged only a ritual master to invite the [local] gods, and sacrifice to and secure them, as well as see them off. Such rituals were carried out at varying intervals and at different

times of the year, some in honor of the local patron god's birthday, others during slack seasons of the year.

Other points to note about festivals in the Shangdang area are the use in some villages of the large decorated walls of fried pastry as discussed by David Johnson, and the offering of whole pigs on lunar 7/18 at festivals at Mount Yongan. This was done by families in the eleven participating villages around the mountain, but also by some from outside the county. After slaughtering pigs their hair was scraped off and their innards pulled out; then they were suspended on long wooden poles and taken to the base of the mountain. Then, to the sound of gongs, those carrying the pigs ran up the mountain to offer them at the temple.

Another local festival custom was cart racing by teams from several villages in and around Pingshun County. This was done in honor of the Holy Mother of the Nine Heavens (Jiutian shengmu) at her temple in Beishe village here. For this 'decorated pagodas' were placed in brightly painted carts pulled by two black oxen ridden by young boys. These carts were accompanied by men on each side and preceded by riders on two horses who raced back and forth, all accompanied by loud shouting.

The use of whole pigs and all this noisy charging about can also be seen in other areas of China, including Taiwan. Such activities are believed not only to entertain the gods but also to stir up and revitalize the qi of the community.⁷

Another variation on running performances as part of festivals is mule running at the Medicine King temple festival in Liubao village of Ruicheng County. For this decorated wooden frames were placed on saddles on the backs of mules. There were three *she* communities involved, each of which contributed three mules. Each day of the festival these mules were taken to the temple, and led around it several times. At noon on the main day of the festival, firecrackers were set off to report that the Medicine King was about to go out of the courtyard, the mule handlers loudly cracked their whips, at which the startled mules jumped like wild animals and ran at great speed, with their iron shoes

⁷ Zhang Zhennan and Pu Haiyan, "Shangdang minjian de yingshen saihui", pp. 209-230.

kicking up sparks. This was all to demonstrate the strength of the god and stir up the forces of spring.⁸

The organization and leaders for a four-day festival in Nanlucheng, another town in the Shangdang area, are discussed above in the chapter on leadership and organization. This was a *guansai* festival based in a City God temple that involved the whole county. A procession to invite the Great Emperor of the Eastern Peak from his own temple to enjoy this festival included about 100 participants as it set out, including drummers and other musicians leading the way, bearers of banners, parasols and placards, and thirty-two men carrying two carved wooden images of the City God, as well as subordinates of the county magistrate and four horse-mounted guards. It also included people carrying a whole pig and sheep. On its way back to the City God temple the number of people in the procession increased to more than 200 because it was joined by 100 members of an opera troupe in full costume who had earlier gone to the Great Emperor's temple. When this entourage reached the City God temple the image of the Great Emperor was taken inside and settled in place. As elsewhere, opera performances began in the evening.⁹

In their study of Yuehu, Qiao Jian and his fellow authors provide supplementary details about festival activities in this area.

On the first day, gods in the area surrounding a host temple were invited to come to the feast to congratulate the host deity on his birthday. This was done by entrusting the Locality God of that place to deliver the invitations. For this, a document with the names of the deities to be invited written on it was burned before his image.

Rituals performed on the second day were to welcome all the gods who had been invited. For this a 'god arena' (*shenchang*) was arranged outside the host temple, to which all the communities involved brought their deities. The host deity was also taken to this area to welcome his guests. All those escorting the deities lined up, with banners, placards, musicians, stilt walkers and martial arts and tableau troupes.

Once the proper respects had been paid in the god arena, all the major festival activities were carried out inside the temple, except for opera performances on the stage and merchants' stalls, which were outside.

⁸ Zhang Zhizhong (1998) "Liubaocun Yaowang miaohui de pao luozi" (Mule running at the Medicine King temple festival in Liubao village). *Min-su ch'ü-i* 113: 1-10.

⁹ Duan Youwen (1997) "Nanlucheng yingshen saishe", pp. 5-7, cited above.

The informants for this and the other reports cited here emphasized that for all of these activities there were fixed sequences and rules, including for the ritual dramas to be performed and the texts to be recited.

Each of the three days of the festivals began with the sounding of bells and drums in the early morning to 'announce the dawn'. During the day there were 'cup offering' rituals, with opera performances at night. Outside the temple every day there were 'street scraping' (*gua jie*), 'running to the sun', and 'sacrificing to the wind' again according to fixed traditions. Other daily activities included reciting the text *Obeying the Decrees*, straightening up the area, inviting the God of Longevity, and beating the 'Drum of Great Peace and Prosperity'. 'Cup offerings' involved offering food before the god and inviting him to eat; offerings included fresh fruit, noodles, soup, vegetables, tea and wine. 'Scraping the street' was to warn off harmful forces and summon the community to attend the festival. This was done three times each day beginning at dawn by going through the streets and lanes beating gongs and drums and blowing the *suona* trumpet. 'Running to the sun' meant making offerings to the sun as soon as it rose over the mountains. For this the ritual master, community head, and 'incense elders', carrying an offering table, rushed outside the temple facing east just as the sun rose. They then ran back inside the temple to offer three cups of wine. On the afternoon of each day offerings were made to the gods of wind and rain to seek three days of good weather for the festival, as well as for the whole coming year. For this the ritual leaders also ran outside the temple to worship, facing northwest. In some cases, right after the sun ritual the moon was also worshipped while facing northwest.

On the first day of the festival, after the early morning rituals, the ritual leaders and their assistants and all the Yuehu gathered in the temple for the recitation of the *Obeying the Decree* text by the ritual master. This text communicated the Jade Emperor's divine intentions for the festival, and the rules and regulations for it. After this, a Yuehu representing the 'God who Inspects the Fast' went into the 'God's [temple] Kitchen' (where sacrificial food was prepared), and then performed a ritual dance in the main hall.

In these daily rituals subsidiary deities like the God of Longevity were represented by Yuehu in costume, with the appropriate music performed throughout. Here I will provide an even more detailed example of what was done on the morning of the first day. At this time the bearers of

the gods' tablets lined up in the temple and bowed four times. The host community head made three prostrations, arose, bowed and recited the text for announcing the dawn. He then prostrated himself again, then thrice more, arose, bowed and then recited a text to ask the gods to get out of bed. He performed three more prostrations and arose. Then the tablet bearers entered the main worship hall, accompanied by music, washed their hands and rinsed their mouths. Then 'incense elders' and those in charge of offering wine entered, bowed, and recited the text for washing hands and rinsing the mouth. They then prostrated themselves and arose, after which tablet bearers" looked after the gods to wash and rinse" (*zhao shen guan su*) (?). This routine was followed for other gods in the temple as well.

At the end, a text recited included the words, "The festival is finished; may wind and rain be harmonious. The festival is finished; may the nation prosper and the people be at peace. The festival is finished; may buying and selling be peaceful. The festival is finished; may the people be secure and at peace." This was all accompanied by bells and drums. Then a *qianhang* opera troupe leader recited in a loud voice, "May all the gods return to their places and the whole nation avoid disasters and misfortunes." Then all burned incense and recited the name of the Buddha Amitābha three times, set off firecrackers and burned paper offerings. The tablet bearers took the gods back to their places, then all made prostrations before the chief deity and withdrew. With this all the steps of the *sai* were completed.¹⁰

In his recent dissertation on temple festivals in Zhao County of Hebei, Yue Yongyi lists 108 large and small festivals in that county alone, with sixteen additional ones in adjacent areas, for a total of 124.¹¹

For such festivals in central Hebei, east of Shanxi, there are some useful introductory comments in a history of Baoding city and in a study of nearby Ding County. On Baoding we read,

In the past people who attended temple festivals burned incense to seek [help from] the gods, tied up clay dolls [to seek sons], made vows,

¹⁰ Qiao Jian, Li Guanwen and Li Tiansheng, *Yuehu*, pp. 204–214.

¹¹ Yue Yongyi, "Miaohui de shengchan-dangdai Hebei Zhaoxian li qu xiangcun miaohui de tianye diaocha" (The production of temple festivals—a fieldwork investigation of contemporary village temple festivals in the pear [raising] area of Zhao County, Hebei), unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, Beijing Normal University, 2004, p. 148. Zhao County is near Shijiazhuang in southern Hebei. Yue Yongyi conducted fieldwork in this area for several years, beginning in 1999.

inquired about illness and medicine, sought rain and begged for blessings, driving away demons and cultivating virtue. Because there were so many worshippers, merchants realized they could make a profit, so they spread out mats in front of temples to do business.

[In the past] there were 419 temple festivals in the Baoding area, 154 of them large scale, most held in the spring or fall. In the spring people burned incense and worshiped the Buddhas [gods] to seek good weather and peace and security for the whole year. In the fall they repaid their vows to the gods [in thanks for blessings received]. In accord with historical changes, each festival gradually developed different characteristics, some becoming markets, such as the medicine market at Qizhou in Anguo County...

Most temple festivals lasted from three to five days, though some lasted from ten days to half a month, such as that for the [Baoding] Liu Shou[zhen] temple on lunar 3/15. After Liberation, in accord with guidance by different levels of government, *miaohui* gradually became markets for the exchange of goods, though they still included operas, stilt walking, lion dances, dragon lanterns, martial arts, etc. So, such festivals have become more colourful, promote trade and enrich the entertainment of the people.¹²

In Li Jinghan's monumental study of Ding County we are told that in the first decades of the twentieth century there were forty-three temple festivals in the county, sixteen of them in the county seat, and that:

The origins of festivals in each village are quite old, so it is difficult to investigate when they were established. Present *miaohui* include not only worship of the gods, making and repaying vows and seeking help and protection from the gods, but also people taking advantage of the opportunity to enjoy amusements... as well as gather in markets to engage in economic activities...

Whenever the time for a festival arrives, responsible people in the village meet to discuss managing it. Then they collect money from families in the village, depending on the amount of their wealth and land, to meet festival expenses. If the money they collect is not enough they divide up the shares again according to household income. If any funds are left over they are kept in the village office.

Ordinary temple festivals last for four days, but some go on for half a month, and others for only two or three days... Some temples have opera stages, for others temporary ones are built. On both sides of the stage there are large carts on which women sit to watch the performances.

¹² Li Guojun et al. (eds.) (1989) *Lishi Wenhua mingcheng—Baoding* (Baoding: city of history and culture). Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, pp. 404–405.

When the festival begins, all the villagers come to burn incense and visit the temple. Men and women, old and young, all joyfully go back and forth. In some villages many people come in large carts... On the one hand they burn incense to reverence its gods, and watch operas, on the other hand they buy a few things and see their relatives. There are very many people who come to *miaohui* to sell things, so they are really big markets, selling such items as farm implements, iron tools, cloth, cosmetics, food and toys. Ordinarily at each festival, merchants earn 120–130 yuan, which in villages is not an insignificant amount.

Temple festivals have several positive contributions and benefits. The daily lives of peasants are very difficult and boring, so watching operas at *miaohui* can relieve their depression. Townspeople also take advantage of festivals to sell things they make at home, like brooms and implements made of willow...

[On the other hand] at such festivals riffraff gather, people gamble, and spend a lot of money for the visits of their relatives and friends, so that some poor families have nothing left to eat.¹³

From this and other material on Hebei festivals we see that they share many characteristics with those in Shanxi, but on the whole are less complex and don't seem to place as much emphasis on processions. In the above chapter on leadership and organization I suggest that these differences might be due to the absence of Yuehu musicians in Hebei. Hebei festivals nonetheless have many interesting local variations. The festival at the temple for Patriarch Han in Beiqi village of Ding County Fan Lizhu, Hou Jie and I observed in June 2001, and found it to be very lively indeed, with thousands of worshipers packed together in the large temple complex and its courtyards, burning incense, making offerings and consulting diviners.

Festivals have long been held at this temple, even during the Cultural Revolution, when the temple was protected by the local Cultural Affairs Bureau. For a time the temple buildings were used as a school, but people still gathered every year for the annual *miaohui*. The school was moved to another location in 1992, funds were collected, and after

¹³ Li Jinghan, *Dingxian diaocha*, pp. 436–437. Li's American co-worker Sidney Gamble provides an English summary of this in his (1968) *Ting Hsien: A North China Rural Community*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, pp. 411–414. Fieldwork in this county was conducted between 1926 and 1933; Gamble's book was first published in 1954.

a few years the many buildings, images and murals of this temple were restored.¹⁴

Li Jinghan describes this festival during its heyday as follows:

The festival each year is for four days, from lunar 3/21 to 3/24. Every time there is a festival the villages all solicit money from shops large and small to pay for the costs of performing operas, setting up sheds, and other expenses. The villagers all treat the Patriarch Han temple festival as an annual festival. During this time, farmers stop working, students take a holiday and every family prepares glutinous rice dumplings (*zongzi*), steamed bread, and *heluo* buckwheat noodles just as during an annual festival. Every family goes to the temple, just leaving one or two people to look after the house. Many of the villagers welcome relatives and friends from afar to attend the festival, and prepare good food for them. It is all very *renao*; men women, old and young, all come to worship, buy things, watch operas and visit the temple; there are many people everywhere!

The superstitious beliefs of the villagers in the Patriarch Han are very deep. On lunar 3/20 those who have made vows because of illness prostrate themselves once every ten steps on the way from their homes to the temple. That night the people do not return home, but sit in the temple, which is called *zuoye* 'sitting through the night'... On the 21st people give new robes to Patriarch Han, and there are very many who make fans and burn incense and ritual paper [money]. Robes given to the Patriarch are taken to the temple and put on his image. The paper fans are placed beside the image. Beside the temple [in the courtyard] are big 'incense fire pools' [shallow pits about eight feet across] in which incense burns continually. In front of the Patriarch's image is a big incense pan, and on the floor there is a piece of cloth on which people throw coins, called 'oil coins'; there are 'old Daoists' (*lao Dao*) who take care of this money so that it is not stolen.

In addition to its main hall for the Patriarch Han there are halls for other deities here, for the Sage (Confucius), Tian qi (god of the Eastern Peak), the Emperor of Medicine (Yao huang), the Jade Emperor, the Three Teachings [with images of Śākyamuni Buddha, Confucius and Laozi], [The Patriarch] Hunyüan, the Yellow-Maiden (Huanggu), and Grandma (Nainai). The people first worship the patriarch Han, then the other deities.

The temple festival at Beiqi village occupies about 150 mu for the temple, opera stage and merchants' stalls. The main goods sold at such stalls are clothing and cosmetics, farm implements, food, livestock, paper flowers, items of wood and bamboo, brooms, iron implements and tools, leather goods, stones, manure forks, whirligigs, bamboo baskets and

¹⁴ Chen Tielian (2007) "Dingxian Hanzu gong miaohui" (The temple festival of the Patriarch Han temple in Ding County). Unpublished manuscript. Mr. Chen is a local scholar from Baoding City in Hebei.

cabinets and buckets. There are also wine shops, teashops, craft sellers, story tellers, displays of 'foreign scenes' and herbal medicine stores. At the livestock market at least 2,000 head of cattle, donkeys, horses and mules are sold each year.

In the 1920s and 1930s about 10,000 people attended the festival each year. After the festival, those in charge put a list of income and expenditures on a temple wall.¹⁵

The legends and beliefs associated with Patriarch Han will be discussed below, but Li Jinghan and his co-researchers also discovered some small-scale festivals in other Ding County villages that nicely illustrate how such traditions could be established. One such festival that they learned of in 1929 was at Yao Liu Zhuang village, where two years earlier the village head had proposed cutting down a large willow tree to sell for money to operate a school, but this was not done because of opposition from the villagers. During the next New Year festival a man told the villagers that he had a dream in which he saw a deity who said that he wanted to manifest his divinity (*xianshen*) in the big willow tree, and that the bark of that tree could heal many kinds of illnesses. After that, many of the people burned incense and prostrated themselves before the tree, asking it to heal illness. A sick man boiled some of the willow bark and swallowed [the infusion], and his illness was cured, so the villagers no longer dared to bring up the idea of selling the tree. This news spread to other villagers, whose inhabitants also came to pray, so Yao Liu village organized a temple festival and had an opera performed for the tree god!

The result of this and other healings attributed to this tree was that a four-day annual festival was established for it on lunar 3/2–3/5. During these festivals many people prayed to this tree and contributed 'incense money'. The village also collected money from local shops. In a field west of the village people built a large mat shed and an opera stage, with a god shed facing it, in which was placed a deity image. Those who came to make offerings wrote their names and what they had contributed on pieces of yellow paper, which were posted on the walls of the shed. Beyond the opera stage they built another shed for 'miscellaneous goods', with mats spread out for buying and selling.

The big willow tree was one-half *li* west of the opera stage; there they built another mat shed which covered the tree. Inside this shed there

¹⁵ Li Jinghan, *Dingxian diaocha*, pp. 437–438.

was an offering table equipped in the same way as in the god shed. Everywhere in the village and at crossroads were hung lanterns made of yellow paper which were lighted at night. In front of the opera stage on both sides were placed two large carts for women and children to sit on.

All those who came to seek aid from the willow tree deity first burned incense and made prostrations before it as they prayed. Some brought along packages of willow tree bark which they held while offering incense. When they returned home they boiled the willow bark and gave the infusion to sick people to drink to heal their illnesses. Many people came; so crowded together they could not move. Some people brought along pennants with such statements on them as “always responds to requests,” “truly efficacious” and “protects the whole area.” These pennants were hung all over the willow tree.

Inside the deity shed there were attendants, men for the men and women for women. There were also bookkeepers who recorded the offerings people brought. A few days before the operas were performed every household in the village was notified. People then invited their relatives and friends to come and watch the opera. They prepared good food and rice, so there was much eating and drinking. When the time for the festival arrived, farmers and students all stopped their work to attend it.¹⁶

I have information about other Hebei temple festivals from the Zhuozhou city area north of Baoding, to the area around Handan city in the far south of the province near Henan.

In Lousang miao (Mulberry Tree Temple) village in the Zhuozou city area there is a Sanyi gong (three [upholders of] righteousness temple) built in honor of the three famous sworn brothers of the third century CE, Liu Bei, Guan Yu and Zhang Fei. This village, established in the Han dynasty, was Liu Bei's hometown. A tomb for Zhang Fei is nearby.

The Sanyi gong in honor of the three sworn-brothers, was first built in the Sui period (sixth century CE), and had over thirty rooms. It was destroyed in 1967 but rebuilt in 1995–1998; the rebuilt temple contains images of the three heroes together with those of their assistants and wives. The temple festival on the traditional date of their oath of

¹⁶ Li Jinghan, *Dingxian diaocha*, pp. 441–442. Within the short space of two years this festival attracted about 4,000 people from this and ten nearby villages. This is a precious example of how a temple festival might start, even in the absence of a temple!

mutual aid began in the Yuan period, led by the village manager and Daoist priests. After 1949 it continued to be organized by local people, particularly by the village Agricultural Association and the militia and commune leaders. In the past the temple had thirty-six *mu* of land to support a resident priest and his disciples, who were responsible for caring for the temple, reciting ritual texts during festivals and performing divination for people concerned about long life, prosperity, marriages and illness.

Two different kinds of rituals are carried out during the temple festival, the first is a traditional ancestor worship performed inside the temple in honor of Liu Bei and Zhang Fei. This must be carefully performed in a respectful and sincere manner by men who purify themselves by eating vegetarian food, bathing and wearing festival clothing. Women are not allowed to participate in this ritual. The ritual implements must be clean and properly arranged to express filial reverence and sincerity, and the offering food must be fresh and abundant. There are thirteen steps for one such ritual and sixteen for another, including reciting such moral exhortations as “Be diligent! Do not do something because it would only do a little harm, or not do it because it would do only a little good. Only be virtuous and worthy; so one can save others.”

The temple festival itself begins after this ancestral rite is finished; in it the three heroes are worshiped as gods with the usual offerings of incense, prayers for blessing and health, and repaying vows by giving spirit money and robes to the gods. Operas are performed on a stage across from the temple about the activities of Liu, Guan and Zhang in the Three Kingdoms period (220–280 CE) that followed the Han. The festival begins on lunar 3/20 and ends on 3/25; a total of six days. It is managed by local work units and elders of the Liu and Zhang families. Since 1998 about thirty Daoist priests have been invited each year from the well-known White Cloud Daoist monastery in Beijing. They construct a Daoist ritual area in front of the temple, where they recite scriptures, prostrate themselves, make offerings to Liu, Guan and Zhang and pray for blessings for the people. There are also Lion Dance troupes and villagers who know how to heal illness. Temple caretakers are employed by the village, while in 1998 the Hebei Daoist Association sent over twenty lay devotees to give moral instructions, assist people in worship and explain it to them. There is also a middle-aged woman named Zhang who volunteers each year at the festival to tell people

stories about Zhang Fei and to give them healing massages. Fan Lizhu, Hou Jie and I talked to her there in 2001, when there were also several diviners in the temple courtyard.¹⁷

The reports on temple festivals in the Handan area, published in our series on popular culture in north China villages have already been summarized in detail in the above chapter on leadership and organization, so there is no need to discuss them further here.¹⁸

There is less information on temple festivals in Henan Province, south of Hebei, an area that encompasses that of several ancient states that were the foundation of the culture of the Central Plains (Zhongyuan) within which the culture of northern China developed. In this context it is not surprising that the festivals for which we do have detailed evidence are all for the ancient culture heroes Nüwa, Fuxi and Pangu, who are discussed above in the chapter on the history of temple festivals. The Henan scholars Gao Youpeng and Zhang Cuiling provide descriptions of festivals for these gods, Gao for all three and Zhang for Nüwa, with an emphasis on the participation of women. Festivals for Pangu have long been held at Mount Pangu in Tongbo and Biyang counties in the southwest of the province near Hubei. It is here that people believe the god created earth and heaven and all things in them, so they built a temple on top of the mountain in his honor. Every year at lunar 3/3 people from the surrounding area come to this mountain to worship, perform operas and make offerings, to thank him for his kindness. They pray for protection and healing, peace and prosperity and the birth of sons. The Pangu festival lasts from three to five days, with many groups of worshipers led by *huishou* climbing the mountain. There are two types of worshipers, the first of which is middle-aged men who form Pangu *she* associations to pray for good weather and other blessings.

¹⁷ Shi Jian (2007) “Lousangmiaohui de lishi fazhan yu bianhua” (The historical development and changes of temple festivals in Lousang [village]), in Geng Baocang et al. (eds.) *Baoding diqu miaohui wenhua yu minsu jilu* (Collected Investigations of Temple Festival Culture and Popular Customs of the Baoding Area). Tianjin guji chubanshe, pp. 446–458.

¹⁸ See in particular the two reports by Du Xuede and those by Li Wei and Wang Yongxin in Du Xuede, Yang Yingqin and Li Huaishun (eds.) (2006) *Handan diqu minsu jilu* (An investigation of popular customs in the Handan area). Tianjin guji chubanshe, pp. 3–41, 103–115. English language summaries of these reports are included in the book. In his *Kindai Chūgoku no shakai*, Sasaki Mamoru provides a bit of information on temple festivals in Wei County a short distance northeast of Handan, but there is not enough detail to warrant its inclusion here. See his pp. 207, 232, 235.

As they climb the mountain the association members bind themselves together with their leader with red rope or thread. They worship Pangu as a mountain god.

The second type of worshiper is women seeking sons for themselves or their daughters-in-law, who make and repay vows to the god. At the foot of the mountain they tie red thread and cloth around their chests, then make four prostrations before ascending. They go in groups that usually include both young and older women, some of whom carry bells, with some older women representing their daughters-in-law. The simple ritual for seeking sons consists of making prostrations while uttering a vow such as the following: "Grandfather and Grandmother Pangu, [please] do a good thing and give me a small grandson. [If you do] I will give you an opera [performance], good wine and food, and money. At the four seasons of the year I will ask peace for you and ask how you are, and tell my grandson to remember you his whole life."

Some older women lead their little grandchildren to the Pangu temple to make prostrations. One old woman told the investigator that a child should do this at the temple until he or she is twelve years old, to ensure that Pangu would not abandon it. Others attending a festival might ask Pangu to decide legal cases. Those involved in disputes go to the temple to burn paper money, set off firecrackers, make offerings and kneel in front of the god's image, where they swear that they have not done anything wrong, recognizing that the god will punish those who insult good people. They also pray for protection and prosperity for their families.

As at other festivals, here people make and repay vows, seek sons, healing and good business for family members by offering incense and ritual money. They also offer whole pigs and sheep, fruit, steamed bread and sweet pastries. The majority of worshipers are middle-aged women. When their worship is completed they have three operas performed, for which pictures of Pangu are hung on the stage, with burning incense placed before them. Before performances, ritual money is burned and firecrackers set off. People assert that after a festival ends it usually rains to wash away the dirt and ashes left behind, because the god loves cleanliness. As people descend the mountain on their way home, most take along food they have brought and cooked on the piles of incense ashes. They also take home little images of people made of flour, purchased at the festival, believing that such items are medicine left behind by Pangu.

Gao Youpeng continues by noting that annual festivals for the creator goddess Nüwa are celebrated at what is believed to be her tomb in Xihua County, near three villages called Nüwa city. A temple for her has been built behind this tomb to hold her image. Her festival is held on lunar 12/17–23 and 1/2–20, with 12/23 considered to be her birthday. The day she repaired the sky is celebrated on 1/15, which is the liveliest day of the festival. Most of her worshipers are older women, who make offerings, recite scriptures and dance like spirit mediums. They are grouped in ‘incense fire associations’ beating banners with slogans like “[May] the bright light of Mother Nüwa (Nüwa niangniang) and all the gods shine forth.” These associations also bring music groups playing panpipes and drums. Around the Goddess’ tomb her worshipers pile as offerings bricks wrapped in yellow paper called ‘golden bricks’. Another special characteristic of their rituals is a ‘frog dance’, in which a person costumed as a frog dances to drumming.

When her worshipers make vows, they sing songs like the following, songs that clarify their beliefs about the goddess: “Venerable Mother, Ancestress of humans, I am (name inserted here). I have many sons and grandsons who are secure and at peace, all due to your blessings. I have come to burn ritual paper (money) for you and offer incense. You have long helped and protected my daughters-in-law to give birth to sons, and protected and helped my grandsons to attend university and prosper in business. So, I give you [offerings].”

Mr. Gao adds that the goals of making vows are protection and aid, driving away harm, marriages, giving birth, good business and harvests, [safe] travel, promotion in school and getting jobs, for all of which people petition Nüwa.

