

## ONE

# Chekiang



For 1,000 years myriad shrines have stood by the rivers,  
Every year prayers and gifts are offered by countless givers;  
Clear skies come when needed, as does the rain,  
The gods thus grant what the people wish to gain.

Auspicious harvests to the prefecture are borne,  
Before the temple, female mediums song and dance perform;  
The ringing of their songs; the banging of their drums,  
Amidst clouds of incense they speak the gods' tongues.

Cakes the size of plates, succulent offerings,  
Bow low, offer to the gods, they refuse not such things;  
By evening, the drunken people bear each other home,  
Cicadas' music fills the temple in the gathering gloom.

—Lu Yu 陸游, "Song of the Festival" (*Sai-shen ch'ü* 賽神曲), in *Chien-nan shih-chi, chüan* 16<sup>1</sup>

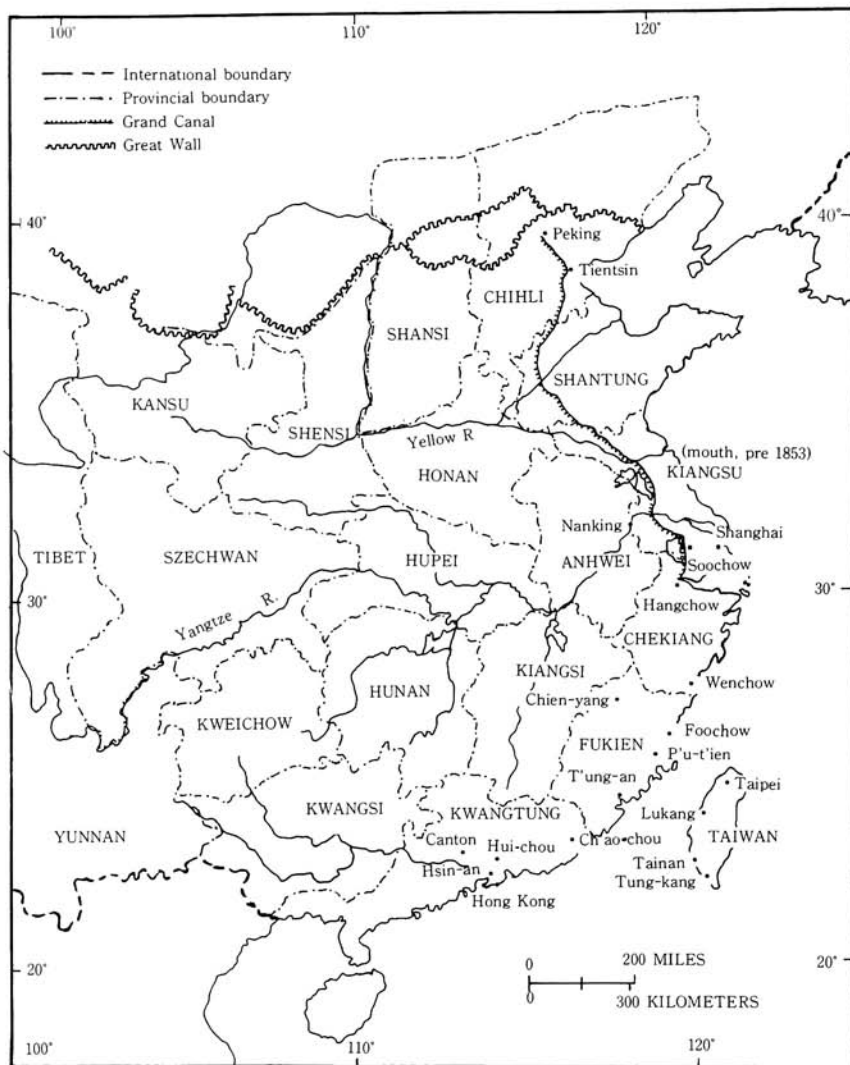
### *The Land and Its People*

Chekiang lies on the southeast coast of China between the provinces of Kiangsu and Fukien; it also shares borders with Anhwei and Kiangsi (see Map 1). The name Chekiang literally means "winding river," in reference to the Ch'ien-t'ang River, which wends and

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<sup>1</sup> For more on Lu Yu's poems about rural life (including festivals), see Michael S. Duke, *Lu You* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1977), pp. 124–131; and, Burton Watson, *The Old Man Who Does as He Pleases* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1973), pp. 3, 51, 56–57 and 61. Neither scholar has translated the "Song of the Festival." A punctuated edition of Lu's *Chien-nan shih-chi* may be found in *Lu Yu chi* (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1976).

Map 1 — Late Imperial China



Courtesy of David Johnson, et. al. *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China*. Copyright © 1985 The Regents of the University of California, p. xii. With permission of the publisher.

weaves its way 186 miles (310 kilometers) from the mountains bordering on Anhwei to Hangchow Bay (see Map 2). With an area of 39,300 square miles (101,800 square kilometers), Chekiang is China's smallest province in terms of size, but currently ranks tenth in population. Although the Ch'ien-t'ang River had been called the "Che-chiang" (Chekiang) for centuries, this name was not applied to the province until the Ming dynasty.

Located between latitudes 27 and 30 degrees north, Chekiang falls within the subtropical monsoon climate zone. While the winters are not bitterly cold, snow and frost are often seen in the northern plains and mountain regions. The annual rainfall averages between 44 and 76 inches (1,100 and 1,700 millimeters), with more rain falling in the mountains than in the plains. Add to this a frost-free period of between 230–270 days and one can see that Chekiang is a province well-suited for agricultural cultivation. However, this relatively mild climate also helped spawn the germs which caused epidemics during the summer months, when the average temperature would jump to 82 degrees Fahrenheit (28 degrees Celsius) in Hangchow and 84 degrees Fahrenheit (29 degrees Celsius) in Wenchow. Because epidemics in Chekiang occurred most frequently during the warm summer months, most plague expulsion festivals there were held either just before or during this season.<sup>2</sup>

Chekiang's topography is rugged, with mountains and hills occupying over 70 percent of the land, plains and basins another 22.4 percent, and rivers/lakes 5.2 percent (the rest is tidal flats). The territory of Chekiang also encompasses 36 percent of China's islands, over 18,000 in number. The best (if not most comfortable) way to get a sense of this region's topography is to ride a long-distance bus like the one between Hangchow and Wenchow, which takes the traveler over fertile fields and through craggy mountains down to one of Chekiang's most bustling ports. Even in the age of highway and railroad transportation systems, much of the province's commercial and passenger traffic still flows along a network of rivers and canals extending nearly eight thousand kilometers in length. This network was particularly well-developed in the northern areas of Chekiang (known as the "water country" [*shui-hsiang* 水鄉]), and one need only glance through a Ming or Ch'ing period travelogue to see how frequently travelers, merchants, and religious specialists used these routes. There was also a network of forty ports, the largest being

<sup>2</sup>See *Che-chiang ti-li chien-chih* (Hangchow: Che-chiang jen-min ch'u-pan-she, 1985), pp. 93–143. I have yet to determine whether the timing of these festivals corresponded with agricultural slack periods. However, as most of Wen's festivals were held in cities, this may not have been an issue.

