

The Jiaw of Shigaang (Taiwan): An Essay in Folk Interpretation

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Native exegesis is the explicit *raison d'être* that a ritual has in the mind of a participant. Most ethnographic interpretation of exotic ritual is dependent upon native exegesis, collected from one or several verbal and willing informants. An exegesis, or anyway the kind that ethnographers are able to collect in China, may include a tradition or opinion about the origin of a ritual, either in general or in the informant's particular community, but exegesis is rarely identical with a description of origin. Rather it is a theoretical rationale for the ritual activity. It tells what it is that the ritual accomplishes, and perhaps how it does so, and why that needs to be accomplished. These things are often explained by reference to shared beliefs about the cosmological order of things. (That indeed is one of the reasons we are led to treat them as religious.)

In some societies conscious interpretation and explanation of ritual seem to be commonplace. People seem very aware of specific 'meanings' of ritual acts or objects and are articulate about them. If they are articulate to each other as well as to visiting ethnographers, then presumably they tend to share their interpretations of what is being done by a ritual and why. The ethnographer's job is facilitated if he can collect such a single, widely shared exegesis with little variation from informant to informant. Although he may have misgivings about other aspects of his understanding of their religion (e.g., putative psychological correlates or unconscious social effects), he can at least trust his report of native explanation.

There are societies, however—and China is apparently one of them—in which explicit exegesis seems to be rarer, where only a small number of specialists can articulately set forth the how and why of a ritual and

often do so only with great reluctance or hesitation. Sometimes one or another exegesis of a ritual is even considered secret property. The student of a society where explicit native exegesis is not common must assume (though subject to disproof) that all or many non-specialist participants in a ritual are likely to be unaware of the specialist interpretation. He must expect that different people will have different amounts of knowledge, and oftentimes (and partly in consequence) that they may have divergent or entirely different interpretations. As a language breaks into dialects along the social or geographical lines of poor communication, so we may expect (and find) that the sharing of other cultural knowledge will also exhibit discontinuities where communication is misleading or infrequent. The student who would collect interpretations of a ritual in such a situation has the problem of dealing with widely differing amounts of knowledge among his informants, as well as with contradictions between one informant's view and another's.¹

The problem of different amounts of knowledge is logically separable from that of different understandings of knowledge. The understandings of one man may be an elaboration of the understandings of another, and that is potentially a different situation from their contradicting the understandings of another. Presumably when two exeges are different from each other in degree of elaboration (perhaps through the inclusion of esoteric knowledge in one version), the difference is likely to be associated with greater ignorance on the part of one party and greater knowledge on the part of the other. When two exeges are different from one another in such a way that they contradict each other or attribute different meanings to the same stimulus, the differences *may* be due to mutual ignorance or it may be that one or both of the parties are aware of the other interpretations and reject them. There clearly can be an affective component in the continuation of differences of exegesis as well as an intellectual one.² Thus Protestants and Catholics have normally known a good deal about each other's religious views, but this has not prevented sectarianism in Europe. When we find dissimilar exeges, we can explain the differences by appeal not only to differences of knowledge but to an affective attachment to the correctness of one's

1. Note that explicit exegesis and theoretical or cosmological rationale are not necessarily the most important part of a ritual. The analyst must also consider important social effects of the ritual and the dramatization through it of cultural or psychological themes somewhat independently of either the content or the sharedness of native exegesis, or, of course, origins.

2. I am indebted to Victor Turner for making this point clear to me.

own views and the wrongheadedness (or inappropriateness) of conflicting or divergent views. Which is more important in a given case is an empirical problem. In the present essay we shall concentrate upon the situation in which different people seem to be unaware of each other's views, largely because that seems to me to be the best vantage point for viewing the example I wish to discuss. One can readily imagine other examples in which the affective component would be a better point of departure, however.

Whether we are dealing with differences in amounts of knowledge or differences in interpretation, however, we must still deal with essentially the same problems of ethnographic description: what version constitutes 'folk religion' and how are different versions to be related to each other?

One approach of course is to decide that that version of the religious system will be taken as 'the' system which is the sum of those elements common to *all* of the participants: the least-common-denominator approach. Such a line of attack often leaves one with little to analyse, and few systematic relationships, for it seems that there is barely a single fact of which someone does not turn out to be ignorant. The opposite, and in many ways more inviting, approach is to assume that the true locus of religious knowledge is the specialist, that somehow the specialist's version is the one most people would endorse if they knew about it, and that therefore it is the object most appropriate for analysis in the name of folk religion. This solution is particularly inviting if the specialist in question is a member of the same immediate community as other participants in the system so that his knowledge is in theory available to the others as well. But as we have seen this tempts the analyst to find regularities which are simply not there for most of the participants. If we are concerned with the way in which religion reflects or maintains motivations or cultural or psychological themes widely shared in this society, then acceptance of the specialist's view as 'the' folk religion means that we are attributing to members of the society as a whole ideas or patterns of ideas which they may not hold. Such ideas are available, perhaps, for them to hold, but if they do not in fact hold them, they are not likely to be influenced by them, and an analysis that assumes their relevance to other behaviours goes astray. When diversity of opinion from one informant to another is very great, there cannot be a unitary folk religion at the level of exegesis, for that is not a context in which the 'folk' are united. If, in our study of a religion, our concern is with an overt or implicit philosophical system, to be compared with other

philosophical systems, then we may find it useful to minimize this diversity by attending to the version that seems most inclusive, or most internally coherent, or the like in the views of one or more articulate and expert informants or texts. If, on the other hand, our interest in a religion is an interest in the perceptions, projections, and motivations of the people who practise that religion, then the diversity we have noted cannot be left out of consideration and must find its place in our analysis. There is a time-honoured anthropological approach to dealing with a situation in which different members of a social group have different amounts and kinds of knowledge about the supernatural and about techniques for communicating with it and dramatizing man's relationships to it. The term 'religious specialists' is ordinary anthropological parlance to refer to those members of any community most knowledgeable about religion, be they members of a formal priesthood or simply ordinary folk with slightly more knowledge than their fellows. Distinguishing 'religious specialists' from other people is a quite usual way to deal with some of the variation in amounts and kinds of religious understanding. In effect it says that there are two levels or kinds of understandings that informants may have, and that they require somewhat separate consideration.

