cases and for the severest offenses did the guilds envision application of the most extreme punishment available to them: expulsion from the guild, which deprived a man of his livelihood.\textsuperscript{136}

Various other measures were used from time to time to enforce observance of the guild’s rules. Government approval of the goals and regulations of the guild and cooperation in enforcing them were sometimes sought and obtained, but this means was resorted to rather seldom, the guilds preferring to settle their problems internally and with their own resources. Carving regulations on stone tablets and setting them up in public view was also a means of providing an extra aura of authority for guild decisions.\textsuperscript{137} These and other measures, however, remained clearly of secondary importance as means of coercion.\textsuperscript{138}

Finally, a note on the overall importance of guilds in the lives of their members. Most members probably had little connection with the guild outside of special occasions. General meetings, as we have seen, were usually held only once a year. Even in the minority of guilds that had their own halls, the hall does not seem to have served as a social center in the sense of, say, the hyphenated “national homes” of immigrant groups or the V.F.W. halls in the United States. With the exception of occasional references to guild members using the hall for a party and, in certain merchant guilds, references to its serving as a center of business activity, the guildhall seems to have been relatively unused between meetings.\textsuperscript{139} One should probably not assess very highly, then, the importance of guilds in the daily life of the cities during the early Ch'ing. They did introduce a principle of cohesion among the members that would otherwise have been absent, but they did not replace or even greatly affect the more basic ties of home and shop.

School-Temple and City God

STEPHAN FEUCHTWANG

When I started to research the “state cult” I had very little idea what it might have been. I knew that it was centered in the administrative capitals of China, i.e., in cities. Now that I have done some research,\textsuperscript{*} I find it difficult to make my report of it directly relevant to the quality of urban life in traditional China, although it is entirely relevant to the relations between rulers and ruled in traditional China and therefore in some degree to the power structure within cities and to urban-rural relations. The state cult was of course closely related to sociopolitical control, but the objects of control were not so much the populace at large as the bureaucracy and local elites. The use of religion to control the common people may have been legitimated by the state cult, but in manipulating the masses, the managers of society necessarily looked to religious arenas outside the strict confines of official religion.

A second source of difficulty lies in the number of gross misconceptions of Chinese religion that have grown up over the years as a result in part of overcategorization, by which (for example) we have too easily identified Confucianism with state orthodoxy. The official religion as I found it in my research is not the same as the Confucianism we associate with the Confucian classics or with the schools in which they were studied. Faced with the problem of how to describe the state orthodoxy, I decided to focus on documenting the religious attitudes of officials and on discussing the place of the official religion in Chinese religion as a whole. This is not, therefore, a strict account of the rites, deities, and edifices of the official religion, although these are all mentioned in the course of the discussion.

I have translated and studied as the official religion (1) what is written

\textsuperscript{*} The research on which I based this paper was conducted in March and April of 1968, thanks to the generosity of the Subcommittee on Research on Chinese Society.
in the Ta Ch'ing hui-tien under the headings “Ts’u-ch’i” (shrines and sacrifices), “Chi’-ssu” (sacrifices and offerings), or the combined term “Ts’u-ch’i-su,” and (2) what is contained in local gazetteers in the sections entitled “Su-tien” (sacificial statutes), where official temples are listed before or apart from those of the popular religion and from those specifically Buddhist or Taoist. Official temples were also specified as t’ao-miao, “altars and temples,” whereas all others were called ts’u-miao, “shrines and temples,” but it must be remembered that all temples given in gazetteers were listed by their scholarly, not their popular, nomenclature, and that a great many popular temples were not listed in the gazetteers at all. Su-tien, the official religion, was also the term for rites addressed to deities, and I have of course included them; but the many other official rites not directed to deities have not been considered. The Hui-tien was a collection of statutes that was revised several times during the Ch’ing dynasty; I have used the one issued in the K’ang-hsi reign.

In the section devoted to the affairs of the Board of Rites (Li-pu), the whole range of li includes not only the official religion but also mourning rites, court etiquette, the protocol of dress at court, enfeoffment, reception of foreign dignitaries, the making and receiving of presentations, and propaganda such as hsiao-yieh (the recital of the Imperial Edict in rural districts). The scope of the Board of Rites follows the example of the Li-chi (Record of Rites), only two sections of which—the “Chi-fa” and “Chi-i”—concern the official religion. I mention this here merely as a reminder before I narrow my sights that the official religion was only part of what we would call etiquette, protocol, ceremonial, and propriety.

“Religion” is here confined to communal, not individual, worship. “Worship” may be taken as avowed communication with beings who are not subject to the physical conditions of the known world. There are those who will count Chinese religions as three: Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist. Others feel unable to include Confucianism as a religion, because the Confucian classics contain passages expressing skepticism over, or dismissing the issue of, the existence of “gods,” and drawing attention rather to “spirits” the examples, names, and reputations of men and women who have lived and died. “Spirits,” then, are heroes—historical figures whose examples are to be emulated, or one’s own ancestors whose reputations are to be maintained, enhanced, or created. To make the contrast clear, we may say that such “spirits” exist only as names, whereas “gods” are believed to be agents.∗

∗ “Agent,” according to the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, is “The efficient cause, . . . any natural force or substance which produces phenomena.”

School-Temple and City God

I do not want to prejudice the question of the religion of the scholar-officials of China, nor do I want to start with undefined categories that may be misleading. I want to offer a view of certain Chinese institutions of symbolic action as they were distributed throughout Chinese society. This view is logically anterior to the labeling of these institutions as Buddhist or Taoist or Confucian, which we may do either according to philological analysis and the history of the texts used in these institutions or according to the way the participants labeled the institutions and themselves. In other words, on principle, I am making a distinction between action (and institution) and interpretation (recording, philosophizing, and labeling). I am aware of the dangers of such an enterprise when it is itself based on documents checked with direct observation only in a much later period (Taiwan, 1966–68). But I have done my best to be sure that what I am reporting was real and not just paper action.

The Confrontation in the City

The establishment of an administrative city was marked by the building of city walls. Other emblems were a temple to the City God (Ch’eng-huang miao) and a school-temple (hsieh-kung) within the walls, and at least one of the prescribed open altars outside the walls. This would seem to have been a minimum at the lowest level of administration, the county.†

In only very rare cases would a city have been purely administrative. It would have been founded at or near to an already existing economic center, or else it would itself have become the basis for the development of economic functions. Among the institutions almost invariably found in economic central places were temples of the popular religion, some of them centers of cults that were shared by or adopted into the religion of the state. Two such that I will draw attention to were the cults of Kuan-ti, god of trustworthiness and loyalty in war and trade, and T’ien-hou (or, to give her equivalent popular name, Ma-tsu), goddess of seamstresses. Both deities were very popular as patrons for merchant associations in the Ch’ing period. T’ien-hou more so in coastal than in inland regions.

In instances where government funds officially raised were sufficient, officials could afford to build separate temples to these gods for their exclusive use, as was the case for example in the administrative walled city of Tai-peh-fu, built late in the nineteenth century next to the flourishing port of Meng-chia. But even in such instances exclusion of the non-official populace could not last long in the life of the city as it developed its own markets and nonofficial institutions. In the case of Tai-peh-fu, repair funds for temples came from the pockets of nonofficials. In at
least one of the city temples to T'ien-hou or to Kuan-ti—there were often several to each even within the city—officials and nonofficials would mix.