Map 2 — Late Imperial Chekiang: Administrative Divisions



Traced with alterations from *Chung-kuo li-shih ti-t'u chi* (Shanghai: Ti-t'u ch'u-pan-she, 1982).

Ningpo and Wenchow, which coastal junks used on their way up and down the China coast.<sup>3</sup> As we shall see in chapter 4, the existence of such highly developed transportation networks proved instrumental in the spread of Marshal Wen's cult.

In attempting to subdivide Chekiang geographically, one might best follow the schema presented by Chang Ch'i-yün (see Map 3). Chang divides Chekiang into the following three sub-regions: 1) The northern plains sub-region, which consists of the Hangchow-Chia-hsing-Hu-chou Plain (hereafter referred to as the Hang-Chia-Hu Plain) and the Ningpo-Shaohsing Plain (hereafter referred to as the Ning-Shao Plain); 2) The coastal sub-region between the Ch'ien-t'ang and Ou river deltas; and, 3) The mountainous sub-region of the west and southwest.<sup>4</sup> The cult of Marshal Wen originated in Wenchow Prefecture of the coastal sub-region of Chekiang, an area which proved highly inhospitable and difficult to cultivate. According to one Ming-dynasty local gazetteer:

Wenchow is difficult to reach by either mountain or ocean route . . . The people are poor, and exhaust themselves growing crops which can only be harvested once a year.<sup>5</sup> If a flood or drought strikes, people may well starve. This area is not suitable for sericulture, so most women work hard at weaving cloth. Those living near the coast either fish or work at cultivating salt.<sup>6</sup>

Because the city of Wenchow was located near an ideal natural harbor, many of its natives engaged in commercial activities and sought their fortunes throughout southern China and even abroad.<sup>7</sup> From

<sup>3</sup> *Che-chiang ti-li chien-chih*, pp. 418-426. See also Lin Cheng-ch'iu, *Che-chiang ching-chi wen-hua shih yen-chiu* (Hangchow: Che-chiang ku-chi ch'u-pan-she, 1989), pp. 46-48, 84-98. For more on Ming-Ch'ing routes, see Timothy Brook, "Guides for Vexed Travellers: Route Books in the Ming and Ch'ing," *CSWT* 4.5 (June 1981): 32-77. See also his "Supplement," *CSWT* 4.6 (Dec. 1981): 130-140; and, "Second Supplement," *CSWT* 4.8 (Dec. 1982): 96-109.

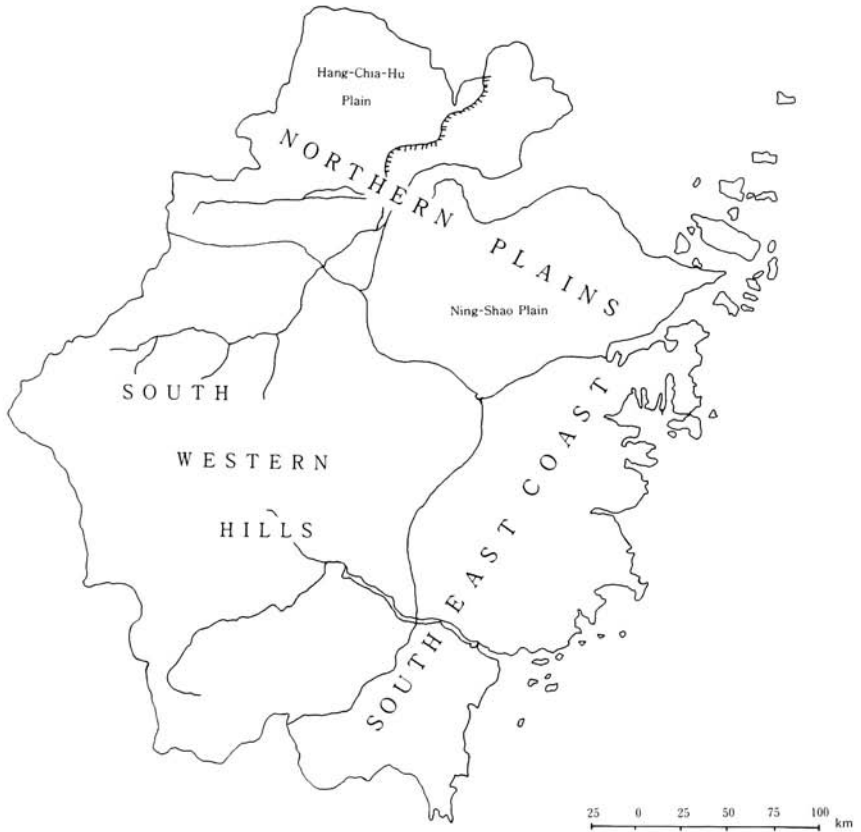
<sup>4</sup> See Chang Ch'i-yün, "Lun Ning-po chien-she sheng-hui chih hsi-wang," *Shih-ti hsieh-pao* 3.7 (May 1925): 1-17. R. Keith Schoppa divides Chekiang into four zones (inner/outer core and inner/outer periphery) in his *Chinese Elites and Political Change: Zhejiang Province in the Early Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 13-26.

<sup>5</sup> People living in the northern plains sub-region generally practiced double- or even triple-cropping.

<sup>6</sup> *WCFC* (1605), 2:47b-48a.

<sup>7</sup> See *Che-chiang ti-li chien-chih*, pp. 460-463. See also Chou Hou-ts'ai, *Wen-chou kang-shih* (Peking: Jen-min chiao-t'ung ch'u-pan-she, 1990); and, Yeh Ta-ping, *Wen-chou shih-hua* (Hangchow: Che-chiang jen-min ch'u-pan-she, 1982).

Map 3 — Chekiang's Sub-regions



Traced with alterations from *Che-chiang sheng ti-t'u tse* (Shanghai: Hsin-hua shu-tien, 1988).

this sub-region, Wen's cult quickly spread along coastal trade routes used by Wenchow merchants to the northern plains sub-region of Chekiang, his first temples in that sub-region being built in Hangchow during the Southern Sung dynasty. Merchants from in and around Hangchow later transmitted Wen's cult to other sites within this sub-region, particularly two important market towns named Ch'ing-chen (in Chia-hsing) and Hsin-shih (in Hu-chou; see Maps 2 and 5). It is not clear why Wen's cult never gained a significant foothold in the mountainous sub-region of western and southwestern Chekiang, his only cult site in the entire sub-region being at Li-shui (see chapter 4). Perhaps this was because the mountains there provided an effective barrier to most forms of transport, or because most Wenchow and Hangchow merchants do not appear to have engaged in a significant amount of trade in this sub-region.