Upon repaying answers to vows worshipers sing,

Heaven is most efficacious, earth is most efficacious, and the gods three feet above the ground are efficacious. Oh, my Venerable Matriarch Mother, I am your devotee from (name inserted here) village. On (year inserted here) year and (month inserted here) month I made a vow to you, and today I have come to repay it... You are efficacious, with divine power... I offer you a whole pig and a whole sheep. Venerable Mother, Matriarch of Humans, what I have brought to offer you is not much; please do not be dissatisfied. This is (name of item inserted here); which I offer you to eat and drink and for your expenses. Venerable Mother... I will lead the way for you; on (month inserted here) month and (day inserted here) day we will reach (name inserted here) village and go to (name inserted here) place. I will invite a big opera for you, and

show you a motion picture... I do not ask you to walk *peng peng*; here is a divine horse; here is a divine sedan chair [for you to ride]. When we reach our destination I will burn a tall stick of incense.

Before chanting these songs worshipers must prostrate themselves, with three more prostrations at the end to show their reverence. After singing, they are to go straight forward, without looking back.¹⁹

Zhang Cuiling reports that according to the testimony of a 78-year old man she interviewed, before 1938 there was a festival for Nüwa at Xihua every year from lunar 2/2 to 3/20. The man's family sold brooms at these festivals, which stopped after 1938 but were revived in 1981 after some worshipers resumed coming to the goddess' tomb in 1978. It was organized and led by women. During the festival, "All the worshipers eat and stay together [in the temple], like family members and sisters." According to Ms. Zhang, 90% of the organizing committee members are women, most aged 30 to 60. In the last 200 years there have been only three male *huishou*. Men are not allowed to participate in dances for the goddess, nor in night vigils at her temple. Larger festivals involve several hundred worshipers, smaller, several tens. In 1994, the local government built a pavilion for Nüwa here, with murals that include inscriptions based on Nüwa mythology such as: *Smelted rocks to repair the sky and Made humans with yellow earth*. Festival finances are managed by two volunteer accountants, with all funds used only for festival expenses. Those who donate twenty yuan or more are given certificates, and any discrepancies are made up by the *huishou*. Food is prepared from food offerings contributed by worshipers. A forty-five year old woman reported that festival tasks are assigned by the goddess according to the sincerity and ability of her worshipers, and their affinity with her. She said, "I have always gone to the kitchen as soon as I arrive at the temple; all I do every day is cook. The task the Venerable Mother assigned to me is to prepare rice. Every day I steam several hundred pots of rice and noodles, but I don't get tired." In addition to such food, decorative offerings made of flour are fashioned for the deity, steamed pastries in the shape of fruits, dragons, phoenixes, fish, frogs, birds and flowers that are painted red, yellow, black or blue/green.

¹⁹ Gao Youpeng, *Miaohui wenhua*, pp. 282–318. The quoted passage is on pp. 305–306.

An important part of reverencing the goddess in the Xihua area is the possession by her of the spirits of some of her worshipers so that they can ‘speak on her behalf’ and ‘represent her body’. Some are also possessed by other deities, such as Fuxi, Guanyin, Pangu, Guan gong, the Lord Lao, Er Lang and Nazha, as well as Norman Bethune and Mao Zedong, but the ‘most important is Nüwa’. Such possession, or dreaming of the goddess, is how devotees learn of tasks they are supposed to do at the festivals. All those possessed are women, who dance, speak, chant, weep, laugh or cry, or make ‘strange and wild movements’ for hours or days at a time. Their movements can be like those of characters in operas, or martial arts performers, or based on everyday work. Such worshipers told Ms. Zhang, “this is what the goddess has me do,” or “I don’t know why I leap about this way,” or “If I don’t jump, my mind is depressed and my head hurts... It is what the god tells you to do.” Of the chants and dancing, a thirty-six-year old woman said, “We are all Nüwa’s daughters; these chants express our filiality toward her, and cause her to see us gladly.”

Another Xihua tradition is piling earth on the tombs of ancestors on lunar 10/1 and at the Qingming festival, the latter because according to tradition, this is the day when Nüwa piled up earth and stones to repair the sky. Such earth is called the ‘Venerable Mother’s earth’; as it is piled up, women pray for good harvests, marriage and the birth of sons.

As we have seen in the case of the annual festival for Patriarch Han in Beiqi village in Hebei, staying all night in the temple is also practiced at Xihua in Henan, here called *shougong* (maintaining effort), but here men are not allowed to participate; even those whose wives are inside must remain outside or in a side building of the temple. Ms. Cui’s informants told her that the purpose of this night vigil is to reverence Nüwa and to seek benefits like sons and money for those whose minds are sincere. For *shougong* women bring to the temple straw pillows and newly-made cotton blankets, which are donated by people from the whole area. They sit all night until dawn, believing that this is what the goddess wants them to do. One woman said that she did this because of a dream she had.²⁰

²⁰ Zhang Cuiling (1996) “Xihua Nüwacheng miaohui diaocha baogao” (A report on investigations of the temple festivals at Nüwa city in Xihua). *Minsu yanjiu* 38: 40–53. I am grateful to Ms. Yan Zhidan, a graduate student at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, for sending me this article in December 2006. Ms. Yan, a native of Henan, is doing research on local religion and customs there.

Festivals for Fuxi are held at Taihaoling, one kilometer north of Huaiyang City, every year between lunar 2/2 and 3/3. This is a large-scale festival with about 1,000,000 participants from the whole area during the month, with the liveliest day being lunar 2/15, believed to be Fuxi's birthday, when about 200,000 people attend. According to local tradition, while Confucius was teaching here, in what was then the old state of Chen, people found a giant human skull, which Confucius told them was that of the Primary Ancestor, Fuxi. The people then buried the skull and built a temple to commemorate it. Year after year, more and more people came to worship, all of them bringing a piece of earth from their homes to put here, so the tomb became as it is today. However, according to Gao Youpeng's research, there was little activity here before the Song dynasty, with official sacrifices established only in 966, a tradition that was continued in the Ming and Qing.

The image of Fuxi now at Taihaoling is seated, about five meters high, wearing a yellow wild animal skin on top, with leaves and grass below, barefooted, with two horns on its head and holding an Eight Trigrams emblem in its two hands. There are many images of the god at festivals, made of plaster or wood, or in woodblock prints on paper. At the festival worshipers throw food into the piles of incense ashes, *shaobing* baked cakes, steamed buns, meat balls and eggs, which they eat right after they are smoked and baked by the burning incense or take home to share with family members. This food they believe has the power to heal illness and extend lifespans; because of the Ancestor's efficacy it becomes a sacred medicine. People also take home from the temple area cypress and elm tree seeds, grass roots and tree leaves to boil and drink the infusion. Similar efficacy is attributed to earth from the tomb in the form of small clay chickens and dogs that can be bought at the festival, called 'mud dogs'. According to local tradition, when Fuxi and Nüwa were creating humans out of earth they made such chickens from the leftover mud. These clay effigies are thrown into village wells or boiled with tea. People also bring a bag of earth from their homes and empty it on the tomb. Then, after praying for the Ancestor's aid, they pick up small pieces to take back.²¹

²¹ Gao Youpeng, *Miaohui wenhua*. See pp. 301–323 for all the material I discuss here from his studies of the cults of these three deities. Mr. Gao has written another book on this topic that includes much interesting information about the history and legends associated with Henan deities and festivals, but no detailed descriptions of festival activities. Gao Youpeng (2000) *Chenzhong de jidian: Zhongyuan gu miaohui*

For temple festivals in Shandong Province along the coast, southeast of Hebei and northeast of Henan, I have found only a few reports, by Sasaki Mamoru, Joseph W. Esherick and Zhao Zongfu. During his cooperative fieldwork with Chinese scholars in 1986 Sasaki found evidence of temple festivals in Pingyuan County in western Shandong, not far southeast of Shijiazhuang in Hebei. These festivals, called *Xianghuo-hui* (incense fire assemblies), were held at temples for the Niangniang Goddess on lunar 4/18, Zhenwu (the Divine Warrior) on 3/3, the Jade Emperor on 6/19 and Guandi on 2/24. He notes that at such festivals people prayed for good fortune, healing and the birth of descendants. Festivals in which Daoist priests and Buddhist monks participated were called *jiaohui*. The family and personal rituals carried out during festivals are discussed in the concluding chapter of the present book.²²

In his study of the Boxer movement of the late nineteenth century, Esherick provides a useful summary of Shandong festivals in a discussion of village temples:

There was one paramount occasion when these temples became a focus for community activity; the temple fair, held annually at temples in larger villages or market towns. The name for these, in most of the north China plain sources I have seen, was 'inviting the gods to a performance' (*ying-shen sai-hui*). The center of attention was an opera, supposedly performed for the benefit of the temple gods, who would be invited out and provided a front row seat, usually under some sort of tent or parasol.

Above all, these occasions were welcomed for the relief they provided from the dull monotony of peasant toil. Booths would be set up to provide food and drink, and provide for gambling. The crowds and opera created an air of excitement welcome to all. But the statement of community identity provided by the opera and temple was also extremely important. It is important, too, that the gods were not only part of the audience; many of the most popular dramatic characters—borrowed from novels which blended history and fantasy—had also found places in the popular religious pantheon. Since few villages had resident priests, and few peasants received religious instruction at larger urban temples, it was principally these operas that provided the substantive images for a Chinese peasant's religious universe.²³

wenhua fenxi (Dignified rituals: An analysis of the culture of old temple festivals on the Central Plains). Henan daxue chubanshe. Gao Youpeng is Vice-Chair of the Research Center for the Civilization of the Yellow River and the Director of the Institute of Culture and Ethnic Studies, both of Henan University.

²² Sasaki Mamoru, *Kindai Chûgoku no shakai*, pp. 34–35.

²³ J. W. Esherick (1987) *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, pp. 63–64.

The most detailed description of a Shandong temple festival that I have found is that by Zhao Zongfu in his article “Taishan Wangmuchi Pantaohui miaohui diaocha” (An investigation of the Peach Garden Assembly temple festival the Mount Tai Wangmu Pool), based on field-work conducted in 2000 with other scholars from Shandong University. This pool is located at Xigukou just south of Mount Tai and north of Tai’an City. After describing the Wangmu temple and its deities, the author goes on to say that before 1949 this was a big festival held here on lunar 3/3, the Goddess’ birthday, when all the other deities were believed to come to congratulate her. After 1949 the festival ceased, but people still came to worship until the Cultural Revolution. After 1976 worship here quickly revived, so that by 1994 the annual festival was held again, with support from the local government. Many people came to it in hired buses from as far away as Shanxi to the west and Fujian to the south, and also from Hebei, Henan, Heilongjiang, Chahar, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Guangdong, even a few from Taiwan. People come from Taiwan every year; some from Yilan and Taoyuan have set up stone tablets in front of the temple. No government officials participate in an official capacity, and there is no temple organization, but people come of their own accord, with only a few police present to help prevent accidents. On the second day of the festival in 2000, 547 door tickets to the temple were sold, with another 3,054 later for a total of 3,700. About 70% were women over age forty, 20% younger women and 10% men. Most were farmers, but there were also some merchants, workers, students and Party cadres. Most worshipers said they came to ask for *pingan*, peace and security, but others prayed for sons, marriage, wealth, employment, healing and success in studies. A few came to complain to the goddess and a few to repay vows to her. The author reports that the great majority of those present were sincere believers, who on 3/3 burned incense continually from five o’clock in the morning until night. The large incense pits in front of all the god shrines were full of ashes. Some worshipers donated robes or 100 *yuan* bills to the gods, while others released fish in the temple pool. The largest crowds were in front of the shrines for the Mother and the Medicine King, but even here there was no quarrelling or fighting, so “the police had nothing to worry about.”

There were many little stalls and mats beside the roads selling incense, candles, toys and food, and religious objects and souvenirs such as ‘*pingan* belts’ and amulets for protection and good fortune. As they entered the temple people bought incense sticks of different sizes, some

a meter long, paper ingots colored gold or silver, and yellow memorial paper saying, "May the whole household be fortunate," to burn as offerings. Inside the temple offerings were put on altar tables. People prayed to the Mother silently for about three minutes while holding incense sticks, which were then put in burners. Then worshipers would bow and prostrate themselves at least three to nine times, but some as many as 100 times. Then they left the temple to circumambulate the pool while facing the spring that fed it, praying silently. Then, after bowing before the temple pagoda, they placed offerings in front of the shrines of the other deities such as the Goddesses of Eyesight and of the Moon. Those repaying vows offered robes and banners that they had made themselves and 'thank you money'. At the Medicine King shrine worshipers bowed and made prostrations, asked for holy water and pulled 'medicinal grass' from an area beside this shrine. The water is taken from the pool and sold in plastic containers by temple workers. After worshiping at all the shrines, a few went on up Mount Tai, but most returned to the temple courtyard, then went home. Before leaving, some people sought good fortune by tying red strings on the branches of a cypress tree in the courtyard or on the big bell there, or by throwing coins in a basin in the middle of the pool. Other than the incense or paper ingots, offering gifts included apples, pears, bananas, oranges, chicken, pork, steamed bread, *zongzi* steamed rice and meat wrapped in grape or bamboo leaves, *jiaozi* stuffed ravioli, and also cakes, bread, cigarettes and wine, even a birthday cake! Of course, firecrackers were also set off.

The author also provides several accounts of activities by individual worshipers that are discussed elsewhere in this book.²⁴

This concludes my survey of temple festivals in this core area of north China. As for festivals in other northern provinces, the excellent work Adam Yuet Chau has done in Shaanxi is referred to in the above chapter on ritual leaders. His new book contains detailed discussions of festivals for the Black Dragon King and other deities in Yan'an and Yulin Counties in the northern part of the province, including rich material on their preparation and organization, all of which supports the basic argument of the present book. Of this, he writes in part as follows:

As tradition dictates, Shaanbei (northern Shaanxi) people stage temple festivals at least twice a year, one during the Lunar New Year and the

²⁴ This article is in *Min-su ch'ü-i* 132: 57-73 (Minguo 7/90; July 2001).

other for the deity's birthday. These temple festivals are organized by temple associations (*hui*), which comprise a small group of responsible and generally respectable adult men who are approved by the deity through divination.

If the temple has a medium he will usually become a core member of the temple association. The members of the association are called 'association heads' (*huizhang*), and the head of the association is called the 'big association head' (*dahuizhang*).

Traditionally, every year in the first half of the first lunar month the temple association organizes a temple *yangge* troupe to 'visit door to door' (*yanmenzi*) around the villages in the vicinity of the temple to greet villagers and to collect donations for the temple. On the First Month Fifteenth the association oversees the communal festival at the temple. The temple festival on the deity's birthday is a much larger event, lasting typically for three days, and thus requires much more organizational effort. Depending on the level of prosperity of the temple community, different folk performing arts are staged for the deity as well as for the community. The goal of every temple festival, like that of other festive occasions such as wedding and funerals, is to produce "excitement and fun" (*honghuo*)... Lots of firecrackers are also a must...

Preparations for the annual temple festival usually begin immediately after the First Month Fifteen festivities... usually in February. Two or three persons are sent out to book opera troupes... They follow the suggestions made at the large temple association meeting, seek out the right opera troupes, check their dates of engagement and their repertoires, and reserve them for the Longwanggou temple festival. They make a sizeable down payment and make preliminary requests for particular opera pieces.

Chau describes in detail preparations for fireworks, electric power, police presence to keep order, and arrangements with the nine participating villages for locations for merchants' stalls, as well as cleaning and preparing the temple area, putting up auspicious couplets, and distributing large posters announcing the festival. The festival begins with opera performances, and then temple employees and about 100 volunteers from the participating villages begin to help with cooking, boiling drinking water, arrangements for divination, crowd control, preparing for the annual procession and many other tasks. It is really a big production!

Another good study of a local festival in northern Shaanxi is David L. Holm's article on an annual 'lantern maze dance' that is also complexly organized. It involves an elaborate procession through a maze marked by 367 lamps! Several villages take turns in taking responsibility for organizing this procession, beginning by selecting the date for it by divination. Holm writes,

There were strict rules for threading through the maze, and the overall atmosphere was far from relaxed. It was felt that if people were not extremely careful they could lose their way in the sea of lanterns... Everyone, regardless of status within the religious association, would prostrate themselves when they arrived at the central altar-table... Apart from serving as a locus for offerings and obeisances, going around the lantern maze is also said to have the power to ward off sickness and calamity. The lanterns also bring fertility. After the villagers have gone through the maze, married women begin to 'steal the lanterns'... Each woman steals either one or two, and quickly hides them in her clothing. The lanterns are then carried back home and hung from the lintel. Provided that they are still alight when they arrive home, they are also said to bring the birth of children: a green lantern brings the birth of a girl, and a red lantern the birth of a boy.²⁵

In sum, wherever one turns in rural north China there is rich evidence for complex and structured community rituals organized by the local people themselves.

²⁵ See Adam Yuet Chau (2006) *Miraculous Response: Doing Popular Religion in Contemporary China*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, pp. 52–54, 77–79, 108–119, 137–149; all great stuff! Of particular interest is his discussion of temple and festival finances on pp. 110–119. David Holm's (1994) article is "The Labyrinth of Lanterns: Taoism and Popular Religion in Northwest China", in *Minjian xinyang yu Zhongguo wenhua: Guoji yantaohui lunwenji* (Folk beliefs and Chinese culture: a collection of articles for an international conference) 2: 797–852. The quoted passages are from pp. 812–813.

CHAPTER FIVE

GODS AND TEMPLES

As is true with other areas of China, the deities worshiped by ordinary folk in the north are believed to be able to provide specific forms of aid and protection, so here too a kind of practical logic is at work. The names and functions of many deities in Hebei, Shanxi, Shandong and Henan are noted in other chapters of this book; this chapter is intended to provide summary comments about them. The four volumes of reports by local scholars in Hebei discussed above provide the names of over 100 deities, some of them worshiped primarily in this area, with others known as well in other areas of the country. These names are listed below.

As is true elsewhere, local temples in north China are considered to be residences for the gods, represented by their images. The Hebei temples I observed together with Fan Lizhu and Hou Jie between 2000 and 2004 were mostly small three-sided shrines, open at the front, with a single altar at the back for deity images. A few had been repaired or rebuilt after the waves of destruction they had endured in the previous decades, but many were dilapidated, some no more than tiny shrines made of stones or mud bricks. There are several larger temples on Mt. Qingxu, and an ancient rock-cut shrine for the goddess Nüwa on top of Mount Zhonghuang near Handan, but the most extensive temple complex we visited was that for the Patriarch Han in Beiqi village in Ding County. This Hanzu *miao* was extensively restored after the Cultural Revolution by local people, and its annual temple festivals resumed. This temple, enclosed in a large compound facing south, has five rows of buildings from front to back, with two additional buildings and bell and drum towers on either side, with small administrative buildings on either side of its entrance. There are large pits for burning incense in front of the main buildings, which contain altars on which are images of the following deities, all reconstructed. The inside walls of these shrines are covered with murals depicting the lives of the gods. From front to back, the images are for the Patriarch Han in the center building of the second row with a small shrine in the back for Dizang, the bodhisattva who cares for the dead, surrounded by murals depicting the Ten Kings of

Purgatory. This building for the Patriarch is the largest in the complex. Just behind this front center building is a small separate shrine for the temple guardian, Weituo, facing north, with an image of the Celestial Worthy Who Rescues from Suffering facing south. The building located front row, far right, is for the Third Princess, Miaoshan, who is depicted on the murals here as a Transformation Body of Guanyin With 1,000 Arms. The front far left building is the Hall of the Great Sage Equal to Heaven, Sun Wukong.

In the third row of buildings north of the entrance the center structure is the Hall of the Three Teachings, with an image of Śākyamuni Buddha in the middle and images of the Most High Lord Lao on his left and the Sage Kong, Confucius, on his right. There are paintings about the lives of all three of these deities on the walls. At the back of this building there is an image of Guanyin as the 'Great Being of the Southern Seas', with her acolytes the Dragon Maiden and Shancai on her right and the bodhisattvas Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra on her left. On the right side of this third row of buildings is one for Bixiayuanjun, the Goddess of Mt. Tai, and several other goddesses who deliver children, all holding babes in their arms. On the inside walls are painted scenes depicting the stories exemplifying the Twenty-four Forms of Filial Piety. On the outside of this building was pasted a large red poster stating, "Repaying a vow," thanking the Celestial Immortal Holy Mother (Bixiayuanjun) for delivering a child, saying, "We rejoice in having obtained an honorable son, and have offered a yellow robe [to the Goddess]." The building on the left side of this third row is called a Medicine King Temple, with images inside of the Three [Ancient] Emperors: the Yellow Emperor in the middle, with Shennong, the Divine Agriculturalist, on his left and Fuxi on his right. There is no image of the Medicine King Yaowang in this shrine.

The building in the fourth row center is called the Hall of the Three Pure Ones. However, the images in it are not Daoist, as one might expect from this name, but those of five Buddhas: Chandana, the Lamplighter, the Ancient Buddha Hunyuan, the Ancient Buddha Who Supplements Heaven (Chong tian gufo), and Śākyamuni. Hunyuan, here a title derived from popular sectarian tradition, is in the center position, and Śākyamuni is on the far right. The ceiling of this building is covered with stucco images that reminded me of the Italian artist Tiepolo; here they are 108 little caves with images in them. On the side walls are mural paintings of the Eighteen Arhats. The altar at the back of this building, facing north, was the most interesting to me,

because it holds an image of Wusheng laomu, the ‘Venerable Mother Beyond Birth [and Death]’, the chief deity of the sectarian tradition that I had long studied. Her image is in the middle of five. On her far left are those of Samatabhadra as a mother goddess, Puxian mu, and Wangmu niangniang ‘the Royal Mother’, then Wusheng laomu, and then to her right the Golden Flower Mother (Jinhua mu), and Mother Mañjuśrī. This addition of the word Mother (*mu*) to the names of deities is an old sectarian characteristic found already in Ming sectarian scriptures. A sign on this altar maintains that Wusheng laomu is one of twelve Venerable Mothers. So, this back altar of the building in the center of the fourth row from the front of the temple is a shrine of the Hongyang sect founded by the Patriarch Han. There are no side buildings in this row.

The building in the last, fifth, row here is dedicated to the Jade Emperor, with two of his disciples, with six guardian deities on each side.

We were told that all of the rebuilding and art work in this temple, including over seventy images, had been done by the villagers themselves, from memory and photos. As such, the Patriarch Han temple is an excellent example of the devotion and artistic abilities of local villagers.¹

The deities discussed in this chapter developed against a background of official religion supported by governments at all levels of administration. For the Ming period, Romeyn Taylor provides an excellent discussion of this background, beginning with the understanding of the cosmic order that was believed to support it. He writes:

In the absence of a belief in a world-transcending creator and lawgiver to whom human society would have been bound to submit for its own salvation, the Chinese social order was understood by its members to flourish or perish by its harmonious or disharmonious relations with the encompassing cosmos. The cosmic order was experienced as normally life-giving and life-sustaining, and as governed by the known periods of solar, lunar and sidereal time. The importance of astronomy and of time periods defined by astral motion was reflected in Chinese religion

¹ This description is taken from my field notes, dated July 20, 2000. The Patriarch Han was Han Taihui (d. 1598), the founder of the Hongyang sect, a monk who took the titles ‘Piaogao’ (‘He who floats on high’) and the Hunyuan Patriarch. For a discussion of him and the *baojuan* scriptures he wrote, see my (1999) *Precious Volumes: An Introduction to Chinese Sectarian Scriptures from the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Asia Center, pp. 321–335.

in the sovereignty of the astral cult over all others. The polar-equatorial framework of Chinese astronomy located the cosmic sovereignty in the region of the north celestial pole which was viewed as the central palace of the heavens. Earth, as the counterpart of Heaven, was characterized by its fecundity, which worked under the rule of the seasons and was assisted by the cooperation of human communities in agriculture and husbandry. But Earth, as the place of burial, was also the passageway of souls leading from life to death and from death to life; hence the association of cults of fertility and of the ancestral cult with the earth. The assumed survival of human and animal souls after death permitted the mythopoeic imagination to create and sustain an invisible world of active forces behind the visible phenomena long after the birth of Chinese philosophy in the late Chou period.

The active forces of the unseen world, understood as spirits, were accessible to human contact in the ceremonial settings of sacrifice and prayer; and through them, the cosmos was understood to be responsive. The moral order, as defined perhaps first by the philosophers, was projected upon the cosmic order, which then actively sustained it in human affairs through the process of justice and by the support of legitimate authority. It might be argued that there were as many worldviews as there were people in China at any given time, but for present purposes, it is convenient to assume that most of them may be treated as variants of the aforementioned generalization, and further, that these may be grouped into relatively homogeneous sets. Different ways of understanding the world may be found, among other places, in the written records of debates over the meaning and the liturgical forms of the official religion of the Chinese empire. The official religion was defined by sacrificial statutes (*ssu-tien*). For all levels of Chinese society organized in the empire, from the imperial court down to the common household, the places of worship, the liturgy, and the participants were prescribed in detail.

...

Within the context of the much larger sphere of ceremonial (*li*), religion is meant to denote transactions between men and spirits. In official religion, such transactions consisted mainly of sacrifices accompanied by prayers or announcements. These were usually performed at regular times in an annual cycle, but important events provided occasions for additional performances of the rites. The specialized central government agencies directly responsible for the sacrifices included the Bureau of Sacrifices of the Ministry of Rites and the Court of Imperial Sacrifices, both of which had general policy and administrative responsibilities.

...

The middle and minor sacrifices of the imperial capital cities were all normally presided over by imperial relatives, members of the nobility of merit, or civil officials (military officials presided over military rites). Sacrifices at the level of prefecture, sub-prefecture, or county were presided over by the ranking official at that level.

...

The official rituals that most overlapped with local village observances were those for prefectures, sub-prefectures and counties, and for communities and families. The deities involved and the months in which they were worshiped were:

Flags and Banners (for local military headquarters):	second and ninth months
Soil and Grain:	second and eighth months
Wind, Cloud, Thunder, and Rain:	second and eighth months
Sacred Peaks, Guardian Mountains, Oceans and Great Rivers (within the area of the administrative unit):	second and eighth months
Abandoned Ghosts:	third and seventh months and tenth months

(Various local spirits added to the rolls by imperial decree)

Community and family

Ancestors:	second, fifth, eighth and eleventh months
Soil and grain:	second and eighth months
Abandoned Ghosts:	third, seventh and tenth months
Stove Spirit:	eleventh month

Other officially worshiped deities that were also venerated by the people were the martial god, Zhenwu, the God of the Eastern Peak, City Gods and Guanyu, called Guangong or Guandi by the people.

Taylor continues,

The spirits listed here were all classified as celestial, terrestrial, or human. This presented a few problems. The spirits of wind, cloud, thunder and rain were sometimes classed as celestial, but they were not stars and were usually served in important respects together with the terrestrial spirits. The popular practice, shared by some emperors, of identifying the spirits of walls and moats, and the spirits of the landscape with historical persons also generated conflict when the worship of these spirits came under government regulation.

