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WANG MINGMING

Shiding Village

Popular Authority, Life History, and Social Power

Between July and October 1995, I undertook a social anthropological investigation in Shiding[1] township (*xiang*) in Taibei county, Taiwan, a restudy of work done by the British anthropologist Stephan Feuchtwang. Shiding township is situated in the mountains on the border of the basin to the southeast of Taibei. Two centuries ago, this township was still an untouched forest, sparsely inhabited by only a few Taiwanese aborigines (*gaoshan zu*). In the Xianfeng period (1851–61) of the Qing dynasty, Minnan-speaking people, who had originally migrated from southern Fujian, moved from Taibei city to this area and reclaimed the land, subsequently planting sweet potatoes, rice, tea leaves, and other crops. Later, the Japanese colonial authorities continued to use the popular name for the place, calling it "Shiding township," which was further subdivided into the three subtownships (*qu*) of Shiding, Getou, and Fenglin. In 1920, in the course of local administrative

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reform, the three subtownships were combined into one administrative village (*zhuang*), under Wenshan prefecture (*jun*) of Taibei; the village was divided into fifteen watches (*bao*), and a watchhead (*baozheng*), charged with basic-level administrative responsibility, was appointed for each. In 1945, control of the village was shifted to Taibei prefecture (*zhou*), and it was again called "Shiding township." The fifteen watches of the Japanese period were changed to eleven villages (*cun*). In 1975, this was again changed to thirteen villages. In 1941, the population of Shiding was more than 8,000, and when Feuchtwang arrived in 1966, the population had reached 13,342. Since then, because of the external flows and the aging of the population, the trend has been reversed, and the population is presently 7,285. The market and administrative center of Shiding township is in Shiding village (one of the thirteen), a small market-town (*zhen*) built around two small streets. Feuchtwang's fieldwork focused on the area around Shiding village. In his doctoral dissertation and the many scholarly works that came out of his fieldwork,[2] Feutchwang called his fieldwork area "Mountainstreet."

Between 1966 and 1969, Feuchtwang lived in Shiding's village temple for two years. Indeed, it was in this ordinary Taiwanese rural temple that Feuchtwang had experiences he could not have had in England. He experienced the everyday religious cultural life of Chinese Taiwan and wrote a great deal of anthropological analysis based on his observations. His goal in going to Shiding was to develop his own insights from his results. Based on the systematic data Feuchtwang supplied, as well as our commonly agreed-on research goals, I developed a further plan of study of the relationships among popular authority, history, and symbolic systems in Shiding. This essay uses my research results to undertake a discussion of "popular authority" or "the folk model of authority," a discussion that also relates to the construction of informal power and its recognition in Chinese society. In my opinion, the investigation of these questions is crucial to our understanding of the concepts of social order, morality, and state-society relations in Han society. I also believe that understanding these phenomena

must rely on close observation of popular practices. For this reason, I focus most of my attention on data analysis. However, in order to clarify a few concepts, I will also make occasional forays into certain discussions relating to subject and object in anthropological theory.

The Origins of Research into Popular Authority

The word *authority* in Western languages was originally similar to *author*, and signified "he who creates" (creator). We now translate "author" in Chinese as *zuozhe*, which refers to the creator of a text. In classical Europe, the term referred broadly to someone who could provide or produce new objects that people could use, and from this it also came to mean people who could earn the respect of others. Later on, "authority" became a political concept, referring to powerful people to whom others submitted, people who often had a certain trustworthiness and ability.[3]

Based on the classical Western notion of "authority," the German social philosopher Max Weber created a theoretical system in the social sciences. Weber was concerned with the process of, and motive force behind, the evolution of traditional social systems toward modern capitalistic systems. He argued that the construction of a particular form of authority was a prerequisite to the construction of the system itself. According to Weber's schema, "authority" can be divided into three types: charismatic, traditional, and bureaucratic. *Charismatic authority* refers to an individual who comes to possess a certain power to dominate, as well as a certain prestige, as a result of having created material benefits for other people. Since this type of authority is not the province of the government, Weber also called it *natural authority*. *Traditional authority* refers to a system which, having existed for a long time, gradually obtains the recognition of the masses, and thus comes to possess symbolic power and the power to impose restraints on morality and behavior. The power of *bureaucratic authority* derives from the formal government and the orders issued by its leading officials; its existential basis is the administrative ranking

system. This existential base impacts on the structure of the system, which is why it is bureaucratic.[4]

Since Weber was concerned with how traditional society evolved toward modern society, his theory of authority more or less followed this schema, and emphasized the evolution from natural and charismatic to traditional and then to bureaucratic forms of authority, as well as how different types of authority constituted forms of domination within particular social categories. Weber's historical-sociological theories contain two big problems. First, they overlook how the three forms of authority overlap and indeed are inseparable in contemporary social life.[5] Second, Weber overemphasizes the evolution of the formal social system and underemphasizes the existence and important role played by "non-governmental popular authority" in informal settings. Much research has led us to realize that the study of authority is extremely challenging and that the challenge is related not only to the composite nature of authority but also to the complicated nature of the relationship between "popular" (informal) and "governmental" (formal) authority, and the differences and relationships between them.

In addition, since Weber's theory was built on the language of classical Europe, his concepts have certain cultural limitations. In Chinese, the equivalent word for authority is *quanwei*, and the way we now use this term shares much with Weber's usage. But from the point of view of the Chinese language, *quanwei* is the conflation of *quan* and *wei*, and refers to someone who inspires trust and fear, and thus has a certain prestige (*weiyan*). In daily use, however, *quanwei* is rarely used to describe a system and is more often used to describe a person (as in "an academic authority").

Even if we ignore cultural differences in the use of the term, we still must note that Weber's theory is limited to the description of actual governmental power, whereas the idea of "authority" is used today to refer not only to people or to systems but also to describe the symbolic system referred to by the term *gods*. If we extend the concept, we discover that "authority," as used in ideological dis-

cussions, has more explanatory power than when the term is invoked in political science. Indeed, in concrete terms, we often note that what really evokes trust and fear, creates power and prestige, is not an authoritative person or system but rather a certain ideology or symbolic system. For example, in a temple, what inspires trust and evokes fear is usually not a person but rather a god and the superhuman world the god represents.

In Shiding, the system of gods is extremely complex, and the degree of differentiation and variation is also very high. Local gods who have long been present include Baoyi Zunwang (the Venerated King who Protects Righteousness) and others brought to Shiding from their native place in Anxi county, Quanzhou, Fujian; Mazu, transplanted from Taiwan's great Mazu temple; and immortals propagated by local Daoist temples. Feuchtwang called this complex of beliefs "local cults"[6] and argued that the basic goal of this worship was precisely to maintain the spatial order of territory in Shiding: Baoyi Zunwang and the immortals occupy the same temples, and are the "masters" of Shiding; the cult of Mazu enables Shiding, through the hierarchy of incense exchange, to partake of "religious power" outside the township. At the same time, these three gods all have their own special characteristics, in addition to the territorial roles they admittedly play. Baoyi Zunwang's image resembles a general or a mandarin under the imperial order; the immortals' images resemble otherworldly Daoists or skilled, miracle-working doctors; Mazu is a gentle, benevolent, female messiah. In my opinion, all local Chinese communities transform their residence into a complete symbolic world. Each symbolic world has its own center, and the center of Shiding's symbolic world is made up of Baoyi Zunwang, the immortals, and Mazu, who, respectively, represent the military form of authority, integrated with territoriality, the healing (both social and self-) form of authority, and the benevolent form of messianic authority. For this reason, we also note differences in the particular rituals employed in the worship of these three gods. The competitions to welcome the gods connected to Baoyi Zunwang resemble military drills. The celebrations of the immortals emphasize corporal

and spiritual cultivation. Mazu is called on to make the rounds of Shiding territory, removing the threat of disaster.

At first glance, newly built temples [i.e., since Feuchtwang's fieldwork] in Shiding appear to have destroyed the originally complete local symbolic system. In terms of scale, many of these new temples go well beyond that of the original local temples, and the members they recruit also go beyond Shiding's territorial networks. This seems to displace the original symbolic centrality of Shiding, and, for this reason, some conservative residents of Shiding oppose these temples. The important differences between new and old temples in Shiding may be categorized as follows: old temples take local, territorial worship as their core, whereas new temples break through these territorial limitations. However, if we examine the question from the point of view of the types of authority represented by the gods, we discover many points of commonality between old and new temples. In terms of ritual, some (new temples) emphasize the martial display of the competitions to welcome the gods, whereas others focus on rituals devoted to corporal and spiritual cultivation. Still others emphasize avoiding disaster and harm. From what I have seen, I would argue that even if all three types of (traditional) ritual display have been absorbed by the new temples, even if each new temple attempts to provide all three styles of ritual, still, in the hearts of the people, the new temples generally assume only the functions of physical and spiritual healing and disaster-avoidance and have nothing to do with local territorial cults.

My fieldwork gave me the distinct impression that, in terms of the organization of symbols and the shaping of popular concepts, what the temples create is a kind of system of authority. The system of authority in a particular temple may be seen from its spatial arrangement. In general, the principle deities of a temple are arrayed against the center of the northern wall of the temple, with the auxiliary male and female gods on either side. In addition, in some temples there are multiple images of auxiliary gods on the right and left, giving the impression that both sides are protecting the principal gods. The principal gods and the important auxiliary

gods are like the emperor in that they face south. The gods on the side face either east or west toward the interior of the temple. The believers who enter the temple to worship feel the power and prestige of the gods in this awe-inspiring space, and also must kneel before the gods, according to ritual tradition, before they can ask the gods for assistance and peace of mind.

In 1981, Emily Martin Ahern (who has since retaken her maiden name, Martin) published *Chinese Ritual and Politics*,[7] in which she argued that Chinese popular ritual is a form of exchange between the gods and people. The majestic gods are like the officials of the imperial court, the lords or the "powerful and noble" under the emperor, while the worshipers are like the commoners who come to the yamen to file a complaint or to make a request. In fact, the physical arrangement of objects, the tools of communication, the styles of bodily presentation and oral expression are all similar to the forms employed under the imperial regime when officials beseeched the emperor or the people reported to officials the affairs of the everyday world. Martin had already understood what I subsequently observed: In rural areas distant from both heaven and the emperor, Chinese imitate imperial ritual because they have no access to formal authority or justice, and hence create an imaginary authority and justice that permits the necessary exchange.

Feuchtwang later pointed out that even if most specialized Daoist and other religious rituals can be traced back to classical imperial cosmology or models of order, when these rituals arrived at the popular level, they became part of a "demonic order" and a "demonic authority" rather than a genuinely imperial order and authority. In other words, at the popular level, imperial symbols from previous dynasties are used to mask popular dissatisfaction with, or even opposition to, the current political order. For this reason, this kind of historical identification reveals not the uniformity of Chinese culture but rather its high capacity for transformation. In a recently published article entitled "Historical Metaphor: A Study of Symbolic Representation and Recognition of Authority,"[8] Feuchtwang elaborates on popular conceptions of authority in the context of his professor's, Maurice Freedman's, notions of Han

cultural identity. Freedman, in a separate study, had raised the question of whether regional study could illuminate questions relating to Chinese culture as a whole, whether the elegant writings in classical Chinese and the vernacular writings (of local traditions) all belonged to the same cultural whole. He acknowledged in this context the diversity of China. However, in his discussion of "Chinese religion," Freedman employed a unitary theory of cultural identity. Feuchtwang's question is this: If we say that all Chinese share a central historical identity, does this not then mean that they believe in the same historical order and political worldview? Feuchtwang argues that much evidence suggests that this is a problematic viewpoint. From the transformation of imperial authority effected at the popular level, we learn that the same order may evolve to represent a different historical identity and that, as a result, Chinese culture has no one "center."

Feuchtwang's decision to examine questions concerning the expression of religious authority and cultural identity is quite a breakthrough. However, I feel that he followed the thread of historical identity too deeply, and ignored a basic fact: The existence of a center of symbolic authority at the popular level proves the existence of a set of concepts related to "trust" at that level, and the idea of this authority represents a mode of power, substituting (for that of the imperial bureaucracy), in which the subject becomes attached to the god and in a sense removed from the real world. Feuchtwang argues that the symbols and culture of popular authority are related to the recognition of real power—and here he hits the nail on the head. However, this does not explain why, in a stable, modern society and a "scientifically advanced" age, people still place their trust in the authority of "superstitions."

On this point, one matter is clear: When people acknowledge one kind of authority, they simultaneously reject other forms of authority or at best acknowledge several forms of authority simultaneously. If we follow this line of reasoning, then the strengthening of one form of authority inevitably means a threat to another. If we say that the temples represent authority in terms of popular belief, then the threatened forms of authority must be current struc-

tures of authority such as identified by Weber: the modern bureaucracy and the welfare system. And if this is true, then I think I am correct in my discussion of risk and opportunism below, because if risks and challenges did not exist in contemporary society, then people would not need to seek out something in which to place their trust.

Obviously, Martin and Feuchtwang have already offered penetrating discussions of the symbolic forms of authority in popular culture. While studying the symbols and rituals of Han popular culture, I was greatly influenced by them. However, in my opinion, these two senior scholars put the lion's share of their attention on symbolic expression and thus downplay other avenues of expression of popular authority. To be more specific, they both ignore two important questions: First, if what is hidden behind the popular symbolism of authority is not "imperial justice," then to what might "nonofficial justice" refer? Are "nonofficial" authority and justice embodied in a concrete person or historical period? Second, is the fact that old symbols of authority and justice have once again been recycled in popular culture a kind of structural antagonism, or does it have concrete political-historical implications?

I have been thinking about these questions since 1992, when I was fortunate to be chosen as a member of the research team for the "Chinese Village Society Mutual Assistance Research Plan" of the British Institute of Social and Economic Anthropology. Furthermore, I was fortunate enough to receive financial assistance from the plan to carry out a year's fieldwork in two Minnan villages. In the course of this research, I examined the questions of religious organization and the mobilization of social resources in Fujian villages,[9] and at the same time was also able to accumulate materials for the collaborative project between myself and Professor Feuchtwang. The principal goal of the project was to study traditional social relations (including kinship relations and nonkinship workmate and classmate relations) and how such relations are currently mobilized by families and individuals to serve the needs of family emergencies, housework, ritual, investment, and so on. We carried out research on these topics in ten administra-

tive villages in Gansu, Anhui, Jiangsu, Yunnan, and Fujian. In places other than Fujian, lineage and popular ritual functions were rather weak, whereas in Fujian they clearly occupied a dominant position. For this reason, in the course of my research in two Minnan villages (Meifa in Anxi and Tangdong in Jinjiang), I paid a great deal of attention to the role of history, tradition, and symbolism in the formation of kinship and territorial relations. In the course of the investigation, I focused not only on the workings of the household economy but emphasized even more the construction of the public sphere.