Linguistically, the vast majority of Chekiang's present population of forty million inhabitants speak the Wu 吳 dialect, which is still spoken by eight percent of China's populace.<sup>8</sup> Wu dialect in Chekiang features four different varieties: northern plains, west and southwest, T'ai-chou, and Wenchow (see Map 4).<sup>9</sup> The ability of Marshal Wen's cult to spread throughout much of the province of Chekiang, and even cross provincial boundaries, was in part due to the fact that it arose in and initially spread through areas which possessed similar dialectical characteristics.

Marshal Wen's cult first arose in P'ing-yang County of Wenchow Prefecture, an area which lies on the border of the Wu and Min dialect regions. P'ing-yang is one of China's dialectical melting pots, with five distinct dialects spoken there. One linguist researching the southern part of P'ing-yang<sup>10</sup> has determined that over 54 percent of the million-plus inhabitants speak Min dialect, while a further 16.2

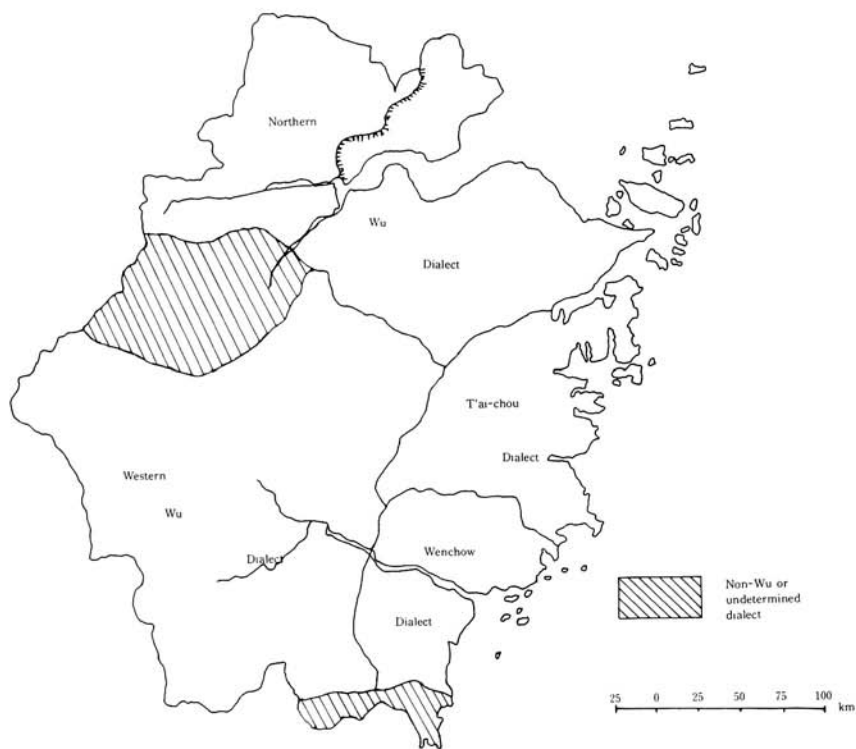
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<sup>8</sup> Wu dialect is one of three dialects which grew out of the Ancient Yüeh language (Ku Yüeh-yü 古越語), the other two being Cantonese (Yüeh 粵) and Fukienese/Taiwanese (Min 閩).

<sup>9</sup> Chou Chen-ch'üeh and Yu Ju-chieh, *Fang-yen yü Chung-kuo wen-hua* (Shanghai: Shang-hai jen-min ch'u-pan-she, 1986) has an introduction to China's dialect regions, as well as an analysis of Wu dialect variants in Chekiang; see pp. 8-14, 59-68. See also S. Robert Ramsey, *The Languages of China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 88-95, and Y.R. Chao (Chao Yüan-jen), *Hsien-tai Wu-yü yen-chiu* (Peking: K'o-hsüeh ch'u-pan-she, 1958).

<sup>10</sup> Now known as Ts'ang-nan. In 1981, P'ing-yang County was divided into P'ing-yang and Ts'ang-nan counties.

Map 4 — Chekiang's Dialect Sub-regions



Traced with alterations from Chou Chen-ch'üeh & Yu Ju-chieh, *Fang-yen yü Chung-kuo wen-hua*.



percent speak the Wenchow form of Wu dialect.<sup>11</sup> The spread of Marshal Wen's cult from P'ing-yang north to Wenchow city and south to Fukien (see chapter 4), as well as the spread of the cult of the Five Commissioners of Epidemics north from Fukien to Wenchow (see chapter 2) may have been facilitated by the fact that many residents of P'ing-yang county could communicate with natives of both regions.

Historical linguists have determined that the Wu and Min dialects have profound links and enjoy considerable overlap in terms of vocabulary and pronunciation, making the spread of popular beliefs from one area to the other all the easier. These scholars have convincingly demonstrated that the form of Wu dialect which existed before the Six Dynasties is the ancestor language of modern Min, and that the northern Chinese dialects spoken by those people who migrated south during that era gradually became modern Wu dialect. According to their research, as northerners moved southwards into Kiangsu and northern Chekiang following the fall of the Han dynasty, the dialects they spoke intermingled extensively with ancient Wu dialect, causing great changes in the latter as it existed in these two provinces. However, Wu dialect in southern Chekiang and Fukien during the Six Dynasties was relatively unaffected and retained many of its original features.<sup>12</sup> One can see this from the fact that Japanese readings of Chinese characters termed "Wu Pronunciation" (*Go-on* 吳音) more closely resemble modern Min dialect than modern Wu dialect.<sup>13</sup>

Turning to the spread of Marshal Wen's cult inside the province of Chekiang, one finds that its spread along trade routes may also have been facilitated by linguistic factors. Wen's cult moved northwards from Wenchow to Hangchow during the Southern Sung dynasty, one important reason being that while the Wenchow form of

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<sup>11</sup> The other inhabitants speak either a local dialect called Man 蠻 (there is considerable debate over whether this derives from Wu or Min dialects), another dialect called Chin-hsiang 金鄉, or the language of the minority She tribes. See Wen Tuan-cheng, *Ts'ang-nan fang-yen chih* (Peking: Yü-wen ch'u-pan-she, 1991), pp. 1-31. See also Lu Chia-mei, "Wen-chou P'ing-yang Min-nan-yü yen-chiu" (M.A. thesis, National Taiwan University, 1983). I would like to thank Ho Ta-an 何大安 and Hung Wei-jen 洪惟仁 of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, for referring me to these and other works on historical linguistics mentioned in the notes below.