A little reflection will readily convince us that the distinction between specialists and laymen is not always a hard and fast line. We can make it more specific and easier to identify, of course, if we define as specialists members of a bounded, distinguishable clergy. However the distinction is rarely so tidy as we might hope. Nearly everyone is more knowledgeable than someone else in the community about something, and religion is no exception. Classing people as religious specialists or non-specialists will not ordinarily leave us with two homogeneous groups each with a single, easily discoverable, shared view of religion and religious phenomena. There are differences both among specialists and among laymen. Given this heterogeneity of information and interpretation, the student seeking a unitary folk religion (or one unitary view prevailing among specialists and another among laymen) is still forced to decide which interpretation to accept as 'the' understanding of the group in question. He is still faced with the entailed problem of deciding what is known to whom and in whose head which elements make a coherent system, if anywhere. Perhaps the most logical way to proceed under the circumstances is to identify groups of informants with views that are similar enough to permit analysis within the ethnographer's defined range of convenience. That is a reasonable way to deal with the problem (in a way that treating each informant as a separate universe, for example, is not) and is com-

mon enough in ethnographic descriptions. It is surprisingly rare in the literature on Chinese religion.

Most studies of Chinese religion present us with a point of view derived from specialists, be they philosophers and their commentators, or native folklorists. With a copy of Michael Saso's excellent guidebook to Taiwanese folklore in hand (Saso 1966), I found I often 'knew more' about what people were doing in one Taiwanese village than most of my informants did. Clearly the knowledge I had from that book beyond what informants knew, knowledge Saso presumably received from texts and native specialists, was not knowledge that could explain the motivations or cultural or psychological characteristics of my Taiwanese informants. It was useful to know, but it was not the whole story either. For most concerns of the behavioural sciences, an understanding of these customs seemed to require the view of the ignorant and poorly informed as much as the more complete explanation available from outside.

The issue of variation is of interest for reasons other than our not wanting to attribute to informants perceptions and motivations which they do not have. The maintenance, interplay, and limits on the variation are of importance in themselves. How (or how much) can it be that people who hold different ideas about a ritual can still cooperate in its accomplishment unaware of (and/or undisturbed by) the differences? Seen another way, how can a ritual simultaneously confirm (or fail to dis-confirm) diverse views of what it is about?³ It does not seem surprising to find that the degree of concern with (and elaboration of) the interpretation of one or another aspect of the ritual varies within the population as much as the nature of the interpretation itself does. People not only have different ideas about things, but different amounts of

3. Presumably the ritual itself sooner or later poses limits to the logical extensions of one interpretation or another, and the nature of these limits is important to our understanding of *ritualism* among the people in question. It may turn out, for example, that people given to exegesis have a relatively low tolerance for badness of fit (in the form perhaps of unexplained gestures or vague statements) between exegesis and ritual, while people whose interpretations remain private and/or ad-hoc have a relatively higher tolerance for badness of fit. It is also possible to imagine the tolerance orientations of one ritual or sphere of ritual being extended to another, so that we can envision a mechanism that tends to maintain the amount of exegetical variation at about the same level in different rituals or spheres of ritual. The relation between the general view that members of a society take towards a ritual on the one hand and the limiting of exegetical variation by the form of the rite and the willingness of participants to stop pursuing inconsistent, dangerous, or self-destructive lines of interpretation on the other hand is a fascinating issue, but cannot be pursued here.

interest in them. The bell-ringer may not only have a different view of the role and meaning of bell-ringing from the parson, but he may also imagine bells to be centrally important to the church service and may be uninterested in or unaware of many of the elements of the church ritual in which bell-ringing plays no part. A discussion with him of church services rapidly becomes a discussion of bell-ringing, which is a sort of Charles-the-First's-head for him. I would argue that as long as the interest is focused on the bells, there is no dysfunction in his remaining largely ignorant of the parson's views about the meaning of the service. The issue seems to me to be one of focus or of concern. The checks on the extravagance (or anyway the idiosyncrasy) of one's opinions are fewer in areas outside of one's immediate activity and participation. In most Chinese rituals a given participant has responsibility for, access to, or interest in different subroutines differentially. While we may expect to find commonality (and communication) among individuals with the same responsibilities, access, or interests, the variation in these qualities of focus (and in relevant communication) between categories of participants seems to me to be crucial to understanding how exegetical diversity can be maintained among co-operating participants. We find ourselves concerned with the subroutines of the ritual with which different participants are involved, the social effects perceived to result from the ritual or a part of it (and/or how important and how deliberate these may be), and the relation of all of this to one or another exegesis of the event.

Our two concerns, diversity of interpretation and difference of focus, can be imagined in an extreme case, where each participant has an entirely different interpretation of what a ritual is about and what it is trying to accomplish and where furthermore major interest and effort turn out to be focused on areas that seem to have little connexion with *any* of the participants' stated interpretations, with the result that they do not discuss their interpretations with each other and are unaware of the differences. The Chinese case I wish to discuss is not that extreme, of course, but I hope to be able to demonstrate that these problems do occur and that a full recognition of them is enlightening.⁴

In his book on rites of petition for benevolence at the Songshan⁵

4. I stress the abbreviated nature of this description. My purpose is to make my case for the study of alternative exegeses convincing. It is not, for the present, to produce an exhaustive account of a ritual. Many details are accordingly omitted or somewhat simplified in the interest of brevity or clarity.

5. Mandarin words other than Taiwan and Taipei are romanized in the

temple of Taipei, Liu Chi-wan (1967) traces the history of the Chinese word Jiaw 醮, which his English abstract provisionally glosses 'propitiatory rites.' In summary, Liou explains that the word Jiaw

originally . . . means to 'worship deities' (祭神); later it came to mean 'formal rites performed by Buddhist or Taoist priests to worship deities,' and now in Taiwan it has come to signify 'a large-scale ceremony in a certain locality for supplicating and expressing gratitude to deities.'

(q. from the English abstract, p. 161)

I shall examine a particular local instance of such a Taiwanese Jiaw, which occurs every third spring in the township 鄉 capital of Shigaang 西港, just to the north of the old capital at Tainan 台南. Most of the material on which this paper is based was collected during a period of residence in a village in Shigaang Township between late 1966 and mid-1968.⁶ That village I have called Bao-an 保安, and have described elsewhere (Jordan 1969, 1972). Living in a village that planned to participate in the festival, I was, like everyone around me, engaged in many conversations about it during the long weeks of preparation before the festival days and after it was finished. In addition I had occasion to interview some of the priests and some of the laymen who served in the temple during the rites or worked on the temple committee.

A short time before the festival began, when preparations were already very plainly under way and excitement was growing, I sponsored an essay contest, providing money for prizes for essays on the Shigaang festival from pupils of the junior high school located immediately opposite the temple. I received thirty-two essays, which supplemented what I was able to learn from conversations and interviews.⁷ These essays do

National (Gwoyeu Romatzyh) system officially adopted by the Republic of China. Taiwanese (Hokkien) words are romanized following the Standard system used in most dictionaries and mission publications. I have accepted the usage of the revised edition of Sheen Fuh-jinn's *Pronouncing Dictionary* (1966) as standard. Mandarin words are capitalized. Hokkien words are not. I have preferred English to Mandarin and Mandarin to Hokkien wherever possible.