Research into the construction of the public sphere shows that beginning from the 1920s and 1930s, two forms of power have coexisted in a single space. During the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties, although the government's military power extended to the village level, administrative power went down only as far as the county level, and the public space below the county level was for the most part organized and managed by informal local society. From Republican times forward, by contrast, the government increased its presence in the village public sphere. This expansion was expressed in village government and school construction. State-owned village government buildings, county roads, and schools now occupy a dominant position in the local public sphere. The current situation greatly differs from that described by early anthropologists. Freedman argued that, in traditional China, the southeast coast was too far from government control, and, for this reason, all local affairs were the responsibility of lineages. Between the government and the locality, the gentry constituted the primary channel of communication, and the gentry played a dual role: On the one hand, they served local society; on the other, they represented feudal imperial authority at the local level.

My fieldwork in Anxi and Jinjiang counties, Fujian, revealed a continual differentiation over the course of this century in the formation of the upper levels of social leadership, such that part came to serve the government's official power and symbolic space, while another part became an unofficial leadership outside the government. Still, some people continued to play both roles or played

both roles at different times in their lives. As things now stand, leaders outside the official public sphere often play a leadership role in such activities as the reconstruction of local temples, the organization of ritual, the repair of lineage halls, and the compilation of genealogies, while local officials have maintained a certain distance from these types of activities.

According to Anthony Giddens's discussion of modernity, the power of local government is closely connected to the creation of a penetrating, supralocal culture and the rise of the nation-state.[10] In other words, the existence of a formal administrative system in rural society represents the construction of a new political authority and its symbolic system. Our observations prove that the construction of a nation-state during this century in China has had precisely this influence. Still, Giddens's model cannot completely explain the evolution of China's villages and localities, because he underestimates the staying power of popular culture, which is to some extent special in the Chinese case. Scholars who have paid attention to the evolution of modern Chinese culture have readily noted that, as modern forms have emerged, traditional popular culture also expanded in certain areas. We should connect such findings with Martin's and Feuchtwang's discussion of authority and popular ritual, and go on to raise further questions. First, if popular conceptions of authority use symbols from the past as an expression of opposition to current authority, then does the coexistence of the two types of social power in the same village space represent the mutual reinforcement of the two types of authority? Second, are the two social forces in the public sphere the concrete manifestations of bureaucratic personnel and informal local leaders? Third, what are the connections between the existence of popular authority and social historical conditions?

Conscious of the weighty significance of these questions to the narrative of modern Chinese society and culture, I began my fieldwork in Meifa village, Anxi county, Southern Fujian, in October 1994. The regional cultures of Fujian and Taiwan are similar but have experienced different processes of political and social evolu-

tion. These similarities and differences provided rich materials for the consideration of the questions raised above, thus permitting us to formulate our answers on the basis of comparison and similarity.

Preliminary Studies of Local Leaders

In Richard Madsen's view, there are two types of politicians in Chinese society: the "moral" type and the "strongman" type. According to his research in "Chen village," Guangdong, these two types have continued to coexist in China's rural villages since 1949, and the "moral" type has become the focus of mainstream popular trust, as this conforms to China's tradition (i.e., her practical tradition).[11] The village head of Meifa village in Minnan, as in the case of all Chinese villages, is directly elected by villagers from a list of candidates provided by upper-level government ministries, and is then confirmed by the higher levels; the party secretary is selected indirectly by the branch, and then confirmed by higher levels. The direct source of their official authority is the bureaucratic authority of the state, but they are judged by "popular opinion" as well as supervised by the government bureaucracy. Villagers from Meifa use such terms as *irascible*, *selfish*, *intolerant*, *corrupt*, and *unfair* to describe a typical "bad official," and describe a typical "good official" (such as the village head) as "a good person, but lacking in boldness." This distinction is similar to that between "strongman" and "moral" types and might be taken as proof that Madsen's categorization is correct.[12]

However, the categories are less important than the questions raised in the course of observation. In my opinion, the distinctions the people make between good official and bad official, fair and unfair, effective and ineffective all illustrate that there is a set of ideas about what makes an authoritative political character. If this is true, how then are these ideas expressed concretely? Is there a connection between how these concepts mold the self-image of the person exercising authority and how he cultivates his own style of authoritative conduct? Does this set of ideas illustrate how one may truly recognize authority?

I spent a lot of time asking local people, "Who is the local authority?" only to learn that the term *authority* in Minnan dialect is nothing but a direct translation from Mandarin and that locals did not completely understand what it meant. Later, I used the term *weixin* ["having power to maintain one's own authority; not making a mere demonstration"]* and began to get some response. Almost everyone I asked pointed to a mysterious figure, a sixty-year-old villager, and said that he took care of everything. He took the village's interests completely to heart, was fair in his manner of doing things, and had more authority than anyone else, including the two local cadres. Fei Xiaotong, in his *Village China,* written long ago, noted that authority in Chinese society could be divided into "violent power" and "consensual power," the former referring to power gained by force or by violent people; the second referring rather to power commonly recognized by most people, the force of this latter coming from common feelings.[13] In the eyes of Meifa villagers, "violent power" has no "authority," and "consensual power," if lacking effectiveness and suggesting timidity and fear, could not earn *weixin*. The person in Meifa with authority is that mysterious one with strength, who likes to take care of things, who is fair and not corrupt.

In that case, we must explain who that mysterious person is. Why does he have such authority? How did he come to be commonly recognized as such? Following the anthropological rule of using pseudonyms, I will call this man "Mr. C." I met him during my first field research in Meifa village in 1992 and noticed his importance even then. In October 1994, I interviewed him several times to solicit his life history. At present, many villagers refer to Mr. C behind his back as "black face." In fact, he himself admits that he is "black-faced." Indeed, his face is very black, and he is slightly balding, of medium height, rather somber in his expression, and does not go out of his way to greet other villagers. How-

*From the *Mathews Chinese-English Dictionary* (Shanghai: China Inland Mission and Presbyterian Mission Press, 1931; rev. American ed. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975).

ever, the description "black-faced" does not refer solely to the color of his skin. When he and other villagers use the term, they are referring to the village deity, Fazhugong, the Gentleman Master of the Way. Fazhugong, also known as Zhanggong Shengjun, Sage Lord Master Zhang, was once a Daoist priest, born in Yongtai county, Fujian, who found the Way on Stone Ox mountain in Dehua county, thereafter becoming the leader of one type of Daoism in southern Fujian and Taiwan. He is the principal deity in the temples of many popular territorial cults.

There is a story behind the choice of Fazhugong as the Meifa village god. Originally, the Chen lineage was part of a neighboring village and occupied one small corner of that village. In the mid-Ming, they moved to Meifa, obtaining 600 *mu* of good land. The belief in Fazhugong played a very important role in the Chen lineage's decision to move. Through a medium (*lingji* in Fujian and Taiwan; similar to the *saman* among northern peoples), the god, in the course of a territorial patrol, chose the current site of Meifa village as his own yamen. In another incident, his spirit miraculously transformed 600 *mu* of good land belonging to a rich person named Xie Baiwan (literally, "one million thanks") into land belonging to the Chen lineage. From this point on, Fazhugong was elevated to be the principal god of the village temple.

The current Fazhugong temple, Longzhengong, is situated slightly to the north of a line running through the center of the Chen lineage's neighborhood in Meifa. Visiting the temple, I discovered that the god's hair is awry and his face very black. His hand holds a sharp sword, and a snake curls around his waist. These symbols' special character all derive from the "heroic epics" of his suppression of demons. His hair and face color are the result of his fights with demons. The sword in his hand is used to execute poisonous snakes. If we use the methods of symbolic analysis to consider the nature of the Fazhugong cult, we see that he expresses a kind of model of domination, as well as stories and poems of heroic victories—stories of gods triumphing in battle over demons, Daoist magic triumphing in battle over demonic magic, men triumphing in battle over snakes, and righteousness triumphing over

darkness. But we should also note that these highly concentrated stories of battles and victories, in terms of the significance attributed to them by average villagers, are retellings (of familiar themes). The above-mentioned legend concerning Fazhugong's contribution to the independence of the Chen lineage of Meifa and their acquisition of land, is thus also the result of such reformulation. The two basic conflicts in these legends, gods versus demons and righteousness versus unrighteousness, have become metaphors for the conflicts between lineage members and nonlineage members, and between local people and powerful outsiders.

These two symbolic antagonisms are not limited to myths and popular legends but also exist in the local temple's role as the local public space and locus of identity. There are two levels of meaning in the widespread existence of village temples in Han local society. Toward outsiders, the temples express a kind of cultural and social independence and uniqueness (whether or not such uniqueness truly exists); to insiders, the temple symbolizes a kind of publicly acknowledged center of authority, a body in which villagers lodge their spiritual, material, and symbolic needs, a structure that judges what is orthodox and heterodox in the everyday world. These two levels of meaning stand in a dialectical relationship with the signification conveyed by the gods' legends.

Mr. C's life story and social role are nothing more than the story of a person's this-worldly life; but if we think a bit harder about the experience and outlook of the authoritative person of this place, it becomes clear that there is a reason he is called "black-faced." The fact that villagers find him fair, unselfish, and effective is because, in the eyes of the villagers, he, like the gods, possesses a "heroic tale."

This legendary character was born in 1935 into a poor family in Meifa village. When he was seven, his mother died and his father became gravely ill, so that the boy at a very young age became a permanent laborer for a local landlord. In 1949, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) came to Anxi county, and because C was poor and smart, and enjoyed learning some Mandarin from the People's Liberation Army (PLA) (the troops were from Hebei), the new

government soon came to like him. Between 1950 and 1953, when the PLA entered the mountainous areas of Anxi county to "exterminate the bandits," C used his "Minnan Mandarin" to serve as translator for the troops. Thereafter he served in such positions as district head, member of the district party committee, and special agent of the Public Security Bureau. Between 1959 and 1961, while serving as a special agent of the Public Security Bureau, he "committed an error." Acquiescing in the demands of clan elders, he supervised the reconstruction of the lineage hall and organized an armed feud with a neighboring village. For this he was relieved of his position. In 1966, he was jailed as a "feudal boss" and a "criminal." He was released from jail two years later and lived by working in construction, farming, and doing unskilled labor. In 1981, he began to work for the shipping office of the local government, and, in 1988, his political status was rectified, after which he returned to the village political stage. He handled the restoration of the village temple, the rebuilding of the lineage hall, and, the compilation of the genealogy, as well as other public undertakings, compelling the village head and party secretary to turn a blind eye to these "feudal superstitions."

Mr. C is most proud of four things in his life, and these are the same matters for which the villagers of Meifa appreciate him: (1) his experience as a local official in the 1950s; (2) his glorious exploits in organizing a brotherhood of twelve people and defeating a neighboring village in a feud in the late 1950s and early 1960s—all to protect the interests of the Chen lineage; (3) his trials of having been incriminated and having suffered during the "Cultural Revolution"; and (4) his contributions to local welfare once the "Cultural Revolution" was over. In the process of the economic development of Anxi county, the government's industrialization and urbanization plans impinged on Meifa village, and a great deal of local land was confiscated, which provoked the resistance of many people. Mr. C often played the role of mediator between the government and the peasants.

Previous sinological or anthropological study of local leadership has largely emphasized the position of local leaders vis-à-vis

the examination system or their dominant position in the economy. I think the case of Mr. C offers a corrective example, illustrating that local leadership models are more complex. Recently, the research of Joseph Esherick and others has emphasized that leaders are those who mobilize marital, symbolic, and economic resources to establish their own position. In other words, this research has emphasized local leaders' role as rational political actors.[14] The example of Mr. C illustrates that the molding of this local leader was not solely attributable to his political striving but was also the result of the molding of the local population. We should not forget that he is someone who has served as an official and who has "suffered" primarily for the "people" as well. His political coming of age is intimately linked to the popular model of authority. Although he has spent his life in a different political space (from that of the people), he has not forgotten that power is not the same as authority, because there is good power and bad power. If we say that he has a certain "power of domination" in the locality, then the source of this domination are the "respect" and "confidence" he has earned in accord with popular notions of authority.

Mr. C's maturation is linked to the age-old yet still pertinent Chinese political ideal of "taking the people as master." This ideal not only permeates "the way of the emperor," as described in the twenty-four histories, but also was widely spread through popular opera, stories (Judge Bao, Zhong Kui), beliefs, and rituals. Space does not permit me to tease out the specific comparisons between Mr. C, his life experience, and these plays and legends, but it is no less true that his social existence may be categorized in terms of the political ideals expressed in Minnan local rituals.

Scholars of popular religion in Fujian and Taiwan understand that most ritual activities in the local universe are based on the system of local-leader and incense-head (*toujia-luzhu*). In Meifa village, the *toujia-luzhu* system is also the principal system (of the organization) of ritual in village temples. The Chen lineage of Meifa is divided into twelve ancestral halls in seven villages. These twelve ancestral halls and seven villages have been organized into four units, each of which assumes responsibility for worship activities

in village temples on an annual basis. The four units make up a four-year village worship schedule. The *toujia* and *luzhu* are selected by divination, and those selected are different from ordinary worshipers in that (1) they collect money every year to finance village worship; (2) they represent the whole village in praying to the gods; and (3) they spend relatively large amounts of money to hold large banquets.

The *toujia-luzhu* system is a territorial and kinship-based organization, as well as a symbolic ritual performance. The *toujia* and *luzhu* constitute a temporary "government organism" that carries out administrative work (collecting poll taxes, arranging for Daoist priests and for theatrical performances); they "take the people as masters" in praying to the gods (through the medium of the Daoist priest) while paying a certain price for having been chosen as "leader." This symbolic political leadership group, which both makes "sacrifices" and earns "profits" (in the course of its activities) is consistent with the general logic of authority, which constitutes "a responsive power." The *toujia*'s and the *luzhu*'s greater expense of time, money, and energy for the people is an expression of the people's needs; thus they do not begrudge the expense and effort as "waste," as they believe that being *toujia* and *luzhu* is very prestigious and is an expression of the good fortune they will receive at a future date.

Actually, this sort of mutually beneficial relationship is similar to that between gods and men. Gods in general refer to themselves as "responding to a need," and if those who worship and demand things of the gods receive protection, they must respond with compensation (i.e., sacrifice). The reason Mr. C is called "authoritative" is because his personality accords with the demands of this style of power in which "gifts of food are returned" when "a call is heeded." Rather than refer to him, as Esherick would, as a "local leader," we prefer to say that he is a medium through which the people express trust and hope, a form of popular compensation employed when there are gaps in communication between top and bottom strata of society.

Does the example of Mr. C, in Meifa village, Anxi county, south-

ern Fujian, possess representative significance for all Chinese culture? This is a question requiring future research that will have to take into consideration regional, historical, and political elements; to date, I have been unable to carry out this research. Nonetheless, my Taiwan fieldwork was an occasion for some comparative work, even if the comparison may raise more questions than it answers. At present, there is no need for us to take Meifa village as a microcosm of China as a whole, although we must admit that it constitutes a local space in the "Chinese political system." What are the similarities between this village and the example of Shiding in the Taiwanese political system, which diverged from that of the mainland several decades ago? My impression, having carried out work in Shiding, is that people on both sides of the straits have similar ideas about the nature of "authority." For example, when talking about local political figures, people from both Meifa and Shiding employ such terms as *fair*, *effective*, and *selfless*. They express similar demands in their expectations of the gods, and both use the ritual symbolic system to express the reciprocal nature of political relationships. But in Taiwan, the region and its powerful figures and their experience are all somewhat different from what we saw in Meifa village.