Merchants desirous of converting their wealth into status and moving into the literati class would contribute to the building of official temples. In the absence of official temples, they would sponsor the building of temples to gods or spirits included in the official cults. An example of this face-improving enterprise—an even better one than the building of temples to Kuan-ti and Ma-tsu, who were popular in all classes of the population—was the building of temples dedicated to both Confucius and Kuan-ti, often called Wen-wu miao and often founded in conjunction with the establishment of a private school.*

I hope to show that there was also a counterprocess in which popular cults were incorporated into the official religion (ssu-tien). Kuan-ti and Tien-hou are only two examples of popular cults thus adopted, and in their cases the adoption went so far that temples to them were built by officials throughout China. The scholar's equivalent to the merchant's Tien-hou cult was the cult of Wen-ch'ang, which also had temples within and without the official religion throughout China. There were other cults that were less widespread, or that were honored by officials but not yet formally incorporated into the ssu-tien. These borderline temples were often the largest and most frequented in a city. A case in point seems to have been the Ling-ying miao, in Ningpo, cult center of a deity honored since the twelfth century by tablets with the imperial seal for various acts of protection of officials traveling at sea but not accepted into the ssu-tien.

Although the most crowded and striking to look at, these temples were below or at the bottom of the official religious hierarchy, which was organized into ceremonial divisions. Tables 1, 2, and 3 chart this ceremonial hierarchy. All the open, suburban altars (Table 2), except for the altar to the local unworshipped dead, are superior to the mass of the temples in the lowest level. When we move up from this point, we find a sharp distinction from popular religion. It is possible to detect the gradation by exclusion from the relevant sections of the gazetteers who sponsored the building of and repairs to the several shrines. Since in at least half the cases this had not been recorded, our findings must be crude. But it appears that the altars to the land and grain and to wind-rain-thunder-clouds, as well as certain shrines to Hsien-nung (god of agriculture) and Huo-shen (god of fire), were, in the two prefectures I investigated (Ning-po and T'ai-wan), the only ones sponsored exclusively by officials.* In the case of Hsien-nung and Huo-shen, however, there were other temples, not officially sponsored. This leaves the two open altars as the only exclusively official cults.

Other cults occurring in seven or more of the eleven counties are, in order of the increasing involvement of nonofficials, the altar for unworshipped dead (officials and gentry); the school-temple and Wen-ch'ang (officials, gentry, and commoners, with gentry outnumbering commoners); the City God; and Tien-hou and Kuan-ti (officials, gentry, and commoners, with commoners outnumbering gentry).*

Since the Li-chi was written, every dynasty has had its version of the official religion, and the changes it underwent as dynasty succeeded dynasty, and reign succeeded reign, were substantial. Even the several open altars (to the land and grain, to wind-rain-thunder-clouds, to mountains and rivers, and to unworshipped dead—all cults directly sanc-

* In Taiwan, Hsin-chu, Tainan, Kao-hsiung, and Lu-kang all had Wen-wu miao; and so did Tainpo in the New Territories of Hong Kong. All of them were nonofficial temples. Both merchants and local scholars would have joined in such enterprises.

---

**Table 1. The Three Levels of Sacrifice in Late Ch'ing Official Religion**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Great Sacrifice (tszu-szu)</td>
<td>Rites at this level were conducted at the imperial capital only, either at the open suburban altars or at the temples within the walls. Sacrificial animals were washed three lunar months in advance; there was a three-day fast before the rite; and the emperor in person was the leading participant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Middle Sacrifice (chung-szu)</td>
<td>Rites at this level were conducted at the imperial capital and at lower-level capitals. Sacrificial animals were washed 30 days in advance; there was a two-day fast before the rite; and either the emperor in person (at the imperial capital) or a delegated official of the appropriate administrative rank (at lower-level capitals) was the leading participant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Common Sacrifice (ch'ien-szu)</td>
<td>Rites at this level were conducted at all capitals. Sacrificial animals were washed 10 days in advance; there was a one-day fast before the rite; and an official of the appropriate administrative rank was the leading participant.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Great Sacrifice (tsu-su) Level

Rites at this level were held in the imperial capital only, at the Ts'ai Hsiao (Great Temple).
The objects of worship were the ancestors of the reigning emperor, great imperial predecessors, and great statesmen and warriors. Worship was held on auspicious days in the 1st month of each of the four seasons; on Chi Ling Ming; and on the birthdays and deathdays of the objects of worship.
The color of the silk offerings and notices (petitions) was white with yellow borders.

Middle Sacrifice (chung-su) Level

Emperors of previous dynasties were worshiped at the imperial capital only, at the Li-t'ai Ts'ai-wuang Hsiao (Temple of All Former Emperors).
The rite was held on an auspicious day in the 8th lunar month.
The color of the silk offerings and notices was white with yellow borders.

Common Sacrifice (chün-su) Level

1. Kuan-ti (Imperial Ruler of the Peaceful, or God of War) was worshiped at the Wu Hsiao (Temple of Military Culture) on the 13th day of the 5th lunar month.
2. Hsien-i (Former Physicist) or Huang-ti, Fu-hsi, and Shen-nung (the Three Emperors of Man, Heaven, and Earth) were worshiped at the Tsu-shuang Hsiao (Temple of Three Emperors) on the 1st day of the 1st hsin on the 2nd and 11th lunar months.
3. Hsio-shen (the Fire God) was worshiped at the Hsio-shen Hsiao on the 23rd day of the 6th lunar month.
4. Lung-shen (the Dragon God) and other gods of water, rain, and sea travel were worshiped at the Lung-shen Ts'ai.
5. Ch'ung-huang (the City God), often in association with military gods and the gods of the North and of the Sacred Eastern Peak, was worshiped at the Chi Hsiao, huang Hsiao on an auspicious day in the 8th lunar month and on the emperor's birthday.

Sources: Ts'un Chi Ling Hsiang, K'ang-hsi edition (1690), and contemporary local gazetteers.

Table 3. Rites Held at Open Suburban Altars, Ch'ing China

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sacrificial level and location of altar</th>
<th>Object of worship</th>
<th>Shape of altar</th>
<th>Date of worship</th>
<th>Color of offerings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great sacrifice, Imperial cap, S suburb</td>
<td>Ti'en (Heaven); plus the tablets of WRTC* and of the heavenly bodies (from the agriculture complex)</td>
<td>Round mound</td>
<td>Winter solstice, and (from 1742) New Year's morning (harvest prayer)</td>
<td>Green-blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great sacrifice, Imperial cap, N suburb</td>
<td>Ti (Earth); plus tablets of the 5 mountains and of the 4 seas (from the agriculture complex)</td>
<td>Square with a pit</td>
<td>Summer solstice</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great sacrifice, Imperial cap, N suburb</td>
<td>She-chi (Land and Grain)</td>
<td>Square with a pit</td>
<td>5th stem day of the 1st hsin of the middle months of Spring and Autumn</td>
<td>The 5 colors of the 5 elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle sacrifice, Imperial cap, E suburb</td>
<td>Chao-jih (Sun)</td>
<td>Round mound</td>
<td>Vernal equinox of odd-numbered stem years</td>
<td>Red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle sacrifice, Imperial cap, W suburb</td>
<td>Hsi-yieh (Moon)</td>
<td>Square with a pit</td>
<td>Autumnal equinox of certain branch years</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle sacrifice (after 1726), Imperial cap, S suburb</td>
<td>Hsien-nung (patron deity of agriculture); plus, at the imperial capital only, tablets of WRTC and MR, and the Great Year Calendar</td>
<td>Round mound</td>
<td>Hsien-nung, 12th branch day of the 1st hsin of the middle month of Spring: Great Year Calendar, the New Year</td>
<td>White with yellow borders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle sacrifice, provincial and lower-level caps, N or S suburb</td>
<td>Local Land and Grain; and, on separate altars, WRTC and local MR</td>
<td>Square</td>
<td>Land and Grain, 5th stem day of the 1st hsin of the middle months of Spring and Autumn; WRTC and MR, 6th branch day of the 1st hsin of the middle months of Spring and Autumn</td>
<td>Land and Grain, black; WRTC and MR, white</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common sacrifice, provincial and lower-level caps, N suburb</td>
<td>Li (the local unworshipped dead, overseen by the City God)</td>
<td>Square</td>
<td>Chi Ling Ming, Chung-yian (the 15th day of the 7th month); and Meng-tung (the 1st day of the 10th month)</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Ts'un Chi Ling Hsiang, K'ang-hsi edition (1690), and contemporary local gazetteers.

tioned in the *Li-chi*—have been changed in their position around the city, merged, separated, neglected, or rehabilitated, both in the ritual statutes and in practice. The official cults that occurred with greater regularity in county capitals, including those to Confucius and the City God, were only indirectly sanctioned by the *Li-chi* and its criteria for the Five Sacrifices (the *wu chi-sau*). They all had histories of entailment as gods and promotion through feudal ranks of nobility, and they were all popular as well as official. Judging from the Ning-p'oo gazetteers, which are continuous from the Sung to the Ch'ing, the cults that survived most steadily and for the longest time were those of the schools (to Confucius) and of Kuan-t'i and the City God. Cults to other gods derived from the popular religion were subject to the vagaries of imperial favor; canonization might last only as long as a dynasty.

