LOCAL ADMINISTRATION IN NORTHERN CHEKIANG
AND THE RESPONSE TO THE
PIRATE INVASIONS OF 1553-1556

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This thesis is the result of original research carried out by myself.

Merrilyn Fitzpatrick
ABSTRACT

Chia-hsing in northern Chekiang was part of one of the most advanced and prosperous sectors of the Ming empire. The pirate invasions of 1553 to 1556 were the direct outcome of the extra-legal overseas trade which had arisen in the region as a consequence of its expansive economic capacity. Contradictions within the conduct of overseas trade suddenly changed into large-scale piracy when the Ming government re-enforced the ban on overseas trade and travel. The crisis therefore which threatened the security of Ming authority in the south-east, developed in intimate relationship with the policies and practices of the Ming government, and the society and economy of the south-east.

The military crisis created by the invasions put to the test the resources of an administration geared to long years of peace. The positional defence and fragmentary military control of the peace-time Ming defence system were ill-equipped to cope with an emergency which called for decisive and co-ordinated action. Because of the nature of military resources available to the civil bureaucracy, the emphasis in the anti-pirate activity was placed on the defence of walled towns (which housed the local administrations). The provision of fortifications therefore constituted a major element in the overall defence strategy. The crucial role played by local administration in the wall-building programmes of this period reflects the degree to which the central government depended on local initiatives and efficiency to provide resources for the general defence of the region.

Defence of the countryside and unwalled towns was almost entirely left to local effort. Little attempt was made by local elites or administration to mobilize the people of the region for defence. Troops were brought instead from outside of the region, and for the general population, there was often little difference between the depredations of the pirates and the demands of the troops. Many local people joined forces with the pirates, threatening the stability of the region's social and economic life. However, the strong participation by the local bureaucratic elite in a regional defence administration led by men with roots and a clear understanding of conditions in the south-east enabled the government to suppress the piracy in the Chiang-Che region before it did lasting harm to the structure and power of Ming rule in that area.
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ABBREVIATIONS

DMB  Dictionary of Ming Biography
LCME  Library of Congress Microfilm Edition
STSL  Shih-tsung shih-lu (The Veritable Records of the Ming Chia-ching period)

NOTE ON ROMANIZATION

The romanization used in this thesis is that of the Wade-Giles system. In the case of place names, conventional English spelling is used for well-known cities and geographical features (e.g. Soochow, Hang chow Bay), but Wade-Giles romanization is used for administrative units related to those places (e.g. Su-chou prefecture, Hang-chou Front and Rear Guards).
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I am also indebted to my supervisors, Professor Wang Gungwu and Dr John Fincher, for access to their lucid minds and genial personalities; Dr S.T. Leong for his help with articles in Japanese; my fellow student, Leif Littrup, for many stimulating discussions of sixteenth century local history, his assistance with works in German, and his criticisms of several of the chapters; my husband Andrew Pike for his endless patience and encouragement; Mrs May Wang and Mr Wu Chi-hua for their opinions about Chinese texts; the staff of the Asian Studies Collection, Menzies Library, A.N.U.; and the Tōyō Bunko, Tokyo, for the use of their facilities; and Norma Chin for accurate and efficient typing.

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Needless to say, the many inadequacies of the text are exclusively my own responsibility.
# MING REIGN PERIODS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reign Period</th>
<th>Years</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hung-wu</td>
<td>1368 - 1398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chien-wen</td>
<td>1399 - 1402</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yung-lo</td>
<td>1403 - 1424</td>
</tr>
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<td>1425</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hsüan-te</td>
<td>1426 - 1435</td>
</tr>
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<td>1436 - 1449</td>
</tr>
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<td>Wan-li</td>
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<td>Ch'ung-chen</td>
<td>1628 - 1644</td>
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</table>
MAP II: CHIA-HSING PREFECTURE
(WALLED TOWNS AND COASTAL DEFENCES, 1553)
MAP III: CHIA-HSING PREFECTURE
(WALLED TOWNS AND MARKET TOWNS, 1556)
INTRODUCTION

This thesis is an attempt to investigate aspects of the Late Imperial Chinese state under the Ming through the medium of a local study. It grew out of a search for a suitable topic of local history, with the aim of building a detailed, vivid picture of the interrelationship of life and institutions in a part of China where sources were sufficiently numerous to allow a thorough coverage over a short period. On these criteria, Chia-hsing suggested itself, with its abundance of sources (including several local gazetteers for every district for the Ming and Ch'ing periods), and its "ordinariness", in that it contained no overwhelming features such as a provincial capital or a great city which would dominate the character of local administration.