Religion and Popular Authority in Shiding History

Shiding, like the whole of Taiwan, was ceded by the Qing government to imperial Japan in 1895. Before this, although this area had been the responsibility of Qing official administration on Taiwan, it had retained a substantial amount of local autonomy. As a mountainous area, not fully developed until the end of the nineteenth century, its population remained extremely mobile. Unlike Meifa in southern Fujian, Shiding is a multiple-surname village and traces its regional identity to Anxi county in mainland Fujian (the same county but a different township from Meifa). Their gods, such as Baoyi Zunwang, came from Anxi. Lineage identity is quite weak. Feuchtwang felt that regional affinities had been substituted for lineage ties, and this observation is no doubt correct.

The strict administrative control of the Shiding area began with imperialistic, hegemonic Japan, which, at the time, venerated modern rational politics. Before World War II, the Japanese rulers cleverly made use of the power of local leaders in the selection of formal local authority, absorbing "bandit" leaders who had previously engaged in armed resistance against the Japanese military and appointing them as village leaders (*zhuangzhang*), while also selecting local gentry as watch-heads. In 1895, the Qing government lost to the Japanese in the Sino-Japanese War and ceded Taiwan to Japan, at which point Taiwan became a Japanese colony. Before long, the Japanese army gradually occupied the island and in so doing provoked the resistance of the Taiwanese people. Shiding's first village head, Chen Bingsheng, was a well-known "bandit leader" before being named village head; his troops had been active in the mountains around Shiding, inflicting heavy losses on the Japanese colonial troops. In order to avoid injuries and deaths on a large scale, the Japanese colonial government offered Chen the possibility of turning himself in, in return for which he would receive a lifetime appointment as village head as well as a substantial monetary reward. Enticed by the promise of power and money, Chen Bingsheng did turn himself in, accepting the appointment of the Japanese colonial government. The government kept its promise, investing all local administrative authority in Chen, although in order to ensure the needs of colonial rule, the army and police retained effective power of control.

From the time of his appointment up until his death in 1942, Chen Bingsheng served as the local representative of colonial control, occupying the middle ground between the local people and the colonizers. He and his underlings, the watch-heads, were local leaders absorbed by the colonial government in an effort to "win over" the Taiwanese people, and, while in office, Chen used his position in the "middle ranks" of society to mediate the tense relationship between rulers and ruled. He often appeared in the guise of protecting local interests, developing a "negotiating" relationship with the Japanese colonial government, "satisfying" the people's demands within the limits permitted by the colonizers.

Moreover, he had a certain authority in the people's eyes, certain special characteristics that come with "informal authority." Even now, stories still circulate in Shiding concerning Chen Bingsheng and his watch-heads' resistance to the high-pressure rule of the Japanese colonizers, and their "asking leave" to pursue the popular welfare, within certain limits. Several local bridges bear the marks of their fund-raising efforts. One can thus see that at the time the division of local power was quite unclear; even though the village leaders and the watch-heads were ordered to carry out Japanese colonial rule, at the same time they actively pursued popular local interests as well. Still, their position as local representatives of colonial government was naturally most important. Outside their formal power of appointment, there also existed popular authority. Since the Japanese carried out a policy of ethnic discrimination and exploitation of the Taiwanese, this kind of authority was often exercised in secret.

At the time, the Shiding local temple (the Jishun temple of Baoyi Zunwang) provided the locale for the exercise of local popular strength. This local god had great power, and even Chen Bingsheng and other government officials had to submit secretly to his authority. How is this sort of center of local popular authority produced? After much fieldwork in Shiding, I discovered that behind it lies a moving story: There was a local leader named Lü-Lin Wumu, who, in the face of the cultural hegemony of the Japanese colonial government, cleverly planned to have this temple express the frustrations and wishes of the people. This local leader matured in the process of responding to cultural hegemony. Lü-Lin Wumu was originally a pharmacist and, in the early period of Japanese rule, established a sect inside the local temple, inviting Fouzuo Dijun (Lü Dongbin) from the Daoist Zhinan Temple in Taibei to serve as chief deity, thus establishing a secret religious sect, organizing the people to cast aside sin and cultivate their bodies and their minds. He set a personal example, quitting opium in response to the god's demand, although he disagreed with the strong-handed policy of the Japanese rulers of forcing people to quit smoking opium and thus gained broad popular prestige.

How was Lü-Lin Wumu's authority constructed? Old people in Shiding who knew him as a child told me that Lü-Lin was originally quite wealthy, a leading local character, with a good deal of prestige. They had already forgotten the difficulty he had had in establishing himself. According to the Lü Genealogy, Lü-Lin was originally surnamed Lin, his full name being Lin Jianghai. He was born into a poor family and, because of his family's poverty, had no choice but to marry uxorilocally into the Lü family. He joined his wife's family from a young age and relied on them for his livelihood. During the Japanese period, not only did the Lin family suffer, but the relatively wealthy Lü family faced a crisis as well. The family head took ill and died, leaving his wife, née Zhou, to maintain the family's status. Before long, Lü-Lin Wumu's younger brother also died when his illness defied treatment. Before Japanese colonial rule, the Lü family had run a Chinese pharmacy in Shiding to make a living. Once the Japanese colonial government was in Taiwan, they promoted modern Western medicine and dismissed Chinese medicine as "sorcery," thus making things difficult for local doctors and druggists, in the process creating a temporary crisis for the Lü family. Under colonial rule, the people of Shiding had an acute sense of emptiness, and even Lü-Lin Wumu, who was later to become a local leader and to earn widespread respect, could hardly avoid a sense of disappointment about life. According to the Lü family genealogy, Lü-Lin Wumu was not a moral character in his youth and instead engaged in many morally questionable activities; throughout his life he was ruthless in business and not only turned his back on ethics but damaged his health through overattention to business. In addition, he was a heavy opium smoker, which brought him many health problems.

What we should notice is that it was precisely during these multiple crises—involving the individual, the family, business, and the nation—that Lü-Lin Wumu finally found the path toward the resolution of common popular difficulties. One winter evening, his mother, née Zhou, summoned him for a chat, not about Lü-Lin Wumu's faults but rather about a dream she had had that saddened

her. She had dreamed that Lü-Lin's dead brother was suffering in hell, and, although he hoped to receive assistance from the family, no one had paid attention. The mother said that in the Zhinan Temple in Taibei there was a service offering communication between the human and spirit worlds and that Lü-Lin Wumu should avail himself of it so as to help his mother find out what it was that her poor child needed in hell.

Following his mother's request, the next day Lü-Lin Wumu went to the Zhinangong. Inside this Daoist temple was an altar devoted principally to Lü Dongbin. In the temple there was also an old medium, who, with the help of talismans provided by the Daoist priest, could be possessed by departed souls and thus serve as a spokesman for these souls and communicate with those who came searching for the spirits. In a while, the medium, shaking all over, said that the spirit possessing him was indeed that of Lü-Lin Wumu's little brother. The spirit said that he had died in a painful way, from having taken modern Western medicine; it was the doctor's fault. Now, in hell, he had neither clothes to wear nor enough to eat. He asked that Lü-Lin Wumu periodically send him food and sweets. Naturally, Lü-Lin Wumu agreed immediately.

Before long, Lü-Lin Wumu's father and Ms. Zhou's husband, "San'en," also spoke through the medium. He also said that he had died in a painful way and that his life in hell was very difficult. Lü-Lin Wumu asked how they might make it better. The spirit recounted Lü-Lin Wumu's inglorious behavior and said that if he wanted his father to live more peacefully in hell, then Lü-Lin Wumu must correct his behavior under the guidance of the gods and must also do good works for others and accumulate virtue for the future. Lü-Lin Wumu asked a master at the temple how to accumulate virtue, and the master answered that he should construct a subtemple of the Zhinangong in Shiding. Thereupon, in order to seek the god's protection, he immediately resolved to seek virtue in future lives through this action, and through the establishment of a "subbranch" (or phoenix hall)[15] for Lü Dongbin in Shiding, to make known the nature of this god and relieve the suffering of the people in a troubled time.

When the Japanese occupied Taiwan, the Jishun temple in Shiding was very run-down, a small structure no larger than a home, with an image of Baoyi Zunwang inside. After much discussion, Lü-Lin Wumu obtained permission from this god to place Lü Dongbin and associated gods from the Zhinangong in this temple, to refurbish the temple, and to set up a popular religious structure called the Mingshantang. The temple was organized around the Lü-Lin Wumu family, and they attracted worshippers from all the villages of Shiding. The hall's manager was Lü-Lin Wumu, and his principal supporters included Chen Bingsheng and other local officials.

The Mingshantang is known as a "phoenix hall" in Chinese popular religion, and its central ritual is the "planchette" (*fuluan*), in which the medium, possessed by ancestral and other spirits, takes a phoenix brush (a wooden implement with three tines) and makes character-like marks on a sheet of sand. Then the medium's assistant explains these and writes out a poemlike "phoenix book." Later, he adds to these stories of good and evil and glosses on these moral tales, and the whole becomes a "morality book" (*shanshu*) destined to enlighten the world. Through 1907, all the morality books of the Mingshantang were edited, printed, and circulated by Lü-Lin Wumu. They made an impressive collection, divided into five sections (benevolence, propriety, ritual, knowledge, and faith), the ensemble known as the "Renewal of the Living World" (*huoshi you xin*). All the contents were "phoenix books" and stories of good and evil, which convincingly depict the local mood during the period of Japanese occupation. While I was in Shiding I photocopied this book, obtaining a copy from Lü-Lin Wumu's grandson, and discovered that the Mingshantang was indeed a place where the people of Shiding could express their happiness, anger, grief, and joy. Recorded in the book are a good number of stories of family quarrels, illnesses, social conflict, moral behavior, and the eradication of evil, and here and there it covertly expresses the Shiding people's desire to resist the violent colonial rule of the Japanese.

Through the construction of the Mingshantang, Lü-Lin Wumu

obtained local social recognition, and became an authoritative figure that village leaders and watch-heads had to respect; his critique of temporal authority could threaten the power of those who held these positions. Under Japanese colonial rule, the Mingshantang became a local cultural center, paired off against Japanese Shinto. In the early period of Japanese rule, the colonial government built a Shinto shrine to permit Japanese residents and local rich and noble families to receive the "education" of Japanese religion. Most Shiding residents did not appreciate the spiritual rule of Shinto, preferring to go to the Mingshantang and worship the local gods. Consequently, the Mingshantang founder, Lü-Lin Wumu, came to occupy a position close to the people's hearts, and even the Japanese colonial government's policy could not but admit that he was a well-intentioned educator. One of Lü-Lin Wumu's descendants, Lin Cong, now an elderly woman, said that when Lü-Lin was alive he consistently opposed the coercive nature of Japanese rule and often proclaimed throughout Shiding that the anti-opium centers set up by the Japanese were inhumane (the Japanese colonial government, in order to achieve the goal of "Japanifying" the Taiwanese, suppressed the use of opium). Lü-Lin advocated that people quit opium through worship of Chinese gods and said that he himself had stopped after beginning his worship. The Japanese police lost prestige in the face of his daily proclamations. Still, they did not dare oppose him but, rather, hoping to win him over to their side, gave him a permit allowing him to smoke opium at will.

Even if the Mingshantang served for a time as the public religious arena for Shiding, at base it was through the Lü-Lin Wumu's family's construction and passing on of the temple that it gained status and continuity. In 1942, Lü-Lin Wumu died, passing on to his son, Lin Qingbiao, responsibility for the principal functions of the temple as well as his position as local leader. By the time Lin Qingbiao became a local leader, colonial rule on Taiwan had gone through many changes. With the outbreak of World War II, the Japanese rulers no longer appointed locals as village heads but instead carried out a strict program of "imperial assimilation"

(*huangminhua*) and a "movement to improve popular customs." Under these difficult circumstances, Lin Qingbiao became an active promoter of popular beliefs. He continued his father's resolve and organized the affairs of the Jishun temple and the Mingshantang, even if, because of the prohibition by the Japanese, the secret activities of Lü Dongbin were discontinued. Still, to the degree possible, Lin Qingbiao tried to carry out temple festivals in a grand way. At the same time, his authority grew daily, and, finally, the Japanese, in their own best interest, had no choice but to appoint him the head of the local militia. After the retrocession of Taiwan in 1945, Lin Qingbiao's reputation grew even further, and his religious activities continued to develop as well. At the time, his son was already grown and became the head of the local "national elementary school." Lin himself served as chairman of the school parents' committee. He organized the reconstruction of village temples under the slogan "restore Chinese culture" and also used his position as head of the school parents' committee to cooperate with his son and restore worship of Lü Dongbin, even making him the god of the elementary school students, taking the god's birthday as the children's "vegetarian holiday."

After Lin Qingbiao died, first his wife, then his son, the school principal, assumed direction of the temple, but their authority did not extend as far as that of their "saintly ancestor." Instead, from 1979 on, another local leader with a different surname became the representative of popular historical identity. This was Gao Bineng, and his experience is similar to that of Mr. C in Minnan. He was born into a small peddler's family, and his mother had died long before he achieved renown. His father became known during the Japanese period for manufacturing dried bean curd; he was honest and respected by the Japanese and was appointed assistant clerk (secretary to the village head). As a youth, Mr. Gao was brave and smart, earning the praise of the Japanese teachers in school, and, because of his family's favorable circumstances, he was educated in technical school. He returned to his village at the age of twenty-three, where he served as secretary in the village government, and

was soon promoted to the position of secretary to the village head. After 1945, he continued to be employed by the nationalist government and was the first popularly elected township head (*xiangzhang*). After serving two terms, he left this post but continued to exert a key influence on the election of future township heads, and at the same time he served on the county assembly, all the way up to 1976 when he formally retired from local politics. In 1979, he replaced Lin Qingbiao's son as head of the management committee of the Jishun temple and transformed what had been the Lü-Lin family temple committee into a fairly model temple management committee. After a few years, he undertook the reconstruction of the Jishun temple as well as the first *jiao* ritual in several decades.

When I was doing fieldwork in Shiding, I took pains to ask: "Who is the person most knowledgeable about local history and customs?" Many people told me that it was Mr. Gao. Yet when I asked if Mr. Gao was the most prestigious person, the response was not as definitive as in the case of Meifa village in Minnan. Mr. Gao has a certain amount of prestige; indeed, otherwise he would not be selected as head of the temple management committee. Nonetheless, a good number of people have a negative attitude toward him. For example, those who dislike political parties think that Gao is the representative of a party and that under his management the temple has become a party temple. More and more people work, study, and plan their futures outside the village, and these people tend to think that Gao is nothing special. Local politicians pay him a certain respect but do not really take him very seriously. Even Mr. Gao himself has become more and more reclusive. A few years ago, he started to study *qigong* and now feels that it is better to engage in self-cultivation at home than to try to meddle in troublesome outside matters, that it is better to build his own family temple than to build the village, public temple. He is also someone who has been a "good official" and who, in his later years, took charge of the local public temple, which earned him a certain respect. Still, this kind of authority figure, in the popular estimation, is much less prestigious than Mr.