People without degrees or aspirations to join the scholar-official class did not generally frequent the school temple for the official worship of Confucius and worthy Confucians; much less the open altars. But even where commoners and officials shared temples, official rituals were distinctive in their ceremonial, in the absence of priests, and in the strict order of participation by official rank and degree.

The county capital was the lowest level of the hierarchy of temples and altars, in nonadministrative cities and towns, and in all lower places in the central-place hierarchy, temples of popular cults proliferated. It was in administrative capitals that popular religion met with and contrasted with official religion: the theater, noise, color, urgency, and bustle (in short, *je-nao*) of the popular temple contrasted with the dignified and ascetic seclusion of the official shrines, the market contrasted with the yamen.

There were several ways in which popular temples and markets were associated. A temple might have housed the figure of the patron deity of a guild and have been the meeting place for guild members for both secular and sacred business—that is to say, annual worship, feasts, and theatrical entertainment. The open space in front of the temple, the temple yard, might have been the site for regular markets or fairs, as well as for theater; temple dues would then have been collected from the traders. In other cases a popular temple might have produced its own commerce on festival days in ritual goods (incense, spirit money, candles), food, snacks, fortune-telling and so on. The official altars and the school-temple had none of these associations.

The *City God temple* on the other hand, as much as if not more than any other shrines, were the sites of markets and all other kinds of *je-nao*. The cult of the City God was only partially incorporated in the Ch'ing su-

---

**School-Temple and City God**

Tien. Yet because such temples existed only in cities (unlike the temples of other popular cults), they were closely associated with the idea of official government—so much so that officials had to perform certain ritual duties at them. City God temples were linked according to the organizational principle characteristic of the altars of the official religion. Various aspects of the position of the City God cult as a point of transformation between the official and the popular religions will be developed throughout this paper. Here I want to dwell briefly on some of the marks of distinction between the two, including the organizational principle I just mentioned. Gods in the top and middle ranges of official ritual were represented by narrow upright blocks of wood called *shen-wei* (deity position) or *shen-p'ai* (deity board) or just *chu* (roughly, "host"). These blocks were inscribed with the full title of the being to be worshiped at them, and they resembled in all ways the tablets for ancestors on domestic altars and in ancestral halls. As far as I know there was no special ceremony for the consecration of a tablet, not even the dotting that was done to inject the spirit of the deceased into an ancestral tablet. This contrasts strongly with the elaborate rite for the consecration of images in the popular religion, which was an elaborate version of the dotting rite.

The eyes of a properly made and consecrated image, I have heard it said, should light up when incense is burned in front of them. Such an image is said to contain *ling* (numen, or uncanny intelligence and power). In the ceremony of consecration, the priest inscribes a mirror or an incense pot in front of the image with a charm headed by the character *ling*; he then performs *fa* (magic ritual), in which all the parts of the body, which are a microcosm of the universe, are invoked and an oath written in the air for each. A crude form of consecration involves the killing of a chicken and the dotting of the image's ears (by which the god hears prayers) with its blood. Also dotted with blood are the mouth (by which the *ling* of the god responds to prayer), the eyes (*yin* and *yang*), and the nose (*human society*), as an expert told me in Taiwan. Into the back of the image are placed the five precious metals, the five viscera, plaited threads in the colors of the Five Elements, and a piece of bread or a living thing—for instance, a bee. To purify the image, Hsü-shen is then invoked in some cases, a stretch of burning coals or burning spirit money laid out and the image carried over it.

Ideally, in the regulations of the *Hui-tien*, the official cults celebrated at the open altars and the City God cults were set in a ranked hierarchy that exactly paralleled the administrative one, i.e., the county-level cults were subdivisions of the prefectural-level cults, and so on up to the
imperial capital. The regulations were not often put into practice exactly, but their principle was followed. For instance, the tablet at the altar of the land and grain would have inscribed on it "hsien land and grain" at a county-capital altar, "fu land and grain" at a prefectural-capital altar, and so on. The school-temples were also subdivided. They were ranked according to administrative level and there were rules specifying the rank and position of the chief celebrants—prefect for prefecture, magistrate for county. It is not surprising that the official religion should have been organized in this way parallel to, and indeed dovetailed with, the imperial bureaucracy. In contrast is the principle of organization that was peculiar to popular religion. A temple that had grown up around a peculiarly powerful manifestation of a deity became a center of that deity’s cult from which shrines subdivided by a process known, in southeastern China at least, as “division of incense” (fen-hsiang) or “division of power” (fen-ling). There were, for instance, according to the Republican Yin hsien tung chih, in the first urban district of Yin hsien twelve branch temples of the cult whose center was the above-mentioned Ling-yung miao in Ningpo.\* The most important ideological difference between the two principles of organization was that the popular division was that of a specific shen-ming (god) and his power, or of the place where the god had been especially manifest; official division, in the case of City Gods and official altars, was based on administrative level, independent of the shen-ming. The structure of official cults was not subject to the vagaries of supernatural power and its manifestations. As for the borderline cults as that of Tien-hou (Ma-tsun) on the popular side, continued worship of a shen-ming depended on repeated miracles—response to prayers. Once a deity was adopted by the su-tien, however, worship of it was a remembrance and became a regular spring and autumn duty.

The bureaucratic division of areas into lesser areas of supernatural administration continued down into the countryside below the county level. But the division of power was peculiar to the popular religion; and, in Taiwan at least (and I see no reason in this case why Taiwan should be exceptional), many city temples were and are the centers of networks of local village temples—networks established by the ritual of the division of incense from the city temple’s incense burner. At the popular level, the social jurisdiction of a temple—whether that temple is a bureaucratic subdivision of another, a center of a network, a branch temple, or an independent temple—is known as fu-hsia (those beneath its incense burner). As far as I know, this expression was never used for official temples. It signifies the absence of the discrimination by rank and

School-Temple and City God

class that characterized the official cults. A popular temple’s area is defined purely territorially—all those within a given territory, whatever their rank or class, are expected to participate in its major festivals, at least by paying the ritual maintenance tax.