6. My research in Taiwan was supported by grants numbered 5-F1-MH-24,257 and 1-RO4-MH-13,526-01 of the (United States) National Institute of Mental Health and by a grant from the Department of Anthropology of the University of Chicago. This financial support is gratefully acknowledged.

7. The assigned theme of this essay, as of others I elicited from school children, was established by their instructors after I indicated the general topic. The subject was indicated on the posters announcing the contest as: 'Theme: self-chosen (related to the history and origins of the procession to welcome gods arranged every three years by our [temple, the] Hall for Celebrating Peace.' (Tyimuh: tzyhjii niiding: yii joeisuh yeouguan beenshiang Chinqangong meei san nian jeushyng yngshern sayhuey de lihshyy youlai wei fannwei.) There are obvious

not, of course, represent the typical child's view of the proceedings. The essays make no secret of having been composed after (sometimes rather extensive) conversations which older members of the writers' households. For the same reason, however, they probably represent fairly accurately the conception of the festival that is most widely held, and the kind of knowledge about it that is freely transmitted to anyone with the curiosity to ask about the matter. The children's essays are characterized by an impressive uniformity, suggesting that the interpretations they present are widely shared in the township.⁸

In the Shigaang area two phrases are used to refer to the local triennial Jiaw. It may be called a Jiaw for the Kings 王醮 or a Great Festival 大拜拜. Jiaw for the Kings is the more formal term, which appears on printed notices but is only occasionally used in speech, usually by people connected with the temple in a formal way. The other term, Great Festival, is a more relaxed expression, used in ordinary conversation among people living in surrounding villages. Although the two terms are differentiated primarily by the difference in formality between them, certain differences in connotation seem to be associated with slightly different Taiwanese understandings of why the festival is performed and what it means. The term Jiaw for the Kings is an appropriate one, for the rituals performed by priests and selected laymen in the temple conform to the Taoist Jiaw format; the rites are indeed propitiatory ritual (and exorcism). The expression Great Festival is also appropriate, for seen from the view of most participants the festival involves general merrymaking and intervillage co-operation in traditional processions and entertainments reminiscent of many another, less important local festive occasion. For priests and certain temple officiants, the triennial Jiaw is ritual; for most ordinary people it is a carnival.

As best I have been able to understand it,⁹ the orthodox exegesis of the Shigaang Jiaw would centre on the problem of human distress,

disadvantages to letting someone else set the theme, but I preferred to have instructors decide the exact wording of the question so that it would resemble other school essay topics in so far as possible and avoid foreignness of topics that might be constricting to the essayists. The writers offered observations on a wider variety of subjects than the published topic might suggest. My connexion with the contest was not known to the children.

8. It would have been interesting to set an in-school essay on the same topic for another group of students to see what they would know without asking adults, but the contest format made doing both impractical.

9. I am indebted to Kristofer Schipper for helping me to understand the orthodox point of view, though I must take full blame myself for such mistakes as I may make in its exposition.

particularly disease, and its exorcism. Jiaw, or propitiatory rites, may be performed for the relief of many kinds of human distress. The rites at Shigaang are specifically devoted to the relief of epidemics. The orthodox interpretation of the Shigaang Jiaw bases its explanation on the assumption that epidemics are caused by certain demons loosed upon the land, known as the Epidemic Kings or Cholera Kings¹⁰ 瘟王, or more politely (and more commonly) as Wangye 王爺 ('lord kings').¹¹ Epidemics are controlled by the exorcism of these malign forces, using magical spells and procedures which are the property of Taoist priests, in this case the so-called 'black-headed' priests of the Jenq-yii 正乙 school of Jang Tianshy 張天師. In Shigaang the rite centres upon the Shigaang temple. This building is called the Hall for Celebrating Peace 慶安宮, and the principal deity is the goddess Mhatzoo 媽祖. For the festival Mhatzoo's image is removed from the central hall and the temple is prepared so far as possible in the manner of a kingly palace of imperial times, even to its being attended by 'servants' dressed in long gowns. The demons are invited into it with most flattering language, local people all co-operating in giving them to understand that they have been misconstrued as important gods. Flattery and worship are accomplished for three days upon the demons, who are gradually lulled off their guard and become vulnerable. The worship is conducted by laymen, purified by abstention from meat and sex, and by rites of purification. These men live in the temple compound and work in shifts attending the Wangye. The priests dwell in a small building beside the temple, for as the natural enemies of the demons their presence would be disturbing to the effect it is desired to create.

The building in which the priests dwell is called a 'Taoist altar' 道壇, and in these separate quarters the priests conduct most of their rituals. The room is crowded with Taoist paraphernalia: altars, paintings, paper figures, swords, and cloth hangings. And it is off-limits to the general public. At one end of the room are shelves filled with row on row of paper carps, tablets, and flags which will be purchased and placed on

10. The Chinese term is Uenwang, or kings of Uen. Different dictionaries gloss Uen slightly differently. It appears to refer to epidemics in general, but to be used especially of cholera epidemics. I prefer the more specific translation in the present text mostly for alliterative reasons.

11. Some writers treat the term *Wangye* as a specific category of being. However some village people explained it as merely a polite title that could in theory be applied to any supernatural (including in theory Buddhist ones, though instances of this did not come up spontaneously). The Cholera Kings are regularly referred to as Wangye, but the title is not confined to them.

home altars of many Shigaang families at the end of the festivities. There they are objects (sometimes the primary objects) of worship. These fetishes, incorporating the presence of the Wangye, will bring the power generated by the Jiaw to the assistance of the families that receive them. Fetishes from previous years' Jiaw are also brought back and stored in the central temple during these three days that they may be spiritually renewed. Money is paid to the temple both for the original objects and for their resanctification, and transactions related to these help to pay the expenses of the festival. Beside the fetishes are shelves and shelves crowded with josses from all parts of the region, including the statue of Mhatzuu from the main hall of the temple.¹² Fifteen of these, representing the lot, are carried into the temple several times a day by the temple attendants and are manipulated in bowing motions before the high altar. As I understand it this activity represents the welcoming of the visiting supernaturals by the gods of the area. Because this takes place inside the temple, the alert layman outside sees only a short procession of statues carried from the mysterious 'Taoist altar' building into the inaccessible temple, and then shortly back to the 'Taoist altar' again, and most laymen seem not to have noticed even this much. Late in the evening of the third day the priests file into the temple, where the demons of disease are at rest. Quickly the demons are captured by spells and chants and confined to a paper and wood ship, so that they are no longer free to roam the countryside working disaster on its inhabitants. On the following morning the ship, an elaborately decorated object some twenty feet or so in length is hauled to the middle of a field in the village of Poplar Camp 柳營, traditionally considered to be the ancient shore line, and is ceremonially burnt and thus destroyed, demons and all.