C in Meifa village. He had never been the head of local groups (*xiangyue*, literally "village compacts"), as Mr. C had (when he organized his lineage for protective purposes). In popular memory and in his own memory, even if he were a "big man" like Mr. C of Minnan in the past, he is no longer so regarded. How do we explain this mysterious decline in his authority?

Mr. Gao says resentfully that officials nowadays are not like they were in the old days. Formerly, he was elected township head without having to buy votes; now everybody buys votes. In the past, officials took the people as their masters; now the officials serve only themselves. Formerly, there were no factions; now, there are too many factions. In the past, the township head chose only local people to take care of local matters; now, 90 percent of township government officials are "outsiders" selected by civil service examinations. The decline of Mr. Gao's power is perhaps related to the pluralization of local government in Taiwan. His points are valid: the pluralization, commercialization, bureaucratization, and mass involvement (*quanminhua*) of modern Taiwan's rural government were important blows to Gao. The current Shiding township head was selected for contributing to a "friend" from outside the township, and the other government servants, with the exception of a few, are all from elsewhere. Nowadays, Shiding's middle-aged and young mostly work outside the township and naturally pay less attention to affairs back home.

Even more important, the temple under Mr. Gao's control is no longer the only place where popular imagination can make demands on the "emperor." The basis of the existence of popular authority lies in its ability to address practical popular concerns and to react symbolically and in real terms to these concerns. This is the source of "godly authority." When people's practical concerns can, as at the present time, be addressed through such forms as the mass media, which permeate Taiwanese society, this diminishes the demands placed on popularly constituted authority. Even more important, with the development of modern political parties and politics, different identities and common opinions can be expressed through party identity, whereupon the symbolic historical

identity can be replaced. Moreover, professional "shamans" or psychiatrists have replaced the authority of popular worship in thoroughly commercialized Taiwan, and the symbol of authority has come to be the offices of these professions, which inspire popular confidence. The secularization of religion that many people talk about today is perhaps expressed by religion's having taken on the form of these professional, medical, welfare, and psychological systems and the trust they inspire. Mr. Gao, we could say, has outlived his usefulness; in this period, when society has become highly commercialized and secularized, all he can do is proclaim his authority and virtue in the sacred territory of his temple.

People say that heroes are called heroes because they have created time and history, and we call this "heroic perspective" *heroism*. The stories I told above of local "natural authorities" might be described in other people's words as "heroic epics," as if these people were destined from birth for local leadership, who, as they came into the chaotic world, accomplished the mission accorded them by the heavens. However, as an anthropologist, my conceptual tools are not limited to those of individualist culture but also include those of social cultural determinism. This leads me to explore the mutual influence of individual and social culture.

Our case studies—Mr. C from Minnan, Lü-Lin Wumu, Lin Qingbiao, and Gao Bineng—were born in different times and places, but all of them became "local heroes" through their own efforts. Among these, Lü-Lin Wumu, who lived at the end of the Qing and in the early period of the Japanese occupation of Taiwan, passed through the "commercial wars" and their decline, then entered into the role of local religious leader and raised a generation of informal local leaders, based on his own family. Mr. Gao, who grew up in the 1930s and 1940s, became an official in the 1950s and 1960s and "entered the temple" in the 1970s; he lived through political struggles and then took up the limited position of village temple leadership. Mr. C, although he was born and raised in Minnan and is much younger than Mr. Gao, shares many experiences with him. Perhaps we can divide Mr. C, Lü-Lin Wumu and his descendants, and Gao Bineng into three types of popular au-

thority: Mr. C and Gao Bineng first served as officials and later became representative popular leaders; Lü-Lin Wumu went from the people to the people, from everyday "commercial wars" and "bad habits" (opium addiction) to leader of the local temple and leader who "cured social ills"; and Lü-Lin Wumu's descendants, while working in the shadow of their ancestor's "foundation," also became officially recognized popular leaders (militia leader and school principal) and grass-roots leaders of popular temples.

Still, no matter what kind of person they became, their common special characteristics are worth examining. First, the sense of the value of human life embodied by all three types of authority figures is consistent, by which I mean that they all view society and locality (local as the defining boundary) as having an intimate relationship with an individual's "fate." Mr. C's and Gao Bineng's way of being an official may be defined as "taking the people as master" or, as Mr. Gao said, "taking the opinion of the common people as *the* opinion." Thus, in the process of official service, they did not harm the interests of local people and indeed, on occasion, even found themselves out of step with mainstream ideology as defined by the larger society. For example, Mr. C once got into trouble for leading the villagers to engage in "superstitious activities." In another example, Mr. Gao once told me that he had a fit once when certain party officials did not speak Taiwanese. Lü-Lin Wumu, although he never served as an official, still took self-reflection as his duty and, without concern for money, built a "spiritual healing center" (the Phoenix Hall) that at the time served the popular welfare and moved people's hearts.

Next, and closely related to the above point, after being recognized by the people, most of these popular leaders were chosen as, or appointed themselves to be, the leader of the local temple. The local temple is not only the meeting place for local activity but is also the place where local popular opinions and common values are expressed. It is a core site, high on the scale of reputation and symbolic value. Thus Mr. C and Mr. Gao were both "selected" by the temple managing committee to serve as manager, because in

the past, while serving as officials, they had "taken the people as masters" and throughout their lives had contributed their talents and energy to this cause. Lü-Lin Wumu actively organized activities having to do with spiritual beliefs, because he believed that the gods could save the people from their suffering, just as they had saved him from his suffering.

Third, their personalities share two characteristics. First, they were very aggressive, especially when encountering "unreasonable" people and events, and had the habit of losing their temper. Second, they were commonly acknowledged as being very wise. In Meifa village in Minnan, Mr. C was considered to be very intelligent and very good at public speaking. In Shiding, Mr. Gao was considered "very smart," and, during a period of rapid social change, he understood a good deal and was good at protecting himself and others. Lü-Lin Wumu was also called "smart"; he knew how to do business and understood how to bring up his children.

Barbara Ward, in her discussion of Chinese culture, points out that villagers constructed their "mode of understanding" from three sources: models of classical leaders, models of elite society, and models obtained by comparing themselves with neighbors.[16] In the cases analyzed above, we found that the influence of elite classical leadership models was obviously great. The leaders could be compared to the "saints" (*shengren*) of ancient China and, like these holy men, were noted for being able to put others before themselves, practice morality, bring man and heavens together, maintain proper personal behavior, and change popular culture to bring peace to the world. Ward notes that villagers, when carving out their own identity, often take as a basic frame of reference the differences between their village and other neighboring villages. Popular authority plays an important role in this comparison. They pay attention to life in their village and to events such as leadership in local feuds, which create differences between "my village and other villages." Moreover, regarding the construction of a uniform moral order within a village, the local leader, through leading by example, controls "unusual behavior" or any behavior that goes against local interests.

From this perspective, rather than saying that heroes create so-

ciety and time, one should rather say that heroes are born in conformity with their time and their society. Clifford Geertz, in his discussion of sacred authority, argues that the creation of this special authority results from society's producing certain "central concerns" at a certain historical juncture, thus permitting certain exceptional people to have the occasion, at this juncture, to present themselves as spokesmen to these "central concerns."[17] The cases I have studied bear out Geertz's point. Lü-Lin Wumu became "holy" by defining himself in terms of local religious groups and by his efforts to change the fate of Taiwan's society at the beginning of the century. Mr. C became "holy" by cleverly making use of certain slogans and by capitalizing on local knowledge. Mr. Gao's marginal status in his later years was the result of his no longer being able to define the central questions of the age.

Naturally, given China's status as a long-term "bureaucratic empire," the process of local sanctification contains a few special points that Geertz did not grasp. Returning to Weber, we note that popular authorities in China are not only a kind of "natural holy man" but are also inseparable from the bureaucratic system: Either they are acknowledged as popular authorities after having served as an official (like Mr. C and Mr. Gao), or they are invested with official authority after having been acknowledged as popular authorities (like Lin Qingbiao). Even more important, Geertz argues that the "sacralization" of authority comes from people's strategic manipulation of social change, but, in the case of the Chinese people, the creation of authority is closely related to a symbolic system furnished by society. No matter whether in Meifa or in Shiding, the village god's image and efficacy are both the object of popular authorities' emulation: Mr. C of Meifa emulated the Gentleman Master of the Way of the village temple, and Lü-Lin Wumu emulated Lü Dongbin. Martin and Feutchwang argue that the village gods are symbolic icons on which the people rely for the expression of common opinions or the "emperors" of their imagination. From the point of view of ability, the role played by popular authorities or holy ones is also like this, in that they must first "seek permission from the people" and "take the people

as master," and only then can they speak to the "central concerns" of society. From this perspective, Chinese popular authority still bears the coloration of traditional authority, or, one might say, it is a kind of traditional expression that has experienced a historical transformation.

The Power of the Group (*qunti de dongli*)

From the renaissance of religion in Shiding to the study of the life histories of local popular authorities, we can see the dialectical logic between group forces and the power of individual psychology. The power of a social group is inseparable from an individual's fate under specific historical conditions, while at the same time an individual's fate under specific historical conditions is inseparable from the power of a social group. This explains why, in the last few decades, Shiding has witnessed a revival in popular religious belief and also explains the intimate relationship between people historically possessing popular authority and what anthropologists call "public symbols." If we develop this observation further, we see that this dialectical perspective on individual and group power actually explains not only the basic process of the formation of religious belief but also the constantly evolving social mechanism that is intimately linked to man's social and spiritual sense of belonging. More concretely, the spiritual attachment of a group is often the common product of individual psychology and public symbols. In Shiding, I saw the importance of this dialectic in observing the change in local social existence from parochial (*paixi*) to party identity.

At first glance, the transition in local power relations from Lü-Lin Wumu's lineage to Gao Bineng appears to be an exchange within local religious groups, but, in actuality, behind the process of religious exchange lies a process of exchange of power between local factions. During the time of Lü-Lin Wumu and his children, the structure of power in Shiding was made up of three independent groups: the Japanese colonial police and military and the instruments of Shinto ideological rule; the power of the local

administration, such as Chen Bingsheng and others mediating between the Japanese colonial government and Taiwan's indigenous society; and the system of popular authority represented by Lü-Lin Wumu's lineage and his local religious group. When Lü-Lin Wumu died (in 1942), the structure of local power, in a continuation of these earlier times, reproduced itself appropriately, that is, the direct representatives of the Japanese colonial government, the police, and the army; Chen Bingsheng's inheritor, Ye Huotu, the second village head; and Lü-Lin Wumu's inheritor, Lin Qingbiao. After 1945, this structure of power underwent an important reorganization. Between 1945 and 1949, when Chiang Kai-shek came to Taiwan, Shiding's Japanese colonial police and military were forced out of Taiwan, and the Guomindang (GMD) and CCP underground organizations sent people to Shiding, each establishing its own party organization, without setting up complete administrative or police systems. This left a temporary vacuum in local politics. Then, the stronger GMD party organization employed Gao Bineng, the young administrative cadre left by the Japanese colonial government, to reconstruct local political power partially, thereby creating the first representative of the GMD government. For Lü-Lin Wumu and his lineage, this was a period of continuity, and they played important roles in local traditional religion and by rebuilding the school and focusing on education. This tripartite structure of power began to change in 1949.

In 1949, Chiang Kai-shek's army came to Taiwan and, in the following years, cruelly injured and killed all those in Shiding who had worked in underground party organizations, as well as some innocent people. From this point forward, they strengthened the GMD political committee with Gao Bineng at its center and appointed those who had formerly served as officials in the Japanese colonial government police as local police and administrative officials. Gao Bineng was "elected" to serve as the first township head; at the same time, Fang Jiatian, a young policeman with a personal grudge against Gao Bineng, also received the government's trust. Thus two factions formed inside the local GMD administration. Traditionally, people in Shiding took the tunnel

leading to the central area of Shiding as the dividing line between "inside" and "outside" Shiding, dividing Shiding into the areas "inside the tunnel" and "outside the tunnel." Gao Bineng was born and grew up "inside the tunnel," whereas Fang Jiatian was born and grew up "outside the tunnel," and they each built their own factions in their own territories, dividing basic political power in Shiding into the factions "inside" and "outside" the tunnel. In the elections from the 1950s through the early 1970s, there were many power struggles between these two groups, as each group attempted to build its own power base.

At the same time, Lü-Lin Wumu's family took advantage of the GMD government's propagation of "Chinese culture" and made public the originally secret "Worship the Phoenix Teachings" sect at the Mingshantang. Between 1946 and 1957, Lin Qingbiao used his own material and financial power, and also mobilized local energies, to transform the Jishun temple and the Mingshantang, combining the two sites of religious worship, integrating the secret beliefs of the Mingshantang with the Confucian rituals of the Shiding public school, and systematizing the local worship and rituals of the Jishun temple. In fact, at the time that Lin Qingbiao was doing his utmost to promote popular beliefs, the Shiding local administrative organs were carrying out yet another "cultural reconstruction project," using local government authority, with Gao Bineng's and Fang Jiatian's factions at the center. As factions they were divided, but, as representatives of the GMD government, they received orders from higher authorities and carried out the "improvement of customs and habits" in Shiding, attempting to reduce wasteful behavior in local rituals and to avoid the social problems created by local festivals. However, given Lü-Lin Wumu's family's monopoly over some of the public power in Shiding (the school), it was impossible for the "improvement of customs and habits" to be thoroughly implemented, and even if the changing times resulted in the natural disintegration of secret sects, the ritual activities of the Jishun temple still expanded significantly. The religious activities observed by Feuchtwang in the latter part of the 1960s were precisely the result of the expan-

sion of these public rituals and had not always been like that.

Since the 1980s, the structure of power in Shiding has changed yet again. During this period, Gao Bineng received from the Lü-Lin Wumu family the power of control over popular religion in the Jishun temple. The pretext was that the Jishun temple had originally been the common property of all of Shiding but for a long time had been under the control of one small family. In fact, the reason he took over and managed the "den of superstition" he formerly opposed has much to do with changes in the power structure. For some decades, the Gao Bineng and Fang Jiatian groups inside the GMD had gradually lost their importance, as a new generation of local politicians emerged. At the same time, Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) activities gradually became public, and, over time, attracted a certain number of followers. The GMD viewed this as a threat. Neither the change in the internal power structure nor the party struggles on the outside of the party worked to the benefit of the aging Gao Bineng. His shift from secular political power to "sacred" religious power was hardly a random choice.

While in Shiding, I collected a great deal of material relating to historical changes in the local groups and in the power structure. It would be tedious here to attempt a comprehensive analysis. However, my narration should have already sufficiently illustrated one point: that power choices, like religious choices, involve both individual strategic choices and choice governed by group power. The British anthropologist Edmund Leach made a penetrating study of this phenomenon long ago. Among the Kachin tribe of high plains Burma, Leach discovered a "pendulum model" composed of three modes of political organization. The three modes were egalitarianism, hierarchy, and the small country. Local politicians could manipulate these models when they felt their own position to be in crisis. To preserve their leading positions, local political leaders often vaunted the rationality of the hierarchy; in order to overthrow someone else's position, they occasionally reversed themselves and criticized the hierarchy; and in order to shore up a system that was favorable to them, they defended the small-county model.[18] To my mind, Leach's political "pendulum model" could

be translated into Chinese as the "strategic" model, referring to the calculating behavior of local power holders. The changes in the power structure in Shiding, to a certain degree, may also be seen as the results of this kind of strategic behavior.