...

One important distinction between official and popular religion concerned the ways in which spirits of mountains and waters were understood and served. Where popular religion identified such spirits with historical or pseudo-historical, human beings and served them accordingly, the official view held that such spirits were not of human origin at all, but were spiritual beings that had been spontaneously generated and sustained during the continuing cosmogonic process. This meant that specifically

anthropomorphic features of the rites for spirits of deceased humans were unsuitable for the service of the spirits of the landscape.

...

In addition to the sacrifices listed above, there were others that were fully official, but which were approved only for specified places. The spirits served by these rites were found to be exemplary, but not of imperial stature. If they were spirits of deceased humans, they were to be worshipped only in their birthplaces, or where they had served as officials, or where they had been buried. A firm line was thereby drawn between universal cults and local cults within the official religion.²

From these lists we can see that the imperial government was very much involved with deity cults, some of which had counterparts in local village religion. Though Taylor says there was a 'firm line' between universal and local cults, at least for the succeeding Qing period, officially edited local histories list a mix of such cults, as can be seen below.

Discussions of Temples in Hebei Local Histories

To introduce the database for this chapter I first summarize the discussions of local temples in several Hebei local histories. These discussions, written by county officials and scholars, imply a certain level of official acceptance, but include a wide range of local temples that were supported primarily by ordinary people. What I cite here are just a few examples from this type of source. The 1932 edition of the local history of Xushui County in central Hebei lists temples for the First Agriculturalist (Xiannong), Confucius (including two in villages), Guandi (found everywhere), the Three (primordial) Emperors (San huang: Fuxi, Shennong, and the Yellow Emperor), the ancient emperors Shun and Yu the Great, the Duke of Zhou, Emperor Guangwu of the Han, the Silkworm Maiden (Cangu), the 'Three Righteous Ones' (Sanyi: Liu Bei, Guanyu and Zhangfei), the Medicine King (Yao wang; here Sun Simiao), Liu Shouzhen (a deified physician), gods of the Eastern Peak and Northern Peak, the City God, the Bazha deities (in charge of protection from insects, wild cats and tigers, as well as for protecting fields and dikes), Fierce General Meng (a Southern Song general believed

² R. Taylor (1998) "Official Religion in the Ming", in D. Twitchett and F. W. Mote, (eds.) *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 8: The Ming Dynasty, 1368-1644, Part 2*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 840-847. This book uses Wade-Giles romanization.

to drive away locusts), the Fire God, Zhenwu (the Perfected Warrior), the Five Saints (Wusheng: gods charged with protecting horses, cattle and green sprouts and for providing healing medicines and wealth), the Three Officials (Sanguan: heaven sky, earth and water), the Nine Heavens (in charge of wind, clouds, thunder and rain), the Efficacious Official (Lingguan, a Jin dynasty general, loyal and brave, who drowned while wearing iron armor), the Ten Kings of Purgatory, the Insect King, Dragon Kings (many of them; responsible for bringing rain), the Dragon Mother, the Five Ways (Wudao, found in every village, as were shrines for Tudi 'Locality Gods'), the Er Lang (two brave young men named Zhao and Yang. Yang had been given a title as a Daoist deity, Qingyuan miaodao zhenzhun. Zhao, who admired and imitated him, died fighting an evil dragon in a river), and the 'Little Sage god' (Xiao sheng shen; a young man named Teng Jing who was deified after he died at age twenty-three).

This local history also lists village temples to the Lord Lao and the Patriarch Lü Dongbin, and notes that every village had a shrine to the bodhisattva Guanyin. A number of Buddhist temples are also named, almost all of them in villages, with such names as Qilin (Unicorn), Yongxing (Forever Prosper), Guangqing (Ample Good Fortune), Guangshou (Ample Long life) and Yongshou (Perpetual Long Life), names that would have appealed to ordinary folk. All of this indicates that Buddhism was well-established in local life. The same applies to Bixiayuanjun, the Goddess of Mt. Tai, for whom there were eighteen temples, all in villages. Twelve temples with Daoist-appearing names called Gong or Guan (Palace or Observatory) are also listed, nine of them in villages, two on mountains and one in the county seat. There is no mention of Daoist priests. Twenty-four cloisters (*an*) are also named, all but three of them in villages. (*An* is often a term for small residences for Buddhist women, but can also refer to small shrines). Here we see that village religion could include aspects of national or regional traditions, though with so few clergy by this period one suspects that for ordinary folk their rituals and functions may have been similar to those of local protective deities.³

³ *Xushuixianzhi*, pp. 178–186. Wudao is translated as “General of the Five Paths” by Glen Dudbridge (1996/1997) in his “The General of the Five Paths in Tang and Pre-Tang China”. *Cahiers d'Extrême-Asie* 9: 85–98. He is a subordinate of the City God, responsible for dealing with the dead of a local area, by guiding and protecting them on their way to the underworld. Shrines for this deity are commonly found in north China villages, where people announce births and deaths to him. The Tudi locality

The local history of nearby Yi County says that:

In the past, the people of Yi County believed in all the gods and Buddhas. In Buddhism, Guanyin was the most believed in: there were many Guanyin halls and cloisters. After the Tang, there were also many Daoist temples. People sincerely believed in the Jade Emperor, the Three Officials, Heaven and Earth, household deities, the Stove God and the Five Great Gates (Wudamen)... In the old society the people of Yixian sincerely and unchangingly believed in deities and immortals...

Other deities listed here are the God of Longevity, Door Gods, patron deities of artisans such as Lu Ban for carpenters, the Four Efficacious Ones (Siling: dragons, wind, unicorns and tortoises), and a sacred crow believed by the Manchus to have protected the Qing Emperor Taizu from both a drought and a Korean invasion.

The most important deity in Yixian was Houtu huangdi or Houtu nainai, believed to have become a god after meditating in a cave for forty years. "She saved multitudes in obedience to the Jade Emperor's commands and put the Way into effect on behalf of Heaven." Her major concern was "providing male children and caring for girls". During the Eastern Han she once helped Liu Xiu, so that when he became emperor he enfeoffed her as 'Emperor Houtu Who Emulates the Way in Responsibility to Heaven'.

Another important local female deity in this area is Cangu shengmu (the Holy Mother Silkworm Maiden), concerning whom there was a legend that she had been a nun named Sun Shenyi who lived in a flourishing 'Maiden Temple' (*Gugu miao*) on mount Langya in Shandong. In the Later Jin period she gathered an army of several tens of thousands to resist a Khitan invasion. After she died, local people built this temple for her.⁴

The 1934 edition of the local history of Qingyuan County provides the names of fifty-two temples of all types, including four kinds of altars (*tan*) with official support, those to the Sheji (Land and Grain), the First Agriculturalist, uncared for spirits and a combined shrine for the spirits of wind, clouds, thunder, rain, mountains and rivers. There were also village *she* altars, and a Prefectural Literary Temple, as well as temples for the Bazha insect controller god, City God, God

god, present all over China, has a similar function, but also provides protection and aid for the living.

⁴ *Yixianzhi*, 2000 edition, pp. 1106–1107.

of the Eastern Peak, Fire God, Horse God (responsible for the care of domestic animals), Tudi Locality Gods, Wind, Thunder, Fierce General Liu, the Dragon King and Dragon Mother, the Three (Primordial) Emperors noted above, Zhenwu, the Three Primes (San Yuan), Three Sages, Jade Emperor, the literary god Wenchang, Guandi, the God of the Northern Peak, the Medicine King, the King of Accomplished Martiality (Wucheng wang), the King of Divine Response, the Three Righteous Ones (Liu Bei, Guan Yu and Zhang Fei), the Two Young Gentlemen (Er Lang), and the Pure General (Lian jiangjun). Temples for most of these deities were called *miao*, but some were called shrines (*ci*), including those for the Tudi, the Three Saints, a Dragon God and Guandi and Yue Fei.⁵

The 1877 edition of the local history of Tang County lists many of the deities and temples listed above, adding a Jail God (Yushen), presumably of purgatory, and the Lord of the Tang River (Tanghe bo). Several monasteries located in mountains are also named, as are a pavilion and temple for the Jade Emperor and a temple of the God of the Eastern Peak. A commentary here quotes an entire stone inscription concerning the reconstruction of the latter temple in Ming Jiajing 32 (the year 1553 CE). This inscription notes temples in the Tang county seat for the Primal Emperor (Yuandi), the Lord Guan and the Dragon King, adding that:

Though these deities are not the same, in essence they are all vigorous and wonderful (*zhuangqi*); they observe in order to suppress the perverse vapors of the whole area... Ignorant men and women go to [this temple] to seek sons. Women go to the temple to burn incense, particularly in the last ten-day period of the third month and in the eighth month. From the [Ming] Zhengde period on [1502–1521] active people who are wealthy and prosperous have opened shops and restaurants to invite the many thousands of guests who have come from far and near to go to the temple. Surely it is the virtue and power (*de*) of the spirits and gods which has caused such flourishing.

An inscription from a Dragon Mother temple explains that the Tang county seat is on a level area with mountains behind it, passed by the Liao River, which “comes rushing down like a flowing dragon, and cannot be controlled. During heavy rains the river sounds like thunder, shaking the city and terrifying its people.” After attempts to dike the river had failed “a man named Liu Wu invited household heads and

⁵ *Qingyuanxianzhi*, 1: 95–100.

local charitable men to plan to build a Dragon Mother temple beside the Liao River outside the east gate of the city, in order to subdue the river... So they hoped to avoid disastrous floods... and that the power of the god would protect our city... From the time the temple was built, there have been no more floods... It is the efficacious power of this god that has been manifested here.” Mr. Liu is quoted as saying that the goddess had revealed her likeness to him in a dream; he had it painted on a wall and later made an image for it.⁶

The Altars and Temples section of the 1849 edition of the *Local History of Ding Prefecture (Dingzhouzhi)* lists only officially approved temples built and maintained by the local government, such as those for Confucius, Guandi, Wenchang, the City God, Spirits of the Land and Grain, an altar for Homeless Spirits (Litan), the First Farmer, Bazha, Tudi, the Gods of the Eastern and Northern Peaks and the Horse God, along with shrines for the ‘moral and filial’. The dates of building and repairing all of these temples and shrines are provided, as are instructions for official rituals, but nothing more, none of the local beliefs and legends involved as in the accounts summarized above.

However, the extensive field surveys of Ding County in the 1920s, cited above, provide rich information, edited and published in Chinese by Li Jinghan and his co-editors and in English by Sidney Gamble. On temples and deities Li Jinghan notes that, “... in 1930 there were still 879 temples in the county, 22 in the county seat and 857 in 453 villages.” He comments that, “The majority of people in Dingxian, particularly women, worship images; there are almost none who do not believe. There are temples in every village.” He provides a frequency list of these temples that includes fifty-nine names. The most common were temples for the God of the Five Roads, Guandi, the Venerable Mother (Laomu), Guanyin (as Nanhai dashi, ‘Great Being of the Southern Seas’), the Three Officials, the Nainai (Grandmother) Goddess and Zhenwu. For the sixty-two villages in the county selected for special study Li provides a frequency list of the main deities of temples, and includes a very helpful discussion of types of these temples and the reasons for worshipping at them. In descending order of frequency, these reasons were for:

⁶ *Tangxianzhi* 11: 9a, 33a (pagination unclear).

- (1) General purposes, such as seeking blessings and avoiding harm through petitioning such deities as Laomu, Guanyin, the Three Emperors, Three Pure Ones, the City God, Arhats, Tudi, the 'Five Saints Venerable Mother' [sic], and sets of Five and Seven gods whose names are not provided.
- (2) Summoning spirits of the dead: the God of the Five Roads
- (3) Seeking rain: the Dragon King, Holy Mother of the Five Dragons, The Venerable Zhang (Lao Zhang)
- (4) To suppress harmful and perverse influences: Zhenwu, the Two Young Gentlemen, the Great Saint Equal to Heaven (Sun Wukong) and the Grand Duke (Taigong)
- (5) To pray for sons and descendants: Nainai Grandmother Goddess
- (6) To avoid illness for humans: the Medicine King
- (7) To avoid illness for domestic animals: the Horse God
- (8) To avoid insect plagues: the Insect King and the Bazha
- (9) To avoid epidemics: the Plague God
- (10) To seek wealth: the Wealth God

After my years in Hong Kong and contemporary China it is interesting to note that in these Dingxian villages there was only one temple to the God of Wealth!⁷

Li Jinghan's American co-worker Sidney Gamble did fieldwork in Ding County between 1926 and 1933 and published his findings in 1954. However, his discussion is less detailed than that of Li Jinghan, so I will not repeat it here, except to note that he says that there was an average of 1.9 temples per village.⁸

Books of Reports by Local Scholars in Hebei

In these books, edited by me and Fan Lizhu, cited several times above, the following deities and shrines for them are named here listed by rough and sometimes overlapping categories. Many of these deities are discussed in the sources listed in note 18 below. The most useful of these references is Lu Zongli and Luan Baochun's *Zhongguo minjian*

⁷ The *Dingxianzhi* discussion is on pages 11–24 of *juan* 5, pages 453–478 of the 1989 Taiwan reprint edition. The twentieth century surveys are discussed in Li Jinghan et al. (ed.) *Dingxian shehui*, pp. 428–431.

⁸ Gamble, *Ting Hsien*, pp. 424–425.

zhu shen (*Gods of Chinese folk religion*, Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 2000); this book provides passages from primary sources about the gods listed in it. Other sources consulted, in both Chinese and English, are listed in the notes for this discussion.

- (1) Pantheons
 - Quanshen (All gods)
 - Tianshen (Celestial gods)
- (2) Ancient emperors and gods
 - The founders of Chinese culture, Emperors Yao, Shun and Huang (Yellow); the Yellow Emperor came to be considered the father of the Chinese people
 - Pangu, who created the world out of his body
 - The Three Officers (Sanguan) of the Sky, Earth and Water, who keep records of good and bad deeds and judge accordingly
- (3) Gods of Daoist origins (not including female deities)
 - The Lord Lao, the Most High Lord Lao, legendary founder of Daoism and the third of the Three Pure Ones
 - The Three Pure Ones (Sanqing), The Primordial Celestial Worthy, the Jade Emperor and the Most High Lord Lao, the most important Daoist gods
 - The Jade Emperor, second of the Three Pure Ones and the supreme deity of local/popular religion
 - The Black Emperor (Heidi) and the God of the Northern Peak (Mt. Heng in Shanxi); different titles for the same deity, who could be worshiped separately
 - The star god, Kuixing, revered by scholars
 - Zhenwu (the Perfected Warrior), an exorcistic deity who suppresses harmful forces, also called Xuanwu
 - Lü Dongbin, one of the patriarchs of the Quanzhen Daoist tradition who became a widely revered patron of spirit writing
- (4) Female deities
 - Nüwa niangniang, ancient creator of humans (see the discussion of her in the chapter of this book on History and Government)
 - Houtu huangdi, a popular goddess in Hebei, whose home temple is on Mount Hongya in Yi County, with another on Mount Qingxu. One would expect that the title *huangdi* (emperor) to apply to male figures, but not in this case.
- (5) Goddesses of Daoist origin
 - Bixiyuanjun, primarily the Goddess of Mount Tai, but worshiped elsewhere as well, as a protector of women and children. See also the article by Chuu Ling-in on this *Lady of the Azure Clouds*, cited below.

- Sanxiao shengmu: the three goddesses Yunxiao guniang, Qiongxiao guniang, and Bixiao guniang
 - Jiutianshengmu, another set of goddesses
 - Xi Wangmu (Queen Mother of the West), an ancient goddess known already in Shang period sources, and the focus of a Han period popular cult
 - Goddesses of popular sectarian origin: Wusheng laomu, the Venerable Mother [beyond the cycle of] Birth and Death. There are also deities called just Laomu who may be local forms of this originally sectarian deity. For her sectarian background, see also my *Precious Volumes* book on sectarian scriptures, cited in Note 18 below.
 - Goddesses with particular named functions: Wawa pusa (doll goddess who brings babies), Magu the Hemp Maiden, and Cangu the Silkworm Goddess. There is also a Yinyuan temple named, a term referring to karmic connections that may lead to marriage, but I am not sure if there is a deity by this name.
 - Wangen nainai, a local grandmother deity in Xianghe County
- (6) Male hero gods
- Bai Qiuwen (Norman Bethune, a Canadian physician who died while helping the Chinese Communist Revolution). There is a roadside shrine for him on Mt. Qingxu in Hebei. The Sanyi, Three Righteous Ones, Liu Bei, Guan Yu and Zhang Fei, worshiped individually or in Sanyi temples; deified heroes from the Three Kingdoms period and books and dramas about it. Two deities associated with these figures can also be worshiped, Guan Ping and Zhou Cang.
 - Meng Tian, a general under the First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty; according to legend, he was responsible for building the Great Wall
 - Ge Hong, a fourth century alchemist venerated on Mount Qingxu in Hebei, where there is also an image of his wife Bao gu in a temple for Ge
 - Er Lang, a title of several sets of pairs of deified youths
 - Ling guan, ‘Efficacious Official’ there are a number of deities with this title
 - Jiangjun, an unnamed deified general, probably exorcistic
 - Sun Bin (Warring States period general)
- (7) Gods with specific functions
- Bazha, deity responsible for controlling insects that damage crops
 - Baoshen (hail god)
 - Cheshen (vehicle god)
 - Chongwang (insect king)
 - Heshen (river god responsible for protection from floods)
 - Huoshen (god responsible for protection from fire)
 - Longwang (dragon king), the title of many local deities who can both bring rain and control floods

- Lushen (road god)
 - Mashen (horse/domestic animal god)
 - Wenshen (plague god)
 - God/General of the Five Roads (Wudao shen/jiangjun, protector of the spirits of the dead whose deaths are announced at his shrine)
 - The Five Sages (Wu Sheng), one of several sets of five deities who can bring both protection and harm
 - Yanwang (King and Chief Judge of Purgatory)
 - Zhao Gongming, a deified general who came to be considered a god of wealth
- (8) Healing gods
- Liu Shouzhen, a deified physician with a temple in Baoding
 - Yanguang niangniang (Goddess of Eyesight)
 - Yaowang (medicine king), there are several deified physicians with this title
- (9) Gods of Buddhist origin
- Guanyin (a bodhisattva transformed into a goddess of mercy and general aid)
 - Songzi Guanyin (Guanyin in her role as bringer of sons, as above)
 - Puxian (Samantabhadra), a bodhisattva worshiped as a local god
 - Wenshu (Mañjuśrī), bodhisattva of wisdom, here a local god
 - Hebei local deities and temples for them are also noted in Volume 3 of the *Chūgoku Nōson* fieldwork reports by Japanese scholars referred to above. They include Guanyin, the Three officials, Zhenwu, Wudao, Guandi and gods of cotton, graneries, protection from fire, and the sun.⁹

Gods and Temples in Shanxi Province

- (10) Deities with Particular Functions
- City God (Chenghuang); protector of a county area or a village in it and guardian of entry to the underworld. For a detailed discussion see the two-part article by David Johnson cited below.
 - King Guan, a title for Guanyu/Guandi, protector, exorcist, symbol of integrity
 - Dragon King (Longwang), a general name for deities responsible for rain, with local variations such as Yellow Dragon, (Huanglong) and White Dragon (Bailong)
 - Horse King, (Mawang) a variant name for the god of domestic animals
 - Niu wang, the Ox God, another protector of domestic animals

⁹ Suehiro Itsutarō (ed.) preface dated 1955. Fieldwork for this volume was conducted in 1940.

- Mountain God (Shanshen)
 - Sanzong, a name for the old god who shot excess suns out of the sky and hence protects from drought
- (11) Female deities
- Jiutianshengmu (an alternate title for Bixiyuanjun, the Goddess of Mount Tai)
 - Shengmu (Holy Mother)
 - Nainai (Grandmother)
- (12) Daoist gods
- Yuhuang (Jade Emperor); also the supreme deity of local religion
 - Emperor of the Eastern Peak (Dongyue Dadi)
- (13) Local protector gods
- Cuifu jun
 - Lü Wenli
 - The two immortals Shen and Ze (Shen Ze er xian)
 - King Tang

In their *Shanxi minsu* (*Shanxi popular customs*) volume of a series on Chinese popular customs, Hu Fusheng, Zhang Yu and Cao Zhenwu provide a discussion of local temples and deities in this province, organized by the categories they perceive, beginning with ‘Humanized nature gods’. This category includes Heaven as Lao Tianye, Tudi, gods of the sun, moon and stars, and deities of mountains and rivers. They also list ‘ancestor deities’ and ‘worthies’, such as Confucius, and Guangong, as well as patron gods, such as Lu Ban, the patriarch of carpenters, tile makers, stone masons, rope makers and the protector god of coal miners. Their discussion continues with a list of Daoist gods, and animal and plant deities, such as Dragon Kings, the Ox, Horse and Insect Kings, and gods of valleys, flowers and trees. They note as well veneration of foxes, snakes, tigers, fish, deer, sheep and other significant animals. Under the category of deified ghosts they include City Gods, King Yama of purgatory and the General of the Five Roads, who aid both the living and the dead.¹⁰

There is a King Tang temple in Xiajiao village of Yangcheng County in Shanxi that was first built in 1210, during the Jin dynasty, with an opera stage built during the Ming Zhengde period (1506–1521). Several buildings and over forty pillars and thirteen stone inscriptions

¹⁰ This book was published in 2002 by the Gansu renmin chubanshe, in the series *Zhongguo minsu daxi* (Chinese popular customs). The discussion summary here is on pp. 264–275.

still remain from this temple. According to local tradition King Tang is an ancient deity believed to be able to bring rain. Other deities in this temple were a mountain god, locality god, gods to protect horses and oxen, yellow and white dragons and King Guan. According to a village history, in the main hall of the temple were five images on an altar, with King Tang in the middle, a Niangniang female deity on his left, a Crown Prince on his right, with images of deities of the Five Grains and Five Forms of Earth along the sides. There were five sedan chairs on offering tables used to carry the gods in processions. There was a White Dragon hall on the east, with a wood and plaster image of the god that was put out in the courtyard in bright sunlight to assist in prayers for rain.¹¹

At Nanshe village in Lucheng in Shanxi there is an old Jade Emperor temple still extant that was first built in the Dade reign period of the Yuan dynasty (1297–1307 CE), then rebuilt during the Ming in 1637. In this temple there were images not only of its chief deity, but also of King Wen, (Ji Chang) and his consort, and also of goddesses that aid childbirth, an ‘Older Brother who Delivers Births’ (*Song sheng gege*), King Wen’s One Hundred Sons, as well as Oxen and Horse Gods and another responsible for pigs, sheep and chickens. We are told that people pray here for long life, many sons and the safety of their domestic animals. In this same village there is a lineage shrine for the Li clan in which hangs a large genealogical scroll. There is also a Sanzong temple for the legendary Archer Yi noted above who shot down excess suns and so is venerated for his ability to protect crops from drought. In addition here there are a temple for the three goddesses Yunxiao, Qiongxiao and Bixiao, with a hall there for the White Robed Guanyin. Other temples in this are one for the Emperor Guan, the Three Sages (the Ancient Buddha, the Most High Lord Lao and the First Teacher (Confucius), a River God, a small grotto for the Five Roads gods, here identified with five generals who assist King Yama with the spirits of the dead, a Tudi temple with images of the god and

¹¹ Feng Junjie (1997) “Yangcheng xian Xiajiaocun Tangwang miao ji kaolun” (A discussion of rituals at the King Tang temple in Xiajiao village of Yangcheng County). *Min-su ch’ü-i* 107/108: 3–36. This excellent and detailed article includes texts of inscriptions and photos of this old temple. On p. 196 of this same special issue on Shanxi festivals we are told by a 1917 Wenxi County history that villages in that county worshiped the gods Houji, Cheng Tang, Boyi, Taishan, a Golden Dragon, Five Dragons and Five Tigers and a Stone Maiden. Here, as elsewhere, there was an amazing diversity and variety of local gods!

his wife, and a Dragon King Temple. This village is indeed a treasury of Shanxi local cults!¹²

In Changdao township of Lucheng County in Shanxi there is a Bixiagong temple, which is also called the temple of the Holy Mother of the Nine Heavens (Jiutianshengmu) built in the Yuan period. It was destroyed in the twentieth century but has been recently rebuilt. According to older villagers it had been elaborately decorated. Two large posters on the paired temple doors list the names of twelve deities worshiped here. On the east door: the Horse God, Huang Huang, the god responsible for warding off locusts, the Eyesight God, the Sanzong, the Six Jia spirits and King Yama of the East. On the west door the God of the Five Plagues, a Dragon King, [God who provides] Descendants, Zhaoze (“Summons Blessings”), the Six Ding spirits, and King Yama of the West.¹³

In Renzhuang Village in Quwo County of Shanxi, in the past there were nineteen temples, including those for Bazha the insect controller, the Ox King, three for the bodhisattva Guanyin, two for the Fire God, three for Emperor Guan, the Dragon King, Tudi, the God of the Eastern Peak, the Holy Mother Houtu, a Mountain God, Wenchang, Cangu the Silkworm Maiden and the Spirit Peak Chan monastery.¹⁴

¹² Yang Mengheng (1998) “Lucheng Nanshe diaojiagui” (An investigation of the Diaojiagui ritual at Lucheng). *Min-su ch’ü-i* 115: 267–310. This is another wonderful report with lots of details and photos. There are various explanations for the term *gui* (‘tortoise’) in the name of the ritual described here; one was that the temple was built on a tortoise shaped mound, another that since the tortoise spirit could cause floods, operas were performed for it here.

¹³ Duan Youwen (1997) “Jindong Nanlucheng yingshen saishu xisu kaoshu” (An investigation of festivals to welcome the gods in Nanlu City of Eastern Jin [Shanxi]). *Min-su ch’ü-i* 110: 1–20. In this article the author discusses festivals in this same area at a City God temple and a village temple for the Goddess Bixia, as well as a temple for the God Tianqi, a title for the God of the Eastern Peak. He notes that the City God was considered to be the highest official in the county. Other temples noted here are those for Guanyin, the Emperor Guan, the Jade Emperor, the Patriarch Lü [Dongbin] and a Locality God (Tudi), as well as the god responsible for warding off locusts called Huang Huang (with the insect radical on the left). The Ding and Jia spirits represent the ‘stem and branch’ system of Chinese cosmology. The rituals noted in this article are discussed in the Temple Festivals chapter of the present book.