The device of convincing the demons that the populace believes them to be gods seems to be effective at befooling more than the demons, however. One must not speak of them as demons, or even as negative in nature, for that would give the ruse away. When even those 'in the know' speak of these demons as gods, it is not easy for ordinary mortals to discover that they are not. If one asks about them, virtually anybody will tell one that they are indeed gods, and I have the impression after many careful interviews that this is not usually an opinion that is expressed only to avoid giving away the trick, but that it is what most

12. I am indebted to Kristofer Schipper for this identification. Many statues of the goddess are involved in one way or another with these rites, for she is very popular in Taiwan, and the Shigaang temple is one centre of her worship. As we shall see below, statues of her also take a place of honour in the procession.

people really believe and represents the limit of what they know about what goes on in the temple.

It is impossible, of course, to prove that a person does not know or not believe something. An informant can readily demonstrate his knowledge of a subject by displaying it. But ignorance is something else again. The ethnographer who bases his argument on people's ignorance of something is always open to the counter-argument that 'they know it; they just aren't telling you.' When I say that most people do not seem aware of the demonic nature of the Cholera Kings, I am vulnerable to that objection. However, alerted early on to the double valence of the Wangye visit, I oriented many interviews to getting information on this very point, and if it is widely known that the Cholera Kings are not gods, it is surely one of the best-kept secrets in the Republic. In view of the total unanimity of lay informants on the point, it would only be perverse not to accept that people acting toward the Wangye as gods assume them actually to be gods. Most people do not read the spells used by the priests (which are the priests' property and are secret, though it is not clear how intelligible they would be found even if everyone did have access to them). Even the laymen who serve in the temple itself do not need to understand the nature of their supernatural guests, since, gods or demons, they must be entertained with exactly the same reverence. Still the inevitable inability of any ethnographer to demonstrate that people do not know something means that this is a weak point in the argument. As it is an important point, its weakness is also an important weakness in my example.

So it happens that there is a second, heterodox, interpretation of what the Jiaw is all about: the Jade Emperor, lord of all that is, has twelve subordinates who are inspectors of terrestrial realms and are responsible for reporting directly to him on the state of his realms. Each three years three of these inspectors descend to Shigaang, where appropriate attention must be given to their visit, just as it must for mortal officials who make tours of inspection. The Shigaang temple is dedicated to the goddess Mhatzuu 媽祖, the Sacred Mother in Heaven 天上聖母, whose cult is derived from a temple in the town of Stag's Ear Gate 鹿耳門 (now called Mud Wall 土城) located at the coast just to the south inside the city limits of Tairnan. A few days before the festival a statue of Mhatzuu is carried in state from the Shigaang temple to Stag's Ear Gate to receive new incense from the parent temple. She returns to Shigaang to receive the visiting inspectors. The divine inspectors must be fêted and made comfortable, and must be impressed with the harmony

and propriety of all that they see. Conflicts must be settled; co-operation must be stressed; feasts and entertainments must be provided. The central element of the inspectors' presence is their passage through the territory, including their welcome to the township, their passage through its villages, and ultimately their send-off back to celestial realms, for which purpose a magnificent wood and paper ship is constructed in which their physical representations may be burnt and thus transmitted to the beyond, even as offerings are transmitted. Burning the ship, which in the demonic interpretation destroys the Wangye, is merely a mode of transmission to send the godly Wangye home again (even as burning is used as transmission in funerals and other popular rites).

Essential to the rites, from the priestly point of view, is the elegant entertainment of the demons (which may include a procession) and their capture and destruction. What is important if one believes they are divine inspectors is a procession of inspection (locally known as a 'Tour of Inspection Representing Heaven' 代天巡狩), with appropriate welcomes on the route, and a gala send-off. The phrase 'Tour of Inspection Representing Heaven' might be thought to convey the processional aspect of the procession to all concerned. In fact it seems rather ambiguous. The term used for 'Tour of Inspection' (巡狩 Shyunshow) is one formerly used for tours of inspection made by the emperor, and is remote from the experience of Taiwanese farming people. The characters know no other use in the Shigaang region than in connexion with the festival, where they are displayed on banners and palanquins apparently referring to the procession. But the phrase is also used in conversation to refer to the visiting inspectors themselves or even to the whole Jiaw festival. One village girl of about twenty even explained to me that 'Tour of Inspection Representing Heaven' was the name of a god that was somehow involved in the festivities.

The paper statues of the Cholera Kings do not themselves participate in the procession, but remain at home in the temple tended by priests and laymen. In the procession they are represented not by their statues, but by tablets 王令 activated or 'dotted' by the officiating priest at the moment that the Kings descended to earth. They occupy a position at the very rear of the procession, with Mhatzuu. It is not clear to me how many witnesses of this vast and ever-growing parade imagine as it winds slowly across the countryside that the point of it lies in small tablets that look most ungodlike. However most people do seem to believe that the inspectors are somehow involved with the affair, and the term 'Tour of Inspection Representing Heaven' displayed prominently on ban-

ners and palanquins is widely understood to signal their presence.

Whatever the problems in logically applying the widespread non-specialist interpretation of the procession and the deities, the point of importance is that it is different from the specialist interpretation with which it coexists. This difference does not seriously disrupt the co-operation necessary to perform the festival partly because each interpretation permits (if it does not require) the activities inspired by the other, and partly (as we predicted earlier on with the example of our overzealous bell-ringer) because the principal point of interest to most village participants lies elsewhere than in the theological explanations. We have seen that for the most part they do not participate in the rites inside the temple. Outside they are involved in several ways, but most of them are primarily concerned with the procession, and what is interesting to most of them are the patterns of intervillage one-up-man-ship and co-operation involved in the procession, as we shall see presently.

In the years since retrocession of Taiwan from Japan to China, a third point of emphasis has also been added which becomes the primary purpose of the Jiaw for certain purposes and in some eyes: On the second day of the Jiaw the governor of Tainan county arrives, and a small altar is constructed temporarily in the forward part of the temple at which this gentleman offers sacrifices to the seventeenth-century Nationalist culture-hero Koxinga (Chinese: 鄭成功 Jenq Cherng-gong). This is heavily reported in the press, and when people in northern Taiwan have heard of the Shigaang Jiaw at all, they often have the impression that the entire to-do is in his honour. Given government skepticism about the usefulness of religious festivals at a lot, combined with government eagerness to inculcate enthusiasm for approved national heroes, this interpretation is not dysfunctional for the preservation of the Jiaw, and may not be unintended. But it does differ from both the other interpretations and is apparently a common view held by outsiders.

