

The Impact of Land Belief in the Song Dynasty: Spiritual Control, Modes of Sacrifice, and Reinforcement of Grassroots Governance

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Abstract: *In primitive society, individuals were constrained by low productivity and could only beseech the earth for abundant yields. As a fundamental element of human existence, land naturally garnered reverence; however, natural disasters were often perceived as manifestations of the land god's retribution against humanity. Consequently, traditional China developed two distinct beliefs regarding land: one perceives the land god as a benevolent deity who fosters growth and is honored through various positive sacrificial ceremonies; the other views the land god as a stern figure who metes out punishment to those who transgress. The evolution of land belief during the Song Dynasty significantly contributed to controlling the spirit of lower strata and reinforcing grassroots governance while also influencing sacrificial practices to some extent.*

Keywords: Song dynasty, Land belief, Grassroots society, Sacrificial culture.

1. Introduction

Land serves as a crucial material foundation for human survival, development, and reproduction. Since the era of primitive society, individuals have harbored profound emotions and aspirations towards land, which gradually evolved into a belief system centered around it. China's land belief has adapted to the changing tides of history and exerted diverse influences on ancient Chinese society. As civilization progressed, this belief ascended to a national level, establishing a cohesive sacrificial framework and procedures from top to bottom. In the course of cultivating this belief in land, people also created an array of deities associated with land and corresponding regulations governing these beliefs. Subsequently, the ruling class manipulated public sentiment through faith in reverse fashion. China has a long history of farming civilization. Early agricultural activities appeared in the Yellow River and Yangtze River basins more than 6,000 years ago. With the increase of the proportion of agriculture in people's livelihood activities, people's dependence on land became stronger and stronger. Finally, settled agriculture emerged, forming an agricultural tribe whose main livelihood was agricultural production. Agricultural production plays an overwhelming role in the whole social life. During the Song Dynasty's rapid economic expansion characterized by burgeoning population growth and substantial food consumption, agricultural production became increasingly vital; consequently, the significance of land within people's consciousness grew ever more pronounced. Currently, research on Chinese folk customs, beliefs, and culture—both domestically and internationally—has emerged as a prominent field of study. This paper utilizes the examination of land belief during the Song Dynasty as its focal point to analyze how such beliefs subtly influenced societal thought processes over time; it will explore changes in sacrificial practices related to these beliefs while elucidating how the Song Dynasty reinforced its control over lower strata through this very ideology.

2. The Impact of Grassroots Governance During the Song Dynasty on the Ideological

Consciousness of the Common People through Land-related Beliefs.

When discussing the role of God, Max Weber once said: "It is the most fundamental question whether to influence a particular god or ghost by compulsion or prayer, and its answer depends on which is effective." Here, he seems to imply that the relationship between human beings and immortals can only be an unequal relationship in which one side overrides the other, and the difference between different relationships lies only in which side holds the dominant position. However, the beliefs of China and the West are different. We found that there should be a mode of communication between man and god in ancient China, which is different from "compulsion" and "prayer". People can achieve their goals by signing contracts with immortals. Once people have fulfilled their contractual obligations, no matter how high the rank of God is, they must fulfill their responsibilities, otherwise they will be punished for the unique relationship between man and God in China's belief, and the relationship between man and God should be equal. Therefore, the people at the bottom of China all want immortals, and immortals should also fulfill their obligations belonging to God for the benefit of the people.

China was founded by agriculture since ancient times, and the relationship between people and land became closer after the emergence of primitive agriculture. The means of production and living needed are inseparable from the abundance of the earth, especially crops. In the minds of primitive people, it seems that there are gods in control. Because people don't understand the reasons of crop growth, they hope and rely on the harvest of grain, and they form the concept of land spirit and worship of land gods from the idea of nature worship. Then it gradually interacts with human reproduction and life cycle, which implies the significance of reproductive worship and soul worship. Land belief contains strong reproductive worship and agricultural-oriented thought. Land not only provides basic materials for human survival, but also affects people's character and thinking consciousness. Strengthening people's worship of land can enhance people's love and

yearning for the native land. In ancient China, the ruling class mostly adopted the policy of "ignorant people", which reduced the mobility of the bottom people and was beneficial to the ruling class. No matter whether it is a businessman or a soldier guarding the border, they all have deep feelings for the city where they were born or lived, and they all want to leave their leaves behind. This kind of emotion has great psychological inertia and has influenced the people of China since the Song Dynasty. Therefore, strengthening the worship of the land has enhanced the feelings of the bottom people for the local land. In the Song Dynasty, the people's view of ghosts and gods had a certain evolution because of the certain change of land belief, and the relationship between man and god also changed. In terms of land belief, before the Song Dynasty, it was afraid of the harsh land gods in the past, but in the Song Dynasty, it turned to worship the new and kind land gods.