In the gazetteers of Chia-hsing, the mid-sixteenth century invasions of the wo-k'ou (literally, Japanese pirates) stand out as a time of intensive local activity to cope with a problem which also threatened the security of the central Ming government. The period of essentially four years in the mid-1550s promised, therefore, to be a fertile ground for observing the relations between the government at Peking and the strategically and economically vital Chiang-Che delta plain.

The pirate invasions came at a time in mid-dynasty when the major institutions of the unified empire could be described as functioning "normally". A military crisis in a vital sector at such a time commanded the attention of the central government, making it possible in a local study to observe the interaction between central, provincial and local levels of bureaucracy and political power over a number of issues related to defence.

The history of the pirate invasions into Chia-hsing also offers
the opportunity to observe local administration in one of its more active phases. The military crisis forced quick responses — the rapid marshalling both of policies and of the economic and organizational resources of the empire in the south-east.

The pirate incursions into northern Chekiang in 1553-6 were symptoms of the disruptive potential of new social and economic forces being generated by the developing economy of the "advanced sectors" of the empire. The response at all levels of government to the emergency gives some clues as to how the regime succeeded in containing within the traditional power structure these new social and economic forces. The means by which this was accomplished include the nature of regionalism in Chiang-Che and the way it worked during that decade to perpetuate Ming rule in the south-east: the connections which bound the Chia-hsing area to the central government and to other regions which, like it, were economically and politically powerful; the place of local interests in an area where many scholar-officials had influence with provincial and court level administrators. Another factor was the domination of military affairs at all levels throughout that period by civil bureaucrats, especially those experienced in military matters, at a time when military institutions in the south-east were particularly weak. The study provides examples of how a civilian-dominated culture could cope with a military crisis of some magnitude without materially altering the relationship between the civil and military arms of government.

These and other themes apparent at central and regional levels become prominent through an examination of the way in which local social and administrative institutions of Chia-hsing worked during the crisis period. Attempts to provide local defence, including the building of town walls, underscore the resilience of the local administrative system as an important contributing factor in the strength of the Ming government in that sector.

In this thesis, after surveying some of the general characteristics of local administration in Chia-hsing, I have attempted to explore the nature of the pirate invasions and examine in progressively greater detail the responses of the administration, first in a survey of local defence efforts and then in a study of the wall-building component of
those defences. Finally the thesis attempts to look at the crisis from
the viewpoint of the ordinary people of Chia-hsing and to assess the
role which they played in both the invasions and the defence.

The Physical Setting

Chia-hsing was part of one of the most favoured regions in the
empire. It was the north-easternmost of Chekiang's eleven prefectures,
bounded to the north by the provincial border with Nanchihli, to the
west and south-west by the prefectures of Hu-chou and Hang-chou
respectively, and to the south and east by the waters of Hangchow Bay.
In the mid-sixteenth century it contained seven districts, two of them
on the coast, and five inland. Three of the inland districts straddled
the vital artery of the Grand Canal, mid-way between its southern
terminal at Hangchow and the great city of Soochow.

Along the northern coastline of Hangchow Bay, a few rocky headlands
made small sheltered bays in a shoreline mainly flat and featureless.
Between the headlands a great sea-wall protected the hinterland from the
high seas of spring and autumn, when the Hangchow tidal bore could sweep
over the lowlands in a wall of water. Moving northwards towards the
Yangtze mouth, the coastline became increasingly marshy, and its salt
workers, fishermen and reed gatherers formed a substantial part of the
population.

The salt-pans, fishing villages and walled garrison towns,
contrasted with the inland landscape of small fields, densely scattered
villages, canal banks, mulberry trees, busy market towns, and waterways
thronged with craft, the physical manifestations of a tightly inter-
connected pattern of agricultural and commercial life.