However, I would like to point out further that my conclusions concerning the nature of popular authority are of no small value in understanding power changes and factional behavior. A person possessing informal power (such as Lü-Lin Wumu) attempts to construct his own authority and position through propagating beliefs that are beneficial to the people, and, consequently, his authority is, on the one hand, the result of his individual efforts but, on the other, is the social expression of the common ideas of a certain period and its crises. The rise of a person seeking political power is also like this: He must also use intellectual knowledge and factional knowledge appropriate to certain group needs to define his own position.

Thus, in the life histories of different local political leaders, the term *popular welfare* comes up frequently. Chen Bingsheng became the first village head of the colonial government after having been a leader in the anti-Japanese resistance but then lost this heroic status in the redefinition that followed the end of World War II. In comparison, his old commander (*bujiang*), Chen Qiuju, who had continued to fight in the hills, earned a reputation for heroism after his death. However, while Chen Bingsheng was serving as village head of Shiding, he was good at finding middle ground between the interests of the people and those of the colonial rulers; he often covertly protected the innocent people and actively participated in the construction of projects in the local interest, thereby obtaining a certain prestige. Lin Qingbiao, one of the people I described as "possessing informal power" in Shiding, left a "biography" in his genealogy that is even more illustrative: "Lin Qingbiao, born 1901/7/1, died 1959/11/29 . . . by nature strong, straightforward, and fair. He hated evil like an enemy and pursued the public good. He was a righteous man, very strict in the management of his family, and deprived himself so as to be generous to others."[19]

Even if not all local leaders are similarly described in genealo-

gies as "just," "righteous," or "generous," most of them, in their heart of hearts, hope to earn such praise.

In 1995, I participated in the celebration for Gao Bineng's ninety-fourth birthday, and at this huge banquet, to which all his relatives and friends were invited, Mr. Gao spoke of what he had tried to accomplish in his life. First he pointed out that when he began to serve as an official under Japanese colonialism, although it may have looked like he had submitted to the Japanese, in fact he used the opportunities afforded him by official service to make many contributions to the people. For example, on one occasion, in order to save a local person who had just been drafted by the Japanese army and was to be sent to invade Southeast Asia, Gao used a clever strategy, having the man pretend to be sick. Thus the man was able to avoid a terrible fate. The second point he made was that when he was serving as Shiding's first township head, he often refused to accept the officials sent by the higher authorities to serve in Shiding, in order to reduce local people's suffering at the hands of the GMD "outsiders." The third point was that throughout his life he had placed stern demands on his own children and was very strict in his home life, depriving himself to be generous to others. Finally, he said that he thoroughly hated the lawyers and doctors of that period, because they made money while others suffered; Gao himself had never done so and was at ease with himself.

We have also noted examples of frequent mutual antagonism between politicians in different factions. For example, even if Gao Bineng repeatedly recounted examples of his "just" behavior, his old adversary Fang Jiatian also gave me many examples of Gao's sneakiness. We can understand this mutual criticism either as an effort to discredit others behind their backs or as a means of holding up a mirror against which the beholder appears "just," "righteous," and "generous."

One aspect of an individual's life may correspond to the demands of social groups, but there are others who maintain some distance from these demands. This is true for ordinary people as well as for those with prestige. Thus all we can say is that when I heard prestigious people in Shiding talking about themselves, it

was only one side of the matter. Nonetheless, it is precisely the language employed in bragging about oneself that, to a great degree, illustrates what I want to say here: It is true that a person, especially one who seeks to accomplish something in the course of his life, can only achieve his personal aims in devoting his energy to the cause of "popular opinion." In my opinion, although Lin Qingbiao's biography, Gao Bineng's self-description, and Fang Jiatian's criticism are only partial statements, nonetheless these partial statements are very revealing of the logic of Chinese political behavior.

The clearest example is Lin Zhongxin, who in recent years has been treasured by Shiding people for his activity in local politics. This power seeker frequently ran for township head, but, because he lacked real strength, he was never elected. To increase his strength and popular support, in recent years he founded in his home a political information center he called the "Lin Zhongxin service center." The introduction to the center that Lin Zhongxin provided me states that it had served on many occasions to "relieve worries and straighten out difficulties" for the people, presenting complaints to the government and organizing collective resistance to senseless government measures. For example, the government had built a jadeite mine and a high-speed highway between Taibei and Yilan, both on local people's land, and had offered unreasonably low compensation. Through his service center, Lin Zhongxin presented these grievances to the appropriate office and, after much effort, finally achieved a reasonable solution. I asked him whether he was paid for the services he provided, and he answered: "This is a completely voluntary effort to help the people. I take no money and ask only for fairness."

Someone who hopes to be commonly acknowledged as having political power must pay a certain price for such recognition. This price consists of "investing" a portion of his life in the "peace of mind" and "welfare" that the people seek. In other words, from an observer's point of view, we can say that there is an exchange relationship between a prospective holder of political power and the people; the prospective power holder must provide "services"

to the people in order to receive their support. But when he comes to have power, the people must provide him with support and recognition before reaping benefits from the relationship. For example, the current holder of the post of township head has power, and, when people present requests to him, they must often accompany their requests with certain gifts and cannot simply "complain" to their hearts' content. The mother of the township head died while I was doing fieldwork there, and the funeral organized by the township head was, according to what people told me, the largest in Shiding history. During the funeral ceremonies, the township head received many "white packages" from the villagers, and some of the villagers said that the "white packages" were, in part, an expression of grief and, in part, "a repayment of debts owed to him in ordinary times," given that the township head often took care of certain matters for certain villagers. Naturally, when a power holder is in a position of power, if he receives too many "payments of personal debts" (*renqing*), or "bribes," he will evoke popular criticism. I have heard that the current Shiding township head is infamous for this and that he not only uses his position to seek personal gain, establishing in Shiding a plastic factory originally prohibited by the government, but that he also uses all sorts of excuses to receive gifts and money. The popular condemnation of "corrupt officials" illustrates, from the reverse angle, the important role of "fairness," "righteousness," "generosity," and other popular "judgments of officials" in the process of fashioning the prestige of political leaders.

What should be pointed out is that the local concepts of "fairness," "righteousness," and "generosity" have existed over thousands of years of the history of political thought and have been widely propagated. Human figures passed down by the people, such as Guan Gong, Judge Bao, and Zhong Kui in the ghost world, are all what we might call ideal "images of good officials" in the popular mind, and people's praise, gossip, and slander are all equally part of the ideal model of a fair and good official. The political legends circulating among the people for many years have provided a solid cultural basis for modern democratic ideals.

This leads me to consider the social roles played by the media,

as I observed the situation in Shiding. When Feuchtwang was in Shiding, there was no television, and, although there were newspapers, the locals considered these unimportant. For this reason, Shiding, as described by Feuchtwang, was a land of pure cultural tradition, and, in the introduction to his doctoral dissertation, he relates, in a descriptive tone, how, when he first entered the village, he witnessed the scene of old people gathered before their houses, chatting. In fact, before media penetration, popular discourse on "current political matters" was constructed on the basis of such chats. However, things are different now. Television has reached nearly 100 percent of Shiding homes, and many families have several television sets. Following the increase in literacy and the rise in cultural levels, the number of people reading daily papers in Shiding is also considerable. Early in the morning, I often saw different groups of people gathered around a television set, carefully listening to the news and discussing the people in the news. People no longer need to use guesswork to imagine what is good and bad about political figures.

In studying media culture, we often encounter the term *public opinion*, according to which news reports and political commentary should not only reflect the facts but should also reflect the point of view of the average person on political matters. To all appearances, this is already a social ideal that all "democratic" regimes must respect. At base, from the point of view of a student of media culture, the function of the news media should be to satisfy the "consumption needs" of the news "consumers," which means that those who produce the news must, while accurately reporting the facts, also satisfy the audience's view of society and politics, views that are called "public opinion." Following the emergence of this principle in the modern world, modern politicians have found themselves held to new standards. Politicians, in order to obtain popular favor and prestige, must manufacture a media image of themselves, so that they and their audience, which is to say their followers and citizens in general, come to have a clear and visible exchange relationship. To obtain popular recognition, politicians have to engage in political projects that will at-

tract media attention and then use the resulting media reports to solicit popular compliance.

The mutuality of the exchange relation between broadcast media and local people means that local events are no longer confined to a local sphere of knowledge and, instead, can become supralocal events. For example, several important newspapers and television stations reported frequently on the jadeite mine and the highway in Shiding and the popular protest these provoked, and local politician Lin Zhongxin's activities during these events also received media coverage. The "supralocalization" of local events through the broadcast media means that traditional political concepts enter into a modern linguistic space. Moreover, broadcast culture's special exchange nature places an important demand on the media, that of absorbing popular concepts. Consequently, ideas in the space defined by modern media culture are largely limited to older political concepts widely dispersed among the people, such as those mentioned above: "fairness," "righteousness," and "generosity." The only difference is that these ideas have now put on the mask of modern political language ("popular opinion" is just such a mask).

An unhappy side effect of media culture is that supralocal politics has become increasingly important in local society. Before media culture came to be widespread, the politicians whom Shiding residents discussed were principally local leaders, whether historical figures, such as Chen Bingsheng, Lü-Lin Wumu, and Lin Qingbiao, or those who came later, such as Gao Bineng, Fang Jiatian, and so on. The social power of the villagers also resulted basically from the rallying power of local political leaders. Now, even if local political figures and power holders still confront local people directly, nonetheless, following the penetration of local society by broadcast media, Taiwan's best-known people, such as "President" Li Denghui, have also taken on considerable importance as local social forces; if such were not the case, last year's "presidential election"* might not have taken place. The rise in

*Wang's work, published in China, must respect the PRC government's refusal to recognize the government of Taiwan, hence his use of quotation marks.—Eds.

importance of supralocal political characters in local society will undoubtedly have the unfortunate effect of reducing the importance of local political leaders in the eyes of local people. In fact, local people consider the township head and local elections less and less important, and people pay more attention to political events and people from the whole of Taiwan society, which are outside the framework of Shiding. This sort of group consciousness will surely cause local political leaders, in time, to lose their "heroic character."

Religious Secularization and Sacred Authority

Before I went to Taiwan, Professor Feuchtwang visited me in Beijing. As we chatted, he said that he had been to Taiwan a year ago, had returned to Shiding, and had seen his old friends. When he was young, Taibei was not even as big as my hometown of Quanzhou, and people from Shiding were pitied for how they lived. But today the situation has greatly changed, and Feuchtwang no longer felt that the questions he had asked in the past were appropriate. Quite the opposite, Feuchtwang, even as an Englishman, was shocked by Taiwan's wealth. When he went to Shiding, he took a few small gifts from England to give to his old friends. Unexpectedly, his old friends, who had already moved into modern houses, gave him gifts worth more than twice as much as those he had brought, leaving him feeling embarrassed. He also said that what he had written about Shiding was perhaps no longer useful.

If Feuchtwang's memory has served him well, and if my observations and his share a common base, then Taiwanese society has indeed experienced great changes over the past thirty years. Taibei is now a modern metropolis, its streets and neighborhoods no longer comparable to those of Quanzhou, which are still organized principally by dialect. The stores on Zhongxiao East Road sell vast amounts of European clothes and other foreign goods; modern people walk the streets, luxury cars fill the roads. In the universities, Western subjects are taught alongside traditional Chinese cul-

ture, and Western subjects attract more students. Thirty years ago, Feuchtwang saw Shiding's elderly seated on benches around their houses, discussing village affairs; now they crowd around a big television set discussing national affairs. In their leisure time, senior citizens over sixty, just like young people, like karaoke and even enjoy touring in their cars.

Feuchtwang says that this is "change," as anthropologists so often discuss it. To my mind, if by "change" we mean the increase in material goods, then this is indeed change; but if we mean the transformation of society and culture, then this is not necessarily "change." Any social scientist who respects the facts will note that the daily increase in material goods in Taiwan's society not only includes modern consumer items and popular cultural products but also many old things, seemingly swimming against the current.

At the end of July, I went for the first time to Nangang [where Academia Sinica is located], and, in search of a bite to eat, went to a local restaurant. Next door was a Buddhist worship center (*daochang*) that appeared to be very active. I learned that the site had been set up because the Hungry Ghosts festival was just around the corner. In an essay Feuchtwang published on Taiwan's temples, he listed only a few dozen urban and local temples.[20] In wandering around for a few days, I discovered that the number of Taibei's temples had not decreased in response to modern changes but, instead, had increased several tens of times. Moreover, ritual forms had not, as social theory predicts, evolved toward simplicity but instead showed a tendency to return to ancient forms. Two years after my visit to Taiwan, Li Yiyuan [a well-known Taiwanese anthropologist] gave a talk at my work unit [in Beijing] where he noted the increase and limitless spread of Taiwan's popular religion, and I felt that what he said was entirely correct.

In Shiding, the situation was even clearer. In his dissertation, completed in 1975, Feuchtwang provided a complete description of the festivals in Shiding in the 1960s and 1970s. He noted that Shiding rituals may be divided into four categories:[21]

1. Family-based rituals, including a set of year-end and new year's rituals from the twenty-fourth day of the twelfth month

through the ninth day of the first month (according to the lunar calendar); the festival of the first lunar month on the fifth day of that month; the "clear and bright" festival of the fifth day of the fifth month (when ancestral tombs are swept); the birthday of Chuangmu on the first day of the sixth month; the cowboy and weaving girl festival of the seventh day of the seventh month; the festival of the seventh lunar month on the fifteenth day of that month; the mid-autumn festival on the fifteenth day of the eighth month; the double nine festival on the ninth day of the ninth month; and the winter solstice;

2. Rituals based on the birthdays of the gods, including the birthday of Zushigong on the sixth day of the first month; the birthday of the heavenly gentleman (Tiangong) on the ninth day of the first month; the birthday of the village deity known as the Venerated King, on the first day of the second month; the birthday of Mazu on the twenty-third day of the third month; the birthday of the village god Grand Master (Dafu) on the tenth day of the fourth month; the birthday of the immortal (Lü Dongbin) on the fourteenth day of the fourth month; and the birthday of Guanyin on the nineteenth day of the ninth month;

3. Rituals based on the smallest territorial unit, occurring on the third day of the second month, the second day of the eighth month, the sixteenth day of the eighth month, and the sixteenth day of the twelfth month, the birthday of the Earth God;

4. Rituals to welcome the gods, including the festival of the immortals on the twelfth day of the first month; the festival of Dafu on the sixth day of the second month; the festival for Mazu, held once every five years; and the festival for the Venerated King on the fifteenth day of the tenth month.