<sup>12</sup> See Ting Pang-hsin, "Wu-yü chung te Min-yü ch'eng-fen," *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica* 59 (1988): 13-22; Chang Kuang-yü, "Wu-Min fang-yen kuan-hsi shih-lun," *Chung-kuo yü-wen* 3 (1993): 161-170; and Chou and Yü, *Fang-yen*, pp. 25, 38-39.

<sup>13</sup> See Margaret M.Y. Sung, "Chinese Dialects and Sino-Japanese," in *Chinese Languages and Linguistics*, volume 1, *Chinese Dialects* (Taipei: Nankang: Institute of History and Philology, 1992), pp. 563-585.

Wu dialect is largely unintelligible to other Chekiang natives it does share a number of grammatical and pronunciation features with the Hangchow form of Wu dialect. Hangchow itself proved an important linguistic stepping stone as Wen's cult expanded throughout the northern plains sub-region of Chekiang and even parts of southern Kiangsu and Hopeh. This is because large numbers of northern Chinese speakers migrated to Hangchow at the beginning of the Southern Sung, causing the present-day Hangchow form of Wu dialect to exhibit a strongly northern character even while retaining many of its southern features. It is also certainly no coincidence that Wen's cult spread to sites in Hu-chou, Chia-hsing, and Soochow prefectures, as the forms of Wu dialect spoken there share many common features with Hangchow Wu dialect.<sup>14</sup>

What kind of individuals would have been able to transmit Marshal Wen's cult across dialect boundaries? While the sources do not reveal the names of any such individuals, it does seem likely that people who could communicate in more than one dialect, particularly Taoist priests, merchants, and scholar-officials, played the most important roles in this process.

Geographical, commercial, and linguistic features help to explain the spread of Wen's cult within Chekiang, while the climate and frequent outbreaks of epidemics suggest the need for plague-expulsion festivals in that province. The distinctive cultural history of Chekiang further suggests an explanation for the localist nature of the cult, for this region had developed a culture of its own long before contact with Han Chinese from the Yellow River plain. Indeed, many scholars now agree that it is imperative to discard the assumption that the Han "civilized" the "barbarian tribes" below the Yangtze River as they migrated southwards. Scholars such as Wolfram Eberhard worked to overturn this prejudice, attempting to study China as a world of distinct yet continuously interacting regional cultures.<sup>15</sup> More recent archaeological discoveries have reinforced this hypothesis to the point that more and more historians in China today are beginning to see their cultural origins as multi-dimensional.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>See Richard Van Ness Simmons, "Northern and Southern Forms in Hangchow Grammar," in *Chinese Languages and Linguistics*, pp. 539-561.

<sup>15</sup>Wolfram Eberhard, *The Local Cultures of South and East China* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), pp. 1-31.

<sup>16</sup>See Tu Cheng-sheng, "Tao-lun — Chung-kuo shang-ku-shih yen-chiu te yi-hsieh kuan-chien wen-t'i," in Tu Cheng-sheng, ed., *Chung-kuo shang-ku-shih lun-wen hsiian-chi* (Taipei: Hua-shih ch'u-pan-she, 1979), pp. 15-82. See also Ning Chu-ch'en, "Chung-kuo hsin-shih-ch'i shih-tai wen-hua te to-chung-hsin fa-chan ho fa-chan

The first inhabitants of Chekiang named in historical sources were the Yüeh 越,<sup>17</sup> a coastal people who dwelled in the area extending from the Huai River as far south as Kwangtung. While their ethnic identity has yet to be defined, they were probably the descendants of indigenous peoples who intermarried with Han Chinese and other southerners.<sup>18</sup> Their most striking physical features described by Han chroniclers included cutting their hair short and tattooing their bodies.<sup>19</sup> Although the Yüeh and other peoples of south China were eventually subjugated and enslaved by the Han,<sup>20</sup> many of their customs, including snake worship<sup>21</sup> and skill in boating

pu-p'ing-heng lun," *Wen-wu*, 357 (Feb. 1986): 16-30; Yen Wen-ming, *Chung-kuo shih-ch'ien wen-hua te t'ung-yi-hsing yü to-yang-hsing*, *Wen-wu* 370 (March 1987): 38-50. For a review of the archaeological data pertaining to Chekiang, see Tung Ch'u-p'ing, *Wu-Yüeh wen-hua hsin-t'an* (Hangchow: Che-chiang jen-min ch'u-pan-she, 1988), pp. 1-48.

<sup>17</sup>The character Yüeh is a variant of the older character Yüeh 戉, a type of stone axe used by the local inhabitants. See Tung, *Wu-Yüeh wen-hua*, pp. 8, 16-48.

<sup>18</sup>Eberhard postulates that the Yüeh are a mixture of Thai and Yao peoples (*Local Cultures*, pp. 24, 432-436), while Edward Schafer stresses the influence of the northern Lung-shan 龍山 culture in *The Vermillion Bird — T'ang Images of the South* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p. 12. K.C. Chang has uncovered evidence pointing to possible intermingling with Malayo-Polynesian peoples; see his "Chinese Prehistory in Pacific Perspective," *Harvard Journal of Oriental Studies*, 22 (1959), pp. 100-149, and his *Archaeology of Ancient China*, 4th ed. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), pp. 410-476. The general consensus is that the Yüeh were a partly sinicized Thai people who intermingled with other southern ethnic groups. See Li Chi, *The Formation of the Chinese People: An Anthropological Inquiry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928), pp. 275-276; and, H.J. Wiens, *Han Chinese Expansion in South China* (Hamden, Conn: Shoe String Press, 1967), pp. 39, 41, 114-115, 124 (this work was originally published in 1954 under the title *China's March Toward the Tropics*).

<sup>19</sup>Tung, *Wu-Yüeh wen-hua*, pp. 171-181; and Hsiao Fan, *Ch'un-ch'iu chih Liang-Han shih ch'i Chung-kuo hsiang nan-fang te fa-chan* (Taipei: Kuo-li T'ai-wan ta-hsüeh wen-shüeh yüan, 1973), esp. pp. 57-58, 68-69. The first chapter of *Chuang Tzu*, entitled "Hsiao-yao yü" ("Free and Easy Wandering"), contains a description of these customs. See Burton Watson's translation (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 34.

<sup>20</sup>Schafer, *Vermillion Bird*, pp. 13-14; see pp. 59-69 for accounts of slavery, prejudice, and native insurrections. See also Wiens, *Han Chinese Expansion*, pp. 114-115.