A point I shall develop later is that village temples had the character of being for the village area what the City God temple was for the capital. But it was not these local village temples (very often centers or divisions of fen-hsiang networks) that the officials who wrote the gazetteers considered to be subdivisions of their own cult and therefore the only proper temples for the people of the county. The only ceremonies they encouraged for the people were spring and autumn rites at the temples they called she or t’u-ku shen, or at the alters for li. Virtuous local elders, not officials, were supposed to officiate at them. The she temples were obviously considered to be subdivisions of the capital’s she-chi (land and grain) altar, and the li a subdivision of the capital’s t or hsien-li (unworshiped dead) altar. What they were calling she temples were in fact what the people generally call t’u-li (local territory) temples. What they would have liked to think of as local li shrines I think must have been what in northern Taiwan are usually called Yu-ying-kung (Responsive Gentlemen)—a euphemism for those dead that have become malicious, that have to be calmed with offerings of food and money, and that in some cases may reverse their negative power into a positive beneficial one in order to pass out of purgatory.\*

The official interpretations were attempts at controlling popular religion. It would appear from a passage in the gazetteer of Fo-shan town in Kwantung, quoted by C. K. Yang,\* that this nominalistic control was sometimes converted into practice. It is there described how the rites of the “earth and grain god” in every neighborhood of one hundred households were (or should be?) used for “the reading of the law and the elucidation of the agreements” to help the poor and aged, and for feasting in order of seniority and rank. In this way “officials who are skilled in government use the gods to assemble the people, and use the congregation to demonstrate the rules. This may be a good way to improve the customs and traditions.”

Kung-chuan Hsiao in his Rural China considered the state religion to be a form of ideological control in nineteenth-century China, putting it after the hsiang-chieh (Imperial Edict) lecture system. I want now to

\* There are a number of other names for similar types of shrines. Common in other parts of Taiwan is Wan-li Tung-kuei (Ten Thousand Joys for Those Returned or Gathered Together), another euphemistic title for shrines containing the bones of those found dead—for example, the bones of the unknown soldier and the unidentified stranger.
sketch out the attitude of officials to the rites as a form of control—how rites were to be used, and what they were meant to encourage and discourage.

**Ideological Control**

Performing the rites correctly was believed to have lasting effect, to exemplify the order of the universe, and to maintain the correct distinctions. Mencius, whose work (as part of the Confucian classics) was chanted in the school-temples much as sutras were in Buddhist shrines, excoriated as heretics the epicurean Yang Chu and the indiscriminating humanitarian Mo Ti. Lack of discrimination and egalitarianism would lead to cannibalism and bestiality, he wrote. The school-temples, or more colloquially, the Temple of Civil Culture (Wen ming), was as its name implies both school and shrine. It was in two parts. One was centered on the main shrine, in which stood the tablets for Confucius and his peers. The other half was centered on the Ming-lun T’ang (the hall in which human relationships are illuminated). Next to it was a small pagoda mainly for Wen-ch’ang, the patron of learning, but often also for tablets in memory of renowned local officials and scholars. Magistrate Chou of Chu-lo hsien in Taiwan rebuilt the school-temple in the capital of his county in 1715 and added a Ming-lun T’ang, which to his expressed regret it had lacked. Since the school’s establishment, he wrote, the county had had to wait thirty years for a place of ritual, music, and instruction in the teaching of the three ancient dynasties (Hsia, Shang, and Chou), which illuminate the human relationships (ruler-official, father-son, husband-wife, elder brother—younger brother, friend-friend).

As the provincial governor of Fukien had written in his memorial for the completion of the Ming-lun T’ang in the capital of Taiwan (present-day Tainan), "Since there have been humans there have been human minds and human principles. Since heaven creates and earth forms, there is a Ming-lun T’ang (to make creation and formation intelligible (ming) is the function of man (ten) in the San Ts’ai—the Three Powers of Heaven, Earth, and Man). If the hall is not established then the children of gentlemen have no place to discuss and recite [chiang-sungs, the process of learning and rehearsing the classics by heart]. This would inevitably lead to the obscuring of human relationships, the destruction of human principles, and the darkening of the human mind. Men would no longer be human." 

The rites "are really the responsibility of the guardians of the land [i.e., the county magistrates]," says one of the prefaces to a handbook on ceremonial. "The ritual of all matters of worship [sau] has one root in reverence [ching]." "The rites and music and sacrificial vessels are means of reverence and of communication [t’ung] with the gods [shen-ming]. But now the rites have fallen into disarray and neglect. How can worship be serious or the keeping of the law illuminated?" This preface was written in 1835, shortly before the Opium War and the Taiping Rebellion, the beginnings of the end of the dynasty. An attempt to maintain order ritually was made by distributing the handbook to all administrative capitals so that the official religion should not be neglected. Another preface of the same handbook says that "incense and vessels [that is to say, ritual offerings] can control [keep in place, ko] the lower gods and spirits [kuei-shen]. Jade, silk, bells, and drums [other offerings and instruments of worship] can reveal the rites and music... Awe of virtue and the passing on of merit [through worship] civilize the people and form customs."

And in the 1798 gazetteer for Yin hsien it is written that the li (rites) came down to us from the golden age of Yao and Shun. "Ssu-tien rituals are composed on an altar... in order to grasp the hidden virtue of unostentatious good and spread the transforming influence of the ruler [yuan-hua, which also means the beginning of creation]."

There follows a passage on how the people are ruled if they respect the gods. "Gentlemen [chun-tzu, the literate and enlightened men] assist government well if they perform the rites and thus illuminate tradition. Prosperity results. Thus it is meritorious and scholarly. Through the secret, pure, and profound ceremony of the shen, the universe [T’ien-ti, heaven and earth] is aided and benefited and the people protected. Whereas if the altars and rites are allowed to go to rack and ruin, disaster follows."

It is evident that in the ideology of Chinese officials—who wrote the gazetteers and the handbooks on ceremonial, and who set up the shrines of the official cult—the performance of correct ritual was a vital part of man’s function in the universe, which was to order what heaven had created and earth completed. * If order was correctly maintained, there would be universal harmony and prosperity. This was government by example, the culture of nature and society. More specifically, the rites of the official religion were a form of control, control of both the people and the lower gods.

The Li-chieh supports the idea of social and spiritual hierarchies, which

---

* The gazetteers were organized and introduced by officials, who of course were never posted to their native areas. That they were outsiders writing in their official capacity undoubtedly influenced their work; in their home areas they would have been more bound to local traditions.
are, as it were, the two sides of the same ladder. Its "Chi-fa" section specifies the depth of ancestry to be worshiped for each rank in the feudal hierarchy, shortening in the climb down from the emperor until in the last rank no ancestral shrines at all are permitted. As a worshiped ancestor, the deceased is a shen. But the dead of the lowest feudal class "become kuei as soon as they die." A full discussion of this pair of concepts shen and kuei is impossible here, but a brief outline is necessary. They are variously used in the sense of spirit and of god (or demon). Any dead human is a kuei, unless he is worshiped as an ancestor or as having lived a life worthy of commemoration, in which cases he is a shen. An exalted shen, one whose life and works are highly respected and have been for many generations, is called a shen-ming. Kuei-shen I take to be a usage that developed after the time when all classes were known to worship their ancestors; it refers to the spirits of the lowest class, of the common people whose lives had not shone with any officially noteworthy merit. The lowest class of spirit given credence in official religion is formally called kuei, the unworshiped dead, otherwise known as kuei.

But the institutions of the official religion did not of themselves restrict interpretation of the category shen to the memory of ancestors and exemplars. If anything, the substantial offerings, even to Confucius, of cooked and uncooked food and of wine, and the burning of a eulogy written on silk and addressing him directly, would seem already to imply a being more active than a mere exemplar. The passage from the handbook, with its talk of communication with shen-ming and the control of kuei-shen, would also seem to imply something more active.

Magistrate Chou in the gazetteer of Chu-lo haien takes an agnostic position. He recommends, in a detailed guide to the Confucian rites, the text of a eulogy almost identical with the text given in the 1877 handbook. The one line he omits, however, is the most openly pragmatic line of all: "You maintain the constancy of the sun and moon." The rest is confined to praise of Confucius's virtue and wisdom. Chou's position meant discomfort in some of his religious duties as an official: "As to the establishment of the shrine to Wen-ch'ang, former people, considering the securing of salary and office to be scholar's luck, put the absurd god of Taoism [i.e., Wen-ch'ang] beside the former master [Confucius]. Most of the Confucian schools in the empire have borrowed in secret the blessings of the god in order to encourage students. Nor was any of this abolished by the sage men and sage ways of those who set up instruction. I record its establishment." The Kang-hsi emperor had instituted the cult of Wen-ch'ang as part of the official religion.