In a 1974 article, Feuchtwang summarized the characteristics of these types of popular ritual, arguing that they comprised Shiding's interlocking ritual spatial system. The year-end, family-based rituals can be witnessed throughout the Chinese cultural world and thus form part of the "pan-sinic" ritual system. Its social unit, however, was the "family" rather than the "state," because those who participated in the ritual and the social space

surrounding it all take the household as their unit and thus belong to specific families. The other three rituals express, for the most part, the organized face of village and local community. Of course, the community itself may be divided into three levels:

1. As a locality defined by the village, symbolized by beliefs and rituals related to the Earth God; in Shiding, the territorial division followed the river, so that the areas known as "inside the landing" and "outside the landing" each have their own Earth God temple.

2. As a locality defined as the whole of Shiding, symbolized by the three gods of the village temples: the Venerated King, the Grand Master, and the immortals. The local temple in Shiding is called the Jishun temple, where common worship of the three main gods is performed. It is said that these spirits were those used by the first inhabitants of Shiding to symbolize the spirits of their "roots," while the immortals come from Zhinangong, a Daoist temple in the Wenshan area of Taibei.

3. Rituals whose central purpose is to welcome the Venerated King, the Grand Master, the immortals and Mazu, relate to the complex relationship between spatial categories and village religion; in each instance, ritual participants welcome the god in each village of Shiding and tour the borders of the territory, expressing the idea that each corner receives the god's protection.[22]

Outside the space defined by family and local rituals, Feuchtwang also emphasized that there existed a kind of supralocal ritual system, a ritual system in which local "great families" like the Gaos, the Zhangs, and the Lins were the primary practitioners. According to Feuchtwang's interpretation, the origins of this system can be traced to the local gentry hierarchy. The great families in Shiding participated every year in the large-scale, god-welcoming activities in Wenshan. These families and lineages were originally local merchants or landlords, and whether it was through commerce or other social activities, their social spheres were larger than those of most people, and their rituals expressed the sphere defined by the borders they crossed.

Feuchtwang concentrated most of his energy on observing the local ritual system, probably in order to refute the lineage theories

of his teacher, Maurice Freedman. Even if he did not directly criticize his teacher's theory, his description of Shiding's ritual system fully illustrates his wish to prove that, in Chinese life, local spatial systems and family systems were often integrated. Even more important, Feuchtwang had been influenced by the founders of modern anthropology, Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown.

His analysis of family and local ritual was based on Malinowski's and Radcliffe-Brown's functionalism. Like most anthropologists, Feuchtwang hoped, in going to Shiding, to answer one question: In a place far from his own modern Western society, people's lifestyles manifested clear particularities—what accounts for these particularities? The writings of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown had already taught him that to answer this question he first had to carefully observe the society in question so as to place behavioral particularities relating to family, economy, law, politics, magic, religion, technology, and so on, within a larger synthesis and then to subject this ensemble to analysis, explaining how society had come to constitute such a "seamless whole." This "explanation" would then serve as "basic common sense," expressing the understanding and practice necessary to locals living local life.

However, unsatisfied with functionalist explanations, Feuchtwang also studied Marxist theories of class and ideology. Thus, in addition to describing the daily ritual system of the average people, he also emphasized the influence of class differentiation on this system, thus constructing an image of ritual that takes account of both the system of people's daily lives and the system of social divisions.

I should hasten to point out here that the main point of the present essay is not to analyze the origins of Feuchtwang's system of interpretation. Instead, I want to use his observations to probe the differences between what he saw thirty years ago and today's situation. In the final analysis, differences in ritual systems brought about by social change occur in all periods of history. For example, the whole series of differences described by Feuchtwang having to do with family, local, and supralocal ritual systems, as well as the social background to these differences, still exists in Shiding.

While in Shiding, I took out Feuchtwang's notes and, one by one, compared his comments on institutional practices and discovered that Feuchtwang had very accurately recorded local facts. What he saw, I saw as well. But it was precisely this that made me suspicious. We often say "the river flows to the east for thirty years, then to the west for thirty years [i.e., change is constant]." Why then do we find that thirty years later, systems are the same in Shiding?

Even more puzzling, not only have the former systems not diminished, there have also appeared in Shiding a good many [new] religious rituals employing traditional names. According to statistics compiled by government offices, there are twenty-two religious temples currently registered in Shiding, and several dozen, having been built since the 1970s, have not yet been formally registered. In my estimation, based on what I have seen, there are no fewer than sixty temples in Shiding (not counting churches).

Given this number, it is not difficult to imagine that there are many sects. In general, we can divide Taiwanese popular religious temples into four groups:

1. Those that worship a variety of local gods; this includes the many local cults noted by Feuchtwang;

2. Formal or informal Daoist temples, which worship a variety of Daoist gods (such as the Great Emperor of the Dark Heavens [Xuantian shangdi], Lü Dongbin, etc.);

3. Formal and informal Buddhist temples; and

4. Temples of all sorts of syncretic popular groups (such as the Yiguandao).

These multitudinous religious structures are to be seen all over Shiding, and the fact that different categories of worship, with different beliefs and focus, can "peacefully coexist" in this tiny place is truly rarely seen in history.

Even in the case of temples and rituals observed by Feuchtwang, the temples have become fancier with each rebuilding, and the rituals more fervent with each reenactment. The year before I arrived in Shiding, the Jishun temple had been rebuilt, its dimensions expanded to more than twice what they had been in the 1960s

and 1970s; originally it had been an old temple, divided only into front and rear halls; now it is a sparkling new two-story building. There were once two Earth God temples, and one is still in the original place and remains quite small, but the other has been somewhat enlarged. Still, both are new. I have heard that the village government is going to rebuild the other Earth God temple, making it, too, into a two-story structure. Some of the gods and ancestral tablets worshipped inside family homes have been very well preserved, and others have been completely redone.

Those who believe in modernization always argue that what we see in modern societies are "contemporary" things. And it is undeniable that in Shiding we indeed see many modern implements and buildings. However, what captures the attention even more is the contemporary rebuilding of "past" things, of which temples are the most prominent examples.

When I asked people in Shiding their attitude toward the rebuilding of temples, different people had different viewpoints. After analyzing these viewpoints, I decided that the locals divide currently existing temples into three categories: local temples existing from "ancient" (meaning late Qing) times; new temples that Shiding people promoted and invested in; and new temples from the outside. Actually, of these three kinds of temples, some have just been reconstructed, whereas others have been newly built. In addition, there is also a wide range of worship, from local gods to the principle gods of popular mediums (in the north of China, mediums are called *saman*; in the south, *jitong*; their principle gods are the Prince [Taizi], the Kingly Lord [Wangye], etc.) to different Daoist groups and Buddhist monasteries (*siyuan*). However, local people tend to treat the three types of temples mentioned above separately and to view the first as types of local public works, some of the second category as devoted to protecting local interests, and others as purely mercenary; and the third group is seen as being entirely at the service of believers from Taibei city, out to make money. This suggests that Shiding people have a critical attitude toward temples that have appeared in their locality in the recent period. One elderly woman said to me: "These new

temples aren't temples. They don't worship the gods; all they do is ask people for money. They're not like the Jishun temple, which has always been there." According to what I was told, these new temples have many ways of making money. Believers from outside often pay a certain fee known as "incense money" (a contribution that goes to maintain the relationship between the god's temple and the contributor). The managers of these temples also help some worshipers to carry out their rituals and demand fees to do so.

There are three other sources of income for the new temples. The first comes from the "incense groups" [pilgrimages] organized once a year or several times yearly by the temple manager, in which believers from different areas participate, contributing money to support a travel group that goes to the "ancestral temple" [of the new temple] on Taiwan or on the mainland, an enterprise that contains elements of a sacred "pilgrimage" as well as aspects of secular travel and tourist shopping. Many of the pilgrimage routes in Taiwan include unregistered shops, which, I have heard, "local heads" of various areas run. While I was in Shiding I participated in an "incense group" and went by bus from Shiding to the Mazu temple in Zhanghua, and then to a big Wangye temple in Tainan, before returning to Shiding; along the way, we stopped at five "park and shops" where, encouraged by the advertisements, we bought household items such as medicinal creams and vegetable knives. I dare not comment on the connection between the organizers of the "incense tour" and the owners of these roadside stores. Still, it is not hard to imagine the close relationship between pilgrimage activities, shopping, and money making.

The second source of income comes from "mediums" in the temples, who help believers communicate with the gods or with their ancestors and receive a fee for this. For example, in Shiding there is a "Jigong temple" that worships Jigong as its chief god, and the temple manager is a very attractive thirty-year-old woman. I have heard that when she goes through a certain procedure, and drinks some Gaoliang liquor or XO brandy, she becomes just like Jigong, an incarnation of this Buddha. Her behavior becomes very

strange, but there is apparently some truth in her babbling, and she responds to the doubts and questions of her believers. This young lady has more than 100 disciples, who, in general, study with her informally but, when necessary, can form a disciplined religious group, which is beginning to take part in large-scale rituals in different areas. Still, the woman's primary attraction is her ability to "speak truth after imbibing liquor." I have heard that many people who have questions that other specialists are unable to answer seek her out and that she always finds a way to give a satisfactory answer. For this reason, many people believe in her and contribute quite a lot of money to her while they are having their prayers granted.

The third source of income has to do with the very heart of religion, the sacred words that heal the body. For example, in the mountains at some distance from Shiding, there is an "Emperor Xuantian temple," which is believed to have originated in Wudang Mountain in Hubei. The chief figure at the temple is an elderly man in his seventies, who once worked as a miner and who, from a young age, began to seek out masters and study the Way, finally becoming a famous medium. By the end of the 1970s, he had accumulated a good deal of money and built a small temple in Shiding. He is adept at using supernatural, magical means to help men and women who have been struck down by serious illness to gain relief and, for this reason, has received several million NT dollars over the past ten years or so. In 1990, he spent a great deal of money to transform his temple, turning it into a huge Daoist temple, which attracted even more worshippers. According to what he told me, his believers are very generous and often contribute large amounts of money. He also said that these big contributors are all government functionaries and well-known merchants and that, in the process of gaining control over their illness, he also took control of much of the hidden selfishness in their lives so that he is greatly respected and does not stand for ill treatment.

In the late 1960s, Feuchtwang noticed that certain leading figures in local society took [leadership of] worship and ritual activities as a symbol of their own social position, which shows how

sensitive Feuchtwang's powers of observation were. However, at the time he undertook his fieldwork, Shiding's temples did not belong to what he called, in his writings, "territorial cults," and today the situation is much different. The temples that carry out lively ritual activities are often the new, rich temples, not the old local temples. Just as some local residents pointed out, these new temples, for the most part, do not aim to improve the public welfare in general but, instead, are profit-seeking enterprises, even if legally they are classed as nonprofit organizations.

Anthropologists often view belief, ritual, and temples as "sacred objects" and argue that they represent the symbolic system of the society in question. Those scholars, influenced by functionalism (as was Feuchtwang), generally take this symbolic system as a mechanism that creates group identity. And, indeed, this interpretation accords with reality at a certain level, because even those temples mentioned above, which generally exist only to make money, still have followers and serve to create communities. However, given the intimate relationship between these new temples and money, and our observation of their actual function, we cannot but acknowledge that they are profoundly different from genuine "identity," "symbols," and "sacredness."

After finishing my fieldwork, I visited Feuchtwang in London. Once, while chatting at a meal, I used a metaphor to explain Shiding's new temples. I said that Feuchtwang's wife, as a psychiatrist in London, worked to relieve difficulties for those with psychological problems; we call this kind of specialist a "doctor," and the places where doctors are concentrated to consult and prescribe are called clinics or hospitals. "Religious specialists" in Shiding (temple managers and mediums) and the temples newly built by these "doctors" are much like "clinics" or "hospitals." These specialists in their centers of activity use supernatural means to provide "prescriptions" to solve difficulties for their believers and earn money for their supernatural prescriptions. In this sense, they are similar to Western physicians, although their prescriptions are aimed not at the physical but at the spiritual level. Malinowski, the founder of social anthropology, once said that magic, like science,

is a cultural tool that satisfies a certain practical need, which perhaps explains the popularity of new religions in Taiwan. In fact, we can say that the appearance of many new temples in Taiwan illustrates that this unusual society is experiencing a rapid "magicalization" of religion, a transition from belief to magic. Now when people go to the temple, it is not to share in a sacred space connected to social identity but rather to solve their own practical problems.

This leads me to a newly coined term often used in the study of religion, namely, *religious secularization*. Religious secularization is a concept Western social scientists introduced to describe religious changes brought about under late capitalism. It refers to the process by which religious belief and activity evolve from a "sacred" to a "secular" character or, in other words, how late capitalist development (or modernization) leads religion away from its former anticommercial, unworldly stance toward an embrace of commodities and materialism, thus making religion a part of commercial society, in the process becoming something very different from what it originally was. At the outset, I did not like this concept, as I felt that religions throughout history all shared a certain practical orientation, differing only in the specific usages and methods and that hence religion had always been secular. The concept of "religious secularization" arose in the West and thus perhaps embodies the deification of the Western Christian tradition's notion of sacred. In Chinese religion, the emphasis has always been on practicality, and Chinese have worshipped all kinds of "effective" gods. Most of what they did was for "effectiveness" or "results"; very little was oriented toward "sacred" needs. Our beliefs have long been "secular," and there was, I thought, no point in talking about "secularization."

However, after careful study of religion in a changing society, I discovered that I could not deny that "secularization" had a certain analytical significance. As a small example, [while in Taiwan] I came to be good friends with a taxi driver who loved to gamble. He told me how he used to play "Liuhecai," a form of gambling that originated in Hong Kong. The key to this game was guessing numbers, and those who guessed right won big and got

rich. He bought a lot of tickets and, before filling in the numbers, went to mediums or other spiritually potent places to "guess the numbers." The method involved was for the medium to enter a realm where he could communicate with the gods. Then his whole body would shake, his hand would grasp a stick, and on a board, where sand had already been poured, he would make a few strokes at random, after which those present would interpret the strokes as one number or another. This kind of magic actually goes all the way back to ancient divinatory practices and later became the ritual of "worshipping the Phoenix teachings." In the time of Lü-Lin Wumu, the way of worshipping the Phoenix was very similar to the ritual just described, but what people saw in the strokes in the sand were lines from poems that would be explained and were written down by the Daoist, thus making up "morality books" (like *The Living World Renewed*, put together by Lü-Lin Wumu).[23] Now it had become part of the Liuhecai numbers racket. If we say that the "morality books" provide sacred moral teachings for religion, then we should say that the Liuhecai follows a completely secular, monetary logic. If we do not use "secularization" to describe this exchange of meaning and function of the same ritual, it is hard to explain it clearly.

Looking at gambling, a completely opportunistic form of behavior, led me to think about "risk." Even if many people seek the help of a medium before filling in their lottery forms, most of those who participate in Liuhecai lose a lot of money. If we believe that people are somewhat rational, then after a few losses they should stop gambling. Such is not the case, and those who lose still want to gamble, and if no one stops them they will continue, always hoping optimistically to strike it rich. From this perspective, it is not difficult to see the purpose of the planchette ritual in gambling, which illustrates precisely the existence of risk; [their recourse to planchette] was the effort they made to overcome risk, and this effort itself expresses an attitude of optimism.