It is recorded in *Searching for the Gods* that Jiang Wengan did everything he could to gain people's recognition, which brought great disasters to people's lives. However, in the face of such gods, he was greatly welcomed in the Six Dynasties. It can be seen that people did not pay much attention to the virtue of God before the Song Dynasty. Sometimes people even think that the more greedy God is, the easier it is to ask God for benefits. In the view of ghosts, the fear of ghosts is gradually reduced, and ancestors are distinguished from ordinary dead souls; On the other hand, the relationship between man and god emphasizes the mutual needs between man and god in specific scenes, and then realizes the equality of status between man and god. These changes point to the change of human status in the secular and supernatural world. People are no longer full of awe when facing ghosts and gods, but try to connect with them equally. All this shows that at least in the field of folk beliefs, people pay more and more attention to their own value, and there is a positive attitude towards people and secular life, which is an important change from the Six Dynasties to the Sui and Tang Dynasties.

Due to the restriction of the specific ecological environment and national cultural psychology, China has not been able to develop from the ancient heritage of primitive religion to a supernatural mature religion, and finally it has evolved into a highly politicized, ethical and secularized secular religion based on the real kingship. Land belief, as one of the important belief forms in ancient China society, is not only presided over by the supreme ruler of the real world, but also offered sacrifices to the emperor. Moreover, the religious authority of social gods and land gods is directly or confused with the secular authority of rulers at all levels in the real world. In this long historical process of thousands of years, the ritual of land belief and land worship has been continuously developed and perfected, accumulating into a secular religious system with unique national characteristics.

In addition to the self-contained secular religious sacrificial system, many land deities have also contributed a lot to the establishment of the deity pedigree of China's local religion Taoism. The origin and development of Taoist thought is very complicated, which determines that its spiritual system is also very messy. In idol belief, it not only inherits and transforms a set of ghost and god systems such as gods, earthly areas, people and ghosts since ancient times, but also artificially

creates an immortal system, and absorbs many ghosts of sages, kings and Buddhists, thus forming a very large and strange Shinto pedigree.

In the realm of art, the cultural impact of land worship and its associated rituals is notably pronounced. Ripps has observed that many ancient dramas 'originated from primitive societies where agricultural deities were venerated through procreation.' It is understood that harvests are deemed essential for facilitating the cyclical renewal of nature, securing rainfall to ensure bountiful fields, and compelling the plant deity to yield agricultural produce. The cycle of nature's death and subsequent resurrection is commemorated with a celebratory feast. In both Nuo Opera during the Song Dynasty and contemporary social dramas still in vogue today, representations of various land deities hold significant importance.

The Impact of China's ancient land belief on the politics of feudal society is reflected in the construction of the rulers' political order and the significance of political thought. The political relationship between land worship and sacrificial rites is often different for different objects. In the supreme ruler's view, the country has changed from the god of land and grain to the symbol of secular kingship, which is highlighted in the following aspects: first, the meaning of survival, the country exists while the country exists, and the country dies while the country dies. The club of national subjugation is called the club of winning the country, that is, the club of the defeated country, and its roof screen is sealed to show punishment, so as to break the sympathy of the cloudy and sunny days. Second, the hierarchical significance, the name, scale, color and etiquette norms of the country are directly determined by the size of the secular authority. Only the son of heaven owns the five-color earthen altar, and the vassal can only sacrifice one side of the earthen altar, and the ordinary people can only sacrifice it in Zhonglei and the land temple. The second is reflected in the rise of emerging political forces. The association formed by the people's social day gathering has further developed into a political group in the folk secret society, that is, the party society. In fact, the literary societies in the late feudal society of China, such as Fu Society, Ji Society and Nan Society, have gone beyond the category of pure literary societies to varying degrees, but have the nature of political societies and even secret organizations. The rise of these political groups put forward their own political opinions on the political criticism of feudal countries and the development of the country, which is undoubtedly a new political force under the constitution of feudal autocratic regime.