The phrase "borrowed in secret" would seem to indicate not a denial of the existence of "the absurd god of Taoism" and other luck-influencing gods, as one would perhaps expect, but rather a sentiment that it is wrong to have truck with them. We shall see later how this ambiguity was acted out in the official religion when the need to apply to gods for pragmatic results in the here and now became urgent, typically in times of flood and drought. The official did not then deny the existence of supernatural agencies, but he avoided dealing with such categories by employing Taoist priests to do the magic for him—thus withholding recognition, as it were.

The official religion, an institution of government, was subject to the wide range of interpretations put on it by the officials who ran it. But as a product of a ruling class and its history, it did set limits of orthodoxy. Individual officials came to it with various ideological commitments and manipulated it accordingly. There would be officials like Magistrate Chou who would concentrate on the Confucian cult, deemphasize belief in the existence of demonic and supernatural agencies, and stress the enlightening function of ritual. Performance of the correct ritual for them was an exercise in the revelation of immanent reason in the universe, a process of self-enlightenment at the same time as a demonstration of that reason, dispelling confusion from the common people and hence part of the practice of good government.

The officials could believe in a t'ien (Heaven) that was the moral nature of the universe, a metaphysical category that was dominant over all other categories, being the arbiter of their and the world's destiny (ming). This t'ien was not substantial. As Lien, the historian of Taiwan, wrote: "Good and evil depend on t'ien. What is t'ien? T'ien is something that has no voice and no smell, that you can see and yet cannot see, can hear and yet cannot hear. . . . Its meaning is naturalness [tsu-lien]. . . . This cannot be comprehended by the common people, who therefore resort to Shang-ti (supreme emperor)." Shang-ti is the personification of Heaven. But in many texts, despite Lien and those like him, Shang-ti and Heaven are used interchangeably where the sense is "moral arbiter," and are so used by the emperor himself in worship at the Altar of Heaven as part of the official religion.

The emperor was, after all, t'ien-ts'ui, "son of Heaven," and it was his prerogative alone to worship Heaven directly. There was only one altar to Heaven officially, and that was the one in the imperial capital. Its lower-level equivalent was the land and grain altar, one in every administrative capital. There is thus another side to the ideology of Lien and that is its support for this imperial prerogative—the maintenance of the idea of supreme power in the hands of the sage ruler. On the grounds
that the lower orders in their illiteracy and ignorance cannot understand  t'ien, this ideology provides for the prosecution of heterodox worship of Heaven. Alternative interpretations, or challenges to the possession of the right to the cult of Heaven, were also challenges to the ruler.

Along with Lien's strictures against popular worship of Heaven went equally strong disapproval of the use of charms and magic by Taoists, who in Lien's words, "confused the world and cheated the people like snakes and scorpions." An Imperial Edict of 1724 had made the point that Taoism was strictly for the cultivation of essence, Buddhism for the non-material, and Confucianism alone for social relations. Taoism and Buddhism were corrupt (i.e., heterodox) when they were used to affect, or worse to organize, social relations.

To refer directly to kuei and shen for material benefits instead of to law and order under enlightened government was corrupt. If gods or spirits were to be worshiped, it was only in recompense for past benefits, not in hope of future blessings. Yet government funds were spent on astronomers, geomancers, doctors, herbalists, musicians, dancers, Buddhist monks, and Taoist priests—a nice enumeration of occupations filled by literates who were nevertheless not part of the official literate class.31 Such people constituted a subclass in possession of dangerous alternative ideologies, interpretations, and religious practices.

Practice

In order to show the limits of the official religion in action, I want now to take up a number of contrasting pairs of religious practices as indexes of transformations between the official and popular religions. For the basis of my comparison I shall take for the official religion the annual or biannual ceremony of recompense (pao) called shih-tien, performed as I saw it in Taiwan for Confucius and prescribed, also for Confucius, in the 1875 handbook already cited. For the popular religion a comparable ceremony is the chiao, which is performed in local temples at intervals of a year or more.  

In both ceremonies there are ritual experts who guide the rest of the participants. And in both there are among the participants some who take leading parts and others who are generally passive. In the shih-tien, the ritual experts are members of the local directorate of education and teachers at the school. Their role is to stand on either side of the chief celebrants and guide them from their appointed places to wherever the rites demand they be—at an altar for instance—there handing them the proper offerings and announcing the proper number of kneels and kowtows they are to undergo. In the chiao, the ritual experts are Taoist religious practitioners—priests. They perform all the rites themselves, the leading participants delegating to them even the presentation of offerings and merely standing behind them, holding incense, and bowing and kneeling when signaled by the priests to do so.

The knowledge that the experts in the official religion have is qualitatively no different from that of the rest of the participants. They are set apart from the other participants only to the extent that specialists in one branch of government are from specialists in another. Neither does the ceremony itself remove them from the other participants. The leading participants lead by virtue of their rank, which has been established outside the ceremony. The knowledge of the Taoists, on the other hand, is gained only after a rite of passage that initiates them to a more sacred status than that of the rest of the population. Their knowledge is esoteric, and at points in the ceremony they propitiate those patron deities through whom they have their knowledge—deities whose worship is not shared by the other participants. And the ceremony itself gives the leading participants a more protected and more sanctified status than it gives the rest.

In both ceremonies, then, there is status differentiation; but in the shih-tien the status is extrinsic, whereas for the chiao they are intrinsic, created for and by the religious ceremonies themselves. The final selection of leading participants in the chiao is not by code, decree, or law of the land but by the authority of the chief deity of the temple concerned, before whom the candidates are announced and his approval tested for each by divination blocks. For the duration of the chiao the temple takes on the character of a government office, its lu-hua area being its administrative region; but its leaders are representatives of its population, not delegated to it as the officials of the official religion are.

All women, and all men without degrees, are entirely excluded from the shih-tien, whereas the chiao always includes the entire population of the area in the last part of its rites. For the chiao everyone in the temple's region has to be ritually clean, whereas for the shih-tien only the leading participants need be. Only the leading participants have anything to do with the offerings to the gods in the official religion. In the chiao everyone makes offerings outside the temple and in their homes, and the leading participants witness the presentation of offerings in the temple itself.

The precautions for the shih-tien fast are read out in ceremony to the
leading participants and guides three days before the main ritual: "There will be one communal fast when they [the leading participants] will lodge together in the fasting house thinking of the shen [in this case Confucius]. They will think of the shen's eating and drinking, the shen's residence, the shen's laughter and talk, the shen's will, whatever the shen enjoyed, the shen's occupations and tastes. Each will purify his own mind and be the more reverent and discreet and care for the precautions." The climax to this meditation comes on the main day of the ceremony, when the great gate of the temple is opened and the shen welcomed to the august rites and the munificent offerings. And this is the nearest there is to a physical presence of a shen in the shih-tien or, for that matter, in all the official cults where gods are represented only by tablets.

Both the shih-tien and the chiao are believed by their respective participants to have a generalized good effect. In the case of the shih-tien for Confucius and his associates, it is the spread of learning and the maintenance of civilization; and in the case of the spirits of Wind-Rain-Thunder-Clouds and Mountains-and-Rivers, for whom the shih-tien is also performed, it is the maintenance of food and shelter for all in the administrative region. But where the official would explain that disaster and confusion are avoided by respect for the proper relationships and the performance of the proper rites to glorify those that exemplified and illuminated them, the people (though not necessarily the priest) would explain that prevention of calamity and assurance of a good harvest are brought about by the protection of a god who is to be propitiated by the proper rites. To the people, then, temple ritual is performed either by officials or by priests, both of whom have ritual knowledge that they, the people, lack. There is a sense in which the god of popular religion is imperial: he sanctions statuses that in the official religion are those of the imperial government. And there is a sense in which priests are the equivalents of officials in relation to these gods.