I would not necessarily say that the logic of religious belief and the opportunistic logic of gambling are completely the same. However, I will say that the rise of Shiding's new temples appears to be

deeply related to the increase of risk in Taiwan's secular society. Since the 1970s, Taiwan's society has undergone a rapid transition, passing from the underdeveloped 1960s to a stage of rapid, unprecedented development. In this process of rapid development, many people became rich, fully experiencing the material life of the modern capitalist world, in which money can apparently buy anything. However, at the same time, people came to realize that wealth could not solve all disasters, illnesses, and unhappiness in life. Buying an insurance policy would seem to give people a sense of security, but, in fact, insurance only takes on meaning in the face of disaster, illness, and unhappiness. Instead, people turned toward the gods, seeking a sense of safety. I do not mean to suggest that they completely believe in the logic of religion but, rather, that they hope to receive something from an unknowable world that they cannot get from the known world. From this perspective, I feel that the phenomenon of Taiwan's new religions has certain points of commonality with gambling: They both are means of gaining control over a world that is uncontrollable.

When Shiding residents tell me that "outside temples have all come to make money," they overlook the other side of the coin: Why do the outside temples always succeed? No matter if it is a temple built to facilitate communication between man and god, or an altar built to cure illnesses, the reason they have "earning power" is because many people are willing to pay the price to purchase spiritual insurance.

When talking about modern social life, Giddens points out that modern society is, in fact, a "risk society" and modern culture is, in fact, "risk culture."[24] When forces outside individual control grow beyond the point where the individual can resolve his or her problems, people must necessarily hand over responsibility to systems put in place by society. This is precisely the expanded space supplied by service organizations (such as hospitals) in Western capitalist society that address people's problems. I said above that temples and hospitals have much in common. If this is correct, then we can say that we should understand religious secularization in terms of "risk."

Cultural Crisis and Trust

Since the 1970s, the increase of popular religious worship in Shiding has been driven by changes in social reality. This can be seen not only from the close relationship between gambling and ritual, concepts of risk and religious protection, but also in the process of social evolution. The large number of temples in today's Shiding can be explained by the evolution of urban-rural relations, as well as by the ideological factors already discussed.

Even if uninformed observers see all these new temples as "outsiders," in fact only 40 percent of them can be classified as belonging to outside religious groups, and the rest belong to Shiding residents. Some of the outside groups come from Taibei city, others from Yilan, and the reason they have purchased land to build temples in Shiding is that the cost of land in the cities has gone up astronomically in the course of Taiwan's urbanization. It is much cheaper to build temples in places like Shiding.

According to my findings, the Shiding residents who built new temples had been Daoist priests in Taibei, part of the mobile population of the city, who carried out funerals for city residents and helped to organize local temple festivities in the city. The role they played was similar to that of the "wedding and funeral committee" (*hongbai lishi hui*) in contemporary north China. Feuchtwang was carrying out fieldwork in Shiding just as Taibei was beginning to urbanize, and a good many "rural Daoist priests" from Shiding moved to the city as part of the rural floating population. As for the rest of the mobile population, those who had money bought real estate and then sold it after prices rose, thereby making large profits. Those without money worked in the factories; the Daoists went from temple to temple, carrying out funerals for private individuals. Feuchtwang once described Taibei's local temples and their festivals, but he did not know that the people of Shiding, on whom he was concentrating, had a close relationship with those urban temples, nor did he know that, not long after he left, the Taibei population reached a saturation point, and those religious practitioners from the mountains earned enough money

to come home to Shiding and build their temples. Moreover, they used the connections they had made in Taibei to attract a good number of urban adepts to come to Shiding.

From this perspective—that of temple ownership—the great increase in Shiding religious worship is, as in the case of work and commerce, the result of changes in land prices and mobile population resulting from urbanization. However, we must also take note that the religious trade is not like other professions, in that religion is not only a means by which the practitioners make a living but is also the concentrated expression of certain social ideas. As I noted above, these concepts include "risk" and "opportunism," but this is not the whole story.

No matter how we explain the phenomenon of religious growth, we cannot deny that the growth itself varies by period, by which I mean that the growth has something to do with cultural changes in a certain period. In fact, religion and cultural change long ago became a focus of anthropological attention. From an anthropological point of view, under conditions of rapid social change, religion can serve as an important reaction, a latent force waiting to be reborn. Indeed, the cargo cults and revitalization movements of this century serve as proof of this latent power. In 1931, in the Solomon Islands, the native cargo cults suddenly appeared. The proponents of this cult predicted that a great flood was on the point of swallowing up all white people and that after the flood a boat full of the possessions of the Europeans would arrive at their island. Believers should build warehouses in order to be ready to store the goods, and they should prepare to resist the colonial police. Since the ship would not arrive until the locals had completely consumed their own possessions, they stopped working in the fields. Even though the leader of the cult was arrested, the movement still continued for several decades.

The cargo cults were not an isolated example. This type of cult, together with many other movements expressing yearning for the rebirth of the dead, the end of European-imposed slavery, and the arrival of utopia—appeared all over Melanesia from the beginning of this century. Given that these cults were widely separated

in time and space, their similarities may well be the result of similarities in social situations. In these areas, the traditional local culture had been destroyed. The Europeans, or natives influenced by the Europeans, controlled all political and economic power. Locals were hired to manage and distribute foreign goods but did not know how to obtain them. When the bitter reality of the death of local culture and the pain of economic exploitation brought people to the point of hopelessness, religion provided a solution. Some scholars have pointed out that all these religious renewals can be seen as revitalization movements and that revitalization movements are not confined to the colonized world; in fact, such movements have occurred many times in the United States. Three of the more important among them are the Mormons, Reverend Moon's Unification Church, and Reverend Jones's People's Temple.

The revival of popular religion in Shiding is naturally very different from cargo cults and revitalization movements under colonialism, since the period when the new gods appeared was not a colonial period but, rather, was the period of modernization from the 1970s on. In a recent talk, Professor Li Yiyuan suggested comparing the rapid growth of Taiwanese popular religion with the "heterodox religions" of the United States, Japan, and other countries.[25] He argued that the point of commonality was that in all cases the believers go into a trance. However, Li also argued, after reflecting further on the issue, that the development of Taiwanese popular religion also illustrates the uniqueness of Chinese religion in that the Chinese do not emphasize belief but rather the practical value of divine power. Although Li emphasized that the secularization of religion is a special characteristic of China, his point of view neatly accords, whether he realizes it or not, with the idea of the secularization of religion in sociology. I agree with him to some extent, but I do not agree with his insistent denial of the "divine" nature of religious belief. In fact, if we carefully compare the revival of popular religious belief in Taiwan with revitalization movements as discussed by anthropologists, we discover that even if there are superficial differences, at base there are points

of commonality, namely, that they appear under conditions that lead people to fear an imminent crisis.

A revitalization movement is a trial, undertaken by members of a society who hope to build a more satisfying culture, having already passed through a period of deep reflection. What this definition emphasizes is not merely the transformation of the religious sphere but the transformation of the entire cultural system. Recourse to such extreme methods occurs only after the worries and suffering of a group seem to call for the overthrow of the entire social system and the construction of a completely new one in its place.

Anthony Wallace once pointed out a common process shared by all revitalization movements. In the first stage, society retains its normal character, as the pressure for change is only beginning and there remain adequate cultural resources to satisfy the demands. But if a more oppressive group comes to power, for example, pressure and suffering can increase. Then we enter the second stage, where the pressure on suffering individuals rises incessantly. Should an appropriate change not be forthcoming, calls for cultural change will be heard, as the stresses continue and the socially approved "safety valves" begin to lose their effectiveness. When the time for revival arrives, the process of cultural retreat will come to a stop, and a vibrant cult or religious movement will come to control a good portion of the popular mood. Often, this movement will have little to do with reality and will be destined for failure from the outset. The Indian Ghost Dance was a case in point. It was said that this dance could render the dancer invulnerable to the white man's bullets. Reverend Jones's People's Temple was also like this. After they killed a U.S. congressman, Jones's followers then killed themselves. In relatively few cases, a revitalization movement uncovers a latent adaptive force within a culture and can also produce a long-lasting religion, as in the case of the Mormons. Wallace argues that all religions originated in revitalization movements. The important world religions, such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, are all products of revitalization movements.[26]

In the case of Taiwan, neither the pressure nor the unreason-

ableness of society has reached a point like that under colonialism or when the Jews first appeared in the ancient Middle East. However, it is difficult to judge, from the outside, the crisis that people in a society feel they are facing. "Risk" and "opportunism" are expressions of this crisis. In addition, we should also note the pervasive identity crisis that has characterized Taiwan for some time.

The gods that are worshiped in all Shiding temples are Chinese gods, and all the temple owners and believers emphasize that their gods came from the Chinese mainland in ancient times. From this perspective, the Taiwanese still regard the mainland as the root of their culture. The American anthropologist Steven Sangren once noted that the Taiwanese are very enthusiastic pilgrims and that most of the gods they worship seem to be local gods; but once they start their pilgrimage, they organize groups to go to their "root temple" to seek out spiritual efficacy. The Mazu cult covers all of Taiwan, but the cult comes from Fujian on the mainland. In fact, the pilgrimage connected to the Mazu cult illustrates precisely the importance of roots to the Taiwanese.[27]

Still, not all Taiwanese political and intellectual leaders completely share this view. To emphasize ideas of Taiwan's independence, they promote the idea that Taiwan's culture is local culture and has no relationship to the mainland. Even if this theory is absurd, it fits a certain ideology, and through clever manipulation of certain popular attitudes (such as opposition to the [GMD] or the "February 28 attitude" [on February 28, 1947, Taiwanese rose up against the government of Taiwan, controlled by mainland Chinese—Ed.] has evoked a certain response that makes it difficult for them to answer the question "Are we, deep down, Chinese or Taiwanese?").

The question "Who are we?" has been around since the beginning of mankind. However, throughout most periods of human history, people have focused mainly on humanity as a whole, on myths and theories concerning its creation, whereas in situations like that in contemporary Taiwan, locals are concerned with the question of ethnic identity. I dare not give an easy answer to the question of whether their religious beliefs, at a certain

level, are transmitting a certain ethnicity. However, I will say that there are direct and indirect connections between the religion and ethnicity.

The relationship between ethnic identity and individual identity is very close. When people ask, "Who are we?" they are really asking "Who am I?" The broad distribution of the ideas of "risk" and "crisis" in Taiwan illustrates that the Taiwanese, lacking the means to comment on the fate of man as such, have no choice but to look at society opportunistically, hoping to find a feeling of safety in a constantly changing society. Religion is merely a means of expressing this yearning.

During the eighth month of the lunar calendar, I witnessed at Shiding the annual ritual of "crossing the fire," organized by a Daoist priest named Lin. The ritual was carried out in front of a Shennong temple where Lin worshiped. Before the beginning of the ritual, Lin had laid out a ten-meter-long path of burning charcoal in front of the temple, and it was said that those who were ill or in difficulty could gain peace should they cross over the path in their bare feet, under Lin's guidance, carrying the icon of the god. Two hours into the ritual, although Lin had made use of much magic and talismans, he was unable to get the believers across the charcoal path in safety, and those who walked across it (including Lin himself) were seriously burned for their trouble. Those watching did not dare say that "the gods are not powerful"; instead, they only said that "there must be someone here who is making trouble." If we call this behavior "superstition," we could still depict the attitude behind it as an effort to achieve a sense of personal security through unsafe means. This attitude exists widely in today's Taiwan.

Words like *identity* and *feeling of security* immediately suggest ontological issues, but, in fact, their meanings can be broadened to include the logic of economic activity. In Taiwan, a kind of ritual in which the "golden hen" (*jinmuji*) is sought in temples is very popular. Around the altars of many temples, one finds the image of a hen wrapped in gold. The believers pray to the gods and, with his approval, pay a certain amount (about NT$3,000) to

the temple manager, and leave with a "golden hen." The name suggests that the "golden hen" is a hen that will lay golden eggs, and people say that if you have one you will get rich. And many of these believers who do get rich after obtaining their "golden hen" return a certain percentage of their wealth to the temple.

The "golden hen" cult is a kind of "fetishism," the worship of the medium of exchange. I have not looked into the origins of the "golden hen." However, those who know the history of Taiwanese religion say that, even if the cult has long been present, its widespread transmission has occurred in the last twenty or thirty years. The cult conveys the fear that people in a commercialized society have the power of the market. Smith saw the market as an "invisible hand," something like the "golden hen" cult, in which symbolic language defines the nature of this invisible hand, expressing people's contradictory attitude toward its objective power: People, on the one hand, want money, and, on the other. want to have control over money; the "golden hen" is both the symbol of money and the expression of the desire to control money.

The widespread development of such popular beliefs proves that Taiwanese society has already produced a cultural change closely connected to the harsh logic of the commercial economy. Moreover, these changes are not confined to Taiwan but have appeared in many societies in transition. Recently, anthropologists have begun to pay attention to the role played by the "invisible hand" in the small communities where they do their fieldwork and have begun to examine the contradictory relationship between the microcosms described by traditional anthropology and modern globalization. Influenced by interpretive anthropology's criticism of the political economy school, which views non-Western societies as cut off from the outside world, anthropologists now stress their desire to integrate studies of local culture with work on larger regions, ethnicities (*minzu*), and the global political economy in the hope of illustrating that our original cultural categories/divisions are facing a crisis in the commercializing world.

In his book *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South*

America (1980), Michael Taussig points out that it is impossible to study the symbols of peripheral societies in isolation from the arena of the global political economy. His ethnography describes the reactions of Colombian peasants and Bolivian miners to their own incorporation into the cash economy and the wage system. Colombian peasants have already become seasonal farm laborers, but, in terms of their values, their ideal remains a natural economy, and they believe that only products from their own soil have value and that those produced from large farms have none. They feel that those who rely on the big farms to make money have signed a pact with the devil and that those who sign pacts with the devil will not die a good death. Since the big farms are a part of the global economy, seeing them as "sinful" and as the personification of the devil is the expression of their maladjustment and resistance to the global economy.

In Bolivian tin mines, the values of the miners are somewhat different from those of Colombian peasants. These miners worship both Pachamama, a female god of the soil and of agriculture, as well as Tio, the god of the mountain ores. The icon of Tio is placed above the entrance to the mine, and the miners make offerings to him on a fixed schedule, treating him as the god who protects the material wealth of the mine. Taussig argues that Tio serves as the symbolic medium between the global economic system and local economic resources, on the one hand, functioning symbolically to protect local resources, and, on the other, tacitly permitting foreign capitalists' exploitation of the mines.[28]

In the cultural change appearing in Taiwanese popular religion, we might say that we see another expression (*fanban*) of the cultural situation described by Taussig in Central America. The newly arisen Taiwanese popular religion appears, on the one hand, to respond to commercialization but, on the other, "tacitly permits" the process of commercialization. Thus people both want to escape the daily threat of the "invisible hand" through supernatural powers and also to attempt to use these powers to fashion an "invisible hand" for their own purposes.

In Feuchtwang's doctoral dissertation, he discussed the rela-

tionship between Taiwan's social change and religious change, and offered a preliminary judgment of the cultural changes appearing in Taiwan for the first time in the 1960s. In his view, from the 1960s on, Taiwan was moving toward the decline of religion because of the development of medicine and social services, which would mean that people no longer needed to ask for help from the gods and, instead, would use scientific means (such as the hospital) to solve life's problems.