Land belief has great inertia, which still affects people's thoughts today. Therefore, we should take its essence and discard its dross, conform to the trend of the times and the world, pursue the harmony between man and land, man and nature, and give the ancient land belief a new era significance. Land belief and its worship is an important belief ideology in ancient China society. It has lasted for more than a thousand years in the history of China. The ancient people's political ideals, economic life, ethics, values, culture and art are all reflected in the land belief. Therefore, it is necessary to do academic research on its historical development and evolution, which can not only help us understand the history of ancient

society, but also draw useful cultural wealth for the construction of modern spiritual civilization.

3. The Impact of Land Belief on Sacrificial Manners in Song Dynasty

The ritual system in ancient China was basically established in the Zhou Dynasty. The belief of Zhou people still inherited the animism in the stage of nature worship, and everything on the earth closely related to their life and production became the object of worship and sacrifice. From the sacrificial system of ancient earth gods, it can be seen that the objects of sacrifice contained in the earth gods of Zhou Dynasty are particularly complex and have the characteristics of multi-gods. In the course of the evolution of land gods, scholars think that there are three kinds of land gods in China, namely, the city god, the narrow land god and the earth god who guards the tomb.

The impact of land belief on sacrificial practices during the Song Dynasty is primarily manifested in land purchase vouchers. These vouchers represent the most significant category of town tomb documentation in the Song Dynasty, also referred to as land vouchers or title deeds. They originated from the Eastern Han Dynasty and persisted through the Ming and Qing Dynasties, reaching their zenith in the Song period. Land purchase vouchers serve as evidence of a deceased individual's ownership of land in the afterlife and are typically adorned with various Taoist symbols. The deities depicted within these vouchers are diverse; each deity assumes distinct functions, while a single deity may fulfill different roles across various land purchase documents.

The first is the seller. China people's inherent land-based concept and the worship of land under the small-scale peasant economy are derived from the tomb culture, so most of the gods who assumed the role of sellers in the signing ceremony of land purchase vouchers represented the land belief, and the gods who represented the land belief in the Song Dynasty mainly included the heavenly father and the stepmother. The Emperor Heavenly Father mainly served as a foil to the stepmother in the land purchase vouchers in Song Dynasty, so this paper only researches the stepmother. In primitive society, people were limited by the productivity below and could only pray for the high yield of the earth. As the foundation of human existence, land will naturally be worshipped by people, but natural disasters will be regarded as the punishment of the land god for human beings. Therefore, traditional China has developed two different land beliefs: one is to regard the land god as a benevolent god to promote the growth of all things, and then hold various positive sacrificial ceremonies for it; One is to regard the land god as a severe god who will punish those who offend, and then hold various negative solutions to it. The representative of active land worship in Han Dynasty is the worship of afterlife which represents the whole land belief under the official control. When Emperor Wen of the Han Dynasty accepted Xin Yuanping's suggestion, the country offered sacrifices to the local gods in a unified way. By the time of Emperor Wu, the Houtu Temple was set up in Fenyin. Although Fenyin no longer became an important place to worship the afterland after the Han Dynasty, occasionally emperors came to Fenyin to worship the afterland, such as Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang Dynasty and Song Zhenzong.

During the Sixteen Kingdoms period, the God of Houtu had a more lofty position in the folk land belief.