There is a core ceremony of showing respect that is common to both shih-tien and chiao, just as the kowtow and other gestures of deference are common to all Chinese culture, and that is the san-chieh li—the triple offering of wine. But the shih-tien and the chiao differ in their elaborations of this rite, in the contexts in which they set it, in the beings respected, in the wording of the eulogies and texts read and played, and in the fact that the chiao is a manipulation of the forces of the universe (magic, if you like) involving a great number of other rites, all of them absent from the shih-tien.

Within the official religion itself, elaboration of the san-chieh li differed according to the being addressed. There were minutely specified differences in the amount of offerings, music, and obeisance required and, of course, in who constituted the proper worshipers. The official pantheon was divided largely into three levels of ritual importance, which I have charted in Tables 1, 2, and 3, indicating a few of the ritual distinctions between them. Within these levels the gods were again kept distinct by finer ritual prescriptions, such as those for the measurements of their altars, the positions of their tablets on the altars, and the number of steps up to the altar. When there was more than one god in a single temple or ceremony, the gods were ritually ranked by whether they were housed in the back or front shrines, or by whether they received as animal offerings shao-lao (which was without an ox) or t'ai-lao (with an ox). These and many other kinds of prescription were what constituted the su-tien. They defined which gods were to be worshiped by whom and at what time and place.

The chiao, in contrast, means the setting up at the center of the temple region of a ritual area that is movable and the same wherever the priests take it. It consists of the Taoist pantheon of cosmic forces and deities superimposed on whatever the shen-ming and kuei of the local temples happen to be. In other words, it is the whole structure every time and not an exclusive part of it. The chiao is a purification of the region: the gods are called upon to protect it and to act as mediators to greater powers, and the ghosts are led to keep them away from it. Shih-tien is rank-specific, whereas chiao is place-specific. Both evoke a universe, but that of the shih-tien is of rank in a hierarchy; that of the chiao is of a place as microcosm of the macrocosm.

A lesser form of shih-tien, called shih-t's'ai, was performed on the 1st and 15th of the month at the school-temple. According to the handbook, it was also performed in weddings at the visit to the bride's family, and in funerals at the viewing of the dressed corpse. Worship in ancestral temples is also, as I have observed it, a lesser form of shih-tien. There appear, then, to be two sets. The one is kin ritual, memorialism, officials, and tablets. The other is god ritual, magic, priests, and images. Nevertheless, they share a cosmology and interpenetrate in several ways, some of which we shall now examine.

The emperor's birthday was celebrated with rites very similar to those for Confucius, rehearsed, as were Confucius's rites, in the Ming-lun T'ang and performed in a Longevity Hall that was in all respects like a temple. On New Year's Day (lunar) and at the winter solstice the emperor himself in the imperial capital worshiped t'ien and his own ancestors, while simultaneously in the provinces the same rites as those for
the emperor's birthday were performed in the Ming-lun T'ang. Receiving the orders of the emperor in the provinces involved going out into the eastern suburb to welcome them much as spring was welcomed in the same suburb at the vernal equinox. "We must welcome the spring in the eastern suburb because the people rely on it, and present the military banners in the west drill yard so that confusion and evil can be suppressed before it rises. It cannot be said that the rites (li) were invented today. We are following ancient practices," says the introduction to the "Chi-sun" in the Tai-wan hsien gazetteer of 1721.

At the Altar of Heaven, as the gods and spirits were welcomed, the tablets of the gods and the imperial ancestors were brought from the temples where they were stored to the open altar where they were to be worshiped. The tablet of Huang-tien Shang-ti, God of Heaven, was put on the top terrace of the circular altar, flanked by those of the imperial ancestors. At the emperor's own flanks but on the second terrace were put, to the left and superior side the Sun and then all together the Northern Dipper, Five Planets, the Twenty-eight Lunar Mansions, and the Three-hundred-and-sixty Stars of the Heavenly Circumference. These astrological bodies were common to all Chinese religious institutions. They were used by the Directorate of Astrology for making up the ritual calendar, and by diviners for making up the annual almanac of the days propitious for weddings, opening shops, or visiting the sick, or dangerous because of monsters and kuei. And they were part of the cosmology used by Taoists in the chiao. To the emperor's right on the second terrace was the Moon and Wind-Rain-Thunder-Clouds—the latter worshiped in spring and autumn throughout the capitals of the land together with local mountains and rivers and the City God. The emperor himself sat on the second terrace, opposite and facing Huang-tien Shang-ti. He, like the gods, had been preceded to his place by his own tablet carried by his ceremonial guides to mark where he should stand for every movement in the rites. On the third terrace, behind the emperor, sat princes of the first, second, and third ranks, plus dukes. The gods' and ancestors' tablets had been taken up the sacred way—the time was predawn and the way was lighted by red lanterns—through the central opening of the gates leading to the altar, while the emperor, princes, and dukes passed through their side openings. They were guided by the presidents and officials of the Boards of Rites and Music and of the Censorate. All other officials were excluded, just as the common people were excluded from the provincial rites. The imperial progress through the city from the palace to the altar area was masked from all those not taking part. The street was cleared and the side alleys screened at their entrances by green-blue (the color of Heaven) cloth hangings. During the rites only the emperor and his guides moved. He was the sole leading participant.

As the officials claimed, the rites ordered both natural and social classes. As we move down the ranks of the tsu-tien from altars to temples, and from the highest to the lowest levels of ceremonial (see Tables 1, 2, and 3), there is an increasing persomification of natural bodies and forces, and an increasing tendency to attribute to the spirits of those who have had a personal existence the power to effect events in the here and now. The lower the deities the more they conform to a bureaucratic image of the universe, namely the filling of its parts as offices with the spirits of the worthy dead as officials. At the top level, Land and Grain, Heaven, and Earth have no title but their very names. On the second level, Wind-Rain-Clouds each have titles; the first Earl (po), the others Master (shih). At the lowest level, Ch'eng-huang (literally "walls and moats," the City God) is clearly a spiritual office. It is noteworthy that Ch'eng-huang was represented by a tablet when worshiped at the open altar and by an image when worshiped in his own temple. The City God temple was within the walls. But the tablets of the Land and Grain were kept in his temple and taken out to their altar—with the City God's own tablet—on days of worship. Similarly the tablets of Wind-Rain-Clouds were kept in the Hsien-nung temple when one was built. In the many cases where the prescriptions for the directional position of the altars were not kept, the altars for the Land and Grain, Wind-Rain-Clouds and Hsien-nung (plus his temple) were often built all in the same place.

The City God had another side. He was thought to be the otherworld (jin) equivalent of the chief of the administrative capital, the this-worldly (yang) ruler. It was the rule that an incoming magistrate, before taking up office, first seclude himself in the City God temple and report himself to the god, swearing an oath: "If I govern disrespectfully, am crafty, avaricious, get my colleagues into trouble, or oppress the people, may the shen [you] send down retribution upon me for three years." As jin administrator, the City God was welcomed as chief deity at the official rites for the unworshiped dead at their altar. He was believed to be in charge of all the spirits of the local dead, but the li were his special responsibility and were his underlings in the detection of good and evil among the living (the magistrate resorted to him in cases that he could not decide) and in the discovery of injustices in the lives of those already dead. When it came to officially still lesser rituals, the populace joined the
officials and the City God's image was used. For instance, worship of the City God for himself was not part of the statutory official religion. His annual birthday celebration was largely a popular ceremony. Yet Gray reported that in Canton on the City God's birthday the prefect in the name of the government presented for the image a new suit of silk with which wealthy families had vied to supply him, and he produced the god's jade seal which had been in his keeping for the year. This jade seal was the mark of rank by administrative level ordained by imperial decree in the Ming dynasty. It was turned by the populace into a magic implement, the stamp of which, on a charm or the garment of a sick person, could cure.