Historiography

The Chia-ching pirate invasions are mentioned in almost every
gazetteer from the Chia-hsing area written from the mid-sixteenth
century onwards. Because of the colour and excitement of the time — the first period of general upheaval in that area since the beginning of the dynasty — full and vivid accounts of the events have survived on a scale which does not exist for more tranquil times. In most gazetteers compiled before the Taiping rebellion, the events of the 1550s take a prominent place in the sections on military history and military administration. In other sections, too, the pirate invasions left their mark — on the history of the construction of the walls of the administrative towns, and most particularly in the biographies of local people. In each gazetteer, the material is presented differently, as the events of the 1550s receded or increased in interest to the compilers. To the editors of the late Ming gazetteers for whom the Japanese invasion of Korea was a close and vivid reality, the events of the Chia-ching reign were important for the effects they had on local military institutions and the origins of policies towards coastal defence and overseas trade. Successive Ch'ing compilers added more and more material to the gazetteers which they extracted from the private writings and collections of memorials of the mid-sixteenth century. This material, taken together, forms a large body of literature written during or immediately after those few years of the pirate invasions and with specific reference to the northern Chekiang or Chiangnan region, and which bear on a wide range of social and administrative questions.

Particularly in the case of biographies, much of the material in the gazetteers can be traced back to a handful of key local accounts. Two of these are private accounts by local scholars of Hai-yen, the coastal district of Chia-hsing which was at the centre of the pirate invasions into northern Chekiang. The most comprehensive account is that by Ts'ai Chiu-te, called Wo-pien shih lüeh (short history of the Wo rebellion) in four chüan, each covering essentially one year of the pirate invasions of the area, from Chia-ching 32 (1553) to 35 (1556) with a shorter summary of events until the routing of the main pirate groups from Chiang-Che in 1559 by Ch'i Chi-kuang. His account includes a great deal not found in any other source, and at the same time is verifiable in its more important points by other independent contemporary sources. Ts'ai spent part at least of the pirate years in residence in the city of Hai-yen, the headquarters of coastal defence
for the northern Chekiang sector, and was able to observe the local events at first hand. The flavour of the narrative suggests closeness to the events.

Ts'ai's vantage point is that of a literary man living in Hai-yen, not connected very closely with any of the main characters in the story he tells, though certainly sharing the same class background. Besides the fullness of detail about local events, Ts'ai's account has the advantage of countering the sources written by high officials in the relative importance attributed to different levels of official activity.

Ts'ai's work is paralleled by two independent accounts, one by another local scholar, Ts'ui Chia-hsiang, and the other by the magistrate of Hai-yen district from late 1553 until mid-1556, Cheng Mao. Like Ts'ai's account, they are based on local experience, and each maintains consistently a view of events centred on the town of Hai-yen, Ts'ui's narrative being rather anecdotal in style, and Cheng's providing some first-person glimpses of his administration of the district during the crisis.

Much of the work done on the Ming pirate invasions in earlier decades of this century has served to obscure their wide-ranging significance for Chinese society and politics of the time. As Kwan-wai So points out, Chinese and Japanese nationalists of recent times, basing interpretations on the inadequate and misleading Ming shih account, and each nation's strong feelings towards the other during the present century, have created myths about the pirate invasions which have unfortunately been perpetuated in general western surveys of Chinese history. The perpetuation of the most widespread of the myths, that the Japanese were wholly or largely responsible for the pirate invasions, is the harder to accept because it can be dismissed immediately by reading any of the contemporary sixteenth century observers on the subject.  

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2 Although others have disproved this myth in Chinese and Japanese, Dr So dispels it decisively in English in Chapter Two of his study.
The most useful studies in recent decades for the history of sixteenth century crisis in the south-east have been those which have shed light on the roots of the pirate phenomenon by investigating the relationship between the policies of the Ming government towards overseas travel and trade, and the development of overseas trade (Bodo Wiethoff); or the social structure of the overseas trade along the south-east coast and its relationship to piracy (Katayama Seijiro, Ch'en Wen-shih). This work has been usefully supplemented for the years of the crisis itself by the production of biographies on the major figures of those years now published in the Dictionary of Ming Biography, which, in illuminating the political aspects of the crisis, have exposed a number of still unresolved contradictions.