Heaven is referred to as 'father' and Earth as 'mother', which is why Houtu is often designated as 'Mother Earth'. During the Song Dynasty, it was uncommon for local officials and residents to be mentioned in land purchase documents; this can be interpreted as a contract between the deceased and Houtu. Dong Wanggong and the Queen Mother of the West frequently appear together in these land purchase vouchers, acting as sellers. Dong Wanggong, also known by various titles such as Emperor Donghua, Young Scout, Emperor Shaoyang, and Fusang the Great—who embodies the essence of innate yang—was born on Fangzhu Mountain above the azure sea before time began. He created all things and governs yang energy in harmony from the East. The Queen Mother of the West, recognized also as Yaochi's Golden Mother or Guitai's Golden Mother, represents condensed innate yin qi; she stands as a paramount figure of femininity in Western China up to Miaodong. Residing at Kunlun Mountain's western foothills, she is regarded as the first female immortal. Together with Dong Wanggong, they oversee celestial texts within our world. Every man must pay homage to Dong Wanggong prior to attaining immortality while every woman must visit the Queen Mother of the West before ascending through nine heavens to enter Sanqing scenic area and encounter Buddha at creation's dawn. In land purchase vouchers, Dong Wanggong typically appears alongside her partner—the Queen Mother of the West—but fundamentally they represent an evolved synthesis stemming from her essence alone. The Queen Mother wields authority over punishment and possesses eternal life capabilities aligned with Taoist ideals; thus she occupies a significant place within Taoism's immortal lineage: commanding all female immortals along with heaven-and-earth's yin energies while presiding over Kunlun Island for immortals. The Yin-Yang theory coupled with Five Elements during Han Dynasty serves not only as ideological support for Han people but also forms their philosophical universe's core tenets. As a feminine deity situated in westward realms necessitating male counterparts for achieving Yin-Yang equilibrium—stone reliefs from Western Han often depict them together too—as similar deities may assume varied roles within land transaction documents where occasionally both serve mediators.

Followed by the mediator. Historically, prior to the Sui and Tang Dynasties, Dong Wanggong, known as the Queen Mother of the West, occasionally served as a mediator. Following these dynasties, Zhang Jiangu and Li Dingdu predominantly assumed this role. The two immortals—Zhang and Li—who act as witnesses or guarantors in land purchase agreements are referred to by the terms 'solid' and 'fixed degree,' underscoring the legitimacy and reliability of land transactions. The term 'grading' pertains to establishing standards for land measurement, ensuring accuracy without errors or deceit, thereby affirming that transactions are fair and lawful. 'Firmness' signifies that once a land transaction is finalized, it remains unalterable like stone; one cannot renege on their commitment. Both Zhang and Li are common surnames; their appellations 'firm' and 'fixed' further highlight their trustworthiness and steadfast nature. Although there are no literary records detailing these two immortals, their

representations have remained ambiguous until 1985 when a porcelain maid depicting both Zhang Jiangu and Li Dingdu was unearthed from a Song dynasty tomb in Linchuan County, Jiangxi Province, providing them with tangible imagery.

In comparison to the aforementioned Zhang Jiangu and Li Dingdu, the terms 'Lord of the Year' and 'today's Zhifu' appeared later in land purchase vouchers. Currently, it has been identified that the earliest land voucher featuring these terms as mediators dates back to the fourth year of Tang Dali, which is considered invaluable. Subsequently, there was an increased frequency of such land purchase vouchers during the Tang and Five Dynasties periods. Furthermore, in the Song Dynasty's New Book of Geography, these terms were utilized as models for land purchase vouchers, resulting in a greater number of such documents being produced during this era.

Compared with Dong Wanggong and the Queen Mother of the West in the past, the biggest feature of Zhang Jiangu, Li Dingdu, Time Master and Today Zhi Fu is their specialty. Judging from the current materials, they never play any other role except as intermediaries in the local vouchers. The reason why they have such characteristics is that their nature is relatively clear. Except that they are recorded in the New Book of Geography, there are almost no traces of them in other documents. Only a few Taoist documents mention today's Zhifu, which refers to the officials on duty that day in heaven. Since they are ordinary officials, they can only act as ordinary intermediaries and cannot bear other responsibilities. Apart from acting as a middleman in land purchase vouchers, Time Lord and Today Naoko are rarely mentioned elsewhere. The year Lord should be the collective name of the year Lord and the month Lord. The Lord of the year and the Lord of the month, that is, the God who presides over every year and every month, are collectively called the Lord of the year, which means that the Lord of the year can be in charge of all the time. Zhifu is the abbreviation of the history of Zhifu, which was originally the official name of Han Dynasty, and was the assistant official who entered Zhifu County in Han Dynasty. There is a simple record in the Taoist literature "Seven Signs of Clouds" Volume 19 "The Fifty-fifth Immortal of Laozi": "Always call today's direct symbol to make the six gods guard the night."

In addition to the above two groups of immortals who act as mediators, there are also local mediators. Mei Xianzhen is the mediator who appeared in the land purchase vouchers in Jiangxi Province, including Zhang Zhongyuan's land purchase voucher in the second year of Bao You (1254) and Wang Baisi's land purchase voucher in the first year of Jing Ding (1260).