He arrived at this judgment mainly because he was studying Shiding and because his field of vision was limited to the Jishun temple, a very important local temple. As a happy coincidence, the manager of the Jishun temple also ran a Chinese medicine shop, and, in the temple, dozens of poems of prognostication, by which people would ask for prescriptions for Chinese medicine, were laid out. After the people received their "poem," they would proceed to the pharmacy to buy the prescribed medicine. Naturally, the prescription they received in the temple would not always be effective, and the medicine was not always used correctly. For this reason, from the 1920s on, both the Japanese colonial government and the GMD government repeatedly issued proclamations and passed laws to criticize "shamanic medicine" (*wuyi*) and "prognostication" (*zhanbu*) and have even opposed Chinese medicine. They have spent much wealth and energy in building clinics, hospitals, and modern pharmacies.

Feuchtwang predicted that once these powerful cultural transformations were completed, popular religion would gradually disappear. The phenomena I have discussed in this essay basically illustrate that Feuchtwang's judgment was erroneous. Obviously, popular beliefs and religious ritual behavior not only have not disappeared but have increased. What led Feuchtwang to his error was that he was once an extreme (*jijin*) Western Marxist, and thus he paid little attention to other anthropologists' more penetrating work on religious phenomena.

Anthropologists believe that one of religion's important psychological functions is to provide an orderly cosmological model. By explaining the unknown, religion reduces people's fears and

worries. This explanation generally assumes that there exist in the world various supernatural beings and forces and that, by seeking assistance from these forces, people can control them, thus helping people to face life's various crises. The social function of religion is to prescribe behavior. Religion also serves the purpose of social control, and social control relies not only on law but on concepts of good and evil found in religion. If an individual's behavior is proper, he will receive the approbation of the gods as well as that of culture. But if an individual does something wrong, he or she will receive retribution from the gods. However, the function of religion is not limited to this. Religion also establishes examples of acceptable behavior. Myths are not unrelated to religion. Myths are often full of legends relating to supernatural things, and these legends, through a variety of means, spell out the behavioral and moral principles of society. Another of religion's social functions is that of upholding the social order. In addition, the basic consistency of shared rituals and beliefs helps bind people together and increases the homogeneity of the social body. When the ritual atmosphere is impregnated with feeling, common ritual participation is particularly effective. In this atmosphere, the rush of feelings people experience serves positively to consolidate the group, and leads them to a feeling of psychological satisfaction. At the same time that religion satisfies social needs, it provides psychological security. Another area where religion serves a social purpose is that of education. For example, among hunting and gathering peoples, dance may well imitate the movements of the animals and the methods of hunting; with agricultural peoples, periodic rituals emphasize the steps necessary to achieve a good harvest and thus serve to help people preserve important knowledge necessary to a satisfactory material life.

Once we have examined religion from all these angles, we can easily understand that wherever there is man and society, life would be difficult without religion, and even if social changes might provoke a temporary decline in belief, to date we have yet to witness its disappearance. This statement does not mean that religion has a "scientific basis" but, rather, suggests that as long as society is

unstable, as long as people's basic needs are not completely fulfilled, then "superstition" or belief in supernatural powers will have a basis for existence.

What are basic human needs? What is belief? These questions sound easy, but we can readily discover differences in interpretation. Nonetheless, when anthropologists say, "religion serves psychological, social, and educational functions," they have already touched on the basic questions of human existence. From my point of view, taking these three "functions" together, what we seem to be talking about is closely connected to the social psychological idea of trust, since only supernatural powers that earn people's trust can evoke their compliance, since only systems that are acknowledged and trusted by the masses can control "antisocial elements" within society, and since only methods of cultural transmission worthy of trust can play an educational role.

So, are the various gods of popular religion a trusted force? Is the "sacred space" that the temple represents an arena that creates trusting relationships? For many years, I have sought to answer these questions, and I am still searching. If we say that religious believers do not necessarily worship because they believe in the gods, then is their behavior "irrational" and "superstitious," as classical anthropologists have said? In other words, does social behavior have nothing to do with belief?

After the establishment of functionalism, anthropologists for a long time tended to criticize traditional students of religion as metaphysical, for their overemphasis on the meanings of classical scriptures and their ignoring of current religious practices. Under the impulse of this criticism, most anthropologists considered their goal to be the study of symbolic behavior (ritual) and denied the reality of the thoughts of those they were studying. But after many years of research, anthropologists have discovered that this theory is only partially correct.

In 1945, Radcliffe-Browne, in an essay entitled "Religion and Society," brought ancient China's social ethics together with Robertson-Smith's theory of religion, thus analyzing certain cultural factors and producing his theory of ritual:

> Thirty-seven years ago (1908), in a fellowship thesis on the Andaman Islanders (which did not appear in print until 1922), I formulated briefly a general theory of the social function of rites and ceremonies. . . . I ventured to suggest as a general formula that religion everywhere is an expression, in one form or another, of a sense of dependence on a power outside ourselves, a power we may speak of as a spiritual or moral power.
>
> This theory is by no means new. It is found in the writings of the philosophers of ancient China. . . . The Chinese writers . . . write about *li* . . . which we may . . . appropriately translate . . . as "ritual." . . . The view taken by this school of ancient philosophers was that religious rites have important social functions that are independent of any beliefs that may be held as to the efficacy of the rites.[29]

Even if I agree with Radcliffe-Browne's theory of the "power of ritual," I nonetheless think that he overlooked the function of religious belief at another level, especially the function of what Wallace and others subsequently called faith. Like Radcliffe-Brown's concept of "the power of ritual," Wallace argued that ritual was the principal phenomenon of religion, "religion in practice," as he called it, but that its principle function was not to structure the social order but to reduce people's worries and maintain a high level of confidence. All this was so the people would maintain a certain consistency in their interaction with reality, and it was precisely this that conferred on religion its existential value. The greatest value of religion comes from the activities it requires in practice. The great social anthropologist Victor Turner pointed out that religious ritual could bring people a sense of transcendence, comfort, safety, even joy, or that it could create a feeling of kinship among those who experienced the same rituals.[30] Although religious rituals differ greatly from social practice, we can still note that even the strangest rituals all possess basic social and psychological functions.[31] Pushing this line of reasoning further, we can see religion as a form of belief and behavior through which people hope to control the part of the current world that cannot be controlled.

One individual, who frequently participated in religious activi-

ties in Shiding, said that he half believed and half doubted the power of the gods. But at times he felt that worshipping had no disadvantages, only advantages. Difficult problems that arose at times in work or life, for example, opportunities for promotions at work, which could not be controlled by any one person nor obtained through one person's abilities, appeared to be simply a matter of "luck." In that case, who determines luck? Unless one consults the gods, there is no way to find an answer. People's birth, aging, illness, death, and so on, seem to be fixed by heaven, and if someone is to die, they just die, which not even a doctor can do anything about. One may as well believe in the gods.

Obviously, people do not turn their body and soul completely over to the gods but, rather, create their own life in the secular society through secular means, "half believing and half doubting" the gods, fearing that if, by some slim chance, the gods do exist, they may visit disaster on those who do not believe. From this point of view, the relationship between gods and man resembles that between an authority and those who follow that authority. Like all authorities, the gods are not characters in whom one completely believes, and the reason they elicit superficial as well as genuine faith is basically because they have a certain power that people cannot firmly grasp and that people fear. Religious belief is the same.

Conclusion

In the body of this paper, I discussed popular authority in Shiding, a discussion we may divide into two essential blocks: the first part was devoted to the description and analysis of popular authority and life history, and focused on the dialectical relation between people considered to be popular authorities, the religious symbolic system, and social forces. The latter part focused on the question of social and religious change, and had to do with the function of religion during the process of modernization in overcoming the crisis of cultural identity, as well as the extension of the newly constructed system of trust within the traditional religious symbolic nexus. The main questions I sought to answer were those raised by

Weber on sacred authority, as well as those raised by Martin and Feuchtwang concerning Chinese popular belief as a "mode of communication" or a "mode of recognition of authority."

To sum up my conclusions, I would first like to point out that the construction of popular "natural authority" (the same as "sacred authority") is nothing other than the process of numerous "constructions of history" and is also the process of construction of a belief system under the pressure of group forces. In other words, authoritative people become authoritative because they cleverly employ a heroic mode to embody and articulate the central questions in a society's evolution and cleverly employ certain beliefs—the symbolic system—to link up their own tragedies in life with society's tragedies. From this perspective, for an authority figure, individual character is important because it embodies the collective questions of the greater social setting (the setting of power relations). Moreover, the reason why popular local society has its own authority figures is that supralocal power processes cannot fully encompass local power processes, because the supralocal focal point cannot fully reflect the locality's "central debates." This then means that, as the discourse of supralocal power gradually approaches the "central debates" of a locality, it may then absorb them, so that authority in popular local society may disappear in the face of a new system of authority (whether a political party or a media system) and thus lose its attraction to the people.

This does not necessarily mean, however, that following the advance of political modernity, divine authority will also disappear. In places (such as Meifa village in Minnan) where this specific modernity (which includes both bureaucratization and a high level of "democratic" consciousness) is relatively underdeveloped, popular authority figures can really play important roles, indeed leading roles, in the fields of local social order, justice, and the balance of power. In the same way, in places where political modernity is quite far along (such as in Shiding), popular authority figures may possibly retire from the stage of history. In the latter case, divine authority may well separate out from specific persons

or symbols and take root in traditional religious proscriptions or magical beliefs,[32] which may make such ideological systems resemble modern systems of trust (resembling systems of expertise). From this point of view, sacred authority still has its place in modern society. As to whether it will eventually be able to substitute for political modernization, I do not have enough material here to discuss fully. However, if we accept Giddens's definition of "life politics,"[33] we might argue that this kind of "secularized" belief, or faith system, could become a substitute life strategy against the backdrop of the crisis of cultural identity and, moreover, might contribute in a certain way to the construction of a modern social self-identity. The description in this essay of the religious revival and social evolution in Shiding may have contributed to clarifying this possibility.

Notes

1. The name "Shiding" (*shi* means "rock" and *ding* "a heavy stone used as an anchor") comes from the huge stones found in the locality. People entering and leaving Shiding often had to cross the large stones lying in the streams around Shiding, in the same way they would have to cross the large step at the entrance to a traditional Chinese home. People from southern Fujian use the character *ding* in their word for this step.

2. See the citations and discussion below.

3. See Richard Sennett, *Authority* (New York: Vintage, 1981).

4. Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), pp. 121–299; S.N. Eisenstadt, ed., *Max Weber on Charisma and Institution Building* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. i–lvi.

5. For example, "patriarchal authority" within the family bases its power not only on the authority of the elder as defined by tradition; its real power must come from his personal experience and from the recognition of outside forces. Although in modern society there is no connection between patriarchal authority and extra–familial government, in traditional society patriarchal authority stood in a certain relationship with the construction of the imperial order. In imperial China, some of the emperor's authority came from his imperial position, handed down by his ancestors. But if the emperor lacked the presence necessary to command the obedience of the eunuchs and court officials, if he was unable to control the bureaucrats and the soldiers, then his divine authority would necessarily come under suspicion, which may well result in treacherous officials seizing power or undertaking efforts to overthrow the emperor. In a modern company, a

manager needs more than just the power given him by the owner. He must earn the employees' recognition through efforts to demonstrate his credibility and strength, thereby establishing his (or her) dominance. Moreover, modern cultural hegemony relies not only on old or new traditions but on the acknowledgment of cultural consumers and the production of the bureaucratic cultural industry. Scholars of social psychology have also discovered that the attainment of authority is related not only to individual characteristics but to the acknowledgment of social norms.

6. See Stephan Feuchtwang, *The Imperial Metaphor: Popular Religion in China* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

7. Emily Ahern, *Chinese Ritual and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

8. Stephan Feuchtwang, "Historical Metaphor: A Study of Symbolic Representation and Recognition of Authority," *Man* 28 (1993): 35–49.

9. See Wang Mingming, "Lishi, renqing yu huhui" (History, personal debts, and mutual favors), in *Taiwan-Fujian shehui wenhua yanjiu lunwenji*, vol. 3 (Collected essays on society and culture in Fujian and Taiwan) (Taibei: Academia Sinica, 1996).

10. Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

11. Richard Madsen, *Morality and Power in a Chinese Village* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

12. Anita Chan, Richard Madsen, and Jonathan Unger, *Chen Village: The Recent History of a Peasant Community in Mao's China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

13. Fei Xiaotong, *Xiangtu Zhongguo* (Village China) (reprints, Sanlian shudian, 1985), pp. 60–65.

14. Joseph Esherick and Mary Rankin, eds., *Chinese Local Elites and Patterns of Dominance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 1–26.

15. On Taiwan's Phoenix Halls, see Song Guangyu, *Zongjiao yu shehui* (Religion and society) (Dongda tushu, 1995), pp. 1–62.

16. Barbara Ward, "Varieties of the Conscious Model: The Fishermen of South China," in Michael Banton, ed., *The Relevance of Models for Social Anthropology* (London: Tavistock, 1965).

17. Clifford Geertz, "Centers, Kings, and Charisma: Reflections on the Symbolics of Power," in Geertz, *Local Knowledge* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), pp. 147–66.

18. Edmund Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma* (London: London School of Economics and Political Science, 1954).

19. See n. 9.

20. Stephan Feuchtwang, "School Temples and City Gods," in Arthur Wolf, ed., *Studies of Chinese Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1978), pp. 103–30.

21. Stephan Feuchtwang, "The Social Bases of Religion and Religious Change in a Market Town on the Mountainous Rim of Taipei Basin," Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, 1974, pp. 525–26.

22. Stephan Feuchtwang, "Domestic and Communal Worship in Taiwan," in

Arthur Wolf, ed., *Religion and Ritual in Chinese Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), pp. 105–30.

23. This book was published in 1907 and records a great deal of information concerning planchette ritual in Shiding. The book once circulated widely in the area.

24. Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991).

25. Talk at the second high-level group discussion of social-cultural anthropologists.

26. Anthony Wallace, "Revitalization Movements," *American Anthropologist* 58 (1956): 264–81.

27. Steven Sangren, *History and Magical Power in a Chinese Community* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), pp. 61–92.

28. Michael Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980).

29. A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, "Religion and Society," in Adam Kuper, ed., *The Social Anthropology of Radcliffe-Brown* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), pp. 107–10.

30. Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967).

31. The most attractive part of ritual practice is its promise that, by calling on special incantations, one can compel supernatural powers to achieve a good or bad purpose. Many societies possess shamanic rituals that guarantee a good harvest, the health of domestic animals, or the ability to avoid or cure illness. Even if modern Western peoples are in the process of objectifying their world and rejecting its divine nature, and are striving to suppress these shamanic ideas, the influence of such ideas is still felt. Books and movies about ghosts and shamanic techniques are avidly welcomed and talked about. Western society—like non-Western peoples—have imbued their world with a shamanic nature.

32. According to Charles Lindholm, divine authority in this incarnation is widely found in American society. See Charles Lindholm, *Charisma* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990), pp. 117–50.

33. Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, pp. 209–31.