The difference between orthodox attention to demons and popular attention to a procession that turns out not to include them is by no means anomalous in view of the history of the Shigaang Jiaw. Although the history will not help us explain people's ideas today, a brief excursus is not irrelevant.

According to one source¹³ the Shigaang temple was founded in 1712 to serve as a centre for the cult of the local god of walls and moats 城皇. Subsequently a statue of the popular goddess Mhatzuu was carved and

13. Chern & Shieh 1963: 281-282.

her cult established from an 'ancestral temple' in her honour located at Stag's Ear Gate.

... village people went to the Mhatzoo temple at Stag's Ear Gate to invite the transfer of some incense from her temple back to our area and to carve a joss to honour. From then on Mhatzoo was our patron goddess. There was a Jiaw every third year, and it was necessary to return to the ancestral spot for incense and process through the seventy-two villages of the area under jurisdiction. We have never discontinued this.

Early in the nineteenth century the cult of the Cholera Kings was added after a boat of unknown origins containing sacred objects landed at the village of Inspecting Acrage Camp 察畝營, modern Poplar Camp 柳營, and from 1847 the triennial Jiaw served their cult as well.

Such boats, known as Kings' Boats 玉船 have been described by Liu Chi-wan in a publication of the Taiwan Provincial Museum.¹⁴ According to Liu cholera plagues, actual or threatened, were magically exorcized through the construction of a boat containing in its cabin a shrine to the Cholera Kings. By sending the boat out to sea, the influence of these beings was removed from the community. But wherever such a boat was cast ashore, 'consternation would spread among the people on the coast' and the demons were placated with enshrinement in a temple from which they might in time become guardians of the place. In event such a temple already existed, the arrival of more Cholera Kings might even be a good omen. Alternatively the boat might after sacrifices be replaced with a newer and more seaworthy craft and be sent to sea once more.

Liu considers large numbers of south Taiwanese temples to have been founded in this way, and regards many popular gods as Cholera Kings.

Apparently in 1847 Shigaang was visited by such a boat, and responded by providing sacrifice to its contents and then setting them out to sea. The present invitation to the Cholera Kings is said to date from that event, and not (as one might expect) from a cholera epidemic. If the worship of the Cholera Kings was begun in a time of cholera, local tradition does not record the fact, and there seems to be little interest in their relation to the disease. None of the 32 schoolchildren's essays explain the use of the word for pestilence or cholera (Uen 瘟) in the title of these visitors, although many of the children do use that title. Nor

14. Unhappily the full text seems never to have appeared, though the summary, in English and Chinese and dated 1963, has circulated privately as an offprint. Reference here is to that summary.

could any of my adult informants explain the use of this title as more than fortuitous. This was as true after the Cholera Kings had been sent away as before they came, and was apparently not due to reluctance to discuss the matter.¹⁵

Today the Shigaang Jiaw includes the procession that was originally associated with Mhatzoo's visit to her ancestral temple, the welcoming and worship of Cholera Kings and the explicit belief by many that they are indeed patrons of the community and visiting representatives of heaven.¹⁶ It also includes priestly rites designed to capture and expell the Cholera Kings as malevolent forces.

Apparently the modern Jiaw at Shigaang is a composite: Anciently the temple observed a festival each three years, including a tour of inspection by the goddess of the villages (allegedly 72 of them¹⁷) in her jurisdiction. With the arrival of the Cholera Kings the temple rites were apparently instituted for their exorcism but the secrecy of the nature of these rites promoted the notion that cult rather than exorcism was involved.

A convenient explanation can be had by noting that historically are two separate strains contributing to the festival, and supposing that the problem is that the synthesis is not complete, and therefore the

15. It is also probably not due to the absence of cholera in Taiwan. Japanese records covering the period 1897-1942 (Statistical Abstracts . . . , pp. 1271-1275, tables 490-491) provide evidence that serious outbreaks occurred in 1903 (746 cases, 613 fatalities) and in 1912 (333 cases, 256 fatalities), and that an epidemic occurred in 1919-1920, when 6506 cases and 4368 deaths were recorded on the island. Occasional cases are also reported in subsequent years (1925-1926, 19 cases; 1931-1932, 17 cases; 1941-1942, 10 cases), though with a diminishing mortality rate. Accordingly cholera has been a threat in Taiwan within living memory, if not recently. Presumably widespread awareness of the use of the rite to exorcise the disease in earlier times would have left a trace among older informants today. The apparent absence of such an awareness casts doubt on the likelihood that the rites were so used at that time. Note however that the usual Hokkien word for cholera is *thè-sià* 吐瀉, and in Taiwan the Japanese *korera* コレラ is colloquial. The literary word *Uen* (Hokkien *un*) may be unknown to some except in connexion with the Shigaang festival.

16. One young essayist writes as follows: 'A month ago here in Shigaang there was an automobile accident, and a truck knocked down two electric poles, then ran into a field, but no-one in the truck was hurt. A lot of people say this is because of the protection of the Wangye of the Hall for Celebrating Peace. I think this is probably right, since the triennial Jiaw is approaching.'

17. Seventy-two, like other multiples of twelve, is a number with positive ritual connotations. The same number is used today, though the actual number of villages visited during the three-day Jiaw is 62 and the number visited in the course of fetching incense from Stag's Ear Gate is 18 (to a total of eighty villages), as listed on the official itinerary.

exegesis is somehow transitional between understanding the parts separately (as presumably people once did) and integrating them successfully together (as presumably they eventually will). Such an explanation does not tell us how people involved with the festival today are able to cooperate contentedly in its performance without awareness of the tensions between the more orthodox and a variety of less orthodox positions. For the answer to that question we must turn to the relation between exegesis in general and the focus of interest that most participants have in the rite: to the bell-ringing, if you will.

The Jiaw of Shigaang provides a frame in which a number of activities take place that are independent of the exegetical justification of the festival, or that are at least incidental to it. The importance of the Jiaw to Shigaang merchants and traveling peddlers, for example, lies largely in the number of customers who crowd the town at this time. Occasional beggars find the Jiaw interesting for the same reason. This does not imply that these people are unaware of the kinds of explanation we have just discussed, but rather that such explanations are of much less concern to them than the economic fall-out of the large crowd and the fact that they have an opportunity to benefit by it. The presence of these people in Shigaang, and the reality of economic interests in the Jiaw must be allowed for, of course, by the planners on the temple committee, particularly inasmuch as the merchants at least form an important political bloc. From the analyst's point of view, the overriding interest of merchants and peddlers in the profit to be made during the festival period goes a long way to explaining their comparative lack of interest in the nice details of theological justifications.