According to Hanshu, Mei Xian was really a minister at the end of the Western Han Dynasty. Because she was dissatisfied with Wang Mang's usurpation of the Han Dynasty, she lived in seclusion and became an immortal. In the Song Dynasty, the number of believers gradually increased and was included in the national sacrifice code. Mei Xian Guan Ji records the imperial edicts of Mei Xian Zhen in the fifth year of Yuanfeng. Mei Xianzhen gradually appeared in the land purchase voucher after being canonized. The choice of Mei Xianzhen as the mediator probably valued Mei Xianzhen's official status,

and the mediator was appointed by an officially canonized god to ensure the legitimacy of the contract.

Finally, the referee. In addition to the buyers and sellers and the mediator, after the contract is signed, the strong intervention of external forces is often needed to warn the buyers and sellers of various violations. This role is called the referee. Generally, there are three types of judges who act as adjudicators in land purchase vouchers: Laojun, Nvqing and Hebo. Laojun and the well-known Taishang Laojun will not go into details here, focusing on Nvqing and Hebo.

Female youth is the messenger of God, the messenger of the Five Emperors and other great gods. It is recorded in the Law of Female Youth Ghosts that "the law of the avenue hangs down, which is passed down by the female youth". As the messenger of the immortal on the avenue, female youth undertakes the role of communicating the upper and lower circles. Therefore, many Taoist scriptures begin with "female youth saying" and "too mysterious female youth saying". Buying land coupons is related to communication with the underworld, indicating that young women are also closely related to the underworld. It is recorded in "The Wonderful Classic of the Three-dimensional Commandment of the Taishang Taixuan Women's Youth": "The Three Rivers and the Four Seashui Mansions in Jiujiang have accumulated dead souls at night, and they have been robbed for years, and all ghosts and spirits should die." Explain that young women are in charge of laws and regulations and bind all kinds of ghosts and gods. Therefore, young women, as adjudicators, appear in a large number of land purchase vouchers. A person's seven spirits will leave the body at a fixed time, just like Hebo's crime of informing on sinners. Because Hebo is also associated with the underworld, people believe in Hebo and hope that Hebo can expel evil spirits. Therefore, Hebo often appears as an arbiter in land purchase vouchers.

The land purchase voucher is a contract signed between the earthly people and the spirit, and God plays an important role in the process of signing the land purchase voucher. Through the above analysis, we can see that the immortals appearing in the land purchase vouchers are all immortals with Taoist background. This shows that the makers and users of land coupons have been influenced by Taoism, and it can also reflect the position of Taoism in folk beliefs in the Song Dynasty. Because quite a few archaeological reports only mention the date of land purchase vouchers, but do not mention the specific contents of the vouchers, many land purchase vouchers have not been published, so there is still a lot of room for research on the immortals involved in land purchase vouchers.

The relationship between man and god plays a very important role in various religions and beliefs. It can be said that the important difference between different religions and sects lies in the different understanding of the relationship between man and god. Most religions put the position of God above man, while witchcraft puts the position of man above God, which is the difference between coercion and prayer as Weber said. However, such a distinction can't cover all types of relationship between man and god. In the traditional belief of China people, there are examples of equal communication between man and god, and this equal relationship is

concentrated in the long-standing funerary wares such as land purchase vouchers. In the land purchase voucher, the living and the dead often sign contracts with various gods to obtain the land needed for the tomb and the gods' guarantee for the safety of the tomb owner and the living. In this case, the relationship between man and God is no longer a relationship of compulsion and prayer, but an equal relationship of mutual assistance and reciprocity.

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However, due to the influence of various religious beliefs in history, the relationship between man and god reflected in land purchase vouchers in different periods is still slightly different, among which the land purchase vouchers in Song Dynasty can best reflect the equal relationship between man and god. At that time, people, gods and ghosts were the main characters in the land purchase vouchers, and the images of these characters had their own characteristics. The biggest feature of people appearing in land purchase vouchers is that there is no distinction in social status. The differences in gender, social class and age of the deceased will not affect the use of land purchase vouchers. Dead people with different social identities can enter into contracts with the gods that meet their requirements.