The local administrator was the emperor's delegate to the people. The City God, as his yin complement, was Heaven's delegate to the people and to their dead. Here the official either pandered to or really subscribed to the beliefs of the people. We can see how close official religion and popular beliefs are when it comes to an occasional rite such as a rain ceremony, as the following account from the 1788 gazetteer for Yin hsiien shows.

The ceremony is abundant and the power of the god [shen-ling] magnificently manifest. Pray and he responds throughout the year or when it rains too much and the people grieve to him. The shen [i.e., the City God] blesses the people munificently. Now, the year after Prefect Lu [of Ning-po] took up office there was drought. He prayed to the shen and t'ien rained. Again there was drought and again he prayed to the shen and t'ien rained. He [the prefect] illuminated the people of the prefecture. From the chin-shih [degree-holder] to the head of a Board, when they had virtue toward men shrines were built for them. How, too, can the officials for whom virtue the fathers of Yin hsiien were grateful be forgotten for even one day? The official takes benevolence to govern the people and the shen takes sincerity. So the shen controls [ko] and the people have good faith [hsien]. Therefore the people of the whole prefecture asked for an image [shen-hsiang] to be made for the temple and they bought it gown and a crown. The temple's appearance was suddenly new and awesome, uncommonly [ling] brilliant. The civil and military offered congratulations. Gentry all looked upon it with reverence. That was in 1445, on the tenth day of the eleventh month. The next year Prefect Lu went to make presentations at the Imperial Court and the magistrate of Yin hsiien asked [him to relay a request to] Marquis Yang to compose a memorial to be engraved for the beautification of the temple in the name of gentry and people.

The order of the provincial rain ceremony, as detailed for Taiwan in the Fu-chien t'ung chih, T'ai-wan fu, 1830–69, was that there should be worship first at the altar of Mountains and Streams, and then at the altar of the Land and Grain. The ceremony was to be the same as that of the regular rites, with the addition of a petition prayer for rain. All officials were to take part. Next, all were to go to read the prayer and burn incense to the City God and then to the Dragon God, in their respective temples. The Dragon God was included in the official rites only for rain ceremonies, not for the regular ones.

The officials wore court dress to the altars, but after the plea for rain had been read they changed into plain linen, so as mourning, which they continued to wear as they went to the two temples every day until rain came. In addition to the usual fast, there was a general taboo on the slaughter of animals, and thus the common people were involved. They were even more involved if sufficient rain did not come within seven days. In such a case a committee of officials was formed that went again—after a repeat of the rites at the two altars—to pray and burn incense in the City God and the Dragon God temples. If the drought was severe, the officials had to burn incense and pray in public as they walked, without parasols in the blazing sun, to the temples through the streets. In Tan-shui P'ing, Taiwan, there was a shrine to a virtuous magistrate who had died of exposure while praying for rain.

The wearing of mourning and the exposure to the elements were a penitence and an effort to move heaven; the fast was a purification. If the plea was still not successful, Taoist and Buddhist priests were ordered to plead in their ways, which for the Taoists was the chiao in the City God temple. The gazetteer qualifies this by saying that it used to be done thus in the old days, but de Groot at the end of the nineteenth century observed this stage of officials and priests praying for rain. If rain still did not come, then the image of the City God was taken out into the sun, stripped of his headgear, and sometimes chained to experience the drought himself and to move Heaven to rain. Similar events were reported for Canton by Gray on personal observation at the Dragon God temple. When rain came, the officials retreated to the exclusive altars and tablets to give thanks, dressed now in embroidered robes.

It was common practice for degree-holding scholars of literary repute to write the preliminary address to the deity for rain read in the chiao. After the address came the more esoteric Taoist rites. A Taoist handbook of the 1870's listing documents to be prepared for a number of ceremonies includes such an address (called su-t) written by a chin-shih degree-holder. Both the address and the document that follows it—an announcement text (piao-wen) that we may attribute to the Taoist compiler of the book—appeal to Heaven and all the spirits (chu shen) to put an end to the misery of drought. But the chin-shih leaves the relationship between the supernatural and the living vague. He goes so far as to call
Heaven "imperial Heaven" (Hao-tien) and to say that it would not order living things to be lost and that the spirits who protect the people would not leave them with no support. In the Taoist document the relationship is much more specific. Heaven has strength, earth has achievements; Heaven and earth have virtue, and the empyrean (shang-tsang) has mercy. The spirits have love for the people and have power (ling). Appeal is made to a list of entitled deities in this order: Hao-tien Chih-kuan Yu-huang Shang-ti (the full Taoist name of Yu-huang Shang-ti—the supreme Shen-ming); Duke of Thunder; Mother Lightning; Earl Wind; Master Rain; the forces of the five quarters; the rain Dragon God and the spirits of the dragon kings of the five lakes; the four seas; the spirits of the mountains and streams and of the land and grain. They are all besought to use their power (ling) to drive out the drought demon (or star influence—Kuei). The chin-shih never mentions the drought as a demon or as star influence, nor does he mention ling once in his prayer.

Another chin-shih’s prayer for rain addressed to the City God does, however, go further than the above su-1. This prayer refers to the ling of the City God, to his virtue as guardian of the territory, and to the shen of rain and the ling of such broad natural categories as the ocean. He implores the City God to take his appeal to the gates of Heaven. But the ling categories all occur in couples paired with references to Buddhist concepts.

The Taoist priest who lent me the handbook wrote out another plea for rain for one of his pupils to learn. It is a combination of the su-1 and the announcement text. Features not found in either of the chin-shih’s prayers are references to the cause of the drought as a Kuei and to the ling of the sage strength of the spirits of Heaven and earth, of empyrean Heaven, and of the thunder god, who is to open the gates of Heaven with his poils. Most importantly, this plea states the intention to establish communication with Heaven by means of a fu, a document that is a cross between a memorial and an order (and is usually translated as charm) and that is held by the Taoist during the prayer.

With the concept of malignant influences to be expelled by the use of charms we have moved completely out of the realm of official religion, for only Taoists use charms. A glimpse at some of the oaths, or commands, and the movements prescribed to accompany the burning and brandishing of the charms takes us beyond the bureaucratic universe of the announcement text mentioned earlier. For these more esoteric rites refer to less anthropomorphic forces of the universe such as the spirits (chhi) of the four quarters, of the Five Elements, and of yin and yang. A new imagery of cosmic forces and of alchemy is here introduced into the rain ceremony, and into all occasions when the chiou is performed. The Taoist priest seeks to concentrate in himself as a microcosm forces of the universe sufficient for him to realign things that have gone out of balance and to counter malignant forces that have come into play.

One can move from popular religion into the Taoist as well as into the official religious traditions. The two shared a common ground of metaphysical speculation. But it is in Taoism and not in the official religion that the metaphysical categories of this cosmology are applied as real forces. In the official religion, the notion of a hierarchical structure in the moral universe is consistently displayed. This notion is anthropomorphized as it approaches popular religion, for the metaphor of bureaucracy becomes increasingly elaborate as the spirits of men who have died take on greater and greater powers and the representations of gods are themselves treated as having power. The distribution of this power is through a hierarchy, that is to say by delegation through ranks from the top. The image of bureaucracy is applied to the universe in Taoist religion, too, and with it the attribution of substantial powers to the spirits of the dead—again as Taoism approaches popular usage. But between Taoist religion and popular religion—the former in its application of transcendental metaphysical categories; the latter in the use of the concept ling, in particular—an alternative relationship is added to that of delegation. It is the diffusion and concentration of power from a center. In Chinese metaphysical tradition this is the concentration of power in any spot of time or space as a center appropriately oriented to the greater arrangement of power on a transcendent plane. The ultimate center at the most transcendent plane is known as the great unique (Lui-ti and its synonyms). One may call this a process of identification, and it is common to Taoist religion, alchemy, and geomancy.