The Jiaw supplies a focus for more than merely mercantile and mendicant activity grafted to its ritual core, of course. Many people take advantage of the concentration of spiritual power on the temple at this period for private religious devotions not directly related to the ceremony itself. Throughout the festival, worshippers come and go before the temple, offering incense at outside altars set up for the purpose. For some this is a minimal act of respect such as might be offered at any shrine at which one stops in pilgrimage. For many, however, the occasion inspires longer prayers and more extensive devotions. Some people, usually women, appear in the mornings wearing black and carrying brooms, which they use to sweep the plaza before the temple. Such sweeping is usually undertaken in payment of a vow made between festivals promising that the penitent will sweep the temple square in return for divine favours, particularly healing. Around her neck each such penitential

sweeper wears a paper cangue, symbol of servitude to the god. Such cangues, decorated with carps, the symbol of the temple, and sealed with a paper seal are provided and sealed by temple personnel. The sweepers have nothing directly to do with the flow of events implied in the exegeses we have examined of the entertainment of the Cholera Kings, or even in the renewal of Mhatzuu. Rather these women take advantage of the presence of the Jiaw to sanctify the fulfillment of their vows. For such a sweeper, as for a merchant, the details of theological explanation (or even its gross outline) are subordinate to the actual activity by which she involves herself in the event, and to the implications of this activity to her relation with the divine and the solution of her own problems.

For most people in most of the participating villages the focus of interest in the triennial festival is the procession. The procession is made up of village people and requires organization and co-operation within and among villages. It has political and prestige overtones at the village level that provide fascinating opportunities for manipulation. It is, in addition, the most visible manifestation of the rite for all but the priests and the small number of volunteers serving as attendants inside the temple. Naturally enough there is a tendency to associate the festival with the procession and made all other interpretations derive from this.

The procession is composed of palanquins containing statues of gods and of a variety of performing troupes, representing villages. Some of the performing troupes are directly religious and some are without overt religious significance, but merely 'make the procession more festive'. Most villages submit a palanquin containing village josses, though usually bearing the name of only one of them as a kind of nominal patron of the village temple. It is not clear to me which josses ride in the procession in palanquins and which reside in the priests' house beside the temple, though it is important to have josses in both places. If one's focus of interest is the temple, then the regional josses that welcome the visiting demons in ceremonies at the temple help to contribute to the illusion of welcome and are very important. The delegations of gods in the procession, accompanied by their attendants and performing groups, are less important, even irrelevant. From a village viewpoint the fate of the josses committed to the priests' house is unclear, though no doubt felicitous and renewing (for such an assemblage of divine beings and magicians is a place of great spiritual power), but the gods that are important are those actually making a tour of inspection through the territory in the procession.

The personnel required to carry the palanquin and its emblems, in-

cluding reinforcements varies from fewer than seventy to more than 200, according to estimates submitted by 27 villages to the Hall for Celebrating Peace in 1970. Each palanquin is preceded by a ritual umbrella and a long horizontal banner embroidered in silk announcing the name of the deity, and the village where the statue is normally worshipped. Characters embroidered on the ritual umbrella bear the same information. A silk tapestry on the top of the wooden palanquin often repeats it. Often the words Tour of Inspection Representing Heaven are included as well.

In spite of the names embroidered or appliqued in the silken emblems borne with a palanquin, many palanquins in fact hold several different statues. The Palanquin of Bao-an is normally occupied by all of the mobile josses of the village, that is to say all josses publicly owned (save a small statue of Guan-in 觀音 that is regarded as part of the fixtures of the temple) and such privately owned ones as belong to owners willing to expose them to the risk of damage that accompanies their being carried about. The palanquin of Bao-an, therefore, contains two rows of small josses, each securely fastened to the floor of the vehicle. These represent the important deities that protect Bao-an village.

The procession begins from the temple in Shigaang and progresses over a predetermined route from village to village. As it approaches a village, it is met on a road outside the settlement by the palanquin of this host village and accompanied down the lanes to the local temple. There it may pause for refreshment of noodles and other food served by families of the host village or may continue on its way after a brief pause before the temple.

As it leaves the village, the procession is permanently joined by the palanquin and its bearers and attendants of the host village. Thus the procession grows longer with each village it visits. At nightfall its route takes it back to the central temple at Shigaang. The following morning it sets out again, enlarged with the previous day's additions, over a new route. In all it requires three days for the procession to visit all of the participating villages, and by evening of the third day the procession has grown to awesome length as it winds back to the temple for its final salute before the temple gates.

Many palanquins are accompanied by one or more spirit mediums or *tang-ki* 童乩 (Mandarin: Jitorng 乩童), in trance or, due to the difficulties of maintaining a trance during a long procession, pretending to be in trance. I have described these men in some detail elsewhere (Jordan 1972). When they accompany palanquins on procession their function is to demonstrate divine presence, rather than to be oracular. They are

considered to be evidence of the special importance of the festival, and local people speak of them often in this way and are proud of the number that can be seen when the procession winds its way back to the temple on the third evening, when it has reached the most distant village on its circuit and is swollen to its greatest size. Although selection of rural spirit mediums depends upon a large number of considerations, some informants betray a feeling that great prestige accrues to a village which has a large number of mediums associated with its palanquin(s), and part of the excitement which surrounds the initiation of a new medium in a south Taiwanese village is excitement in contemplating the effect of one more medium in the triennial procession.

Sometimes additional village men accompany the palanquins as 'military' forces. The most usual such group is called an Army of Songq Jiang¹⁸ 宋江陣 and requires about fifty participants. An Army of Songq Jiang carries spears and other weapons and straw shields, in imitation of armies and warriors of an earlier era. When the procession reaches a temple, the Army of Songq Jiang performs a patterned routine in the tradition of Chinese shadow-boxing, a kind of athletic ballet. In its full form it may be a sort of round dance, incorporating both collective steps and individual and *pas-de-deux* shadow-boxing demonstrations.

The prestige which accrues to a village which is able to sponsor an army of Songq Jiang that gives a good performance is a testimony to the skill and precision that is required to train such a group. Most villages require their Army of Songq Jiang participants to practice several hours a day for two or even three months before the Jiaw so that every step of their performance will be perfect. During this long period of practice it becomes one of the dominant activities of village life, and one can hear the distinctive drumming for hours together throughout the village and afar off.