The gods and ghosts in the land purchase vouchers in Song Dynasty are quite different from those in the previous land purchase vouchers. These changes can not be simply regarded as the replacement of actors on the stage, but rather as the performance of new plays in the theater. These changes actually reflected the important evolution of folk beliefs at that time, and these changes were often not realized by those who used and made land purchase vouchers. The main changes are as follows: First, Houtu replaced Tugong as the most important deity to buy land coupons. Of course, this change has been influenced by the national sacrifices, and more importantly, people have gradually lost their faith in negative land beliefs. In turn, people believe more and more in the role of positive land belief, so people have thrown themselves into the arms of Mother Earth. Even adopt various geomantic concepts to pursue more worldly interests. Second, the emergence of a new concept of ghosts. In the Song Dynasty, the land purchase vouchers changed from the past ones, mainly aiming at the characteristics of people and ghosts,

and turned to exclude ordinary ghosts. The main reason for this change is that people's views on people and ghosts have changed fundamentally. For the ancestors in the family, people are convinced that they are the same as strangers; As for other people and ghosts, people doubt whether their power can pose a threat to people. Third, the transformation of the relationship between man and god. The existence of land purchase vouchers itself reflects the equality of God's relationship, and this equality was perfectly played in some land purchase vouchers in the Song Dynasty. People actively bargained with God in land purchase vouchers, striving for their own maximum interests. And this phenomenon not only exists in land purchase vouchers, but also in the note novels at that time, we often find that the equal tendency of people's communication with gods is gradually strengthening.

Through the analysis of the images of people, gods and ghosts in the land purchase vouchers in Song Dynasty and the evolution of folk beliefs reflected behind these image changes, we find that the status of people in the land purchase vouchers at that time has been obviously improved, and people are no longer afraid of ghosts or gods. In the face of some low-level gods, people will even have an equal dialogue with them. All these phenomena show that people re-evaluate their own value and have a new understanding of people's position relative to God. Of course, the emergence of a new relationship between man and god does not mean the disappearance of the old one. Even in the Song Dynasty, people sought help from gods like Taishang by praying. This coexistence of different relationships between man and god shows the inclusiveness of China's ancient beliefs. It is of great significance for us to understand China's belief to discuss the land purchase vouchers that load the relationship between man and god.

4. The Ruling Class in the Song Dynasty Strengthened Its Rule Over the Grass-roots Units with Land Beliefs.

Due to the social transformation in the Tang and Song Dynasties, the official state-owned land gods in the Song Dynasty were gradually in a declining position. On the contrary, the belief in folk land gods in the Song Dynasty was very active. They were distributed in rural natural villages and urban squares, representing the interests of rural people and urban poor respectively, and the folk land gods were subject to the rising city god who represented the interests of the upper class in the city. Although the actual status of the country god in Song Dynasty was low, it occupied a dominant position morally. Therefore, the rulers and the people still consciously use this god to strengthen the control of local society, and have achieved certain social effects.

The land god is one of the gods generally believed by officials and people in ancient agricultural society. The belief of local government is represented by the state gods and the folk belief is represented by the land god. In recent ten years, scholars have conducted in-depth research on the land god by using the theories of sociology, religion and human culturology, and achieved gratifying results. In the past ten years, apart from the general theory, the case studies of the land gods in historians have mostly focused on the pre-Qin and Qin and Han dynasties, and the special studies of the land gods after

Qin and Han dynasties have hardly been mentioned, which is a lack of historical research.

In the Song Dynasty, it was officially stipulated that the local state gods would be sacrificed once a year in mid-spring and mid-autumn, respectively, by the state secretariat, the county magistrate, the county magistrate, and the state doctor and county commandant to participate in the Asian sacrifice and final sacrifice. In case of special circumstances, they can also be photographed by the long officials or acted on behalf of the long officials. The country has always had a high status, and the ritual of offering sacrifices to the country in the Tang Dynasty, for example, has a rising trend in twists and turns. The divine right of the country god was divided by the gods. In view of the social unrest in the late Tang Dynasty and the Five Dynasties, the government of the Song Dynasty constantly weakened and divided the power of local counties. We know that theocracy is actually a reflection of the real imperial power, so the division of administrative power in local counties is reflected in the local state gods, that is, the division of the theocracy of the state gods. Specifically, it was the city god who posed the greatest threat to the state power in Song Dynasty. According to the regulations of the Song Dynasty government, the state and county gods are the highest gods in the local area, and the chief executive must personally worship them, so when the state and county chief takes office, he should worship the state and county gods. However, in Song Dynasty, officials abandoned the state gods of Zhou and County, and devoted themselves to worshipping the city gods.