¹⁴ Huang Zhusan, Wang Fucai and Jing Lihu (1993) “Shanxi Quwo Renzhuang Shangu shenpu he shangu nuoji diaocha baogao” (A research report on the “Fan Drum Roster of the Gods” and Fan Drum exorcistic rituals in Ren village, Quwo [County], Shanxi). *Min-su ch’ü-i* 85: 241–271. This article provides photos of some of the temples discussed in it. The leadership and organization of the ‘Fan Drum’ ritual referred to in this article are discussed in the chapter of the present book devoted to such organization. The chief deity of this ritual is the goddess Houtu, but the ‘Roster of the Gods’

The Work of Willem A. Grootaers and His Chinese Colleagues

Between 1941–1948 the Belgian scholar Willem A. Grootaers did excellent field work with two Chinese colleagues in what was then called Chahar, a province that was abolished in 1952, with most of its area allocated to Inner Mongolia, but parts also to Shanxi and Hebei. Grootaers published a book and several articles on this research, which provide the most detailed information on temples and deities in north China local religion available to that time. Chinese characters are provided in them for all names and terms. Though these publications are in English and French, they can be difficult to find, so I will first list here the ones I have read and then summarize their contents. In chronological order of their publication they are: “Les Temples Villageois de la Region au Sudest de Ta T’ong [Datong] (Chansi Nord). Leurs Inscriptions et Leur Histoire”, *Folklore Studies* 1–6(1): 161–212 (1945); “Temples and History of Wanch’uan Chahar: The Geographical Method Applied to Folklore”, *Monumenta Serica* 13: 209–315 (1948); “The Hagiography of the Chinese God Chen-wu”, *Folklore Studies* 11(2): 139–181; *The Sanctuaries in a North-China City: A Complete Survey of the Cultic Buildings in the City of Hsuan-hua (Chahar)*, by the Survey team Fujen University, August 1948 W. A. Grootaers, Li Shih-yu and Wang Fushi (Bruxelles: Institut Belge des Hautes Etudes Chinoises, 1995). All of these locations are in present Hebei or Shanxi.

Fieldwork for the Datong study in northern Shanxi was carried out in 1941–1943 in surveys of 134 of the total of 483 villages in this area. Here Grootaers visited 401 temples, the great majority of which were deserted. His report discusses their images, inscriptions, bells, inscribed pillars, stone chimes, stone inscriptions and incense burners, as well as their orientation and placement. Page 187 of this report lists the most commonly found temples beginning with 123 Dragon King temples associated with three for the River God and two for Gods of Wells. There were 52 temples for Zhenwu, 34 for Guanyin, six for the God of Mount Tai, and 19 Five Roads God shrines. For Guandi there were 16,

here includes the names of scores of deities compiled by local village leaders from what appears to have been Daoist and official sources. These deities include gods of stars and planets, the sacred peaks, wind and rain, the City and Stove deities, Purgatory, and the Daoist Three Pure Ones, but no local protective gods. All of this is discussed in more detail by Huang Zhusan and Wang Fucai in Volume 14 of the series *Studies in Chinese Ritual, Theatre and Folklore* referred to above.

the Three Officers 15, the scholars' gods Wenchang and Kuixing a total of 13, and one to three each for the Great Immortal (probably an animal deity), the Horse King, City God, Thunder God, the Two Young Gentlemen Erlang, King Yama, the God of Wealth (just one), [Jiang] Taigong and Plague Gods. This list also includes two Lord of Heaven temples, Tianzhu miao, that were evidently not Roman Catholic, as the name might lead one to believe, and 43 Buddhist monasteries, halls and temples. Tudi Locality Gods are not listed here.

The author then discusses the names and deities of these temples, and provides a sample of the questionnaire used in his surveys. All of this laid the foundation for his even more detailed work in other towns and cities of this area.

Grootaers' fieldwork in Wanquan, which is now in Hebei, was carried out with Li Shiyu and Zhang Jiwen from July 1–August 17, 1947. After a discussion of the history and geography of this area, this report provides detailed information on the cults of 33 gods found in 565 temples in 86 villages in this area. The interior walls of many of the temples here had frescoes depicting the lives of the gods in them. Several temple compounds included opera stages. The cults for all the deities found here are described in some detail, with the number of temples for each, led by 109 Dragon King temples, which included nine for the Black Dragon King. The other most common temples here were 109 shrines for the God of the Five Roads, 95 temples for Guanyin, and 67 for Guandi, some of which were located on the tops of village walls or towers. There were 57 Zhenwu temples, 57 for the Horse King, 43 for the River God, 34 for the Three Officers, 23 and 17 respectively for Wenchang and Kuixing, 23 for the Nainai Goddess, bringer and protector of children, and 23 for the Hushen, a god believed to be able to bring rain. For the Jade Emperor there were 19 temples, 17 for Dizang, 17 for the God of Wealth, and ten for the Daxian Great Immortal, here a snake deity. The San Huang Three Emperors, identified as Shennong, Fuxi and the Yellow Emperor had seven temples. This article also lists 43 Buddhist temples, as well as 14 for the sect dedicated to a sixteenth century monk named Puming. There are several deities listed here not found in Datong, including Hushen, Dizang, Puming, the San Huang Three Emperors, the Buddha Maitreya, Tudi, the Chongwang Insect King, Damo (Bodhidharma), Weituo, the Wind God and the God of the Northern Peak, as well as temples for the deities of the Three Teachings and the Daoist Three Pure Ones.

Grootaers includes a helpful discussion on page 237 of the work of a local painter of temple frescos who reported that he painted what his customers required! In his concluding comments the author notes that the earliest inscriptions he saw in this area were from the fifteenth century, and adds that while there are some cults of Buddhist and Daoist origin, about 70 per cent “belong to the popular religion... except half a dozen temples which are managed by monks (Buddhist or Taoist), all the temples (or 99 per cent of the 596 temples) are village property and are visited promiscuously by everybody on all occasions that warrant a temple visit” (pp. 314–315).

Grootaers’ article on the god Zhenwu includes information on the history of this deity whose name was changed from Xuanwu in 998 because of an imperial taboo: the first temple known for him was dedicated in 1018. Grootaers reports that there were temples dedicated to this deity in 348 villages in present Shanxi and Hebei. These temples were commonly built on a high tower on the north side of a village or on top of its north wall, which reflects the belief that the god could protect from evil influences coming from the north. Zhenwu was typically portrayed in image form with a “round face, with a thin moustache and a small pointed beard and with his hair often hanging loose on his shoulders. His right hand holds a sword, while his left is resting on his knee with the fingers knotted in an intricate way to exercise a magic spell.” Murals portraying his life were painted on temple walls. Here again the author includes an interesting discussion of variations in such portrayals, including the translations of some long inscriptions (pp. 167–181).

Grootaers’ book-length study of this area was based on fieldwork with two Chinese colleagues, Li Shiyu and Wang Fushi, in the area of Xuanhua city in present Hebei province. Their work was carried out in August 1948, about as late as such work could be done before the Peoples’ Republic was established. By walking down each street and visiting every temple they found they located cults in honor of 70 deities in 183 temples with both main and side buildings. Of these 36 had disappeared but are recorded on the basis of stone carvings and bells that remained. One hundred sixteen of the temples were completely empty, but 20 of them housed either Buddhist or Daoist clergy. Some others were occupied by families or used as schools or government offices or barracks. All had been built in the Ming and Qing periods between 1403–1424 and 1796–1820. On pages 17–20, the authors provide a list of all the deities housed in Xuanhua temples, subdivided into the categories of Buddhist, Confucian, Daoist and ‘popular cults’.

In this last category the most images were for the Wudao god, with 20 for Guandi, 18 for Zhenwu, 11 Dragon Kings and lesser numbers for a total of 38 deities. The names on this list that are not found in Grootaers' earlier reports are those of a Rain God, Yushen, a god of the Five Grains (Wugu), a Wolf God, Wine God and Patriarch Luo, the founder of the popular sect in his name. They also found one image of the Two Spirits of Harmony and Unity (Ho Ho er shen). There follow detailed discussions of individual temples and deities and the reasons for the destruction of some of them. Among other interesting comments here about 'popular beliefs' are that the "Wu-tao god's main function is to act as Heaven's registry office", for here family heads announced marriages, births and deaths. "Because of the Wu-tao's intimate relationship with daily life happenings, every street erects its own shrine, built on the corner of some owner's house plot." The Five Roads god is here discussed as singular, with images of Tudi and a Mountain God on either side, but the authors note that in some shrines the deity is portrayed as five gods of the roads. Shrine murals portray scenes from judgments in Purgatory (pp. 77-79). There are precious details throughout this book, to which the interested reader is referred. On pages 117-121 Grootaers provides a summary of his fieldwork surveys of village temples, noting differences in frequency of deity cults in the three areas.

Shandong

For Shandong, in a study first published in 1899 by Arthur H. Smith, based on his long residence in the province, he comments that, "... the most frequently honored divinities [in village temples] were the Goddess of Mercy (Kuan Yin P'u Sa), some variety of the manifold goddess known as 'Mother' (Niang Niang), and Buddha." He also notes temples "of all the gods" (Ch'uan shen miao) and "Halls of the Three Religions" for Confucius, Lao Tzu and the Buddha).¹⁵

Volume 4 of the *Chûgoku Nôson*, referred to above, notes several local deities in its reports on fieldwork conducted in Shandong in 1940. These include Guanyin, the Three Officials, the Jade Emperor, Wenchang (god of scholars), Zhenwu, Guandi, and the Three Sages

¹⁵ See his (1970) *Village Life in China*, Boston, Little Brown and Company. First published in London in 1899.

(San Sheng: Laozi, Confucius and the Buddha Śākyamuni), as well as the creator Pangu. There were also temples for the God of Mt. Tai, the Goddess Niangniang, the Goddess of Eyesight, the Water Mother and Earth Mother, and a Demon King, as well as a Locality God shrine. However, in addition to these common north China deities, it is most interesting to learn that there were temples in Shandong for the goddess of fishermen and sailors, Tianhou, The Empress of Heaven, also called Mazu. Li Lulu discusses nine such temples, built from the Song through the Qing periods. Run Huachuan lists eleven Tianhou temples in Shandong built in the Yuan period, with more than thirty dating from the Ming and Qing. Of these, thirty-four were along the coast and ten inland. Li Lulu also provides evidence for four Tianhou temples in Hebei, the largest in Tianjin, one at Kaifeng in Henan, and three in Liaoning. He notes that there were also a few such temples in inland provinces like Shanxi and Anhui.¹⁶

In his study of local community religion in northern Shaanxi Province Adam Yuet Chau provides the names of several of the more famous temples in this area, but notes that, “The overwhelming majority of the temples in Shaanbei, however, are much smaller, one hall, village temples. Most of the deities worshiped in the past have been revived, even though some have declined in significance, while others have gained greatly in popularity. The most influential deity is still the Perfected Warrior Ancestral Master (Zhenwu zushi)... The other commonly worshiped deities include Guandi (Guan laoye), the Buddha... the Emperor of the Eastern Peak... the Jade Emperor... the Three Pure Ones... the Three Divine Officials, Guanyin, the Monkey King (Qitiandasheng)... the City God... the Horse King... the Three Heavenly Goddesses... the Sage Ancestor Lü (Lüzü or Lü Dongbin), and various dragon kings, and fertility and child-related goddesses...” Chau also notes the gods of Medicine and Wealth, Bazha Insect Gods,

¹⁶ Suehiro (ed.) *Chūgoku Nōson*, preface dated 1955. Li Lulu (1995) *Mazu xinyang*. Taipei, Hanyang chubangufen youxian gongsi, pp. 205–211; Yan Huachuan (n.d.) “*Shandong Mazu xinsu ji Longshen xinyang de bijiao yanjiu*” (A comparative study of beliefs in Mazu and Dragon Gods in Shandong). *Journal of Mazu Studies* 2: 51–62. (This issue is not dated, but the latest date I see in it is 2004). These authors both provide information about the names, locations and dates of first construction of these temples. On p. 59 of his article Yan Huachuan notes Dragon King temples in Shandong built between 627–649, 1078–1085 and 1140 of the Tang and Song periods, so there are indeed old traditions here.

Wenchang and a Mountain God; in sum, the same deities we have noted elsewhere in north China.¹⁷

In other sources that discuss north China I have encountered the names of most of the deities listed above, but also including a Sesame God (Zhima shen) and a Goddess of Descendants (Zisun niangniang). Hence, it is safe to say that the deities discussed on these pages are common to all of the north.¹⁸

Chinese Local Deities: A General Discussion

As Romeyn Taylor notes above, “Popular religion identified such spirits with historical or pseudo-historical human beings, and served them accordingly...” The characteristics of these “human gods of China”, as Julian Pas called them, are well summed up by Hwang Teh-shih, who writes that such deities have honorary titles like ‘Emperor’, ‘King’ or ‘Mother’, and have bodies represented by images made for them, images believed to have the five senses of sight, hearing, etc. They desire food, understand human speech, may have spouses and subordinates, and need money. They can also be present in several places at once. Though Hwang’s research was carried out in Taiwan, his conclusions hold for north China deities as well.¹⁹

¹⁷ Chau, *Miraculous Response*, pp. 49–50.

¹⁸ Ma Shutian (1990) *Huaxia zhu shen* (The gods of China). Beijing: Yanihan chubanshe; Ma Shutian (1997) *Zhongguo minjian zhushen* (Chinese folk deities). Beijing: Tuanjie chubanshe; Zhao Xinggen (1998) *Zhongguo baishen quanshu: minjian shenling yuanliu* (Complete book of Chinese gods: a detailed account of folk deities). Haikou: Nanhai chuban gongsi; Chuu Ling-in (2000) “Bixiyuanjun huguobimin puji baosheng miaojing yanjiu” (A study of the Wonderful scripture concerning the Lady of the Azure Clouds and her protection of the state and people and salvation of all living beings). *Danjiang daxue Zhongwen xuebao* (*Tamkang Journal of Chinese Literature*) 6: 185–212; David Johnson (1985) “The City God Cults of T’ang and Sung China”. *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 45(2): 363–457; Zhang Zhentao (2001) *Ji zhong Houtu chongbai yu yinyuejixian* (The worship of Houtu in Hebei and offerings of music [to her]). Center for the Study of Religion and Chinese Society, Chung Chi College, The Chinese University of Hong Kong. CSRCS Occasional Paper No. 7, Daniel L. Overmyer (1999) *Precious Volumes: An Introduction to Chinese Sectarian Scriptures from the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge, MA and London, Harvard University Asia Center). On the Guandi, see also Prasenjit Duara (1988) “Superscribing Symbols: The Myth of Guandi, Chinese God of War”. *Journal of Asian Studies* 47(4): 778–795.

¹⁹ J. F. Pas (1991) “The Human Gods of China: New Perspectives on the Chinese Pantheon”, in Koichi Shinohara and Gregory Schopen (eds.) *From Benares to Beijing: Essays in Honour of Prof. Jan Yun-Hua*. Oakville, Ontario, Mosaic Press, pp. 129–160;

On the temples in which personified deities were believed to reside Anning Jing has a very helpful comment on his research on a temple in Shanxi:

Just as the local church or cathedral in Europe during the Middle Ages was the center of social and religious life of villages, so was the Water God's Temple for the Chinese community at the foot of the Huo Mountain. Situated in the neighborhood of the villages, it was fully integrated into the social, political, religious and economic life of the community. Like many Longwang (Dragon King) temples, it was a locus of both religious power and that of irrigation authorities. It was a temple as well as the administrative seat of the local irrigation system, through which the villages in benefited areas were organized into a self-governing zone. It was the cultural and economic center of the region, whose festivals and fairs attracted both local and distant residents. It was a place of public worship rather than a secluded sanctuary for priests, a place for communal action rather than private meditation or spiritual advancement. It placed material survival prior to spiritual salvation. It placed the well-being of nature and the community over personal welfare. Its festivals, rituals and theater were intimately interrelated, and theatrical performances played a crucial role in the cult. Its intended audience included not only the god but all members of the neighborhood regardless of their social status, sex or age. Its final goal was to harmonize the cosmic order so that both humans and nature should remain prosperous and productive.

...

The main deity in this temple, The King of Righteous Response (Mingying wang) "...was based specifically at the foot of Huo Spring, and he was represented by the sole cultic image in the hall. Here the visible world and the sphere of the spirit seem to have fused. The god was seen to exercise his numinous power from the hall, and his presence was more strongly felt there because of the powerful statue. Due to the villagers' strong sense of the god's presence in the hall, particularly during the festivals, any form of worship for the god would be presented with a heightened sense of reality... The god enjoys watching rituals performed on the platform and drama presented on the theatrical stage." This temple was larger and more elaborate than some in villages, but its basic functions were similar.²⁰

In his excellent *Way and Byway: Taoism, Local Religion, and Models of Divinity in Sung and Modern China*, Robert Hymes says the following

Hwang Teh-shih (1969) "An Important Characteristic of Taiwanese Folk Belief". *Journal of the China Society* 1969: 79-85.

²⁰ Anning Jing, *The Water God's Temple*, pp. 4-5, 41.

about Chinese gods, which he characterizes as following a bureaucratic model or a personal model. He writes:

Each comprises a number of elements, separable but in practice usually traveling together. In the bureaucratic model, these include most obviously the explicit representation of: (1) gods as officials; but also the representation of (2) divine hierarchy as multilevel; (3) authority for all but the highest gods as originating from *outside*, in a *delegation* by higher figures; (4) human interactions with divine authority as *mediated*, both by lower levels of gods who mediate to higher levels and by religious professionals who mediate between even the lowest gods and humans; and (5) gods' relations to specific places and their particular inhabitants as, in principle, temporary and the result of *appointment* rather than of any inherent connection to, or the god's own choice of, a place and its inhabitants.

In contrast, the personal model represents: (1) gods as *extraordinary persons*—a deliberately vague formulation, though the frequent Chinese use, when gods or godlike figures are encountered by humans on earth, of the term *i-jen*, literally, 'different person' or 'extraordinary person', persuades me it is apt; (2) hierarchy between gods and humans or between gods themselves as usually *dyadic* (one-to-one) instead of multileveled, and as based in a variety of connecting principles, including descent, teacher-student or master-disciple ties, or in such a media of *chosen* connection as *exchanges* or *promise*; (3) gods' authority or special power as *inherent* in the person of the god, rather than delegated—this is an aspect of the god's character as 'extraordinary person'; (4) human interactions with divine authority as *unmediated*, *direct* (or at least relatively so); and (5) gods' relations to places and their inhabitants as either *inherent* or founded in the *god's own choice*, and as *permanent*.

Hymes continues

To recognize these two models at work in China is to see that in representing gods, the Chinese drew on all the authoritative human relationships known to them from social life, rather than only on relationships within the state or between the state and its subjects. Indeed, in some cases—such as when they formed a tight patron-client relation with a chosen god, a kind of relation not deeply characteristic of real, earthly Chinese social life since at least the Sung—they forged a tie uncommon in their secular lives, and of which perhaps for that reason they felt need. This makes the relation between Chinese religion and Chinese life both more interesting and more intelligible.²¹

²¹ Robert Hymes (2002) *Way and Byway: Taoism, Local Religion, and Models of Divinity in Sung and Modern China*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, pp. 4–5.

In his classic study of village gods in northern Zhejiang, Clarence Burton Day identified sixty-eight deities, only about twenty of which can also be found in north China, including Guangong, Tudi Locality Gods, City Gods, the Sun, Dragon Kings, the God of Wealth, the Queen Mother of the West, the Jade Emperor, the Three Officials and Xuantian shangdi, a title for Zhenwu, as well as a few deities of Buddhist origin. In her study of local religion in Zhejiang during the Southern Song period (1127–1276) Valerie Hansen says that the “four originally local gods [that] had come to be worshipped over a larger region by the end of the Song” were the Five Manifestations (Wuxian), Zitong, later to become Wenchang, the Heavenly Consort (Tianhou, Tianfei) and King Zhang. For Fujian in the twentieth century Kenneth Dean reports that the most important deities were Baosheng dadi, the Great Emperor Who Protects Life, Guangzi Zunwang, the Reverent Lord of Great Compassion, Qingshui zushi, the Patriarch of the Clear Stream, Mazu/Tianhou and Chen Jinggu, known as the Goddess Linshui furen, the Woman by the Side of the Waters. Except for Mazu in Shandong and Zitong as Wenchang, none of these gods from the southeast and south discussed by Hansen and Dean was worshiped in north China.²²

Similar studies could be cited from other areas of China, but my point is an obvious one; local community religious traditions venerate local gods, a pattern common for other areas of the world as well. For the present book, this pattern reminds us that local traditions in north China need to be studied first in their own context, not simply as part of a generic Chinese situation.

²² Day (1969) *Chinese Peasant Cults: Being a Study of Chinese Paper Gods, Second Edition*, Nanking, Nanking Theological Seminary English Publications, pp. 164–167. Hansen, *Changing Gods in Medieval China*, pp. 133–134; Kenneth Dean (1993) *Taoist Ritual and Popular Cults of Southeast China*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, pp. 61–161.

CHAPTER SIX

BELIEFS AND VALUES

Introductory Comments

Some of the beliefs and values that accompany the ritual activities discussed in this book are noted in other chapters; here I discuss this topic in more detail. After a brief introduction to implicit values embedded in family life and ethical principles to be observed by the people, values that are promoted in locally-available official sources, this chapter moves to a discussion of the personal beliefs of worshipers as the context of the explicit goals of temple festivals. Such beliefs can be expressed directly or implied from what people do in their rituals. There follows a discussion of beliefs and legends about the gods and the values held to be supported by them, and moral values expressed in the operas and folk tales performed or recited at festivals. Additional evidence about such values in operas is provided in an Appendix at the end of this chapter. Finally, I provide passages from local ritual leaders expressing the explicit goals of festivals in honor of the gods. Community rituals have many functions, but the beliefs of those who participate in them provide direct evidence of what they consciously intend by doing so. Rituals are of course a matter of habit and tradition, but they are also expressions of what people think and hope.

The Yuan period *Book of Agriculture (Nongshu)*, published in the period 1312–1314, includes a good, idealized statement of north China rural community values: “In northern villages many join together in cultivating (lit. ‘hoeing’) associations formed of ten families. They first cultivate the fields of one family, with that family providing drink and food. The rest take turns, so that within ten days the fields of all the families have been hoed. So, they lead each other and do their work happily with no stealing or laziness. If there is a family with illness, they join their efforts to help them. So, there are no uncultivated fields, and abundant harvests for all.”

The implicit values embedded in family economic life in rural Shandong and Hebei in the twentieth century are well summarized by Ramon H. Meyers:

The household, guided by the male head, must be regarded as the basic economic decision-making unit... The household's primary objective was to earn as much income as possible through farm labor and other resources or by work in crafts, trades and other employments. The income was intended to preserve a line of descendants giving homage to their ancestors, carrying out the prescribed ritual related to festivals, marriages and funerals, and achieving status for the household. Ancestor worship provided a set of working principles on which the rural family patterned its way of life, adopted goals to pursue, and formed basic values and attitudes toward life. The customs and institutions concerning child rearing, marriage, household economy, wealth inheritance, and religious rites that evolved and modified slowly over time reflected an intense desire by the family to live as a collective, harmonious working unit seeking to augment its wealth and provide security for its progeny... Children were taught that hard work and frugality were closely related with the accumulation of wealth. They were reared not to accept their lot in life and always remain poor, but to strive and achieve the same status and wealth of the rich families of the village.¹

Local official sources, such as the *Local History of Xushui County*, in Hebei sought to encourage these family values and extend them to the rest of the community. Here we find 'verses to exhort the world' (*Quan shi ge*) that advocate filial piety, care for parents and reverence for ancestors, obedience, cooperation among brothers and village families, and school attendance by boys, because "the smart go to school; the stupid are farmers and merchants." The repeated exhortations here begin with "I urge you, good common people..." (*quan er hao min*) to be friendly with neighbors, be frugal and avoid waste, abstain from gambling, immoral sexual behavior, violence and law suits, and care for yourselves (*Xushui zhi*, 1932 edition, 6: 337-341; this exhortation is attributed to "an old history").

At the national level this emphasis on cooperation and mutual care among villagers was emphasized in compilations of social regulations published and distributed by the state, as in the *Collected Statutes of the Great Ming*, published in 1503 and 1587. In this text, village men are expected to meet regularly to recite an oath, which reads:

All of us men of the same village will obey and maintain the rules of propriety and the law. We will not use force to oppress the weak. Those

¹ The *Nongshu* was compiled by Wang Zhen; this passage is from Chapter 7. I came across it in Shimizu Morimitsu, *Chūgoku kyōson shakai ron* (Essays on Chinese villages), (Tokyo, 1951), p. 392. Meyers' (1970) book is *The Chinese Peasant Economy: Agricultural Development in Hopei and Shantung, 1890-1949*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, pp. 134-135.

who disobey will first be disciplined by us together, and after that be dealt with by the officials. As for those who are poor with no-one to rely on, we will in turn provide for their families. If after three years they [still cannot] stand on their own, they will not be permitted to participate in assemblies [for local rites]. Those who lack sufficient resources for weddings and funerals we will mutually aid according to our abilities. As for those who do not accord with the group and act immorally, steal and deceive, all those who do what they should not are not permitted to join this assembly.

When the reading of the text of the oath is finished, old and young will go to their seats in the proper order, and then depart, with their joy complete. What is most important is to revere the spirits and to be friendly toward fellow villagers, so as to strengthen proper local customs.²

The goals of the community rituals that are the focus of this book are a subset of the practical goals for all local worship, goals nicely summed up in a more recent edition of the *Local History of Xushui County* under the category of ‘superstition’, where we read:

Each family and household worships heaven and earth, and such deities as the Locality God, Dragon King, Lord of the Stove, Wealth God and bodhisattvas. They invite images and set up household altars, where at annual festivals they set out offerings and burn incense. If they encounter difficulties they pray to heaven for aid and implore bodhisattvas for mercy. Newly married couples make offerings at the ancestral shrine [of the husband’s family]; they first bow to heaven and earth and then to [the husband’s] parents. If after a long time the wife has still not given birth, she [or her mother-in-law] burns incense, makes a vow and ‘ties on a doll’ to implore a goddess to bestow a son or grandson. On the twenty-third of the twelfth lunar month the family worships the Stove God, imploring him to ‘speak well [of the family] when he goes up to heaven [to make his annual report], and provide protection and well-being when he returns to earth’. Whether or not [the local protective god] Marshal Zhao has been able to bring them wealth, all families, poor or rich, dare not neglect him, so they worship throughout the whole year to seek to become wealthy. When there is a drought they worship the Dragon King to seek rain.

This passage well complements that from Ramon Meyers’ book quoted above.³

² *Da Ming huidian* 94: 1476, cited in Daniel L. Overmyer, “Attitudes Toward Popular Religion in Ritual Texts of the Chinese State: The Collected Statutes of the Great Ming”. *Cahiers d’Extrême-Asie* 5: 207.