No twentieth century historian has yet undertaken a history of piracy in the sixteenth century which accommodates the breadth and depth of materials on the subject compiled by the late Ming historians themselves. The issues which the sixteenth century pirate invasions raise are so vast, the canvas so broad, the materials available so varied, being intricate and contradictory on the one hand and vague and suggestive on the other, that it is only possible for individual scholars to tackle it in sections. It seems that no general history of piracy in the sixteenth century will be able to do justice to the full range of evidence that exists until the history of each area connected with pirate invasions has been explored, tracing the intimate relationship between specific local conditions and institutions and the pirate phenomenon within it. Conversely, since the pirate invasions were intimately connected with social and economic developments along the south-east coast, such local studies should also be able to contribute to an understanding of the history of that region in a number of fields. It is within such a context that this thesis attempts to observe the administrative processes of the Ming government at the local level.

See for example, Hsieh Chieh, Ch'ien-t'ai Wo-tsun (1595), reprinted in Hsüan-lan-t'ang ts'ung-shu hsü-chi, and other works cited by So, pp.211 ff.
CHAPTER ONE

ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROL IN NORTHERN CHEKIANG

The administrators of Chia-hsing prefecture in the sixteenth century had under their control a section of one of the most prosperous and important regions in the empire. The prefecture shared the characteristics of the wealthy Yangtze delta plain of which it formed the south-eastern sector: dense population, many towns, intensive agriculture, flourishing industry, and a high level of political and cultural achievement.

The emergence of the lower Yangtze region as a nationally pre-eminent economic area during the T'ang dynasty was due to conditions which continued to guarantee the prominence of the region during the Ming. These conditions were primarily the continuing value of the region's soil and water resources, and the pivotal position of the region in the transport networks of the empire. For instance, in Chia-hsing, villages where families from the north had settled at the beginning of the Southern Sung had become sizeable towns by the sixteenth century. The ports on Hangchow Bay were less busy in Ming than they had been in the Southern Sung period when the capital was at Hangchow, and in the Yuan period when one of them had served as an official centre for overseas trade. However, the salt pans along the coast were still important, and the hinterland of the coastal towns had become more productive and heavily settled as new canal works gradually

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2 See Mark Elvin, The Pattern of the Chinese Past, Stanford, California, 1973, pp.177-8. For an example of such villages see Chia-ho chih 1288:3.12a-b; T'ung-hsiang hsien chih 1887:1.8b.
3 Cha-p'u chih 1757:6.1a-b.
permitted the expansion of the area under intensive cultivation.

The thirteenth century gazetteer of Chia-hsing described both the abundance and limitation of its resources in this way:

The fertile paddy fields are suitable for grain crops, the dry fields for hemp and beans. The land has the natural conditions to produce the people's daily needs: salt is obtained from the boiling of water; the planting of reeds supplies fuel; the earth produces abundant vegetables; and the waters are rich in fish and crab. Although bamboo, wood, animals, fruits and medicinal products are imported from other prefectures, Chia-hsing is second only to Wu-hsing and its hinterland [neighbouring Hu-chou prefecture] for raw silk and silk goods.4

By the mid-sixteenth century, this picture of the Chia-hsing economy had been modified in several important ways, but several features endured, including the high yield of crops, dependence on other regions for both necessities and luxuries, and the importance of silk manufacture.

In the course of several hundred years, the delta region had enjoyed a period of economic growth marked by increasing specialization in non-grain crops and thus increased dependence on other regions for basic grain supplies. When the above description was written in the thirteenth century, Chia-hsing's main export was rice,5 but by the mid-sixteenth century, Chia-hsing, in common with other delta prefectures, was turning so much towards the production of silk and other non-grain crops that it was becoming a large-scale importer of rice.6

The development of the delta's economy from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century owed little to innovations in technology and economic institutions.7 The source of its steady economic growth lay rather in

4 Chia-ho chih 1288:6.6a.
5 For instance, according to the twelfth century writer, Wang Yen, quoted in Elvin, Pattern, p.210: "In Liang-Che, the prefectures of Hu-chou, Su-chou and Hsiu-chou [Chia-hsing] have the reputation of being rice-producing areas. In a year when the harvest has been good, boats and carts will usually set out in all directions."
6 For instance, see a description from the first half of the seventeenth century in Ku Yen-wu, T'ien-hsia chin-kuo li-ping shu (1639-62), quoted in Elvin, Pattern, p.213. Specialization in silk production was still expanding in Chia-hsing prefecture in the late Ming period. See Chia-hsing fu chih 1878:33.22a.
7 On the slow-down in technological innovation after the thirteenth
the continuous access which the Yangtze delta enjoyed to the benefits of economic expansion in other regions. Continuous access was guaranteed by water-borne transport, which linked the delta's economy with other regions via the Yangtze River, the Grand Canal, and coastal shipping routes.