<sup>21</sup>See *Sou-shen chi*, *chüan* 7, 12, 13, 20, (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1979): 94, 109, 155-158, 164-165, 242-243; and *Po-wu chih chiao-cheng*, *chüan* 2, 7, 10, (Taipei: Ming-wen shu-chü, 1981): 37-38, 83-92, 111-113. For secondary scholarship on snake cults, see Chiang Pin, "Chiang-nan ti-ch'ü she ch'u-an-shuo chung ku-tai t'u-t'eng ch'ung-pai te nei-han," in *Chung-kuo min-chien wen-hua* (Shanghai: Hsüeh-lin ch'u-pan-she, 1992), volume 7, pp. 145-160; Wolfram Eberhard, *Local Cultures*, pp. 378-379, 381-390, 399-400; Miyakawa Hisayuki, "Local Cults Around Mount Lu at the Time of Sun En's Rebellion," in Holmes Welch and Anna Seidel, eds., *Facets of Taoism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), pp. 83-102; Schafer, *The Divine Woman* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1980), pp. 7-54; and, Katz, "Demons or

survived.<sup>22</sup> The latter two customs appear to lie behind the origins of the Dragon Boat Festival (to be discussed below), held in the heat of summer to expel pestilential vapors by means of serpentine ships.<sup>23</sup>

Snake worship in Chekiang was popular for a number of reasons, one of which was that people believed that snakes were among the natural forces responsible for outbreaks of contagious diseases. The following Sung dynasty story provides a vivid example of such a view:

In the fifth month of the year 1195, there appeared outside the South Gate of the city of Hu-chou a woman in white wearing black shoes, walking alone. She hired a boat and after climbing aboard lay down to sleep and covered herself with a reed mat. Normally when a boat moves there is a lot of noise, but this time all was quiet. The boatmen were surprised by this, and when people lifted up the mat [to take a closer look at their passenger] they saw thousands of foot-long black snakes intertwined in a tangle. Terrified by what they saw, they broke into a sweat and quickly replaced the mat [After they reached their destination 60 *li* upriver], the woman offered to pay 200 cash, but the boatmen didn't dare accept. When she asked why, they said: "After we'd seen you like that, how could we dare accept [money]?" She laughed and said: "Don't tell anybody [about what you have seen]. I have come from the city to spread the snake plague (*hsing she-wen* 行蛇瘟). I'll leave in a month." . . . From spring to early summer of that year, the prefectures of Hu-chou, Ch'ang-chou, and Hsiu-chou (the latter two are in Kiangsu) suffered greatly from epidemics (*yi-li* 疫癘), with Hu-chou suffering worst of all. The epidemics abated somewhat during the fifth month, but worsened again during the sixth month. That must have been due to the return of the snake woman (*she-fu* 蛇婦).<sup>24</sup>

Deities? — The *Wangye* of Taiwan," *Asian Folklore Studies* 46.2 (1987): 211–212.

<sup>22</sup>See Tung, *Wu-Yüeh wen-hua*, pp. 274–291; Hsiao, *Nan fang te fa-chan*, pp. 69–70; and Eberhard, *Local Cultures*, pp. 397–398, 402–405.

<sup>23</sup>See Chang Hsiang-hua, "Pai-Yüeh min-tsu yü tuan-wu hsi-su," *Tung-nan wen-hua* 5 (1991): 93–94; and, Wu Yung-chang, *Chung-kuo nan-fang min-tsu wen-hua* (Nan-ning: Kuang-hsi chiao-yü ch'u-pan-she, 1991), pp. 66–68, 292–319. Useful works describing the cultural history of Chekiang include *Che-chiang wen-hua shih* (Hangchow: Che-chiang jen-min ch'u-pan-she, 1992); and, *Che-chiang min-su yen-chiu* (Hangchow: Che-chiang jen-min ch'u-pan-she, 1992).

<sup>24</sup> Hung Mai (1123–1201), *I-chien chih* (ICC) (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1981), p. 892. For a story about frogs spreading epidemics, see *Chu-ting yü-wen* (1899),

This woman in white may very well have been related to the White Snake, one of the favorite subjects of Chekiang popular fiction and drama in the Legend of the White Snake (*Pai-she chuan* 白蛇傳). Although later works portray the White Snake as a benevolent creature trapped by the Buddhist monk Fa-hai 法海, in her earliest form she was a malevolent plague demon who lived in the houses of families she had killed in epidemics. Some versions of the story even state that she infected people with contagious diseases in order to help her husband sell his medicines.<sup>25</sup> Edward Schafer has shown that snake-women were important deities in ancient southern Chinese culture.<sup>26</sup> The Legend of the White Snake reveals that although many of these were benevolent river nymphs, another class consisted of demons who made people ill.

When reading the works of the first Han Chinese who settled the south, including Chekiang, one gets the feeling that they were both overwhelmed and bewildered by their new environment. They had to adjust to a world vastly different from the one they had known: possessing lusher terrain, warmer climate, and more abundant flora and fauna: yet also a region full of hostile peoples and their unfamiliar customs. Much of what these Han Chinese wrote seems an effort to come up with a new vocabulary to describe what they saw, and works as late as the T'ang dynasty abound with stories of things Schafer has described as "either the fantastic creations of fear or the partly true images of incomprehension."<sup>27</sup>

By the Sung dynasty, however, Chekiang had been transformed into China's economic heartland, not to mention the home of many of its top scholars, artists, and bureaucrats. This transformation was in large part brought about by the shift of the national capital to Hangchow following the fall of the Northern Sung

4:32a-33b.

<sup>25</sup>See "Eternal Prisoner Under Thunder Peak Pavilion," in Y.W. Ma and Joseph Lau, eds., *Traditional Chinese Stories* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), p. 362; Fu Hsi-hua, ed., *Pai-she chuan chi* (Shanghai: Shang-hai ch'u-pan kung-ssu, 1955), pp. 3, 21, 27; and Ch'en Ch'in-chien, "Pai-she hsing-hsiang chung-hsin chieh-kou te min-su yüan-yüan chi ch'i ch'ien-tsai tung-li," in *Pai-she chuan lun-uen chi* (Hangchow: Ku-chi ch'u-pan-she, 1986), pp. 62-78. Thunder Peak Pavillion (Lei-feng t'a 雷峰塔) was originally located near West Lake in Hangchow, but fell into disrepair and eventually collapsed at the beginning of this century.

<sup>26</sup>Schafer, *Divine Woman*, pp. 7-54.