³ *Xushui zhi*, 1998 edition, 6: 689. “Tying on dolls” is a widespread tradition in which women seeking children for themselves or their daughters-in-law take home simple dolls from the altars of deities who can bestow babies on the pious.

Personal Beliefs of Local Worshipers

In his recent Ph.D. dissertation concerning temple festivals in Zhao County of Hebei, Yue Yongyi provides not only a list of 126 such festivals in that and nearby counties, but also a list of seventy-four topics of petitions to the gods offered by festival participants. Of these, thirty-eight were for health problems, and nine were for business and income, with others for the birth of children, passing examinations, obtaining positions, marriage, graves, household gods and general peace and prosperity for the family.⁴

The ‘basic principles or postulates’ that inform such petitions and the beliefs on which they are based are nicely summed up by Adam Yuet Chau in his study of local religion in Shaanxi Province. These principles are:

- (1) That there are gods (or that it does not hurt to assume that there are gods);
- (2) That people should respect the gods and do whatever pleases the gods (e.g., building them beautiful temples, celebrating their birthdays), and should not do anything that displeases the gods (e.g., blasphemy);
- (3) That the gods can bless people and help them solve their problems;
- (4) That people should show their gratitude for the gods’ blessings and divine assistance by donating incense money, burning spirit paper, presenting laudatory thanksgiving plaques or flags, spreading the gods’ names, and so forth;
- (5) That some gods possess more efficacy than others (or have specialized areas of efficacious expertise); and
- (6) That one is allowed or even encouraged to seek help from a number of different gods provided that one does not forget to give thanks to all of them once the problem is solved.⁵

It was concerns and beliefs such as these that provided the religious context of community festivals and the motivations of many of those who participated in them. Evidence from our volumes of Hebei local

⁴ Yue Yongyi, “Miaohui de shengchan”, pp. 149–150.

⁵ Chau, *Miraculous Response*, pp. 65–66.

reports is in accord with these principles, as can be seen in the hopes expressed by the Spring Couplets (*duizi*) pasted up in village houses in Xianghe County at the beginning of the lunar year, a time when many temple festivals were held. In his “Xianghe minjian jieri xisu” (The annual festivals of Xianghe), Zhao Jinshan tells us that the auspicious phrases on such couplets include “As they enter the New Year, may all be at peace,” “Lift up your head and see joy” and “May the whole family be happy.” At the main gate of the household is pasted “As you go out, may you see joy;” on the family cart, “Though this cart travels 1,000 *li*, may humans and horses be safe”, and on the pig pen, “May fat pigs fill the pen” and “May the pigs be as big as oxen.” Similar happy sayings were pasted on the barn, well, rice huller, grindstone and house walls; blessings were invoked on every significant spot.⁶

The goals of worship were based on this same optimism, and on the general principle of seeking to avoid harm and summon blessings. We are told that typical petitions to the gods are for peace and good fortune, sons, good husbands or wives, healing, travel safety, good business, promotion in school, safe driving and success in law suits. If prayers are granted, people repay the gods by buying robes for their images or by kowtowing at each step on the way to the temple. In recent years, the repayment of some vows involved burning a paper house, sedan chair or temple in front of a temple, calling out the god’s name while it burned.

At a festival for the Divine Grandmother (Nainai) people prayed to her for protection for their children so that they would grow up to become adults. Worshipers promised different colored robes to the gods if they responded to their prayers: red robes for children, yellow for economic prosperity, white for good relationships between husbands and wives, purple for the production of scholars in the family, and students’ clothing for success in schools. There were also offerings by artists and craftsmen of objects they made.

On the first and fifteenth of the lunar months, women in the Baoding area might worship the goddess Houtu in their homes, seeking such

⁶ In Zhao Jinshan, Fan Liting and Chen Jianling (eds.) (2007) *Xianghe Miaohui huahui yu minjian xisu* (Temple festivals, performance troupes and folk customs in Xianghe), Tianjin guji chubanshe, (p. 21 of the English summary of this article). In *Huabei nongcun minjianwenhua yanjiu congshu* (Book series on village culture in north China), edited by Ou Danian (Daniel L. Overmyer) and Fan Lizhu. English summaries by Overmyer.

blessings for their families as long life, the birth of sons, good health, good relationships with neighbors, making money, passing examinations, promotions, finding wives, peace, good harvests, rain during droughts and similar practical goals.⁷

In his report on community rituals to prevent hail in Gu'an County, Zhao Fuxing says the reason that this Hail Festival tradition has continued so long is because the local people believe it really works. Villagers say that in their experience and that of their ancestors there has never been hail in their village, even though it might have fallen nearby. Local histories record nineteen instances in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries of the village escaping hail, despite damaging storms in the area around it. Villagers believe that this and other miracles are due to the response of the gods to the Hail Festival. For example, during the war against Japan, Japanese forces burned the village, but the building in which the Hail Festival equipment was stored did not catch fire. Attacks by bandits have been avoided and, after the lantern of a Party cadre who came to prohibit the festival went out three times, he fled in fear. Mr. Zhao writes, "Revere the gods as if they are present. Where there is faith, they exist; where there is no faith, they do not. The villagers all understand this principle... The Hail Festival is organized by ordinary people; they take it very seriously, and feel that it is very sacred".⁸

Other evidence from different areas of north China supports the results of studies, such as that of Yue Yongyi, as noted above. For example, Sasaki Mamoru's study of village society in Shandong and Hebei reports that worshipers at a festival for the Emperor Guan in Pingyuan County of Shandong prayed for healing, the birth of children and good fortune, while those at a nearby temple for Zhenwu prayed for the healing of parents' illnesses, prostrating themselves at each step as they entered the temple. Others prayed at the Sanguan (Three Officials) temple for protection from wind and harm in all the four seasons, for peace, healing and 'no problems', as well as protection for

⁷ Shi Bing "Tangxian Qingxu shan miaohui yu Gegong cun" (Gegong village and temple festivals at Mt. Qingxu in Tang County [Hebei]), and Zhao Zhongyi, "Baoding shi jiaoqu de miaohui yu minsu" (Folk customs and temple festivals in the Baoding area). In Geng Baocang (ed.) *Baoding diqu miaohui wenhua yu minsu jilu* (Investigations of folk customs and temple festival culture in the Baoding area), pp. 72, 83, 85 of my English summaries. See note 6 for series information.

⁸ Zhao Fuxing (2006) "Dayidian bingbao hui" (Hail Festivals in Dayidian [village]), in Zhao Fuxing (ed.) *Gu'an diqu minsu jilu* (Records of folk customs in Gu'an [Hebei]), p. 19 of my English summary. See note 6 for series information.

their whole families. Others prayed for abundant grains and friendship among brothers.⁹

At the Xihua Nüwa temple in Henan vows were made to the goddess for protection, driving away harm, marriage, the birth of children, success in business, good harvests, safety in travel, promotion in school and finding work, for all of which people ‘asked Nüwa for help’.¹⁰

There were and are different levels of belief in the reality and efficacy of the gods. The most literal beliefs in north China that I have learned of are in the Silkworm Goddess cult in Mancheng County, Hebei, discussed above in the chapter on leadership and organization. This goddess is represented by a female medium who lives next to a temple she herself has built. She claims to be a living manifestation of the goddess, “I am the Silkworm Mother; I am coming here to heal people who have disease...” Fan Lizhu reports that, “For local believers, [this goddess] was not a fictitious figure but a real human being who had lived in this area many years ago... People believed that the Silkworm Mother helped to solve various difficulties and problems. She had the ability to possess shamans, perform cures, send sons and work miracles, which made her more accessible and appealing than other gods. Above all, the Silkworm Mother is a local god; she is also identified as a neighbor by villagers.”¹¹

Other detailed information about local beliefs is provided from interviews by Zhao Zongfu of worshipers at the Wangmu Pool temple at Mt. Tai in Shandong. When asked if they believed in the Goddess, most replied that they definitely did, but others offered their own interpretations. Older village women the author interviewed all said that she was indeed a very efficacious goddess. They had come to pray for peace and well-being for their whole families. People from towns, particularly those who had worked, and young people, all said that the Goddess and all other deities were originally humans who were remembered for the good things they had done for people, so after a long time had become recognized as gods. Offering incense for them was to recognize historically good people whose minds became efficacious through their purity, so [reverence for them] was not superstition. People maintained that the same is true for drivers who hang images of Mao Zedong or

⁹ Sasaki, *Kindai Chūgoku*, pp. 34, 51.

¹⁰ Gao Youpeng, *Miaohui wenhua*, p. 305.

¹¹ Fan Lizhu, “The Cult of the Silkworm Mother”, p. 57.

Zhou Enlai in their vehicles; they are just remembering the good points of an older generation, believing that they can give protection, which also is not superstition. Others interviewed said that they were acting for the benefit of others and for the prosperity and good weather of the country, concerned as well that officials will not be corrupt, the economy would prosper and all would enjoy a good life.¹²

Adam Chau notes that the majority of the worshipers he encountered in his fieldwork are ‘practical believers’ with an attitude of ‘half trust and half doubt’ or ‘better believe than not’. His informants told him that. “...as far as supernatural powers are concerned, ‘one should not not believe, nor should one believe everything’.” Their attitude is also reflected in a local saying, “If you worship him, the deity will be there [for you]; if you don’t worship him, he won’t mind.” However, this flexibility of individual belief may not apply to the beliefs of the community. As Chau comments, “In so far as the village temple belongs to the village community, the village as a whole worships the village deities as a community of believers.”¹³

Zhao Zongfu’s article also provides the text of an invocation to the goddess:

Royal Mother (Wangmu niang-niang), I offer incense to you, venerable older person, and give you golden paper ingots [*yuanbao*]. You, venerable older person, are most compassionate and merciful; [may you help us] avoid all kinds of calamities and difficulties, and protect my whole family so that we every year are peaceful and secure. When we are ill, may you heal the illness, and when we are in difficulty, [may you] solve that difficulty. When we leave home, [may our travels] be safe and easy, and at home may all live in harmony. May the wind and rain be timely, may all of our affairs proceed as they should, and all be as we wish, with all auspicious and beneficial.

The author notes that most such prayers are spoken silently. To ensure that the Goddess understands the sincerity of the worshiper’s belief, the goal and sincerity of his or her worship are written on a piece of

¹² Zhao Zongfu (2001) “Taishan Wangmu chi Pantaohui miaohui diaocha” (An investigation of the Pantaohui temple festival at the Royal Mother Pool at Mt. Tai). *Min-su ch’ü-i* 132: 68–69.

¹³ Adam Yuet Chau (2003) “Popular Religion in Shaanbei, North-Central China”. *Journal of Chinese Religions* 31: 70–71. Chau’s discussion of this point relies in part on that of Clyde Stevan Harrell (n.d.) “Belief and Unbelief in a Taiwan Village”. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation. Stanford University, p. 86.

yellow paper that is offered as part of a vow-making ritual, as discussed above.¹⁴

Adam Chau's discussion of "peasant religiosity and religious practices" in the northern Shaanxi area where he did his research notes that people go to the deities or to spirit-mediums with 'a variety of simple problems' that include not only illness, but "...marriage prospects, changing jobs, promotion, travel or business plans, lawsuits, interpersonal problems, missing persons or goods, and any other troubles. Many Shaanbei people attend temple festivals specifically to honor their vows by bringing the promised amount of incense money donation." He adds that, "When Shaanbei people are not troubled by any specific problems they go to the deities to give thanks and pray for their continual blessing. The most commonly used phrases in the prayers are '[We or I] implore Your Venerability to bless/protect us so that we will have good fortune, every endeavor will go smoothly, and we will be free from trouble.'"¹⁵

Stories of the Origins of Gods and Temples

As is true elsewhere in China, local gods in the north were believed to have begun their careers as human beings who manifested extraordinary knowledge and power for the benefit of others, power that remained available after their deaths to those who petitioned them in faith. If they were believed able to respond effectively to prayers they could be considered to have become gods, sources of superhuman power, for whom temples might be built where they were represented by images. Legends about their careers were transmitted orally in stories and operas and visually in paintings on the walls of the temple rooms where their images were venerated. In some cases, aspects of these stories might be written down in books of invocations by local ritual leaders, or might be elaborated in novels and Daoist scriptures. As is true with other religious traditions, the full scope and details of such stories might not be known

¹⁴ Zhao, "Taishan Wangmu", p. 71.

¹⁵ Chau, *Miraculous Response*, pp. 63-64. In his *Ting Hsien: A North China Rural Community* (Stanford University Press, pp. 403-404), Sidney Gamble (1968) notes that topics of prayers to the gods in that area included bringing rain and protection from insects, hail, floods, sickness and looting, as well as celebrating the reappearance of gods.

to ordinary worshipers, who could be content just with believing that the god was able to respond to prayers for specific needs.

At the simplest level, stories about gods were just reports about their efficacy, as in the case of a Dragon Mother temple in Tang County of Hebei. A commentary in a late Qing edition of the Local History of Tang County explains that the county seat city beside the Liao River was prone to flooding because “when it rains in the mountains the water comes rushing straight down and the old dikes could not contain it.” In an attempt to solve this problem, a local leader gathered household heads together to plan to build a Dragon Mother temple outside the east wall of the city where the river passes by to control it, “so that the power of this god would protect the city.” After the temple was built the flooding ceased, so “the efficacy of the god has been transmitted and manifested here.”¹⁶

A more detailed story is told about the Patriarch Han, who is venerated in a large temple complex in Beiqi village of Ding County, Hebei. From a historical point of view, the Patriarch Han was Han Piaogao (d. 1598 CE), who founded the Hongyang sect in the late sixteenth century and wrote several *baojuan* scriptures. (On this see my *Precious Volumes: An Introduction to Chinese Sectarian Scriptures of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*; Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, Harvard University Press, 1999, pp. 321–335). However, for Beiqi villagers he is a protective deity, first venerated because he was believed to have saved the people from a famine. According to a local tradition:

In the past there was such a severe drought in the county that buckwheat could not be planted, and when rain finally did fall they had no seeds to plant, so they were extremely worried. However, one day an old man arrived, bringing many buckwheat seeds which the farmers were eager to buy, but the old man did not want any money, and said to them, “I don’t want your money now, because I know you don’t have any; wait until after the harvest to pay me. When the people asked his name and where he was from, he replied that his surname was Han, and that he lived on the north side of East Road in Beiqi village of Ding County; then he left. That year the buckwheat grew very well, and there was an abundant harvest. The people felt very grateful to the old man, but after the harvest he did not show up to ask for his money. Since they realized that if the old man had not sold seeds to them they would not have had

¹⁶ *Tangxian zhi*, 1878 edition, *juan 1*. The page numbers are not legible on my photocopy.

such good fortune, they collected money and sent a man to deliver it to Beiqi village. When he arrived he asked everywhere, but there was no old man named Han. However, on East Road there was a small temple to a Patriarch Han. Since the old man had said he lived there and they could not find him in the village, the farmers believed it was the Patriarch Han who had manifested his sacred presence [to them]. So, this belief gradually spread to the whole area... The villagers used the money they had collected to rebuild the Hanzu Temple and to carry out temple festivals there.¹⁷

When Hou Jie, Fan Lizhu and I visited the Hanzu temple in 2001 and 2002 we learned that while a few temple leaders still knew of the Patriarch's sectarian connections, and had some of his *baojuan*, to ordinary worshipers he was simply a local protective deity.

The god stories for which I have the most information are of divine physicians and of goddesses who provide water from wells or streams. The physicians usually first appear as mysterious strangers, as in the Hanzu story above, strangers who disappear immediately after they cure an intractable illness, a pattern followed in a story from a Medicine King temple in Liubao village in Ruicheng County of Shanxi which runs as follows:

Long ago in the capital the wife of a certain high official became desperately ill and was about to die. Just then a 'Cultivated Talent' scholar dressed in white passed by the family gate riding a mule, and said to a boy there, "The wife of this family is very ill, but she can be cured." When the boy reported this, [the scholar] was ushered in to the house. After he had taken the woman's pulse and given her the first dose of a medicine she revived, with a second dose sat up, and with the third dose was completely cured. Her husband was extremely grateful, but when he [tried to] pay, the scholar firmly declined and would not accept the payment. He said, "My surname is Sun, and I live in Liubao in the state of Rui. My neighbors on the right are named Ma, and those on the left are named Guan. If you want to see me, come at the middle of the third month." Having said this, he abruptly disappeared. In the third month of the next spring, the official sent a man to Liubao to inquire, but there was no one there named Sun. However, he met an old man who pointed to a high cliff, saying that there he should look for a Ma and Guan. [Indeed], when he reached the top of the cliff he saw temples for [deities named] Ma on the right and Guan on the left, with an empty space in between where there was nothing. After he had thought about this for a long time, he suddenly realized, "He is a divine physician! He is a divine physician

¹⁷ Li Jinghan and others, *Dingxian diaocha*, p. 437.

whose name is Sun!” The man reported this to the official, who built a temple on that spot to make offerings [to the healer], whom he called ‘Venerable Medicine King’. This temple was completed just at the middle of the third month.¹⁸

This deity was the famous Tang physician Sun Simiao (581–682 CE) who is venerated elsewhere in the north and in other areas of China as well. In his reports on rituals and beliefs in Gu’an County in Hebei, Zhao Fuxing reports a story of Sun Simiao reviving a woman who was thought to be dead. As her coffin passed by he noticed fresh blood dripping from it, so he stopped the procession to examine her, discovered that she was still alive, and said that she could be cured. Those accompanying the coffin thought he was crazy and were about to beat him, but he opened the coffin anyway and cured her. At this, people realized that he must be a god, because Sun Simiao had died long ago, so they built a Medicine King temple for him. Later this temple was renovated by the family of a boy whose injuries were healed by a passerby who said that his name was Sun.¹⁹

A similar story is told about Liu Shouzheng, a deified physician with a temple in Baoding city, not far from Gu’an County. Of him we are told that at the end of the Northern Song dynasty (960–1127 CE), when the state of Jin occupied the area of what is now Hebei there was an epidemic that was particularly severe in Baozhou (Baoding). At that time there was a well-known physician named Liu Shouzheng from Hejian County who helped the people of this area. He left home to go to Baoding where he worked during the day and stayed in a ruined temple at night. One day as he was walking along he saw a coffin being taken out of a house, and noted traces of blood from a crack in it. He stopped the coffin, asked who was in it, and was told it was a woman who had died in childbirth. Liu said, “This person is not dead and can still be helped”. When they opened the coffin they discovered that she really was still alive. Her family let him stay in a garden beside the river, and from then on his fame spread.

Another story tells of a man very ill with tuberculosis (*laobing*) whose face was as yellow as paper and bones as thin as firewood, and who

¹⁸ Zhang Zhizhong, “Liubao cun Yaowang miao”, p. 7.

¹⁹ Zhao Fuxing (2006) “Ding sheng xianghuo wubainian” (Five hundred years of flourishing worship), in Zhao Fuxing (ed.) *Gu’an diqu minsu jilu* (Collected investigations of popular customs in the Gu’an area). Tianjin guji chubanshe, pp. 72–73.

had not been able to find a cure anywhere. When he heard about Liu Shouzhen he traveled a great distance to look for him. When Liu saw that the man was deeply concerned and had about given up hope, he smiled and said, "You need not worry about your illness. You have a sore on your thigh that will swell up and form a hole as big as a tea cup." He then gave him some medicine and sent him home. After he had returned home and taken the medicine, his illness gradually improved, but the sore in his thigh got worse, so he went back to see Liu Shouzhen. When Liu saw him he laughed loudly and said, "It worked! It's better!" Because the sick man had completely concentrated on his sore, his illness had been cured. Liu then cut off the sore, gave him some medicine, and the man was completely cured. After that Liu became even more famous and people said that he was a divine healer.

Later, when a Jin princess became ill, the court asked Liu to go to the capital to heal her, but he firmly refused. Then the court sent a high official to take him there, but he could not be found. Because he would not serve the Jin, he had jumped into a well and drowned. All that the official found were several volumes of Liu's medical books that were later published as his collected writings. The Jin court gave him the title of 'Liu the Conqueror' because he could not be reduced to submission. The local people built a temple in his honor at which there is a festival for him every year on the fifteenth day of the third month. Together with Hou Jie, I observed this festival in Baoding in 2001.²⁰

In Chapter One, on Rain Rituals, I discuss legends from Hebei and Shanxi concerning village maidens who provided water to horse-riding strangers, for which they were severely criticized by family members. However, in one case the stranger was a future Han emperor who bestowed a title on the maiden after her death, and ordered that a temple be built for her by the well from which she had drawn water for him. She came to be worshiped as a goddess who could provide rain. The other maiden also came to be venerated as a goddess who provided water.²¹

²⁰ *Lishi wenhua cheng*, pp. 411–412.

²¹ Yue Yongyi, "Shuici niangniang miaohui", pp. 225–226. On p. 226 Yue Yongyi also discusses a 1925 text he found in a nearby village, called the "Mother's Scripture" (*Niangniang jing*) in which the goddess is called the Shuiqiu niangniang "Goddess who Floats on Water". She had been a girl in Cao village in the eastern part of Zhao County who drowned herself in a well because of ill treatment by her mother-in-law. After cultivating her powers at the bottom of the well for 200 years she became an

Both goddesses were venerated by local villagers who carried out annual festivals in their honor.²²

Some of the stories in Hebei and Henan about the ancient goddess Nüwa are referred to in Chapter Two above on history and Chapter Four on temple festivals. These are stories of her repairing the sky, creating humans and fashioning musical instruments. These are the oldest and most complex such legends I have found in this material. The report by Shen Ziwen introduced there contains detailed information about Nüwa myths as they are known to local people in the Handan area. My summary of part of his report reads as follows:

The Celestial Emperor's son and daughter Fuxi and Nüwa at first lived beside a river in what is now Heze of Shandong. There was a great flood, during which a huge turtle carried them to the top of what is now Mount Zhonghuang in Shexian. After this flood only the brother and sister Fuxi and Nüwa remained, and to produce human beings they had to become husband and wife, but this made them very ashamed. So, after a discussion, they decided to use the method of 'rolling grinding fans' (*gun mo shan*). After they rolled these stones down, they joined together, which Fuxi and Nüwa took as a good sign, so they married. Now there are still two villages near Mount Zhonghuang named Upper and Lower Grinding Fan villages (Moshan cun). At the New Year festival people in these villages burned incense and made offerings to stone grindstones (*shi mo*) in the village, which they saw as holy grindstones (*shen mo*).

Fuxi and Nüwa married and gave birth to children, but they multiplied too slowly, so they used yellow earth to form humans from mud, and then blew their breath into them, and they became alive. But Nüwa felt that this was still too slow, so she poured water into a pit of mud, and dragged a straw rope through the mud to bring up pieces of mud of different sizes. When she spit on them, these clods of mud became living humans, 3,000 of them. Today there are two villages below the mountain which people say are where Nüwa dragged the straw rope to make humans out of mud. All this took place in the area of Jizhou (modern

efficacious goddess who saved the fleeing and famished Liu Xiu with her miraculous powers. Later, he gave her the title noted above and built a temple for her, which led to her being worshiped by the people of the area.

²² Duan Youwen (2001) "Shanxi Linfen Pingshui shenci beike ji qi shuili xisu kaoshu" (A report on the stone inscriptions and water conservation customs of the Holy Shrine that Calms the Waters of Linfen in Shanxi). *Min-su ch'ü-i* 133: 48. Harrison's account is in her (2002: 96) "Village Identity in Rural North China: a Sense of Place in the Diary of Liu Dapeng", in David Faure and Tao Tao Liu (eds.) *Town and Country in China: Identity and Perception* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, Palgrave).

Hebei). She also had people build a big dike to prevent floods caused by a destructive leader named Kang Hui.

This report continues with other mythical stories, identifying places and villages in this area where these events took place, including a mountain where the goddess is said to have smelted stones to support the sky after this supporting mountain had split. There is still a stone called the 'stone that repaired the sky' (*bu tian shi*) that was left over from the work she did. There is a cave there with a 'Stone Mother Goddess' who takes care of and protects this stone. Another legend says that this is the place where the Chinese people were born. East of Dagang village there is a cave called the 'Venerable Mother (Lao mu) Cave' where Nüwa repaired the sky. There was also a Nüwa branch temple (*xing gong*) there. There were five colors of stones here that are believed to be remnants of Nüwa's smelting to repair the split mountain that had supported the sky. Lunar 1/24 is celebrated as the day the goddess repaired the sky, when the people, calling her Nüwa Laomu, remember and worship her at Mount Zhonghuang.

After they had created humans Nüwa and Fuxi wanted to return to Heaven, but because they feared that their children would cry to see them leave they left secretly on the night of lunar 3/18. After that, on the night of 3/18 the people sat up all night at the temple on the mountain to wait for their parents to return. This became an annual temple festival, with many thousands of worshipers.²³

Ethical Values in Operas

Operas to entertain both gods and people were an integral part of temple festivals all over China, including the north. Everywhere their songs, lively action and familiar stories drew large crowds. Most opera stories are about the struggles of gods and human heroes with demons and villains, stories that dramatize traditional values and help clarify the distinction between good and bad actions. The performance of operas as part of community rituals is noted above; here I refer more specifically to the values they convey. The most comprehensive survey of Chinese opera is the multivolume series *Zhongguo xiquzhi* (*History of Chinese Opera*), published in the 1990s. These 800-page volumes, organized by provinces, include detailed lists of opera types, titles, music, histories of performance, types of make-up and masks, locations of performance

²³ Shen Ziwen, "Shexian Nüwa xinyang", pp. 52–55. On Nüwa myths, see also the articles by Zhang Cuiling in *Minsu yanjiu* 38: 42–43, cited above.

troupes and stages and other topics. For our purposes here the most directly relevant information in these books is their sections on *saixi* (festival operas). In this section of the Hebei volume we are told that festival operas are an ancient form of drama, the basic meaning of which is to offer thanks to the gods and welcome them to the festival. Performances of these ‘festivals to welcome the gods’ (*yingshen saihui*) began in the Song (960–1279 CE) and Yuan (1264–1368) periods. In Hebei these performances have been popular in such counties as Wu’an, Shexian and Yongnian. On them, the *Local History of Wu’an County* (*Wu’an xianzhi*) comments: “Those who perform miscellaneous dramas sing and dance to repay the gods at what are called ‘festivals’ (*saihui*). They are all performed by villagers themselves, who in them both walk and sing, appearing to be crazy. These festivals to repay the gods are carried out every year, even though they waste uncountable resources.”

The editors note that such operas were common in the Handan area by the Yuan period, and by the mid-Qing they were performed here in more than fifty villages, many of which are named. However, after the Peoples’ Republic was established festival operas gradually declined, so now they are performed only occasionally by a few villages.

