A Study on Structural Changes of Chinese Local Plays
in Chiang-nan 江南 through about
the 15th and 16th Centuries (II)

by Issei TANAKA

In Chapter 1 of this article (printed in The Memoirs of the Institute of Oriental Culture 60, 1973), I observed various types of local plays in Chiang-nan 江南 through about the 15th and 16th centuries. In Chapter 2 (printed in this number), I have further investigated the organization of above-mentioned local plays ((1) ~ (3)) according to the materials found in “Ming-chou Wu-shih Chia-chi” 茗洲呉氏家記, a kinship book in An-hui 安徽, in the 16th century. As to the problems, I could recognize undermentioned various facts.

(1) In common with the plays treated in (1), (2), (3) in Chapter 1, the entire management of each play was undertaken by autonomous organization known as she-hui 社会, miao-hui 廟會, etc,. The governing body of such hui 会, consisting of plural number of she-hu 社戶, or a council system made up with she-shou 社首, was generally dominated by the elders within each local village. Business affairs and management of the hui, were usually carried out under a rotation and shift system by these she-hu. In many cases, especially in the cases of consanguineous villages, consisting of minority clans, often found in Chiang-nan, the elders of village-community were, at the same time, the leaders of influential kinship groups, and the organization or property of village-plays were often under the control of powerful clan. In Ming-chou village, for example, the members of organization for she-miao plays, were usually selected exclusively out
of members of family Wu 吳氏, the most powerful clan of this village. This indicates that the organization of she-miao play in Chiang-nan, were constructed on the basis of blood relationships.

(2) On the other hand, the organization of the she-miao play, was maintained, in part, in connection with local administrative system, such as li-chia 里甲, under which all the taxes and labour services to the public were imposed on village people according to the land-book, called huang-ts'e 黃冊, that was to be compiled on the basis of every local administrative section, called li-chia 里甲, in every ten years. In the village of Ming-chou 茅洲, for example, the she-huo 社戶, belonging to the family Wu 吳, the supporter of the village play, often fulfilled the responsibility for compiling the land-book, the so-called huang-ts'e 黃冊, in the capacity of li-zhang 里長, the chief of the local administrative section. In consequences, the structure of local plays in consanguineous villages in Chiang-nan, was supported not only by the private power of minority clan, but also by the public power of the local administrative authority.

In short, the controls of land-owner class over the organization of village plays were, more or less, strengthened in Ming 明 period, in comparison with those in Yuan 元 period. In the following chapters, I shall proceed to investigate what changes might have been brought in the local plays through the trends of strengthening of the controls by gentry class.