The 'soldiers' of an ordinary Army of Songq Jiang are 'led' by one of their number bearing a long baton with a red flag at the end of it, and his lieutenant, who carries two small hatchets. When the entire performance is not called for, as at a brief pause in passing a temple, the 'army' marches in place while the leader twirls his baton, trailing the flag in elegant patterns to the counterpoint of his lieutenant. Variants

18. Possibly the term is originally a reference to the Shandonguese brigand of the Songq dynasty, sometimes identified as a god of bandits, who figures in the novel *All Men Are Brothers* or *Water Margin*. One can imagine the phrase having been popularly applied to local extralegal militia during the Ching, but I have no evidence on the point.

on the Army of Sonq Jiang theme are accomplished by elaboration of the leader's costume and name. Thus there are often 'gold lion armies,' which resemble the Sonq Jiang armies, save that the leader and his assistant carry a lion mask and share a lion costume. A 'white crane army' dresses several leaders as birds. All of these variants are basically 'armies' and are made up mostly of 'troops' dressed as warriors and performing routines composed of marching and shadow-boxing.

It is possible to interpret the warriors as armies of the gods riding in the palanquins of the concerned villages, and the armies are in any case not devoid of significance for the history of conflict between villages and between their gods. For some villages, or more exactly for some inhabitants of some villages, the martial element in the procession is its most significant aspect. Many informants are quite explicit in maintaining that the Sonq Jiang troops that make up so much of the procession for the Shigaang Jiaw 'represent' the military force of each village, alert and ready to defend it. This does not mean that there is any intention to use the troops in such a way—indeed intervillage relations in the area are generally quite friendly. Rather the procession of these troops is a dramatization of the principle of self-defence and alliance, and a commemoration of military alliances which formerly existed, as we shall see below. A village which is able to field an 'army' that is well rehearsed and performs smartly equips itself with the capacity to make a dramatic statement about its self-reliance, its *esprit-de-corps*, and its relations with other villages in the area.

A variety of other troupes, though sometimes continuing the martial theme, are less intimately attached to local gods. Thus a procession includes a long carriage, made like a train of modules, bearing 24, 36 or 48 children dressed as generals from the Chinese opera (an element known as a 'centipede army' 蜈蚣陣). Another element consists of a group of girls dressed in pink who sing a pastoral song and dance in a small circle around a tiny plough drawn by a little boy, as a male and female clown make raucous jests about the outside of the circle. Lately fashion has favoured an act in which six men play the parts of two herders with their water buffaloes. The buffaloes involve themselves in a butting contest, and the herders try to intervene with their whips. In the process they find themselves whipping the wrong buffalo, and embroiled in their own dispute. Other processional elements include groups of musicians (particularly playing music of the Nangoan 南管 style), small groups of young dancing girls dressed in Chinese opera costumes, and the like. Many of these groups bear names that include allusions to popular stories or novels.

Thus one village in 1967 submitted a group of eight girls elegantly dressed as 'the eight beauties'. In 1970 the total personnel submitted by 27 participating villages was reported to be about 2500 participants.

Two other kinds of processional elements are of obvious religious significance. There is usually one, and sometimes several pairs of cloth figures representing Old Tall and Old Short, alias Old Seven and Old Eight, characters found in nearly any large temple in Taiwan. Their story is very widely told—I have even seen comic books retelling it. They are reputed to have been sworn brothers in life whose devotion to each other was very great. When one died in a disastrous flood, the other hanged himself in remorse. In recognition of their unusual loyalty, they are said to have been made assistants to a god of walls and moats. Normally one is represented with a black face (to represent the corpse of a drown man) and the other with a white face, long tongue, and lineal, extended body and head (to represent the corpse of a hanged man). Though the representations are more iconographic than realistic, the effect if one is aware of what is being represented is rather chilling. Pictures very like them also appear in some representations of the course of hell. The children's essays collected in 1967 often mention these, and at least one of the writers says directly that he is afraid of them, in processions, and in temples. Some adults admit to having been afraid of these figures as children, and they figure very prominently in children's drawings of the procession that I collected after the 1970 Jiaw. There is little oral tradition about them, so far as I can tell, but their hellish attributes seem not to have been missed. Less frequent in Taiwanese processions are the 'eight generals' 八家將, represented by between nine and thirteen men in extravagant costumes and coloured body paint who represent lictors from the courts of hell and their servant, who carries instruments of torture. These particular troupes are of special interest because the dancers, unlike other participants in the procession, perform in a light trance and are prohibited from talking to each other or otherwise relaxing on the long dusty roads between villages. They are also clearly hellish, and are dressed to resemble lictors represented in paintings of hell familiar from temples and funerals. Reactions to them, like reactions to Old Tall and Old Short, are reactions of fear and revulsion.

The procession, then, is not entirely ordered about a single theme. Certain elements, namely the godly palanquins from the central temple, relate to the belief that the procession enacts a tour of inspection by heavenly forces. Other elements, though explicable following the tour-of-inspection theme, seem to be of primary interest for the intervillage

co-operation and conflict themes which they involve. Some elements referring to hell are normal in southern Taiwanese processions, but do not seem immediately part of either of these themes, though perhaps we may regard them as appropriate in conveying something of the sanctity and seriousness of the event. Finally a large number of groups of musicians, painted children, troublesome water-buffalo, etc., are added 'to make things festive' and do not seem to inspire local attempt to explain their presence. The amount of work involved in preparing all of this is tremendous. It represents an extraordinarily wide degree of popular participation. Its effective motivation and co-ordination represent one of the most effective exercises in popular enthusiasm and spontaneous co-operation one sees in contemporary Taiwan. But note that this participation is focused rather heavily on logistics rather than theology and is focused slightly differently for each person. Further, there is an element of competition and face-building in it that is unanticipated if we confine our interests to the role of the procession in the activities in the central temple.

Let us return for a moment to the palanquins with their 'troops', which are involved with a conflict between Guo and Hwang surname groups and their interests. Although the elements that make up the procession are not necessarily religious, and although the order of march is not the same from year to year, neither of these is arbitrary either. On the contrary, for all its flexibility, the procession provides a symbolic statement of certain relations between and among villages. A large number of villages in the Shigaang ritual circuit have a heavy preponderance of one or another surname among their resident families. Thus about three quarters of the inhabitants of Bao-an village bear the surname Guo 郭. So do most of the residents of a nearby village which I have called Wulin 梧林. Many of the other villages in the same vicinity are made up largely of people bearing the surname Hwang 黃.