The *Xiquzhi* does not provide opera librettos, but from the lists of titles in it we can get some idea of the contents of performances. For example, of the sixteen dramas performed in Dongtianchi village in Handan County, ten were about stories from the Three Kingdoms period (220–280 CE), while three were based on stories from the Song; that is, they were mostly based on historical events and legends. In other nearby villages most operas were based on stories from the Zhou (1050–256 BCE) and Ming periods (1368–1644 CE). The editors add that most of these operas were based on historical stories and that “they were definitely not about families and love stories.” Most of the roles in these dramas were of male characters, and the few female roles were played by men. Some of the operas were transmitted from local masters, and some were written by village scholars ‘who loved festival operas’. The form of these operas was very old and simple. Most were martial dramas, but even these were quite simple. In them troops did not wear imperial-style regalia. The performers neither sat nor bowed, even when [a character representing] the emperor came on stage they remained standing and sang from behind a table. Their performances were little influenced by other types of opera. Opera roles were passed

on from fathers to sons, with sons taking over when their fathers became too old to perform.²⁴

For our purposes here, the point of this discussion is that these local operas conveyed simple and moralized versions of historical events, particularly through the struggles of heroes and villains in martial plays. Through performing and observing these dramas, villagers vicariously participated in these stories which they knew well from years of repeated performances.

There is no festival opera section in the Shandong volume of this series, but material in the Shanxi volume demonstrates that this participation by villagers in opera performances could be direct and dramatic. Here festivals were typically performed over a four-day period. On the first day two actors went through the village beating gongs and drums to announce the coming performance. On the second day, the first of the festival, with the opera troupe leader leading the way holding a bamboo pole, the whole troupe put on make up and costumes, with the villagers lining the streets to welcome them. Then there was a procession through the streets and lanes called 'brushing the street' (*shua jie*) to drive away demons. After bowing before images of the gods, the actors put on masks representing demons, and ascended to the stage to listen to admonitions from the City God, considered in this source to be the Master of Demons.

At noon on the third day they performed 'Beheading the Drought Demon', a compulsory step in the proceedings. This demon was represented by a man wearing short pants with a red cord around his waist, with his arms bare, wearing a fresh sheep stomach on his head, and holding a bowl of sheep blood. He represented all that was disobedient and unfilial. This demon was driven down from the stage by actors representing the Four Great Celestial Kings, and then driven straight through the audience, which with great shouts surrounded and chased him, throwing pieces of stone and mud to hit him. The demon scattered the sheep blood to clear the way through the streets. The Celestial Gods and the people chased him together. As he passed by shops the demon grabbed food from them, which their owners had put out for him and threw it at the pursuing crowd. Finally, he was chased back

²⁴ *Zhongguo xiquzhi, Hebei juan*, edited by the Editorial Committee for this Hebei volume of the series. Beijing: Zhongguo ISBN Center, 1993, pp. 105-107.

to the stage and symbolically beheaded. After the drama was finished, no matter how late it was, the chief actors sat on the stage and recited stories late into the night, some historical, others humorous.²⁵

Evidence about operas in our books of reports by Hebei local scholars supports that from the *Xiquzhi*. Occasions for having operas performed in Xianghe County are well summarized by Chen Jianling, who notes that in the past there were several big opera stages in the county and many annual festivals. My English summary of his report reads in part:

These festivals lasted three or four days; during them, people offered incense, worshiped the gods and repaid them for blessings by having operas performed for them. Beyond these temple festivals there were also operas performed at rituals praying for rain and to welcome and thank the gods. Operas to pray for rain took place when it had not rained for a long time and the crops were dry. During these rituals people wore hats made of willow branches... If it rained and the drought was broken, people collected money to hire an opera troupe to perform to thank the gods for their help.²⁶

For Handan County, Li Wei reports that in Shangqingliang village:

During the war with Japan, when the Japanese army occupied this area it prohibited opera performances and burned opera texts but, in 1944, local men restored some of these texts from memory, as did people in other villages, so that now there are still twelve manuscripts preserved from that period... There are three types of these operas, one offered to the village gods, a second to the [local] Mountain God and the third to Emperor Ming of the Tang dynasty, who is considered to be the patriarch of operas. Li notes that people believe that those who participate in or observe the operas can obtain health and long life and drive away harmful forces, so they send their young people to participate. These ritual operas are organized entirely by the villagers themselves.

About operas in nearby Tanyin village in honor of the goddess Nüwa, Li writes:

As is true for Shangqingliang, these Tanyin operas were performed by the people themselves, not by professional troupes. "All could be performers, all could be the audience, so no one was to laugh at anyone else!" Li

²⁵ *Zhongguo xiquzhi, Shanxi juan*, edited by the Editorial Board for the History of Chinese Opera, Beijing, 1990, pp. 139–141.

²⁶ Page 44 of the English summary of Chen's report, on operas in this area, in Chao, Fan and Chen (eds.) *Xianghe miaohui*.

Wei provides the names of twenty Tanyin operas called *duixi* that still exist, and of seven that have been lost. Of operas in three of the other villages he investigated he says that festivals there are no longer carried out because the old performers have died and the traditions have never recovered from the destruction of the Cultural Revolution.²⁷

Wang Yongxin comments as follows about operas performed in Dongtianchi village near Handan:

These festival operas were...based on standard historical stories about heroes of the Han, Three Kingdoms and Song periods. There were also operas called 'vow dramas' (*yuanxi*) performed for individual families in their homes to fulfill vows that people had made the year before in petitioning the gods for aid. When they believed that the gods had responded to their prayers for healing, children, wealth, marriages and success in lawsuits, these families hired from two to five actors to perform a short opera before an altar to Heaven set up within the house. The family made offerings, set off firecrackers, kowtowed and thought about the vow being repaid; then the performance began. When the actors were finished, they went on to the next family.²⁸

There are two good articles in English about festival operas, both concerning Ding County in Hebei. For north China, the most pioneering article is by Chao Weipang, published in 1944, based on his work in Ding County. Here operas, which Chao calls 'rural plays', were performed at every festival in communities that could afford them, and were important sources for popular knowledge of history and moral values. Of them, Chao writes, "Most rural plays have strong ethical meaning. Because incidents of rural life are performed, the ethical thoughts expressed are concentrated on family life [such as on filial piety, fidelity in marriage and the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law]...Religious ideas play an important role in expressing ethical

²⁷ Pp. 29–30 of my English summary of Li Wei's report (2005) in Du Xuede, Yang Yingqin and Li Huaishun (eds.) *Handan diqu minsu diqu jilu* (Collected records of popular customs of the Handan area), Tianjin guji chubanshe. (See note 6 above for information on the series in which this book was published). As for the term *duixi*, one meaning of *dui* is opposing, facing, confronting. On p. 17 of his report in this volume Li Wei suggests that this name for a type of opera is derived from an old tradition in this area of stories of opposing military encampments facing each other, but does not clarify its meaning in an opera context other than to say that it was to repay the gods. Wang Ch'iu-kuei notes that these operas could be performed both in processions and on opera stages (personal communication, February 18, 2008). I think it best to leave this term untranslated.

²⁸ Page 33 of the English summary of Wang's report in Du, Yang and Li (eds.) *Handan minsu*.

thought. The gods or immortals [in these plays] always help the good and punish the bad.” Chao provides a quote from one such opera in which the actor portraying the Jade Emperor sings:

The Record of Good and Bad is open on the desk. I observe the record to find the causes. I lift up my head and observe the Shantung region, where the devils and bandits are crowded. Loudly I shout in my Golden Hall: Listen, you alone, Green Dragon! You are sent to the Shantung region. At midnight, when the watchman beats the watch for the third time, you kill them all. I lift up my head and observe the Shansi region. There is a bad man... who does no good. He beats his parents and scolds his neighbors. White Tiger, you are sent to Shansi. At noon he will be killed. I lift up my head and observe the Hupei region, where the people suffer hardships because for three years it has not rained. Li Ch'ang-keng, you are sent to Hupei. Just at noon rain will fall. Feeling uneasy, I lift up my head again and see the people in Lo-yang, Honan. There is a man, Wang Ming-yueh, who repairs bridges and roads and builds temples for the gods. This good man should have nine sons but he has none. From my Dragon Hall I send out a magical air to call Sung-tzu Niang-niang. A golden boy and a jade girl will be given to you and you will send them to Wang Ming-yueh's house in Lo-yang. Waving the sleeves of my robe, I descend from the dragon throne.²⁹

More recently, David Arkush has continued this study in a book chapter entitled “The Moral World of Hebei Village Operas”, also based on evidence from Ding County. He writes that in a number of rural plays from this area:

... we see deities intervening in the world to rectify wrongs, punish the wicked, or reward the good. A prince about to be killed by his parents is saved by a god in one opera... and in another the South Sea goddess (Nanhai laomu, the bodhisattva Guanyin) has restored life to a man who had been murdered by a villain... Elsewhere an immortal... helps a boy find his father, and, in the same play, Heaven saves an innocent man from death... We can find Buddha ordering a local god... to look after the chastity of a virtuous wife... and, in a complicated war story, the Jade Emperor rectifies all in the end and makes the aggrieved family gods in a temple... Threat of supernatural punishment is used to make someone pay a debt... We also see people making vows before the gods

²⁹ Chao Wei-pang (1944) “Yang-Ko. The Rural Theatre in Ting-hsien, Hopei”. *Folklore Studies* 3(1): 27–29. Sung-tzu Niang-niang is the Goddess Who Delivers Sons. Wang Ch'iu-kuei notes that Li Ch'ang-keng is a title of the god of the planet called in the West Venus, who is an emissary from the Jade Emperor's court. (personal communication, February 18, 2008). Except for *yang-ko* (*yangge*), no characters are provided in this article.

on the order of “May the gods split me in two with lightning if I am not telling the truth...”

Arkush goes on to discuss ‘supernatural punishments for breaking a vow’, and gods functioning like officials ‘to rectify justice and restore the moral balance in the universe’.³⁰

Explicit Goals of Temple Festivals

It was gods with stories like those discussed above that were worshiped at temple festivals, the goals of which were sometimes in statements in ritual handbooks read at the beginning or end of the festival. The most detailed such statements I have found are from Shanxi rituals discussed above in the chapters on ritual leaders and temple festivals. The first I will cite here is an invocation to the ancient deity Hou Yi, famous for shooting excess suns from the sky to stop a drought, an invocation from a ritual text used in festivals in Zhangzi County, as reported in an article by David Johnson. After recounting the great deeds of the god, this invocation proceeds as follows:

At this time it is the sixth day of the sixth lunar month, the birthday of the revered spirit. According to principle, we ought to abstain [from that which should be abstained from] and cleanse ourselves, and sincerely sacrifice. We respectfully offer for the god’s enjoyment one troupe performing *yueh [hu]* opera and one troupe, the Yueh I Troupe, performing grand opera [i.e., Shansi *pang-tzu*], and also the Incense Assembly [procession] and the She Displays...to requite the great virtue of the honored god’s eternal and universal bestowal of timely rains and the merit of making his people and livestock secure. We humbly entreat the god to bestow his great favor without limit on later generations, and let the myriad people feel his virtue for thousands and tens of thousands of years without end.³¹

In another article on festivals in this area Johnson quotes a concluding statement from a *sai* festival from another local ritual text:

A good *sai*! The *sai* is finished! There will be gentle breezes and timely rains, the five grains will produce abundantly, men and horses will be

³⁰ This chapter is in *Ideas Across Cultures: Essays on Chinese Thought in Honor of Benjamin I. Schwartz*, edited by Paul A. Cohen and Merle Goldman (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1990, pp. 100–102).

³¹ Johnson, “Confucian Elements”, p. 149.

untroubled, the fields will be verdant, buying and selling will be harmonious, and all affairs will enjoy success. Sweep clean the courtyard, burn a full burner of incense; let the gods return to their places, and keep all misfortunes away.³²

From Nanqi village in this same area of southeastern Shanxi Zhang Zhennan and Pu Haiyan report on a statement to the gods by ritual leaders in a festival: “We [name inserted here] sincerely worship the gods, seeking wind and rain that are harmonious [with good crops], and that the nation may be prosperous and the people secure and at peace. If we deceive the gods or cheat the people we ask [you] gods to punish us by sending down disasters.”³³

Qiao Jian and his fellow scholars provide a similar invocation from nearby Pingshun County:

Respectfully, with offerings of incense and wine we say to the gods in this area, “May you gods spread about kindness and send down excellent blessings, brightly manifesting your imposing spiritual power . . . and divine protection and aid. We look up to the bright light of your kindness. Now at this time when sages and gods assemble, we have respectfully prepared incense, which we presume to offer . . . with long-life wine and fragrant fruits, wishing you long life. Bowing down, we hope that, you, holy one, will live as long as earth and heaven. We pray again for aid and peace for every household; may wealth and blessings come to them, may all the gods be at peace and secure. May blessings increase from year to year. We humbly beg that your divine powers will be efficacious [on our behalf].³⁴

Concluding Comments

From the evidence in this chapter we can see that the religious beliefs of Chinese local people are simple, direct and practical, focused on what is necessary for family and community survival. People believe in the reality, presence and efficacy of the gods, but do not elaborate a theology about them. Stories about the gods tell about what in their history makes them effective for meeting particular needs in the present. Such stories are closely related to rituals; indeed, in this context beliefs about

³² “Temple Festivals”, pp. 697–698.

³³ “Shangdang yingshen saihui”, p. 217.

³⁴ Qiao Jian, Liu Guanwen and Li Tiansheng, *Yuehu*, p. 16.

gods are just enough to justify such rituals in the minds of the people; they are not allowed to occupy a separate theoretical space unconnected with action. Here again, Chinese local community traditions provide an interesting contrast with the sectarian forms of religion better known in the West and their detailed theological discussions.

Appendix: Values and Beliefs in North China Local Operas

Moral Values

In the serial plays featuring the exploits of the eight stalwart sons of the Yang family from the Northern Song (960–1126 CE) headed by She Taijun (Matriarch She), who herself is no mean warrior and fully capable of marshalling an expeditionary army beyond the northern border on her own steam, loyalty ranks supreme as the cardinal virtue that characterizes these pillars of the Chinese empire. In the opening scene of *Wanshou Gong* (*Longevity Palace*), Yang Balang (Eighth-Son Yang), the youngest of the eight brothers, laments in song on how his father and brothers have lost their lives valiantly fighting for their country and how, regretfully, to save his skin he has had to change his name and marry the princess of Liao (Khitan, 907–1125 CE), with which the Song is at war. His very act of surrendering to the enemy not only denotes a failure in loyalty (*zhong* 忠) but constitutes a loss of moral integrity (*jie* 節), much as a woman loses her virtue of chastity. Being an honorable man at heart, however, in these unhappy circumstances he cannot but be overwhelmed by remorse and regard himself as a morally depraved scoundrel, disloyal to his sovereign and wanting in filial piety (*xiao* 孝) to his parents. Moreover, in marrying the foreign princess who subsequently bears him a son, he is also being unfaithful to his Chinese wife, who still lives with his mother. What must he do to restore his honor? Well, perhaps nothing short of reversing everything that he has done, and indeed he is in process of cooking up such a plan! But wouldn't this action make him disloyal and unfaithful once again, this time to the Liao queen and to his Khitan wife respectively? Unfortunately for his peace of mind, Yang Balang has a prickly conscience which, in his own cognizance, can be lost when a person forgets his origins or where he is rooted (*Wanshou Gong* [山西地方戲曲彙編第十七集], Collection of Shanxi local operas, volume 17 [hereafter *Collection 17*], p. 4). And if one's conscience goes bad, one has been born in vain, only to be brought to naught by heaven and earth and good riddance! (*Collection 17*, p. 6) To this his wife the princess replies that if a man takes to heart the welfare of the four seas, fate will have ample material rewards in store for him (*ibid.*).

In Scene 2, celebrating her birthday, the Song Empress Dowager sings, "Now that the imperial son has acceded to the throne, the four seas are quiet and

peaceful. Heaven's mind has complied with the people's wishes, as the sovereign stays on the right path and his servants all loyal and virtuous. We often call upon the name of Amitabha, and pray that our reign may last thousands upon thousands of years" (*Collection 17*, p. 10). Matriarch She, along with four of her daughters-in-law, is invited to the party. As a gesture of extreme graciousness, the Empress Dowager orders Pang Fei, the emperor's beloved concubine, to offer a cup of wine to Matriarch She. Pang Fei, feeling degraded, does so not only with reluctance but willfully drops the cup on the floor when the old lady puts out her hands for it, intending to blame the *faux pas* on the latter. The shrewd Empress Dowager, however, sees what has actually happened and raises hell with the emperor, who obediently entreats the wily concubine to apologize. The moral of this episode of royal row, whether or not intended by the anonymous playwright, cannot be lost on the audience, namely, that the Confucian precept of filial piety (*xiao* 孝) is of universal application, i.e., to be observed by all humankind, members of the imperial household not exempted (*Collection 17*, pp. 39–45).

The audience should also be impressed by the considerable power wielded by the female characters in the play, such as the Empress Dowager, Matriarch She and, not least, Mu Guiying, the wife of Yang Zongbao, a third-generation scion of the Yang family, who is the garrison commander at the Three Passes of Yanmen (Wild-Goose Gate). Though described as tall, good-looking, and possessing a distinguished physiognomy (*Wanshou Gong*, *Collection 17*, p. 27), Yang Zongbao is said to be completely dependent on his wife in military affairs (*Qiankun Dai* [*Belt of heaven and earth*], *Collection 17*, p. 38). Also obvious is the imperial concubine Pang Fei's pernicious influence on palace politics, in which her father Pang Yuan plays a significant role. Pang Yuan is later sent to the Three Passes to replace Yang Zongbao on the recommendation of Bao Zheng (*Collection 17*, p. 51), the famous 'iron-faced, emotionless' chief magistrate in popular literature, who hears cases involving the living in daytime and ones involving ghosts at night (*Collection 17*, p. 87). Pang Yuan and his clique, which includes his son-in-law and two other evil courtiers, have planned to destroy the Yangs and, on top of that, have hired Xie Da, a ne'er-do-well, to assassinate the emperor. Xie Da gets caught in the attempt and killed on the spot by Pang Yuan's son-in-law, thus effectively shutting his mouth (*Collection 17*, p. 47). Xie Da's wife for her own security wants to be a concubine of one of the plotters who, however, fancies Xie Da's younger sister Xie Jie'er; but the young woman resolutely resists his advances, thus preserving her chastity (*jie* 節) (*Collection 17*, pp. 72–76). The crimes of this prototypical gang of four are eventually brought to light by Bao Zheng, the epitome of justice and righteousness (*yi* 義) (*Ming Gong Duan* [*Luminous Lord's judgment*], *Collection 17*, pp. 93–106).

Religious Beliefs

The belief that arcane knowledge, such as only heaven and earth and gods and spirits are thought to possess, is attainable by human endeavor is evident in the traditional Chinese dramatic literature. In the play *Hongmen Hui* (Meeting at Hongmen), Fan Zeng, King Chu's (Xiang Yu) right-hand man, avows that when young he studied with Yang Zhenren (True-Man Yang) in the Woniu Mountain and learned from him all sorts of stratagems that even heaven, earth, gods and spirits wouldn't understand. Thus he knows everything about prosperity, winning and losing, and understands the orbital values of the stars. The friend of a friend also says that a general should know astronomy and understand geography, distinguish winds and clouds, and scrutinize the atmospheric colorations; then will he be able to execute military maneuvers. On this occasion, his knowledge leads him to observe that King Chu has no sign of being a king or emperor, whereas Liu Bang, his rival, has it (*Hongmen Hui*, photocopy of manuscript, pp. 1–2).

Heaven is the prime witness to all human dealings and cannot be fooled. In the play *Qiankun Dai* cited above, Jiao Guangpu, a Song officer under Yang Zongbao's command, comes to Liao impersonating Yang Zongbao in order to spy on his uncle Yang Balang, and is captured and brought to the Liao sovereign Queen Xiao Yinzong's presence. Jiao begs the queen to spare his life so that he could go back to the Song camp, set fire to it, and get Yang Zongbao for her. Incredulous, the queen wants him to swear to heaven. Jiao knows his own mind only too well and, convinced that swearing in vain might bring him a 'stellar curse' in the future, finds it difficult to do so in the present circumstance. But realizing that if he did not comply, his life would certainly be at risk, he resorts to a linguistic ruse. Thus, addressing the queen's brother Xiao Tianyou, he sings:

Listen carefully to your humble servant's oath,
All ye gods that are passing across the sky.
If there be treachery in my journey back...

Xiao: Then what?

Jiao: You listen: [then he continues:]

Heaven and earth will not tolerate me and I'll burn myself.

[This line could also mean:]

Heaven and earth will not allow me to burn myself.

[depending on how the phrase *bu rong* (不容) is understood.]

Xiao: What a damned clever tongue!

But the queen doesn't get it; instead she promises to make Jiao a 'pioneering general' if he truly protects her.

Having heard that his nephew had been captured, Yang Balang comes to meet him, only to find an impostor, who nonetheless has not revealed Balang's

identity to the queen, professing that he knows her son-in-law as Wang Ao, his assumed name. When the queen dismisses them, Jiao sings:

In the presence of King Yanluo, demons fool around with each other; In
the world of the living, people cheat each other.

(*Collection 17*, pp. 36–41)

Supernatural beings are believed to sometimes intervene in human affairs. The play *Tianmen Zhen* (*Battle Array of the Celestial Gate*) opens with two Daoist immortals, Han Zhongli and Lü Dongbin, taking sides regarding the outcome of the impending battle between Song and Liao. Han favors Song and Lü, Liao. They try to settle their dispute with a game of chess and Lü loses. Both leave separately to help their respective sides. Lü Dongbin intends to use the Battle Array of the Celestial Gate to help Liao; Han Zhongli plans to help the Song side to thwart it.

The battle ensues at the Three Passes. One night the waning stars in the sky suggest to Lü Dongbin that the Liao people are in trouble, so he goes to them bringing with him a soul banner and a nine-tiered crown. With the soul-banner he revives the Princess Taohua (Peach Blossom) who has been killed in battle. Then he asks her to lead the army wearing the nine-tiered crown, saying this will win complete victories from now on. Princess Taohua is married to Yang Yanhui or Silang (Fourth-Son), who is also stranded in Liao under a false name. When Yanhui has a chance to leave for the Song camp, the princess gives him the two magical objects, asking him to take them to Matriarch She, with instructions on how to use them. So equipped, Matriarch She leads the Song forces to a decisive victory and succeeds in routing Lü Dongbin's battle array.

Concluding Remarks

This material suggests that while their primary objective is to entertain, the traditional operas of the North-China variety are replete with moralistic overtones, particularly extolling the Confucian virtues of loyalty, filial piety, moral integrity, and justice. On the other hand, the beliefs of a religious nature inherent in this material may be traced predominantly to Daoist, Buddhist, and folkloric sources.³⁵

³⁵ 山西地方戲曲彙編第十七集，山西省戲劇研究所、晉城市文化局合編。內部發行。Shanxi difang xiqu huibian, di shiqi ji /Collection of Shanxi local operas, vol. 17, jointly edited by Shanxi Drama Research Institute and the Culture Bureau of Jincheng City, n.d. Internal circulation.

鴻門宴中范增的角單，手抄本，1985 (Role sheets for Fan Zeng, manuscript, 1985). I am grateful to Roberto Ong for preparing this appendix, and to Professor Wang Ch'iu-kuei for providing the materials for it.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUDING AND COMPARATIVE COMMENTS

We have seen that in the world of local community religion in north China, structure and organization appear wherever one looks, but this is true not only in festivals, but also in family worship practices, ancestor veneration, rituals performed by Daoist priests where and when they are available, and in the transformation of popular religious sects into community-based traditions. In these concluding comments we will look at some of these practices, beginning with rituals carried out at festivals by representatives of families who hope to gain blessings from the heightened presence of the gods at these special times. The last section of this chapter notes some of the voluminous evidence from other areas of China for the basic thesis of this book.

As is noted above, for ordinary people one of the most basic rituals carried out at festivals is the making and repaying of vows to a deity (*xu yuan*, *huan yuan*) by a worshiper making a request for aid and promising a grateful response if the request is granted. The requests can be for healing, success in farming, business or school, or for the birth of a child. The god is promised that he or she will be given a gift if the petition is granted, such as a new robe, repair of its shrine or new gilding for its image. For such a ritual the worshiper offers sticks of incense before the god's image, then bows to pray for aid, and promises a specified response if the request is granted. After this, the person may to seek to confirm with divining blocks that the prayer has been heard. If the god responds positively, the promised gift is given to it at the next festival. For all of this there are specific actions to be performed and words to be said.

Another form of family request at festivals is called *shuan wawa* (tying up a doll), a ritual performed by a woman who wants a child. I have found several descriptions of this ritual, the most detailed of which is that of Anne Swann Goodrich in her discussion of Zisun niangniang, a deity associated with the Goddess of the Eastern Peak. She writes of this 'Goddess (Who Brings) Descendants':

Paper images of (the Goddess) are often set up in the home and offerings are made to it there, asking for a child. If this device does not succeed,

and the woman making the petitions is forty or fifty years old, she then decides to go to the Dongyue miao (Temple of the Eastern Peak)... For five days before going to the temple she must wash herself, eat no meat, and have no intercourse with her husband. She may indulge in no quarrels, nor may she use bad language. She must go to the store and buy threads, three feet each of white, red, green, black and yellow. She must wrap a yellow thread around them and offer a little packet every day to the paper image of the Niangniang hanging in her home, saying, "If you don't give me a child I will take these threads and go to your big temple and pull one away." Just before going to the temple she must fast. If she wishes to be unusually pious, she must *kotow* (sic) every third step on the way. When she gets to the temple, she selects one of the images that surround the image of the Goddess' husband, Songzi Langjun, (who delivers the babies his wife decides to send)... Having made her choice, she takes up the little packet of threads, passes it three times around the image she has chosen, burning incense as she does so. Then she ties the threads around the neck of the child [image], in one knot. The thread must not be too strong, for after the knot is tied, the woman breaks the threads quickly, [and] puts them in a little bag... in her trouser girdle. This bag must not be opened until after the baby is born. Even after the birth of the child, these precious threads must not be thrown away, but must be carefully preserved, for they have healing power.¹

Brian R. Dott adds that tying the thread around the neck of a baby doll "...ritually secures the baby's spirit within the womb of the woman who ties the string. Usually the doll, with the string still tied around its neck, is left on the altar in the temple or shrine..." A variant is for the "woman desiring a baby [to wrap] the doll very tightly in a red cloth. After placing the doll on the altar she has a chat with [the Goddess] and tells her she wants a little baby boy. Next she burns incense and kowtows three times. Then she removes the doll from the altar, carries it home carefully, and places it either on or immediately next to the bed."²

An ancient example of strict hierarchical order in the midst of village life is ancestor veneration by families and lineages. For families

¹ Goodrich, "The Peking Temple of the Eastern Peak". Nagoya, Japan, *Monumenta Serica* 1964, pp. 54–56.