<sup>27</sup>Schafer, *Vermillion Bird*, p. 114. For more on Chekiang's early history, see Liu Shu-fen, "San chih liu shih-chi Che-tung ti-ch'ü tê ching-chi fa-chan," *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica* 58 (1987): 485-523. For data on Hangchow, see Lü Yi-ch'un, "Hang-chou li-shih yen-ko k'ao-lüeh," *HCTHHP* 17.4 (Dec. 1987): 11-12; and, *Nan-pei Ch'ao ch'ien-ku Hang-chou* (Hangchow: Che-chiang jen-min ch'u-pan-she, 1992).

dynasty, a political shift which in part also reflected the rapid economic growth Chekiang had experienced during the T'ang and Five Dynasties periods. The changes that occurred in Chekiang and the impact they had on that province's religious life will be discussed in detail below. I should note here however that the economic and political integration of Chekiang into the Chinese state did not by any means totally extirpate this region's local religious and cultural characteristics.

### *The Development of Chekiang during the Sung*

The political, social, and economic changes that occurred in China during the Sung dynasty are by now well-known to most scholars.<sup>28</sup> They included rapid urban growth, intensified local and inter-regional commercialization, the spread of printing, the growth of the size of the gentry class, and the intellectual ferment that gave rise to Neo-Confucianism, Ch'an (Zen) Buddhism and Perfect Realization (Ch'üan-chen 全真) Taoism, etc.<sup>29</sup> Such changes were particularly striking in a province like Chekiang, which experienced significant growth during this period. While Chekiang had been gradually settled and developed before the Sung, politically and culturally the province had remained largely a backwater, the empire's core being located in the dusty plains of the Yellow River valley. China's center of gravity had been gradually shifting southwards ever since the Han dynasty,<sup>30</sup> but it took the Jurchen invaders who overthrew the Northern Sung and established the Chin dynasty to provide the final impetus which was to bring this long process to its fruition. During the calamitous

<sup>28</sup> See for example the numerous essays in James T.C. Liu and Peter J. Golas, eds., *Change in Sung China. Innovation or Renovation?* (Lexington, Mass: D. C. Heath and Co., 1969).

<sup>29</sup> For an overview of these changes, see Robert Hartwell, "Demographic, Political, and Social Transformations of China," *HJAS* 42 (1982): 365-442. A statistical analysis of southern China's economic growth during the Sung may be found in Chang Chia-chü, *Liang Sung ching-chi chung-hsin chih nan-yi* (Taipei: Po-shu ch'u-pan-she, 1985), pp. 8-36, 53-94. Further work on commercial growth during the Sung may be found in Shiba Yoshinobu, *Commerce and Society in Sung China*, trans. Mark Elvin (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1970), pp. 4-44; and, Mark Elvin, *The Pattern of the Chinese Past* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1973), pp. 131-144.

<sup>30</sup> For a description of this shift, see Denis Twitchett, *Financial Administration Under the T'ang Dynasty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), esp. pp. 12-14, 49-58, 84-96, 175, 193 and 312-313; Shih Nien-hai, *Chung-kuo shih-ti lun-kao, ho-shan chi* (Taipei: Hung-wen kuan ch'u-pan-she, 1986), pp. 239-253; and Jacques Gernet, *A History of Chinese Civilization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 268-273.



years of the 1120s and 1130s, people living in north China fled southwards much as the Han Chinese of the third and fourth centuries had done. Many of these migrants were from the gentry and merchant classes, and they tended to congregate in the cities, especially Hangchow, where the government had established its capital in 1138. This influx of talented individuals, combined with the development of printing and a large increase in the number of schools, transformed Chekiang (especially the northern plains sub-region) into the political and cultural center of the empire.<sup>31</sup> The northern plains sub-region became fertile ground on which Marshal Wen's cult flourished after spreading there during the Sung from its base in Wenchow, with the cult's most important supporters in this sub-region consisting of members of the gentry and merchant classes mentioned above.

The development of cults like Marshal Wen's was also due to the commercial transformation of the province. The countryside of the Hang-Chia-Hu Plain became the heartland of a thriving silk trade, dotted with groves of mulberry trees (on which grew the leaves used to feed silkworms) and scores of newly developed market towns. Porcelain from the Lung-ch'uan region of Li-shui prefecture reigned supreme as China's finest product until the rise of Ching-te chen (in Kiangsi) during the Ming. Shaohsing, Chia-hsing, and Wenchow produced high-quality paper, while the ship-building industry flourished in Hangchow, Ningpo, and Wenchow. Rapid growth in industries such as textiles, mining, tea, and ceramics led to the rise of powerful merchants who later became important supporters of popular cults like Wen's. The province quickly developed a huge network of cities and market towns connected by water transport via canals, rivers, and the sea. Of the forty largest Southern Sung cities, Chekiang boasted twenty-three (58 percent). Many products flowed from the inland regions to the coast, where they were shipped abroad via the ports of Kan-p'u (just east of Hangchow), Ningpo, and Wenchow, with imports flowing back inland in the opposite direction.<sup>32</sup> As I shall explain in detail below, the commercialization of Chekiang appears to have contributed to the rise of new deities who

<sup>31</sup> See Ch'ien Mu, *Kuo-shih ta-kang* (Taipei: Kuo-li pien-yi-kuan, 1953), volume 2, pp. 414-449; Ch'en Cheng-hsiang, *Chung-kuo wen-hua ti-li* (Taipei: Mu-to ch'u-pan-she, 1984), pp. 1-22; Jacques Gernet, *Daily Life in China on the Eve of the Mongol Invasion, 1250-1276* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), pp. 14-16, 22-25; and, Chang, *Liang Sung ching-chi*, pp. 44-51, 126-150.

<sup>32</sup> See Ni Shih-yi and Fang Ju-chin, "Nan-Sung Liang-che she-hui ching-chi te fa-chan," *HCTHHP* 13.2 (June, 1983): 110-119; Lin, *Che-chiang ching-chi wen-hua shih*, pp. 30-49; and, Shiba Yoshinobu, *Sōdai Kōnan keizai kenkyū* (Tōkyo: Toyō bunka kenkūjō 1988), pp. 459-550.

not only protected crops but also merchants and their goods. Data in chapter 4 also reveals that cults like Marshal Wen's gradually spread along the trade routes mentioned above to cover much of the province.

During the Southern Sung, Wenchow became one of the empire's most important ports, while Hangchow grew into the largest metropolis of its era with a population of over one million inside and outside the city walls.<sup>33</sup> In cities like Hangchow, merchants gained great influence in local affairs, both through participating in government monopolies and engaging in internal and foreign trade on their own. At the same time, commercial growth led to the creation of guilds and other commercial organizations, while urban growth attracted thousands of peasants from the countryside.<sup>34</sup> As I will demonstrate in the following chapters, this migration from rural to urban areas may have affected the growth of Marshal Wen's cult, inasmuch as it spread from early sites in less developed parts of southern Chekiang like P'ing-yang to urban centers like Hangchow and Wenchow.