In the past, possibly as early as 1830, Guo villages and Hwang villages seem, as best I have been able to establish, to have been locked in a long-term feud relationship, punctuated by occasional violence, but normally characterized by tension and suspicion. By the time the imperial government eventually intervened and forced the two sides to lay down their arms, there had been thirteen casualties on the Hwang side, and a dozen among the Guo (or so the Guo tell it). One story recounts that the Guo villages dressed their women as men when they worked in the fields so that the Hwang forces would think there were more men than there were and avoid attacking. Another describes the simultaneous

loss of several Guo men, with the result that even children were pressed into battle. Several informants describe with some amusement the ritualization of the battles, where all participants would recess for a rest at the same time because of the discomfort of vigorous fighting in the summer heat. And even children can often recount the final settlement by the Ching government, when the Guo falsely demonstrated that the dead on their side equalled those of the Hwang by showing the head of one more victim than they had, a head retrieved from the grave, it is rumoured, of a stranger who died in the vicinity.

The conflict between the interest of villages dominated by Hwang and the interest of villages dominated primarily by Guo (together with certain allied villages) is an important factor in present political arrangements in this part of Taiwan too, and informants describe contemporary local politics as the seesaw of two power blocks still associated with Guo and Hwang.

The Guo of Bao-an and Wulin worship in common a certain god known colloquially as King Guo¹⁹, and more formally as the Venerable King of the Broad Marshes 廣澤尊王. King Guo is considered to have been the primary instrument by which the Guo interests survived the conflict with the Hwang in earlier times, and he is thought to have a special interest in the welfare of both Guo villages, including their inhabitants who are not named Guo.²⁰ In the early 1960's and before, both villages contributed large sums of money to the refurbishing of his temple in Tairnan. When the triennial Jiaw is held, these villages jointly borrow a joss of King Guo from the Tairnan temple and parade him in the procession with other gods. He arrives about a week before the Jiaw, and remains in one or the other village (by rotation) for four and a half months after the Jiaw is over (or until his birthday on the

19. The Hokkien designation is koeh-sèng-ông which may be represented in characters either as 郭聖王 meaning Sacred King Guo or as 郭姓王 meaning King of the Guo Surname. One rarely sees either of these in print, and informants speaking Mandarin, where the homonymy does not occur, use now one and now the other. The Hokkien is ambiguous, and apparently different people interpret it different ways. Legends of the life and miracles of this god are recorded by DeGroot (1886: 516-527). DeGroot refers to the god as 郭聖王 or Sacred King Guo and regards him as the saint *tutelaire* of Fwujiann. Though he notes an association with people named Guo, the more exclusive association of this god with this surname group appears to be more extreme in the Shigaang area.

20. Although it is probably not utterly by chance that a god named Guo patronizes people named Guo, most patron gods do not share a surname with the patronized. King Guo is emphatically NOT considered ancestral to modern Taiwanese named Guo.

seventeenth day of the eighth moon). His presence is the occasion for much reciprocal entertainment, which takes the form of the 'armies' of one village escorting King Guo to be welcomed by the 'armies' of the other, the shadow-boxing performance followed by refreshments and relaxation by all.

In a very real sense King Guo is not only the patron, but also the symbol of these villages and their common interests and political faction (or at least former political faction). It is important to them that he be accorded the greatest possible prestige by his assignment to a place of honour in the processional order of march. Unfortunately for peaceful settlement of the matter, other villages also have patron gods, gods which they consider to be quite as important as King Guo. Although Chinese gods are conceived to occupy places in a celestial bureaucracy, it seems that at the local level, at least Shigaang, the details of the hierarchization are not fixed, and efforts are continually made to achieve a higher place for one's patron god. In the procession positions toward the rear are believed to be seats of greater honour, the last palanquins belonging to statues of Mhatzoo, the patron of the Shigaang temple, and her attendants. Bao-an and Wulin reason that King Guo ought to be next. Both are powerful villages, and the combination is an important political and social force in Shigaang. In 1967 however one Hwang village was so annoyed at having their patron placed in front of King Guo that they withdrew from participation in the procession altogether rather than undergo such public humiliation. In 1970 central temple authorities settled the line-of-march argument in the opposite way, and in the end Bao-an and Wulin withdrew. I do not know whether villages have withdrawn this way in the past, but it is clear that the line of march question, and the ranking of villages symbolically through the ranking of their patron gods in the procession, is a vital part of the Jiaw in the eyes of village leaders. Whatever theological reasons there may be for the procession as a tour of inspection, the crucial social reality of it is its dramatization of prestige differences between and among villages and religiously defined groups of villages. When the prestige considerations are important enough that villages participate or refuse to participate on the strength of them, it is hard to escape the conclusion that for at least some people they are the most important fact about a Jiaw.

The thrust of this example is very clear. It is less a description of a festival than of the problems inherent in trying to construe a festival. For this ritual at least there is not a single theological justification given for the event by all informants, and indeed we have seen that the two

general clusters of interpretation contain elements that are contradictory: gods are opposed to demons; entertainment is opposed to exorcism. There is no a-priori reason to believe that there need be only two positions. In some communities the number may be different, perhaps as low as one, perhaps very high. When we recall the girl who assumed Tour of Inspection was the name of a god, or the penitents for whom the occasion was an opportunity to fulfil vows, we are reminded that even the 'non-specialist' explanation of events is not entirely uniform. Perhaps we should not speak of only two clusters of exegesis here but of several. A more complete investigation might well reveal numerous contradictions among the non-specialist views. However it is already clear that in Shigaang people do not all share the same view of their Jiaw, and that is what was to be established. If we are to consider the question of the significance of this Jiaw in their lives, we necessarily must ask whose lives before we know which version of the Jiaw we are concerned with.

As we explored the different activities people were engaged in to bring about the Jiaw, moreover, it became evident that different people had quite different foci of interest as well as merely different exegeses. This conforms to the general point made at the beginning: apparently an important condition allowing (or even encouraging) differences in exegesis in the Shigaang Jiaw is the fact that different participants are involved in a wide variety of different tasks, with concerns as different as our hypothetical parson and his bellringer had. A small group of participants is immediately concerned with the events in the temple, some of whom (the priests) have access to textual material including words to be addressed to various supernaturals involved. But most people are more concerned (even exclusively concerned) with a variety of derived activities. Some of the activities are associated with the procession and a theology related to it (and often matters of village prestige and one-up-man-ship to be derived from it). Some are associated with issues only incidentally touching on the theology of the Jiaw (private penance, for example, or commerce). As each man focuses his attention on his own sphere of participation, the theology of the man in another sphere becomes irrelevant. Though sufficient co-operation is maintained for the Jiaw to continue on its three-year cycle, differences in exegesis continue undetected or ignored by participants. A proverb instructs us: 'The participant is misled, but the observer sees clearly'.²¹ The participant is misled because only his own part of the whole is in focus. The onlooker

21. 当局者迷旁观者清,

sees clearly to the extent that he does not take one participant's view to represent the whole.

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