² B. R. Dott (2004) *Identity Reflections: Pilgrimages to Mount Tai in Late Imperial China*. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Asia Center, pp. 130–131. Professor Dott provides additional details on doll rituals on the following pages. The *Baoding wenshi ziliao* (*Materials on Baoding culture and history*), edited by the Baoding City Committee on Culture and History (1999: 16: 28–29), corroborates these accounts, adding that the woman 'steals' a doll from the Goddess' temple, then takes it home to put in a corner of the bedroom. If she gives birth, she needs to repay her vow to the god by giving offerings and providing cloth dolls for her altar.

the north China situation is well-summarized in *juan 6* of the *Xushui zhi*, the local history of Xushui County in Hebei, cited above, where we read that people "...sacrifice to their ancestors on their birthdays. At the Qingming festival, they sweep the tombs and hang up paper (sic). At the Mid-autumn festival every family in front of the tombs burns paper ingots and prepares offerings. On the first day of the tenth month they sacrifice at the tomb and burn paper winter clothing (for the ancestral spirits). On the last day of the year, they go to the ancestors' tombs and invite their spirits to return home and be given offerings", during ritual activities welcoming in the New Year. Rituals carried out by ancestral lineages are well known in the south and southeast, but are also present in the north, where lineage organization and activities were less well endowed than in the south, but still present in some villages. They are well-summarized by Myron L. Cohen, based on fieldwork in a Hebei village south of Beijing. He notes that in this area lineages are divided into branches headed by brothers and that graveyards are arranged by family generations in the shape of triangles with the first ancestor at the top. Husbands and wives were buried side by side covered by a single mound of earth, in typical northern style. There are few ancestral temples, none in the village where Cohen did his field work, and ancestral tablets were owned only by more affluent families. Most families had genealogical scrolls, with the apical ancestors at the top, and the rest organized in horizontal rows by generations. The names of wives were included. Tablets and scrolls were displayed in homes only in the three-day period beginning with the last day of the lunar year. Cohen writes, "At that time the ancestors were invited (*qing shen*) to join the families of their descendants, who 'received them' ... their visit ended on the second day of the new lunar year with the 'seeing off' of the ancestors back to their graves..."

Ritual offerings were made to lineage ancestors only at four times during the year, the Ghost Festival on lunar 7/15, the Cold Clothing Festival on 10/1, the lunar New Year and Qingming. Cohen describes in some detail the New Year and Qingming rituals, which served to emphasize the structure of the lineage, but since his article is readily available in English, I see no point in summarizing it further here.³

³ M. L. Cohen (1990) "Lineage Organization in North China". *Journal of Asian Studies* 49(3): 509-534. On ancestor worship in the north, see also the old classic by Reginald F. Johnston, *Lion and Dragon in Northern China* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986: 276-279) for a discussion of ancestral tablets in Shandong, "...preserved

In the period 1737–1739 there were 6,956 Daoist priests in Zhili and Shandong, and many more Buddhist monks as well. The activities of such clergy continued into the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth, but for reasons discussed above in Chapter Two, their numbers then declined. Daoist priests and their temples were present in north China until the first decades of the twentieth century, when government campaigns against religion reduced their number by confiscating temple lands, and using temples as schools, granaries or offices, thus eliminating the economic resources available to priests. The decline in the numbers of priests took place in Shandong as well. As can be seen in the above chapter on the leadership and organization of community rituals, most such rituals came to be carried out by family heads and village leaders.⁴

However, in the early 1980's priests resumed participating in community rituals in some places, as is discussed by Yuan Jingfang, based on his research on Daoist ritual music in Julu County in Hebei. This article describes whole complex levels of rituals, texts, and musical performances that demonstrate the additional types of organization available in local areas when trained ritualists are present. Mr. Yuan describes the long history of Daoism in this area, beginning with the establishing of the Taiping Dao in Julu by followers of the Daoist

in every private house, while the tablets of the earlier ancestors are deposited in family temples... For the first few days of the New Year the pedigree-scroll (*chia-pu*), which is carefully wrapped up and put away at ordinary times is unrolled and hung on the wall, where it receives a share of the reverence paid to the tablets." This book was first published in 1910 after Johnston was a British commissioner posted in the Weihaiwei area of Shandong in 1904. More recently, Prasenjit Duara included a chapter on "Lineages and the Political Structure of the Village" in his *Culture, Power and the State: Rural North China, 1900–1942* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1988). Here he writes, "It is the normative and ceremonial, as well as the organizational, features of lineages that made them such exemplary institutions in the cultural nexus of power. In many northern villages, lineages had come to define the traditional polity. Lineages and sub-lineages formed the basic divisions that managed administrative and other public activities, and the principle of common descent governed representation in many village governing councils" (p. 87). See particularly Duara's discussion of "Lineages in North China" (pp. 92–100). The author's sources for this discussion are the *Chūgoku Nōson* studies by Japanese scholars cited several times above.

⁴ See Goossaert, V. (2000) "Counting the Monks: the 1736–1739 Census of the Chinese Clergy". *Late Imperial China* 12(2): 40–85. See particularly the chart on p. 60. For the situation in Shandong, see Zhang Yufa (1978) "Qingmo Minchu de Shandong shehui: zongjiao xinyang yu renwu chongbai de bianqian" (Shandong society at the end of the Ch'ing and beginning of the Republic: changes in religious beliefs and the worship of humans and things). *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishiyanjisuo jikan*, 7: 241–285. The reference to the decline in numbers of Buddhist and Daoist clergy is on p. 258.

founder Zhang Jue. The author provides the names of Daoist sects and temples in this area from the Song period on, though by his own admission, most of the deities worshiped in the Ming and later were popular deities not in the imperial registers. In Julu the author found four Daoist *guan* (temples), the largest of which was the Lingying *guan*, which still had 500 *mu* of land, and about forty Daoist-style musicians, with others in nearby areas. These musicians performed in a three-day *jiao* festival that Mr. Yuan observed in Julu, organized by villagers led by their own *huishou* association heads. A Daoist priest was invited to perform rituals in a temporary shed set up for this festival.

The author interviewed four Daoist priest-musicians from the Julu Daoist music association, and learned much detailed information, including charts of the deities venerated at temporary altars set up for the festival. On the main altar for the Three Heavens Jade Emperor Great Jiao Ritual there were seven rows of deities with the San Qing Three Pure Ones at the top. There was also another altar with fifty-three deities in its central area, plus the Twenty-eight Constellations and sixteen more deities represented along the sides, with the Three Pure Ones on the top and King Yama on the bottom. There are also charts showing the locations of nineteen other deities and the fifteen musicians in several sets involved in the rituals for them. This is followed by a list of the offerings given, incense, flowers, lamps, water, fruit, vegetables, cooked food, jewels and pearls (sic). There follow lists of the music played, and then a total of sixty-eight stages and steps of the rituals performed. The article continues with an eighteen page discussion of the music performed! This is indeed an elaborate and detailed ritual process, all carefully organized in its proper sequence.⁵

In his study of ritual music in northern Shanxi, Stephen Jones discusses local 'ritual specialists' called *yinyang* who are "...folk Zhengyi Daoists of the Lingbao scriptural tradition, living as ordinary peasants. They earn their living both as a group from performing public rituals, and individually (like *fengshui* or *yinyang* masters elsewhere in China) by doing geomancy and calendrical consultations for *fengshui* and auspicious days.

⁵ Yuan Jingfang (1998) "*Hebei Juluxian Daojiao fashi keyi yinyue kaocha yu yanjiu*" (*An investigation and study of Daoist ritual music in Julu County of Hebei*). *Min-su ch'ü-i* 116: 55-89.

Thus, Daoists in this area cite two common summaries of their skills: “first looking [choosing auspicious days], second reciting [scriptures], third wind and percussion... or ‘wind, percussion, writing, reciting, looking’... this latter phrase in reverse order of importance. ‘Looking’... refers to choosing auspicious days, a practice which they all perform often; ‘writing’ refers to the many complex documents prepared for funerals and other rituals... Individual ‘looking’ and group ‘doing household business’ (performing public rituals) occupy about the same time for them monthly, but the latter takes longer, and ‘looking’ is quick and well paid. They also officiate for raising the roofbeam, writing an auspicious diagram of the eight trigrams... to be pasted on the beam.”⁶

The author provides interesting discussions of ‘temple fairs’ and funeral rituals in which these *yinyang* specialists were involved when the fieldwork for this book was carried out in 2003, with an emphasis on the musical instruments used and tunes played. On page 6 there are photos of a “Daoist ritual manual, ... early 20th century, with text of memorials required for talismans, and, on left, talismans,” and of an “eighth-generation Daoist” and his son. However, it is the DVD that accompanies the book that clarifies the important ritual roles of these ‘lay Daoist priests’. Jones may not provide specific textual evidence of the Zhengyi Daoism or the use of Lingbao scriptures mentioned in the above quote, but these village ritualists are doing their best to do what Daoists are supposed to do by wearing Daoist-style caps and robes, reciting texts, making offerings, marking out the cosmos with their ritual steps, and presiding over rain rituals, funerals and festivals. For our purposes here the ritual activities of these lay Daoists are a most interesting example of the organization of complex rituals by ordinary villagers in north China.

⁶ S. Jones (2007) *Ritual and Music of North China: Shawm Bands in Shanxi*. Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, p. 5. The term *shawm* is the name of an early European reed instrument, forerunner of the oboe. A common Chinese name for it is *suona*. This book is accompanied by a very helpful DVD of village rituals that Jones and his colleagues observed in 2003. His fieldwork in north China, however, began in 1991. See also Jones’ earlier book, *Plucking the Winds: Lives of Village Musicians in Old and New China*. Leiden: Chime Publications, 2004. On p. 14 of the book, Jones comments: “Though both music and ritual have long been associated with priests, there have been no full-time priests in this area since the 1950s, and the lay ritual practitioners of the Music Associations are now the main intermediaries with the spiritual world of gods, ghosts and ancestors.”

Another example of the ‘force field’ generated by local village ritual organization is the transformation of popular religious sects into community-based traditions, and of deified sect founders into local protective gods. We have seen an example of this above in the temple of the Patriarch Han (Hanzu miao) in Beiqi village in Ding County of Hebei. Here the chief local patron deity is the Ming sect founder Han Piaogao, whose sectarian history is still remembered by a few temple leaders, but forgotten by the people. Murals on the walls of the temple hall where his image sits portray a different legend about him as the divine bringer of seed grains during a drought. Nonetheless, there are images of Wusheng laomu, the ‘Eternal Venerable Mother’, and other sectarian deities in another section of this temple, and the leaders still have some sectarian scriptures stored in the temple office.

There is an entire temple devoted to the Venerable Mother and her acolytes in Handan, Hebei which I visited in 2004, and which has been studied by Wang Yongxin, a Handan local scholar. It is called the Guangji Gong, the Temple of Widespread Aid. After being used as an elementary school from about 1950 to 1986, it was reconstructed during a five-year period beginning in 1986. There are images here of the Venerable Mother, Fuxi and Nüwa and other deities. Mr. Wang has written a report on local beliefs about the Mother which are quite similar to those in Ming period sectarian scriptures, but it is not clear to me if temple worshipers know about them. My conversation with women in the temple indicated that for them the Venerable Mother was a powerful and effective local deity.⁷

I have seen shrines to the Venerable Mother in other places in Hebei as well, but there too she has become just another goddess to whom women pray for sons, grandsons and healing. Her old promises of salvation for humanity in her paradise are forgotten.

The most detailed study of this transformation of sects into local community traditions is by Thomas Dubois, who did fieldwork in Cang County of Hebei in 1997–1998. Four different sects had been active in this area in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but their public activities were cut back during the 1950s, and by the mid-1960s

⁷ Wang Yongxin, “Handan xian Huangliangmeng Lüxian ci Guangji gong miaohui yu xinyang” (The temple festivals and beliefs of the Guangji temple and the shrine of the Immortal Lü of Huangliangmeng [village] in Handan county), in *Handan diqu minsu jilu* (Collected records of popular customs in the Handan area), pp. 155–157, Tianjin guji chubanshe, 2005, in Ou Danian and Fan Lizhu (eds.) *Collected Studies*.

had ceased altogether. However, "... the 1980s and 1990s saw the open revival of many local sectarian groups and practices... Often with the technical assistance of sectarians from neighboring villages, or financial assistance from within the village, many sectarian groups have revived their pre-Revolutionary strength and importance... Much of this activity has been conducted quite openly and is common knowledge within neighboring villages."⁸

Villages here resumed their roles as 'ritual communities', but in some of them religious specialists belonging to sectarian groups had important roles, and "...sectarian festivals had a similar place in the religious life of the community as village temples. At the most basic level, the presence of a sectarian contingent within the village exerted a general prophylactic influence over the community. Peasants in Yang Camp [one of these villages] attributed the high moral character of their community, as well as their good harvests, to the presence of the Heaven and Earth sectarians. Public sectarian rituals, like temple worship, were held on important days of the [village] religious calendar..."

The level of sectarian religious activities varied in different villages, but in one of them, White Yang Bridge, these activities were revived over a period of seven years by a village man who spent the winters in a nearby community where the Heaven and Earth sect was still active, "relearning the tradition that had been lost in his community." Eventually he trained a new group of Heaven and Earth specialists in White Yang Bridge, where their activities came to be supported by the entire village.

The Upper and Lower Primordial festivals, each three days of scripture chanting, generate considerable expenses, such as the food and alcohol for sacrifices, incense, firecrackers and the cost of feeding the sectarians themselves. This cost is born by the families, with the amount donated by each family recorded on a large sheet of red paper and posted in the center of the village... Although villagers in White Yang Bridge enjoy a sense of spiritual protection because of the sect, and most feel a special devotion to local sectarian deities... ordinary villagers are not formally affiliated with the sect as much as they receive services from it. Unlike [other sects like] the Way of Pervading Unity or the Li Sect, there is no formal process by which households enter the Heaven and Earth Sect... No demands are placed on ordinary villagers to participate in or even understand the functions of the sect. Instead, the sect is a resource

⁸ T. D. Dubois (2005) *The Sacred Village: Social Change and Religious Life in Rural North China*. Honolulu, Hawai'i: University of Hawai'i Press, p. 35.

made available to fellow villagers. The Heaven and Earth Sect in White Yang Bridge performs all important individual ritual functions, such as healing, blessings, and, especially funerals, in the village. Because these rituals are uncompensated, fellow villagers, who financially support the large activities of the sect on a regular basis, feel comfortable asking for them, but outsiders often do not.⁹

In September 2007 Ye Tao, Ren Shuangxia and other scholars from Shandong University began to study a collection of 117 stone inscriptions near the Rizhao An temple on Mt. Daze in Pingdu, Shandong. In 2008 they had the inscriptions on both sides of these stelae transcribed and processed electronically, to send to scholars in China and elsewhere to study. These inscriptions are dated from 1683–1939, with a few others from the late 1990s. Most of them are devoted to Daze shengmu (the Holy Mother of Mt. Daze), a local mountain deity who has come to be understood as a manifestation of the Goddess of Mount Tai. Since the name of the originally sectarian goddess Wusheng laomu is noted on eight of these inscriptions, I was sent a set of the transcriptions to write a report on these references to the Mother because of my earlier study of Chinese sectarian groups. In the process I discovered that all of the references to the Mother are from the 1930s, and that other than her name, they include no references to sects or their organization or beliefs. My report is referred to in the note below; it will be published in the proceedings of a workshop on these Daze stelae that was held in Pingdu in November, 2008. For our purposes here what is most interesting is that the overwhelming majority of the names of those who donated funds for these stone inscriptions are of women, women who were the members of *hui* associations who organized the inscription projects, some of which were also headed by women *hui-shou* (association heads). Many of these inscriptions are dated on the birthdays of the deities involved, lunar 3/26 in the case of the Venerable Mother, which indicates the possibility of annual festivals for them on those dates. No such birth date for Wusheng laomu occurs in sectarian scriptures, in which she is a world savior, not a local protective deity, so the fact that this date is ascribed to her here is another indication that for those who paid for these inscriptions she had another role. Stone inscriptions on large tablets require a lot of organization, effort and

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 51, 59–60. The author discusses the history and teachings of this sect on pp. 161–185.

money, several hundreds of old Chinese dollars in this case, so here again we have evidence of the organizational power and devotion of local people in north China. Erecting 117 stone stelae over a period of more than 250 years was no casual undertaking!¹⁰

As is indicated in the Preface of this book, the idea of gathering materials for it came to me after I met and talked with John Lagerwey in 1996 and began to read in some of the early volumes in his series, *Traditional Hakka Society*, which now includes thirty volumes. These books, together with the sixty volumes of the monograph series edited by Wang Ch'iu-kuei, *Studies of Chinese Ritual, Theatre and Folklore*, provide more information on Chinese local culture and religion than has ever been available before, and remind us that the patterns of organization and structure in community religion discussed in the present book are found everywhere in the country. For many years Philip Clart, now at the University of Leipzig, has edited and updated a bibliography of Western language studies of this dimension of Chinese religious activities and beliefs, while Lin Mei-rong has prepared a detailed bibliography of studies of Taiwanese folk religion in Chinese and other languages. The excellent journal edited by Wang Ch'iu-kuei, *Min-su ch'ü-i*, referred to often above, has many detailed articles about local religion in a variety of places. I have read a fair amount of this material, and find that a 2003 article by Kenneth Dean of McGill University does a good job of summing up what we know about community religion in the southeast, much of which applies elsewhere as well. He writes:

Communal rites of collective worship of gods in local temples require complex local organization. Temple committees, often selected on the basis of rotation or divination, raise funds from every participating family, organize processions to each household in the community, arrange for and participate in performances of special Buddhist, Daoist or 'Confucian' rites by ritual specialists from these traditions, and sponsor the performance of Chinese operas. These ritual specialists are also called upon on special occasions to perform rites of passage, propitiation and affliction, and various prophylactic rites. Specialists in geomancy, exorcism, dream interpretation and prognostication contribute their skills to local community religion. Spirit mediums play a particularly important role in temple festivals, and in other aspects of local religion, providing an

¹⁰ My, as yet unpublished, report on this topic is titled, "The Eternal Venerable Mother (Wusheng laomu) in the Stone Tablet Inscriptions of Mt. Daze in Shandong Province". It includes a bibliography and Chinese characters for all the names and terms noted in it.

important channel of communication to the gods and ancestors... Many of the rituals of local communal religion are intense, chaotic and stimulating events, filled with the smoke of incense and the sound of firecrackers, the simultaneous performance of opera, rituals and processions, and the participation of crowds...

Ethnographic research into the temple festivals and communal rituals celebrated within these god cults has revealed the widespread distribution of Daoist ritual traditions in this area, including especially Zhengyi (Celestial Master Daoism) and variants of Lushan Daoist ritual traditions. Various Buddhist ritual traditions (Pu'anjiao, Xianghua married monks and so on) are practiced throughout this region, particularly for requiem services.¹¹

We have seen that many similar practices can be found in the north as well, but at least through much of the twentieth century with fewer ritual specialists involved.

There is much rich information on the topic of this book in the excellent journal *Min-su ch'ü-i*. For just a few examples, see the articles on community religious traditions in Sichuan, Shanghai, Guizhou, Taiwan, Hunan, Yunnan, Guangxi, Fujian, Gansu, and Liaoning and Zhejiang in issues number 85, 86, 89, 109, 110, 111, 113, 115, and 117. For further articles on north China see volumes 107 and 108, an entire double-issue

¹¹ K. Dean (2003) "Local Communal Religion in Contemporary Southeast China", in D.L. Overmyer (ed.) *Religion in China Today*. China Quarterly Special Issues, New Series, No. 3. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 32–34. The series edited by John Lagerwey is the *Traditional Hakka Society Series* published by the International Hakka Studies Association, Overseas Chinese Archives and the École Française D'Extrême-Orient (1996ff). When I met him Lagerwey was with the École, but then as now spending much of his time working out of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, where I taught from 1996–1998. The series edited by Wang Ch'iu-kuei is *Studies in Chinese Ritual, Theatre and Folklore (Min-su ch'ü-i ts'ung-shu)*, Taipei, Shih Heng-cheng Folk Culture Foundation, 1993 to present. Philip Clart's online bibliography is the *Bibliography of Western Language Publications on Chinese Popular Religion (1995 to Present)* (available at: http://www.uni-leipzig.de/~clartp/bibliography_CPR.html). It includes such categories of interest here as Local Studies; Mainland China and Religious Calendar, Festivals, Popular Customs. The English title of Lin Mei-rong's 391 page bibliography is *A Bibliography of Taiwanese Folk Religion, Enlarged Edition*, Taipei, Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, 1997. For detailed reviews of some of the studies in the series edited by Lagerwey and Wang Ch'iu-kuei, see *Ethnography in China Today: A Critical Assessment of Methods and Results*, edited by Daniel L. Overmyer, with the assistance of Shin-yi Chao. Taipei: Yuan-Liou Publishing Co. Ltd., 2002. For a discussion of temple festivals in Guangdong Province, see pp. 317–320 of my review article in this book, "Comments on the Foundations of Chinese Culture in late Traditional Times". Lagerwey has written English-language summaries of the reports in his series; for our topic here, see particularly his summary in Vol. 7, *Temples Festivals and Customs in Gannan*, edited by Luo Yong and Lin Xiaoping (1998). *Gannan* is an old name for modern Jiangxi Province.

devoted to local religion in Shanxi, some articles in which have been discussed above, and such studies as those by Zhong Nian on the god Pangu and Yang Lihui on the goddess Nüwa in issue number 111 as well as Huang Zhusan's study of Duixi dramas in number 115. There is literally no end to these wonderful studies by Chinese scholars, all of them based on careful fieldwork, because the journal keeps putting them out! They are a largely untapped source for our understanding of Chinese rural culture. Wang Ch'iu-kuei is to be commended for soliciting, editing and publishing these articles, year in and year out, to the benefit of all who want to learn.

A major new study of local religion in north China is David Johnson's *Spectacle and Sacrifice: The Ritual Foundations of Village Life in North China* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2009). Johnson is a fine and careful scholar several of whose articles are cited above; I look forward to reading his new book, which he tells me "deals mostly with southern Shanxi", the richest source for this topic.

My good friend and research colleague, Fan Lizhu, a sociologist at Fudan University in Shanghai, has sent me the following comment:

After the end of the Cultural Revolution the economic reforms of Deng Xiaoping started from rural China. One night in December 1978 eighteen farmers from Xiaogang village in Anhui Province risked their lives to break the law by signing a secret agreement to divide the land of the local People's Commune into family plots. They agreed to continue to deliver the existing quotas of grain to the government and commune, and keep any surplus for themselves. Immediately, Xiaogang village became the cradle of China's rural reform. Economic reforms begun in 1978 have helped millions of people out of poverty, and rural society has experienced dramatic change. In 1978, rural residents made up 82.1% of the total population, but by the end of 2006 China's rural population was 56% of the total population, 737 million out of 1.3 billion. China is now changing from a traditional agricultural country to a modernized industrial nation. One consequence of the enormous demand for labor in China's east and southeastern coastal regions and the simultaneous lessening of control over places of residence is that there has been a large-scale migration of surplus labor from poor rural areas to the cities, especially in the increasingly prosperous south and southeast, but also in the north.

As China emerged from the Cultural Revolution in the late 1970s many people resumed their earlier religious and ritual practices, which had been completely suppressed for only ten years. In recent years anthropological and ethnographic research has demonstrated evidence for the continuing vitality of China's common spiritual heritage and the devotional beliefs still alive in the practices of ordinary people today. Since 1979, with the ending of the Cultural Revolution and the beginning of the economic

reforms of Deng Xiaoping, a massive resurgence and reinvention of local traditions, perhaps the greatest in history, has taken place across China. I estimate that between one and two million village temples have been rebuilt or restored across China, and that ritual traditions once thought lost are now being re-invented and celebrated in many of these temples. (Personal communication, March 2009)

To the best of my ability this book has provided detailed information about these local community traditions in north China, past and present, to provide both a deeper understanding of Chinese culture and to serve as a base for comparison with religious traditions elsewhere.

Finally, it is most interesting to realize that many of the patterns of local organization and ritual discussed in this book can be found in many other areas of the world as well, where we also find the worship of local protective deities who reside in temples, where they are petitioned for practical aid and celebrated with annual festivals, dramas and processions around their communities. In fact, as I have argued before, despite many theological and historical differences, there is already a kind of universal practical religion of ordinary people, one of the best examples of which is the non-sectarian Chinese community traditions discussed in this book. A next step for me may be further comparative study of this topic.¹²

¹² On this, see my (2002) "Gods, Saints, Shamans and Processions: Comparative Religion from the Bottom Up". *Criterion* 41(3): 2-9, 34, and its more detailed Chinese version (2003), "Shenming, shengtu, lingmei he raojing: cong Zhongguo wenhua guandian bijiao difang minjianxinyang chuantong" (Gods, Saints, Shamans and Processions: Comparing Local Religious Traditions from a Chinese Point of View), *Taiwan Journal of Religious Studies* 2(2): 1-16.