### *Religious Changes in Sung Dynasty Chekiang*

While most scholars today pretty much agree on the nature of the political and socioeconomic changes affecting Sung China, the impact these changes had on that era's religious history is less clear. Fortunately, the stimulating and informative essays in the recent conference volume on T'ang-Sung religion edited by Patricia Ebrey and Peter Gregory go a long way toward solving this problem. As the editors properly point out in their introduction to this work, many aspects of Chinese religious life remained largely unchanged, including ancestor worship, the idea of a reciprocal relationship

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<sup>33</sup> We know more about this city than any other contemporary urban site, both from Chinese works like the *Tu-ch'eng chi-sheng*, *Hsi-hu lao-jen fan-sheng lu*, *Meng-liang lu*, and *Wu-lin chiu-shih*, as well as accounts by Westerners such as Marco Polo and Oderic de Pordenone. Jacques Gernet has utilized all these works and many others to present a lively and colorful picture of Southern Sung Hangchow in his *Daily Life in China*.

<sup>34</sup> Gernet, *Daily Life*, pp. 39–40, 46–48, 59–62, 67–68, 77–78, 81–88. For more on Hangchow's commercial growth, see Shiba, *Sōdai Kōnan*, pp. 312–339; Lin Cheng-ch'iu and Chin Min, *Nan-Sung ku-tu Hang-chou* (Honon: Chung-chou shu-hua she, 1984), pp. 24–40; and, Lin Cheng-ch'iu, *Nan-Sung tu-ch'eng Lin-an* (Shanghai: Hsi-ling yin-she, 1986), pp. 233–279. For information on guilds and other commercial associations in Hangchow, see Ch'üan Han-sheng, *Chung-kuo hang-hui chih-tu shih* (Shanghai: Hsin sheng-ming ch'u-pan-she, 1934), pp. 44–45, 46–49, 58–62 and 92–94.



between people and the deities they worshipped, the lack of a clear distinction between secular and sacred, the use of the "bureaucratic metaphor" to conceive of the structure of the supernatural realm, the doctrine of the mandate of heaven, etc.<sup>35</sup> It is also important to remember that the apparent transformation of local religious life during the Sung may in part reflect the larger quantity and higher quality of the sources available for this period. Nevertheless, the evidence presented below indicates that a number of important changes in local religious life did occur (especially in developing provinces like Chekiang), with greater numbers of local gods, able to answer a wider variety of needs, coming to be worshipped in larger and more ornate temples than ever before.

Perhaps the most significant change in Sung local religion had to do with the nature of those deities worshipped. From ancient times up to Sung dynasty, most people in Chekiang had engaged in ritual activities centering on local earth god cults (formally known as the Gods of Earth and Grain [She-chi shen 社稷神]). While frequently viewed with suspicion and sometimes even contempt by scholar-officials and members of Buddhist and Taoist movements, these ancient cults flourished for many centuries despite attempts at suppression. As early as the Han dynasty, the people of Chekiang had already gained a reputation for being intensely devoted to their local earth gods.<sup>36</sup> Even during the early years of the Sung dynasty, the annual spring and autumn sacrifices to these deities remained the hallmark of ritual life in rural Chekiang.<sup>37</sup> The sources usually refer to these rituals as "sacrificing to the gods of the soil" (*chi-she* 祭社), and indicate that spirit mediums (almost always referred to as *wu* 巫) played a leading role in presiding over them. The Gods of Earth and Grain appear to have had one major function, caring for the crops, and the rural rites to them centered on this power. In the spring, people appealed to the earth gods to grant a bountiful harvest; in the fall they

<sup>35</sup> See Ebrey and Gregory, "The Religious and Historical Landscape," in *Religion and Society*, pp. 6–11.

<sup>36</sup> For a description of Yüeh divination and spirit-mediumship, see the *Feng-shan* 封禪 section of Ssu-ma Ch'ien's (ca. 135–93 B.C.E.) *Shih-chi*, in *Records of the Grand Historian of China*, Burton Watson trans., (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), p. 63.

<sup>37</sup> Rural cults and festivals had been a part of Chinese culture from ancient times. Many of the works preserved in the *Book of Poetry* (*Shi-ching*) and the *Songs of Ch'u* (*Ch'u-tz'u*), particularly the *Nine Songs* (*Chiu-ko*), derived from such ritual events. See Marcel Granet, *Festivals and Songs of Ancient China*, trans. E.D. Edwards, (London: Routledge, 1932), pp. 147–206; as well as his *Danses et légendes de la Chine ancienne* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1926), 2 vols., esp. volume 1, pp. 229–390.

gave thanks if such had been the case.<sup>38</sup>

By the time the Sung dynasty had reached its maturity, however, numerous cults to new types of deities had begun to flourish in Chekiang and other parts of south China. These newer deities did not merely control matters relating to agriculture (though they could intervene in such affairs when necessary), but also dealt with a wide range of problems such as suppressing bandits, aiding commercial ventures, and exorcising demonic forces. Cults to such deities not only gained immense popularity on the local level, but quickly spread throughout south China along the commercial networks mentioned above.<sup>39</sup> This is not to say that the people of Chekiang and its neighboring provinces only worshipped earth deities before the Sung; other nature spirits, Buddhist and Taoist deities, as well as ancestors and the souls of the unknown or unruly dead also received sacrifices. In addition, cults to new deities like Marshal Wen never completely replaced those to the earth gods; these ancient gods continued to be worshipped, albeit usually in small shrines along a road or in a field. However, the decline of the earth god cults did have a significant impact on Chekiang local religion that was readily apparent to contemporary scholar-officials.

As cults to new deities like Wen began to flourish, the beliefs and practices associated with earth god cults appear to have entered a period of decline. The number of altars/temples to these deities steadily dwindled, and people became less diligent in carrying out the required sacrifices.<sup>40</sup> In the case of Yung-chia County in Wenchow Prefecture, the Southern Sung literatus Yeh Shih (1150–1223) noted in 1218 that: "During the Sui and T'ang dynasties, the number [of altars] to the Gods of Earth and Soil gradually grew to 2,816 . . . but by the Ch'un-hsi reign (1174–1189) over 2,000 had disappeared."<sup>41</sup> In describing the decline of earth deity cults throughout Wenchow prefecture, Yeh explained that:

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<sup>38</sup>See Ling Ch'un-sheng, "Chung-kuo ku-tai she chih yüan-liu," *Bulletin of the Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica* 17 (1964): 1–44. See also Kanai Noriyuki, "Sōdai no sonsha to shajin," *Tōyōshi kenkyū* 38 (1979): 62–65, and Nakamura Jihei, "Sōdai no fū no tokucho," *Chuō daigaku bengakubu kiyō, shigaku ko* 104 (March 1982): 51–75.