Popular religion is pragmatic religion; metaphysical categories are latent in concrete phenomena. Power is immanent, manifested in extraordinary phenomena and events, and tapped from them. At the same time shen and kuei can become gods and demons of this immanent power and can be brought under control through the officials of a supernatural bureaucracy. Taoist priests perform rites in the name of these gods and demons; officials do not.

Bureaucratic Control

By a regulation promulgated in the first year of the Ch’ing period, the state sponsored the building of shrines to celebrated officials and local worthies. Candidates for canonization were to be recommended to the emperor, who would authorize their enshrinement. The criteria for can-
onization were contained in five statutes of the Li-chi. Now it is true that almost all popular temples were also dedicated to former humans, many of whom had lived in or administered the localities where they were enshrined. In Ningpo, a number of popular temples not included in the ssu-tien or else crossing the line between official and popular (having been built by officials but having no official rites performed in them) were dedicated to past officials posted to Ningpo—many of whom had relieved the people by reducing taxes in times of hardship.

There was certainly an overlap between the official and the popular religions, and there was no exchange of gods, or rather a transformation of each other’s gods, between them. It was characteristic of the popular—unofficial religion that the former official had to manifest his power as a god if he were to continue being worshiped. To be worshiped officially, a candidate must have been worthy by official standards of virtue—loyalty to the emperor, and so forth—and recommended by the appropriate officials. Like the degree system, this was open to corruption. Hsiao has shown how local gentry bribed the appropriate officials to recommend their ancestors for canonization.

The principle of judging a shen by his life as a human was often abandoned, however, especially where the shen had become very popular. Canonization of the latter into the official religion was a form of control.

More direct means of control have been documented by others, but we can mention here the bureaus in every administrative capital for the registration of Taoists and Buddhists, and for the commissioning of one of their number for such official services as the rain ceremony. This had the effect of creating an orthodoxy under official control. At its highest point was the head of the Cheng-t’ien, the so-called Taoist pope, who was given the task of appointing jointly with the emperor former officials and worthies who should fill the posts of the City Gods of the empire.

There are many examples of popular cults that were adopted into the ssu-tien because the shen had been officially recommended for saving emperors’ or officers’ lives (e.g., Ningpo’s Hsieh-chung shiao to the sixth general who died defending Su-yang city against the forces of An Lu-shan), or for producing rain (e.g., Ningpo’s Pai-lung-wang shiao, a Dragon God temple to two Sung-period brothers who lived in the mountains). Kuan-ti, the various gods of Wen-ch’ang, and T’ien-hou are examples of the most thoroughgoing adoption, for they were recommended so many times from so many different places that in the Ch’ing period it was ordered that official temples to them be built—in all capitals for Kuan-ti and Wen-ch’a’ng, and in all coastal capitals for T’ien-hou.

It was characteristic of this class of beings that they were reputed to have led unorthodox lives, or not to have fulfilled their allotted span, or to have met violent death. Kuan-ti was supposed to have died in battle without blood descendents. T’ien-hou to have died a virgin. It was this extraordinary aspect about them that manifested ling. As kuei their unspent force was dangerous. They chose to use it positively, to bring prosperity to those who prayed to them. With their incorporation in the ssu-tien, an official interpretation of their deeds and function was imposed and an orthodoxy dictated by the Board of Rites.

The school-temple and the City God were both the oldest and the most constant features of the county-level cities I have investigated. There is a case to be made for their being the two most essential features of the official religion: the City God was the focus of a religion based on natural forces and ghosts, and thus was the god for the control of the peasantry, as it were; the school-temple was the center for the worship of sages and exemplars of official virtues, for the spirits of bureaucracy.

The school-temple was the center of the cult of literacy. For Confucians the spirit was in the written word, not in any object or image or natural body. The written word was enough; it was the vehicle of tradition, the trace of the sages and of the golden age. In most Wen-ch’ang temples there was an incinerator for the respect of the written word. It was, in theory, the only place where scraps of paper containing writing could be destroyed, since it was a shrine to the inventor of writing.

To scholars, skill in writing was the way up the official ladder. Worship of Wen-ch’ang was only one of many ritual observances by which members of the scholar-official class “borrowed in secret” blessings for scholars’ luck. To the illiterate people, writing meant statutes and decrees, on the one hand, the means by which their rulers governed them, and secret charms, on the other, known only to the initiated and effective as cures for sickness or ill-luck.

There was a dialectic in which officials adopted deities from popular religion and bureaucratized them, while the people worshiped gods that were like magic officials or that were magic official deities. Gods that in popular religion were fluid, whose identities flowed into one another, whose functions were potentially universal, and who were magic in their ability to metamorphose and to fuse man and nature in themselves, were in the official religion standardized and classified, minute distinctions and the separation of rites and cults keeping them apart.

Taoism offered confirmation of an alternative to the official type of power structure. To place the official religion in a completed context it would be necessary to show how Buddhism offered a third tradition out of popular religion.
As a last point, let me make it clear that what I have described as the
official religion did not constitute the religion of all those who were, or
who aspired to be, officials. In his home county before he became an of-
cicial, in his nonofficial capacity while he was an official, and when he
retired, a scholar-official might well sponsor nonofficial temples and take
part in nonofficial rites. At the very pinnacle of the hierarchy, the Ch'ing
emperors had their nonofficial religion in the inner palace. The
official religion with the office of emperor at its head was an institution of gov-
ernment; and, like the examinations, possession of it and the content of
it could be disputed and changed. On either side of the official religion,
so to speak, were on the one hand the shu-yuan and on the other the
secret societies. Outside the city were the places of Buddhist and Taoist
retreat. All of them were places where the institutions of government and
the official religion could be disputed. The walled cities of administration
stood for official power. The power of nonofficial religious institutions
and the governed lay beyond the walls in the countryside and in un-
walled central places.

Urban Social Control
SYBILLE VAN DER SPRENKEL

In most societies the law and legal institutions have been concerned
with the resolution of conflicts and disputes: "The pervasive problems
of conflict and conflict resolution are central in legal studies," to quote
a recent writer. Can the same be said of China? And were there dif-
fences between urban and rural communities in this respect? And
again, although modern sociologists tend to think of the various norms
and mechanisms that arise out of social interaction rather than of a
generalized entity, social control, may this concept still have usefulness
when one is thinking of a premodern society? Perhaps these questions
may serve as a starting point for our inquiry.

It must be stressed at the outset that in traditional China "urban"
was not a category to be sharply distinguished from "rural." Conse-
quently, we are dealing here with a sector that is part of the general
spectrum of social behavior, not a sharply differentiated and localized
category. The idea that the degree of urbanization varies along a con-
tinuum is applicable also in this field: no Chinese communities ever
established themselves as municipalities possessing defined powers of
independent jurisdiction. Town and country were alike governed by
a blend of two different kinds of organization: the first, the territorial
network of the centralized imperial authority reaching from the top
downward to the family or household at the base, the seat of whose
administration was merely located within one city in the han; and the
second, the customary unofficial organization of overlapping groups and
associations, which arose not by design or by explicitly established right
but spontaneously wherever and whenever groups of people associated
regularly and shared neighborhood, activities, cult practices, common
interests, or general interdependence. It will be the purpose of this