In addition, the new Five Dragon Gods are also an important force to divide the divine power of state and county gods. An important function of the country god is to be responsible for reconciling yin and yang, reconciling wind and rain, and ensuring a bumper harvest in agriculture. However, the gods in charge of meteorology in agricultural society are diverse, and the gods of famous mountains and rivers, sages of past dynasties, Five Mountains, Fengbo, Rain Master, Leigong and Dian Mu are all traditional gods in charge of meteorology. All the gods were in charge of the same thing, and as a result, all the gods were in charge of nothing, so the Song people created another Five Dragon God. When this god came out, he almost monopolized the meteorological power.

There are many reasons for the weakening of the influence of the land gods in Song Dynasty. First, the rulers of Song Dynasty pursued the policy of paying equal attention to the three religions, and Buddhism and Taoism developed and gradually went to the bottom of society to expand their social influence. The organized deity system of Buddhism and Taoism had a great impact on the traditional deity belief, thus dividing the divine power of the country gods. Secondly, the frequent rotation of officials in different places in Song Dynasty is also an important reason for the decline of state gods in counties. Since the founding of the Northern Song Dynasty, in order to prevent officials from colluding for personal gain, local forces have been formed. It is stipulated that local officials cannot be officials in their own country and rotate every three years. In this way, officials lost their cadastre, and the relationship between the land and the land became slack, which led to the weakening of their belief in the land god and the grain god. Finally, the cities in the Song Dynasty were prosperous and developed in industry and

commerce. Some scholars even thought that the commerce in the Song Dynasty was the first "commercial revolution" in China. Although this view was not generally recognized by scholars, it was an indisputable fact that the commerce in the Song Dynasty was obviously more prosperous than that in the Han and Tang Dynasties. The development of industry and commerce made the urban economy play a higher and higher role in social life. The prosperity of urban economy provides the most fertile soil for the protector of the city, that is, the city god to replace the agricultural god.

The land god in Song Dynasty is the common god of the agricultural laborers with the village as the unit and the urban underclass with the workshop as the unit. Consistent with the social class of believers, it is at the bottom of the structure of gods at all levels, under the jurisdiction of the city god king, and is responsible for the management of one village and one square. Its appearance strengthened the integration of the grass-roots society in the Song Dynasty. The land god can play its due role in controlling the grass-roots society of local villages and workshops. First of all, it is because of the change of land system in Song Dynasty.

Change. From the Northern Wei Dynasty to the Sui and Tang Dynasties, the land system in feudal countries was state-owned land. Although farmers are attached to the land, their sense of belonging to the land is bound to be unstable because of the objective existence of the land state receiving and granting system.

Secondly, the prosperity of the land god in the Song Dynasty was closely related to the big land structure of the landlord class in the Song Dynasty. We know that land annexation in Song Dynasty was more realized through land sale, and it was not as good as that under the condition of state-owned land ownership, land annexation was by means of extortion or state reward. Based on the latter, the large land system is often fragmented, thus forming manor economy. Based on the former, the large land system often exists in a decentralized form because of the scattered sellers. In other words, the land of the big landlords in the Song Dynasty may be scattered in several villages, and the same village may be the land of several landlords and many farmers, which determines the complexity and diversity of village composition. The ruling class uses land belief to build group consciousness. Finally, the citizens in the city's grass-roots units, whose predecessors or predecessors are mostly rural residents, are inextricably linked with the land and have a complex of giving up the land. Therefore, although they are in a city with business as the core, their attachment to the land is innate.

The Song government also fully realized the significance of offering sacrifices to the land god to stabilize the people's psychology, so it also consciously used the belief of the land god to strengthen the control of the grassroots society. The official sacrifice to the country soothes people's hearts, controls group consciousness and group behavior and then stabilizes local politics.

Regardless of the actual status of the country god in the Song Dynasty, because it occupied a dominant position morally, the rulers and the people still consciously used this god to strengthen their control over the local society and achieved

certain social effects.

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