<sup>39</sup>See Kanai Noriyuki, "Sōdai Seisai no sonsha to dōshin," in *Sōdai no shakai to shūkyō, Sōdaishi kenkyūkai kenkyū hōkoku* 2 (1985): 81–108; and, Valerie Hansen, *Changing Gods in Medieval China, 1127–1276* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 9–10, 75–78, 105–159.

<sup>40</sup>See Kanai, "Sonsha to shajin," pp. 73–74, 77–78, 80.

<sup>41</sup>Yeh Shih, *Shui-hsin chi* (*Ssu-pu pei-yao* edition), 11:5a. This work has also been reprinted in the *Yeh Shih chi* (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chū, 1961), pp. 190–191. For a study of this scholar's place in Sung history, see Winston Wan Lo, *The Life and Thought of Yeh Shih* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1974).

The earth gods [govern] the soil, while the grain gods [govern] the cereals. Without the soil there is no life; without the cereals there is no nourishment. When kingdoms were created, they first erected these altars to offer sacrifices, in order to show the people they had received the Mandate of Heaven . . . These rites (performed by officials) were solemn and reverential in the extreme, and no one dared to neglect them. [Today however] beliefs that are weird and licentious, false and absurd have arisen . . . Alas! Are the people so irreverent that they are ignorant of ritual propriety?<sup>42</sup>

Yeh was not the only Southern Sung literatus to lament the decline of cults to the earth gods. Wang Po (1197–1274), a native of Chin-hua in western Chekiang, attributed this to the spread of Buddhism and Taoism to rural areas, noting with outrage that: "[For the Gods of Earth and Grain] to fall to their knees in shrines dedicated to Lao-tzu, Sakyamuni, and evil demons is far indeed [from their original majesty]."<sup>43</sup> Buddhist monasteries and Taoist temples often supplanted ancient cult sites, although the specialists of these religions did allow local deities to remain in these new sites as minor gods, and even occasionally permitted such sites to be used in staging traditional local rites.<sup>44</sup>

The rapid growth of cults to new types of local deities was also marked by the expansion of socio-religious organizations which had traditionally been associated with the worship of earth gods.<sup>45</sup> Traditional Chinese sources, including works like the *Book of Rites* (*Li-chi* 禮記), frequently refer to such organizations as *she-hui* 社會, literally "earth god associations," the term currently used in modern Chinese to mean "society." By the Sung dynasty, however, these organizations had developed into groups supporting the worship of all manner of local deities, although their primary functions continued

<sup>42</sup> Yeh, *Shui-hsin chi*, 11:3a; and *Yeh Shih chi*, pp. 186–188.

<sup>43</sup> See Wang's *Lu-chai chi*, *chüan* 9. See also Miyakawa Hisayuki, "Dōkyōshi joyori mitaru Godai," *Tōhō shūkyō* 42 (1973): 14–15 and 22–24; and, Fukui Kojun and Sakai Tadao, eds., *Dōkyō* (Tokyo: Heika Chuppansha, 1983), volume 1, pp. 59–62.

<sup>44</sup> See Kanai, "NanSō saishi shakai no tenkai," in *Shūkyō shakaishi kenkyū* (Tokyo: Yuzankoku Chuppan Kaisha, 1977), pp. 595–597; and, "Sonsha to shajin," pp. 74–76, 80–81. For an example of the eclectic mix of temples at sacred sites, see Edouard Chavannes, *Le T'ai Chan* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1910), pp. 44–158.

<sup>45</sup> These are referred to by Chinese scholars as "sacrificial organizations" (*chi-ssu tsu-chih* 祭祀組織) or "sacrificial networks" (*chi-ssu ch'üan* 祭祀圈), and by Japanese scholars as "sacrificial associations" (*saishi shakai* 祭祀社會).

to involve raising money for the upkeep of the temple and staging annual rites on a local deity's birthday. Such organizations also expanded beyond local boundaries, with worshippers setting up branch temples in areas they migrated to or did business in, retaining links with the main temple through regular (often annual) pilgrimages.<sup>46</sup> The festivals they staged have many characteristics in common with those extant today, including processions featuring armed troupes (whose members did not hesitate to use their weapons during local feuds), people wearing cangues to atone for previous sins; rotating recruitment of leaders known as "association heads" (*she-shou* 社首 or *hui-shou* 會首), huge and vibrant market fairs, the presence of hordes of beggars, etc.<sup>47</sup>

Another important trend in Sung religious life involved the ever-increasing number of official titles (*feng-hao* 封號) awarded to all manner of local deities by the state. Sung dynasty worshippers attempted to ensure the continued existence of popular local deities by applying to the government for a title. The usual procedure involved the cult's leaders submitting a petition to the county magistrate, using the deity's miracles as evidence of its numinous efficacy (*ling* 靈). If, after careful investigation, the magistrate determined that there was cause to award a title, he would report to higher authorities who transmitted the petition to the Board of Rites, Imperial Secretariat, and Court of Imperial Sacrifices, which conducted their own investigations. Only after everything relating to a particular local cult had been meticulously examined could a title be awarded. The process of applying for an official title required great outlays of time, effort, and money, and if it backfired could even result in the suppression of the cult of the local god in question.<sup>48</sup> Many cults of the new deities described above were branded as "illicit cults" (*yin-tz'u* 淫祠) or "illicit sacrifices" (*yin-ssu* 淫祀),<sup>49</sup> and faced the threat of

<sup>46</sup>Hansen, *Changing Gods*, pp. 128-159.

<sup>47</sup>For a colorful and detailed description of one such festival, see Huang Chen (1213-1280), *Huang-shih jih-ch'ao*, 74:19a-34a, in *Wen-yüan Ko Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu* (Taipei: Shang-wu yin-shu-kuan, 1983), volume 708, pp. 746-752.

<sup>48</sup>Hansen, *Changing Gods*, pp. 79-104.

<sup>49</sup>Scholars of Chinese religion disagree on how to translate these terms. Some researching Taoism, including Judith Boltz and Rolf Stein, tend to translate *yin* as "excessive". See for example Boltz, "Not by the Seal of Office Alone: New Weapons in the Battle with the Supernatural," in Ebrey and Gregory, eds., *Religion and Society in T'ang and Sung China*, p. 244. Most scholars researching popular religion however (including Valerie Hansen and Daniel Overmyer) prefer "licentious". See in particular Overmyer, "Attitudes Towards Popular Religion in Ritual Texts of the Chinese State: *The Collected Statutes of the Great Ming*," CEA 5, (1989-1990): 201; and Hansen, *Changing Gods*, pp. 84-86. Richard von Glahn prefers "profane" or "profligate", arguing in his