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GLOSSARY OF CHINESE TERMS AND NAMES

an shen	安神
Anguo	安國
Bai Qiuen (Norman Bethune)	白求恩
Bailong	白龍
Bailong miao	白龍廟
Baimei sanlang	白眉三郎
Baituan cun	白團村
Baiyi guanyin	白衣觀音
Baiyun guan	白雲觀
Bazha	八蜡
Bazha miao	八蜡廟
bangzi dui	梆子隊
bantou	板頭
bao zhang	保長
Baoding	保定
Baoding diqu miaohui wenhua yu minsu jilu, Ou Danian, Hou Jie, Fan Lizhu, Geng Baocang	保定地區廟會文化與民俗輯錄, 歐大年,侯杰,范麗珠,耿保倉
Baoding fuzhi	保定府志
Baoding shizhi	保定市志
Baoding wenshi ziliao	保定文史資料
Baogu	鮑姑
Baoji	寶雞
Baojia	保甲
Baojuan	寶卷
baosai xi	報賽戲
Baoshen miaohui	雹神廟會
Baosheng dadi	保生大帝
Baoshi	報食
bawang bian	霸王鞭
Bazhou	霸州
Beidou jing	北斗經
Beiqi	北齊
Beiqi cun	北齊村
Beishe	北社
Beiyue	北嶽
Bian Que	扁鵲

Bing yu long wang	冰雨龍王
Bixia yuanjun	碧霞元君
Biyang	泌陽
Butianshi	補天石
Cai shen	財神
cai yueji	踩月忌
caiban / ts'ai-pan	采辦
Cangu sheng miao	蠶姑聖廟
Cao (gully)	槽
Cao (village)	曹
Chang	場
Changli	昌黎
Changli xian	昌黎縣
Changxin	常信
Changzhi	長治
Changzi xian	長子縣
Che shen	車神
Che Wenming, Shanxi	車文明,山西晉城周村東嶽廟考
Jincheng Zhoucun Dongyue	
miao kao	
Chen	陳
Chen Jianling	陳建伶
Chen Jinggu	陳靖姑
Chen Tielan, Dingxian	陳鐵練,定縣韓祖宮廟會
Hanzu gong miaohui	
Chenbao	陳寶
Chenghuang	城隍
Chenghuang shen	城隍神
chi	尺
Chi You	蚩尤
Chong nan wang	蟲蝻王
Chong wang miao	蟲王廟
chongpao	銃炮
Chūgoku nōson kankō chōsa	中國農村慣行調查
chuma	出馬
Chuu Ling-in, Bixia yuanjun	褚齡寔,碧霞元君護國庇民普濟保生妙經研究
huguo bimin puji baosheng	
miaojing yanjiu	
Congzhong cun	從中村
Cui fu jun	崔府君
cunzhang	村長
Cungui	村規
Cunsai	村賽

da hui shou	大會首
Da Ming huidian	大明會典
Daning	大寧
daxian	大仙
Dayidian bingbao hui	大義店冰雹會
Daze shan	大澤山
Daze shengmu	大澤聖母
Dezhou	德州
Di huang	地皇
Diaocha	調查
dietan	跌壇
ding daxian	頂大仙
Dingxian	定縣
Dingxian shehui gaikuang diaocha	定縣社會概況調查
Dingzhou zhi	定州志
Dizang	地藏
Dizangmu	地藏母
Dongfuren	東扶仁
Dongmiao dadi	東廟大帝
Dongtianchi (village)	東填池
Dongwang	東汪
Dongwang cun	東汪村
Dongyue miao	東嶽廟
Dou shen	痘神
Du Huiping	杜惠萍
Du Xuede	杜學德
Du Xuede, Yang Yingqin, Li Huaishun, Handan diqu minsu jilu	杜學德, 楊英芹, 李懷順, 邯鄲地區 民俗輯錄
Du Xuede, Handan xian Dong Furen deng wu cun de Yuhuang shengjiao yishi	杜學德, 邯鄲縣東扶仁等五村的玉 皇聖醮儀式
Du Xuede, Wuan shi Guyu cun yingshen jisi ji shehuo nuoxi	杜學德, 武安市固義村迎神祭祀暨 社火儺戲
Duan Youwen	段友文
Duan Youwen, Shanxi Linfen Pingshui shenci beike ji qi shuili xisu kaoshu	段友文, 山西臨汾平水神祠碑刻及 其水利習俗考述
Duan Youwen, Jin dong Nanlucheng yingshen saishe xisu kaoshu	段友文, 晉東南潞城迎神賽社習俗 考述
Dui shenghuo kongjian de guishu yu chongzheng—Changxin Shuici niangniang miaohui	對生活空間的規束與重整—常信 水祠娘娘廟會
duiwu	隊伍
Duixi	對戲
duixi	隊戲

Duizi	對子
Erlang	二郎
Erlang shen	二郎神
ershen	二神
Fan Liting	范麗婷
Fan Lizhu	范麗珠
Fang Bi	方弼
Fangxiang	方相
Feng bo feng shi	風伯風師
Feng Junjie	馮俊杰
Feng Junjie, Yangcheng xian Xiajiao cun Tangwang miaoji kaolun	馮俊杰,陽城縣下交村湯王廟祭 考論
Fengdu	豐都
fengshui	風水
Fenjiatun	蕢家屯
Fojiaotu	佛教徒
fu zongli	副總理
fuji	扶乩
fushen	附身
Fuxi	伏羲
Gang shen miao	缸神廟
Gao Youpeng, Zhongguo miaohui wenhua	高有鵬,中國廟會文化
Gaobeidian	高碑店
gaoliang	高粱
gaoqiao	高驕
Ge gong	葛公
Ge Hong	葛洪
Ge Hong miao	葛洪廟
Ge Hong shan	葛洪山
Geng Baocang, Baoding diqu miaohui wenhua yu minsu jilu	耿保倉,保定地區廟會文化與 民俗輯錄
Geng Baocang, Guo Fubin, Dingxian da yangge tanyuan	耿保倉,郭福斌,定縣大秧歌探源
Gong Li, Yangxian Hongya shan Damiao ji miaosu chutan	公李,易縣洪涯山大廟及廟俗 初探
Gongcao	功曹
Gu feng miao	孤峰廟
Gu'an diqu minsu jilu, Ou Danian, Fan Lizhu, Zhao Fuxing	固安地區民俗輯錄,歐大年,范 麗珠,趙復興
Gu'an xian	固安縣
guajie	刮街
Guan	關
Guan Ping	關平

Guan wang	關王
Guan Yu	關羽
Guandi	關帝
Guang sheng gong	廣生宮
Guang sheng nainai	廣生奶奶
Guangwu	光武
Guangwu di	光武帝
Guangze zunwang	廣澤尊王
Guansai	官賽
Guanshiyin pusa	觀世音菩薩
Guanwang	關王
Guanyin lao miao	觀音老廟
Guanyin laomu	觀音老母
Guanyin miao	觀音廟
Gufeng	孤峰
guiling	鬼靈
Gunmoshan	滾磨扇
guochu	過廚
gushi	故事
Hailongxian zhi	海龍縣志
han chuan	旱船
Han Piaogao	韓飄高
Handan	邯鄲
Handan diqu minsu jilu, Ou Danian, Fan Lizhu, Du Xuede, Yang Yingqin, Li Huaishun	邯鄲地區民俗輯錄,歐大年,范麗 珠,杜學德,楊英芹,李懷順
Handanxian Congzhong cun miaohui yu minjian xinyang	邯鄲縣從中村廟會與民間信仰
Handanxian Dongtianchi cun yingshen saihui shilu	邯鄲縣東鎮池村迎神賽會實錄
Handanxian Huangliang meng Lüxianci Guangji gong miaohui yu xinyang	邯鄲縣黃梁夢呂仙祠廣濟宮廟會與 信仰
Hanzu (Patriarch)	韓祖
Hanzu miao	韓祖廟
Heidi	黑帝
Heilong dawang	黑龍大王
Hejian	河間
Heluomian	餡烙麵
heshen	合神
Heshen miao	河神廟
honghuo	紅火
Hongtong	洪洞 (sic)

Hongyang	紅陽
Hou Yi	后羿
Houjiaying	侯家營
Houshan miao	后山廟
Houtu	后土
Houtu huangdi	后土黃帝
Hu	胡
Hu Bingwen	胡炳文
hu xian	狐仙
Hua Tuo	華佗
Huabei nongcun minjian wenhua yanjiu congshu	華北農村民間文化研究叢書
huahui	花會
Huaiyang	淮陽
Huang	黃
Huang di	黃帝
Huang gui	黃鬼
Huang long	黃龍
Huang Qiang	黃強
Huang Zhusan	黃竹三
Huang Zhusan, Tan duixi	黃竹三, 談隊戲
Huang Zhusan, Wang Fucui, Jing Lihu, Shanxi Quwo Renzhuang "Shangu shenpu" he shangu nuoji diaocha baogao	黃竹三, 王福才, 景李虎, 山西曲沃任莊 《扇鼓神譜》和扇鼓儺祭調查報告
Huanggu	黃姑
Huangji laozu	黃極老祖
Huangjing	皇經
huangshu	黃鼠
huizhang	會長
huishou	會首
Hunyuan	混元
Huo di zhen jun	火帝真君
Huo shen miao	火神廟
Huoquan	霍泉
Itsutarō Suehiro	末弘嚴太郎
Iwanami Shoten	岩波書店
Jia	賈
Jia Yaru	賈亞茹
jiazhang	甲長
Jiacun xiang	賈村鄉

Jianji dashi	監齋大士
Jiang taigong	姜太公
Jiangjun miao	將軍廟
Jiangnan	江南
jiangshen	降神
Jianjie Yezhuang cun liangjing qiuyu	簡介葉莊村晾經求雨
jianmin	賤民
jiao	醮
jiaozi	餃子
Jiaxian	佳縣
jiaxiang	家香
jie	節
Jieshen	接神
Jili nuosu yu minjian xiju	祭禮儺俗與民間戲劇
Jin	金
Jin ci niangniang miao	晉祠娘娘廟
jin fei	今廢
Ji nan de Longshen chongbai ji qiuyu wenhua	冀南的龍神崇拜及祈雨文化
Jincheng	晉城
Jinci	晉祠
Jindong Nanlu cheng yingshen saishe xisu kaoshu	晉東南潞城迎神賽社習俗考述
Jing quan longwang	井泉龍王
jishe	祭社
jitong	乩童
jiugui	舊規
Jiutian sheng mu	九天聖母
Jiutian sheng nü	九天聖女
Jiuwei niangniang	九位娘娘
Jizhou	冀州
juanpeng	卷棚
kaimaban	開馬絆
Kaitian jing	開天經
Kanai Noriyuki, Sōdai no sonsha to shashin	金井德行, 宋代之村社と社神
kang (bed)	炕
Kanshan tudi miao	看山土地廟
kanxiang	看香
kanyu jia	堪輿家
ketou / koutou (to bow prostrate)	磕頭
ketou (section head)	科頭

- Kindai Chūgoku no shakai to minshū 近代中国の社会と民衆文化：日中
bunka: Nitchū kyōdō kenkyū, 共同研究：華北農村社会調査資
Kahoku nōson shakai chōsa shiryōshū 料集。
- koushou 叩首
Kui Xing 魁星
Langye 瑯琊
lao bantou 老板頭
lao shetou 老社頭
lao weishou 老維首
Laoye miao 老爺廟
laobing 癆病
laodao 老道
Laojun 老君
Laomu 老母
Laomu miao 老母廟
laoye 老爺
Laozhang 老張
Laozi 老子
Lei Wen, Tang Song shiqi defang cisi 雷聞,唐宋時期地方祠祀政策的變
zhengce de bianhua, qianlun “sidian” 化—兼論“祀典”與“淫祠”概念的落實
yu “yinci” gainian de luoshi
- Leigong Leimu 雷公雷母
li 禮
Li cheng 歷城
Li Guojun, Chen Qijun, Lishi wenhua 李國鈞,陳啟軍,歷史文化名城—保定
mingcheng-Baoding
Li Jinghan 李景漢
Li Jinghan, Dingxian shehui gaikuang 李景漢,定縣社會概況調查
diaocha
Li Tiansheng 李天生
Li Wei 李偉
Li Wei, Shexian Shangqingliang tanyin 李偉,涉縣上清涼彈音等六村迎神儀
deng liu cun yingshen yishi yu saixi 式與賽戲演出
yanchu
Liao (river) 遼
Ligang Xicun Lishi zongzu xisu 李崗西村李氏宗族習俗信仰調查
xinyang diaocha
lijia 里甲
lin zhang 臨長
Linguan miao 靈官廟
Lingying Furen 靈應夫人
Lingying guan 靈應觀
lisheng 禮生

Liu Bei	劉備
Liu Guanwen	劉貫文
Liu Shou	劉守
Liu Shouzhen	劉守真
Liu Xiu	劉秀
Liu Zhang	劉章
Liubao	劉堡
Long ci	龍祠
Long tan miao	龍潭廟
Long wang miao	龍王廟
Longhua hui	龍華會
Longquan shan	龍泉山
Longwang	龍王
Longwanggou	龍王溝
Lousang miao	樓桑廟
louzi	樓子
Lu Ban	魯班
Lu cheng	潞城
Lü Dongbin	呂洞賓
Lü Min (Marianne Bujard)	呂敏
Lü Wenli	呂文麗
Lü Zongli, Luan Baoqun, Zhongguo minjian zhu shen	呂宗力, 樂保群, 中國民間諸神
Lü zu miao	呂祖廟
Luancheng xian	欒城縣
Lufu	潞府
luoquan	羅圈
Lushen miao	路神廟
Ma	馬
Ma Guodiao	麻國鈞
Ma Quanxiang	馬全祥
Ma Shutian, Hua Xia zhu shen	馬書田, 華夏諸神
Ma Shutian, Zhongguo minjian zhu shen	馬書田, 中國民間諸神
Magu	麻姑
Mai nainai miao	麥奶奶廟
mamazi	馬馬子
Mancheng	滿城
Manchengxian zhi	滿城縣志
mantou	饅頭
Maogui shen	毛鬼神
mapi	馬禪
Mashen miao	馬神廟
matong	馬童

Mawang	馬王
mazi	馬子
Meng Tian	蒙恬
miao	廟
miaohui	廟會
miaozhu	廟祝
Milefo	彌勒佛
mingxiang	命香
Minjian shenci	民間神祠
mu	母
mu	畝
Naihe (bridge)	奈何
nainai	奶奶
Nainai miao	奶奶廟
Nanding laoye miao	南頂老爺廟
Nanjia	南賈
Nanjia cun	南賈村
Nanlu cheng	南潞城
Nanqi (village)	南齊
Nanshe	南舍
Niangniang jing	娘娘經
Niuwang	牛王
Nuo	儼
Nüwa (goddess)	女媧
Nüwa niangniang	女媧娘娘
paijun	排軍
Pang-tzu (bangzi)	梆子
Pangu	盤古
Pangu miao	盤古廟
paoshe	跑社
Pengpeng	蹦蹦
Pingan	平安
Pingdu	平度
Pingshun	平順
Pingyuan	平原
po guan	破關
Pu Haiyan	暴海燕
Pucheng (county)	蒲城
Puxian (Samantabhadra)	普賢
Puxianmu	普賢母
Qi Bao	漆寶
Qitian dasheng	齊天大聖
qi yu / qiu yu	祈雨 / 求雨

qiancheng	虔誠
qianhang	前行
Qiao Jian	喬健
Qiao Jian, Li Guanwen, Li Tiansheng, Yuehu: tianye diaocha yu lishi zhuzong	喬健, 劉貫文, 李天生, 樂戶: 田野 調查與歷史追蹤
qima	起馬
Qin Jianming	秦建明
qingshen	請神
Qingshui zushi	清水祖師
Qingxu shan	青虛山
qinza / ch'in-tsa	勤雜
Qizhou	祁州
Quan er haomin	勸爾好民
Quanshen miao	全神廟
Quanshi ge	勸世歌
Quwo	曲沃
Raoyang xian	繞陽縣
Ren huang	人皇
Ren Shuangxia	仁雙霞
renao	熱鬧
Rizhao an	日照庵
Ruicheng	芮城
sai	賽
Saihui	賽會
Saishe	賽社
Saishe jili yu Yuehu jiyue	賽社祭禮與樂戶伎樂
saishen	賽神
San huang	三皇
sanfu	傘夫
Sanguan (Tian guan, Di guan, Shui guan)	三官 (天官, 地官, 水官)
Sanguan jing	三官經
Sanguo yanyi	三國演義
Sanqing	三清
Sanqing dian	三清殿
sanshandao	三山刀
Sanxiao niangniang	三霄娘娘
Sanxiao shengmu miao	三霄聖母廟
Sanyi gong	三義宮
Sanyi miao (gong)	三義廟 (宮)
Sanyin shishe jiuku jing	三陰施捨救苦經
Sanzong	三嶽
Sasaki Mamoru	佐々木衛
Shajing cun	沙井村

Shanshen miao (ye)	山神廟 (爺)
Shangdang	上黨
Shangdang minjian de yingshen saishe	上黨民間的迎神賽社
Shangfu	上伏
Shangqingliang (village)	上清涼
Shanshen	山神
Shanxi Linfen Pingshui shenci beike ji qi shuili xisu kaoshu	山西臨汾平水神祠碑刻及其水利習 俗考述
Shanxi sheng Quwo xian Renzhuang cun Shangu shenpu diaocha baogao	山西省曲沃縣任莊村扇鼓神譜調查 報告
shaobing	燒餅
she	社
Shejun (usually pronounced ye)	葉君
shen guan	神官
shen jia	神家
shen momo	神嬖嬖
Shen Yuezhong, Qingyuan Langjiazhuang cun cunluo wenhua	申耀中,清苑郎家莊村村落文化
Shen Ze er xian	神澤二仙
Shen Ziwen, Shexian Nüwa xinyang he Wahuang gong qiuzi xisu	申子文,涉縣女媧信仰和媧皇宮求 子習俗
Shenchang	神場
Sheng mu	聖母
shengbiao	升表
Shengjinggang	聖井崗
shengqi	生氣
shenhan	神漢
shenma	神馬
Shenmo	神磨
Shennong	神農
shenpeng	神棚
shenshe	神社
shensheng	神聖
shenshu	神書
shentou	神頭
sheshou	社首
Shexian	涉縣
Shexian Shangqingliang Tanyin deng liucun yingshen yishi yu saixi yanchu	涉縣上清涼彈音等六村迎神儀式與 賽戲演出
shezhang	社長
shi	實
Shi Bing	史冰

- Shi Bing, Tangxian Qingxu shan miaohui yu Gegong cun 史冰,唐縣青虛山廟會與葛公村
 Shi guang niangniang 石廣娘娘
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 Shimo 石磨
 shougong 守功
 shoushi 首事
 Shouxing 壽星
 Shu Yu 叔虞
 shua jie 刷街
 shuan wawa 拴娃娃
 Shuangcheng 雙城
 shuangdui suona 雙對噴呐
 Shui gong nainai 睡公奶奶
 shui guan 水官
 Shuici niangniang 水祠娘娘
 Shuimu niangniang 水母娘娘
 Shuiqiu niangniang 水泗娘娘
 Shuishen 水神
 shuji 書記
 Shun Di 舜帝
 Shunyi xian 順義縣
 si xiang 司香
 Si zhi gong cao 四值公曹
 si zhu 司燭
 Sibeichai cun 寺北柴村
 Siwei 四尉
 songshen 送神
 Songshen jing 送神經
 Songzi guanyin si 送子觀音寺
 Songzi langjun 送子郎君
 Sun 孫
 Sun Bin 孫臏
 Sun Simiao 孫思邈
 Tai'an 泰安
 Taihang yuji qushui yishi ji xieyu yanju minsu kao 太行雩祭取水儀式及謝雨演劇民俗考
 Taihaoling 太昊陵
 Taimu (village) 太睦

Taishan niangniang	泰山娘娘
Taishang xuanlingdou benming yansheng zhenjing	太上玄靈斗本命延生真經
Taishanwangmu chi Pantaohui miaohui diaocha	泰山王母池蟠桃會廟會調查
Tang wang	湯王
Tang wang miao	湯王廟
Tang yanjiu	唐研究
Tangxian Qingxu shan miaohui yu Gegong cun	唐縣青虛山廟會與葛公村
Tangxianzhi	唐縣志
Tanyin cun	彈音村
tanzhu	壇主
Taoshen miao	陶神廟
Tian huang	天皇
Tian shen miao	天神廟
Tian Sulan	田素蘭
Tian xian ye	天仙爺
Tianjin guji chubanshe	天津古籍出版社
Tianqi	天齊
tiao da shen	跳大神
tingshi / zi	亭士 / 子
tingzi	庭子
Tongbo	桐柏
tongji	童乩
tongpao	統炮
Tōyōshi kenkyū	東洋史研究
Tudi	土地
Tudi shen	土地神
Tun cheng cun	屯城村
Tushe	土社
Wahuang miao	媧皇廟
Wang Ch'iu-kuei	王秋桂
Wang er nainai	王二奶奶
Wang Fucai	王福才
Wang Mang	王莽
Wang Yongxin	王永信
Wang Yongxin, Handan xian Huangliangmeng Lūxianci Guangjigong miaohui yu xinyang	王永信, 邯鄲縣黃梁夢呂仙祠廣濟 宮廟會與信仰
Wang Yongxin, Handan xian Dongtianchi cun yingshen saihui	王永信, 邯鄲縣東填池村迎神賽會
Wangmu niangniang	王母娘娘

Wawa pusa	娃娃菩薩
weishi	帷士
weishou	維首
Weituo	韋陀
Weixian	威縣
weizi	幃子
Wenchang	文昌
Wenshen miao	瘟神廟
Wenshu (Mañjuśrī)	文殊
Wu (surname)	吳
Wugumiao shen	五谷廟神
Wusheng miao	五聖廟
Wu wang	吳王
Wu'an shi Guyi cun yingshen jisi ji shehuo nuoxi	武安市固義村迎神祭祀暨社火儺戲
Wu'an xianzhi	武安縣志
Wudao	五道
Wudao jiangjun	五道將軍
Wudao miao	五道廟
Wudao shen	五道神
Wulong ye (miao)	烏龍爺 (廟)
wupo	巫婆
wushen	巫神
Wusheng laomu	無生老母
Wusheng miao	五聖廟
Wuxi yu shouhu fuzhu ling: guanyu Dongbei diqu wuxi di huxian xinyang zhi kaocha	巫覡與守護輔助靈：關於東北地區巫覡 的胡仙信仰之考察
Wuxian	五顯
xia qing	下清
Xiajiao cun	下交村
xiamā	下馬
xian	仙
xian shen	顯神
Xiang Yang, Shanxi Yuehu yanjiu	項陽, 山西樂戶研究
xiangdao de	香道的
xiangdi	鄉地
Xiangfen	襄汾
Xianghe	香河
Xianghe miaohui, huahui yu minjian xisu, Ou Danian, Fan Lizhu, Zhao Jinshan, Fan Liting, Chen Jianling	香河廟會、花會與民間習俗, 歐大年, 范麗 珠, 趙金山, 范麗婷, 陳建伶

Xianghe minjian jieri xisu	香河民間節日習俗
Xianghe xian	香河縣
xianghui	香會
xianghuo she	香火社
xianglao	香老
xiangsai	鄉賽
xiangshou	香首
xiangtou	香頭
xiangyue	鄉約
xiao huishou	小會首
xiaochē	小車
xiebing	邪病
Xigukou	溪谷口
Xihua (County)	西華
Xingyu longshen	行雨龍神
xinggong	行宮
xingshen	行神
Xingtai xian	邢台縣
Xiwangmu miao	西王母廟
xizhu	戲竹
xu	虛
Xu	許
Xu Yushan	許玉山
Xushui xianzhi	徐水縣志
Xushuizhi	徐水志
Yan (village)	燕
Yan Baoquan	延保全
Yanguang nainai	眼光奶奶
Yan Huachuan, Li Danying, Shandong Mazu xinsu ji Longshen xinyang de bijiao yanjiu	閻化川,李丹瑩,山東媽祖信俗及龍神信 仰的比較研究
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Yang gong	楊公
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Yang Rongguo	楊榮國
Yang Xinmin	楊新民
Yangcheng	陽城
Yangcheng xian	陽城縣
Yangcheng xian Zecheng cun Tangdi miao ji saishe yanjuti jikao	陽城縣澤城村湯帝廟及賽社演劇題記考
Yangge	秧歌

yangpi gu	羊皮鼓
Yanguang niangniang miao	眼光娘娘廟
Yangxian miao	楊仙廟
Yanhou shen	咽喉神
Yanmenzi	沿門子
Yanwang dian	閻王殿
Yao di	堯帝
Yao Liu zhuang	藥劉莊
Yao huang	藥皇
Yaoshan Shengmu miao yu shenshe	堯山聖母廟與神社
Yaoshen miao	窑神廟
Yaowang	藥王
Yaowang miao	藥王廟
yazhan	押盞
Ye niangniang	葉娘娘
Ye Tao	葉濤
Yihe tuan	義和團
Yin Yuru, Wang er nainai yu Yaji shan miaohui	尹玉如, 王二奶奶與丫髻山廟會
yingshen	迎神
yingshen duiwu	迎神隊伍
yingshen saihui	迎神賽會
yinyang	陰陽
yinyang xiansheng	陰陽先生
Yinyuan miao	姻緣廟
Yixian zhi	易縣志
Yongan	永安
Yu shen	雨神
Yuan Jingfang, "Hebei Julu xian Daojiao fashi keyi yinyue kaocha yu yanjiu"	袁靜芳, "河北鉅鹿縣道教法事科儀 音樂考察與研究"
yuan	元
Yuanbao	元寶
Yuanxi	願戲
Yue Yongyi	岳永逸
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Yuehu	樂戶
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Yuhuang	玉皇
Yuhuang ge	玉皇閣

Yulin	榆林
Yushen	獄神
zaixiang	災香
Zao wang	竈王
Zengfu	增福
Zengfu caishen miao	增福財神廟
Zezhou fuzhi	澤州府志
Zhan hanba	斬旱魃
Zhang Cuiling, Xihua Nüwacheng miaohui diaocha baogao	張翠玲,西華女媧城廟會調查報告
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Zhang Zhennan, Pu Haiyin, Shangdang Xinancheng miaosai	張振南,暴海燕,上黨西南呈廟賽
Zhang Zhentao, Ji zhong Houtu chongbai yu yinyue jixian	張振濤,冀中后土崇拜與音樂祭獻
Zhang Zhizhong, Liubao cun Yaowang miaohui de paolouzi	張之中,劉堡村藥王廟會的跑樓子
zhangfangren	賬房人
zhangzhu	掌竹
Zhangzi	長子
Zhao (county)	趙
Zhao Fuxing	趙復興
Zhao Fuxing, Dayidian bingbao hui	趙復興,大義店冰雹會
Zhao Fuxing, Dingsheng xianghuo wubainian	趙復興,鼎盛香火五百年
Zhao Gongming	趙公明
Zhao ji shenghou	昭濟聖后
Zhao Jinshan, Sibai hu cun Yaowang miao ji Yaowang dan	趙金山,四百戶村藥王廟暨藥王誕
Zhao Lichun	趙立春
Zhao shen guan su	照神盥漱
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Zhao Zongfu, Taishan Wangmuchi Pantaohui miaohui diaocha	趙宗福,泰山王母池蟠桃會廟會調查
Zheng Quanxi	鄭全喜
Zheng Quanxi, Handan xian Congzhong cun miao yu minjian xinyang	鄭全喜,邯鄲縣叢中村廟與民間信仰
zheng sai	正賽
zhengshi shen	正式神
Zhenwu	真武
Zhenwu miao	真武廟
zhi xiang	執香
Zhima shen	芝蔴神
Zhiwu ying	智武營
Zhonghuang shan	中皇山
Zhongyuan	中原
zhou	粥
Zhou (village)	周
Zhou Cang	周倉
zhuangzhang	莊長
zhuchang	主鬯
zhuli	主禮
Zhuoxian zhi	涿縣志
Zhuozhou	涿州
Zisun niangniang	子孫娘娘
Zitong	梓童
zongli / tsung-li	總理
Zongzi	糉子
Zou Wensheng, Wang Jian, Chen Chu wenhua	鄒文生,王劍,陳楚文化
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