Water transport had enabled the farmers of the delta to benefit from the gradual expansion of rice culture in the middle Yangtze basin. Relying on supplies of grain from up-stream, farmers of the delta were able to devote more of their land and energies to the production of non-grain crops such as cotton and silk.\(^8\)

In the mid- and late-Ming periods, Chia-hsing prefecture also participated in the benefits of sudden economic expansion in southern Fukien. From the early sixteenth century onwards, the scale of foreign trade conducted in southern Fukien began to increase rapidly,\(^9\) and silk was a major export item. As the leading silk producing area, the prefectures of northern Chekiang profited by their supply of silk in various forms to these export markets in Fukien.\(^10\)

The countryside of Chia-hsing was extensively commercialized and linked closely with local urban as well as inter-provincial markets. In Chia-hsing no peasant lived more than a few hours by boat or foot from the local market, and many lived within easy reach of large towns. His ease of access to markets gave him relatively wide economic opportunities. The closer a peasant lived to a large city, the more his crop could become specially tailored to its consumption patterns. For example, in the vicinity of the great city of Soochow, peasants tended to grow only one crop per year of slower-ripening rice, rather than the two crops afforded by quick-ripening rice, because they could get such

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\(^10\) Rawski, *Peasant Economy*, p.74.
good prices for quality grain in the luxury markets of Soochow, that it was not worth the extra seed and labour to undertake double-cropping. Similarly, farmers could decide to grow mulberry leaves instead of a second grain crop, and to keep the women indoors working at spinning and weaving, rather than have them working in the fields.¹¹

Even by the late thirteenth century, the delta region had been highly urbanized.¹² As its economy continued to grow, the tendency was rather to increase the number of medium-sized market towns than the continue to add to the size of existing large cities.¹³ In the sixteenth century, each of Chia-hsing’s seven districts (hsien) contained, besides the administrative town, four or five market towns designated as ohen, that is towns large enough to have strategic or economic importance to their surrounding region. Towns in the major silk-producing area in the vicinity of the Grand Canal were particularly large and prosperous. A number of them were centres for specialized long distance trade in silk goods. One of them, Wang-chiang-ching, was described in a contemporary record as:

Thirty 里 from Chia-hsing city is a town called Wang-chiang-ching. To the north it connects with Su-chou, Sung-chiang, Ch’ang-chou and Chen-chiang prefectures (i.e. the areas south of the Yangtze and north of Chia-hsing), to the south with Hang-chou, Shao-hsing, Chin-hua, Ch’u-chou, Ning-po, T’ai-chou and Wen-chou (i.e. the prefectures of Chekiang province) and beyond to the south-west with Fukien and Liang-kuang. All the traffic between north and south passes through the town. In its environs the industries are planting mulberries, rearing silk-worms and weaving silk. When merchants who come from all directions to obtain goods are transacting their business in the town it is so crowded that one cannot press one’s way through.¹⁴

This description makes clear the economic interdependence of this silk-producing region with the ports of Fukien as well as with the great cities of its immediate region.

The administrative towns of the prefecture also had a strong

¹¹ Rawski, Peasant Economy, pp.52 ff.
¹² See Elvin, Pattern, pp.175 ff.
¹³ See Elvin, Pattern, pp.177-8.
¹⁴ Quoted in Fu I-ling, Ming-tai Chiang-nan shih-min shih-t’an, Shanghai, 1957, p.41.
commercial character. Around the prefectural city, by far the largest population centre in the prefecture, were extensive suburbs in which markets flourished.\textsuperscript{15} Chia-hsing was the major city between Soochow and Hangchow on the Grand Canal, and besides its extensive administrative functions was also the natural centre for economic activity for all of the surrounding area. At the walled coastal town of Hai-yen, suburbs filled the area between the city walls and the sea.\textsuperscript{16} Of Chia-shan, an administrative town only since 1430, and unwalled until the 1550s, it was said: "People crowded together, their houses in rows like fish-scales, and market-places the hub of activity."\textsuperscript{17} So closely enmeshed with the commercial life of towns was the countryside of the delta that it is possible to think of it as being almost urban over much of its area.

Administrative Divisions

Over the centuries, local administrative tasks had become increasingly complex while political authority had become concentrated at the centre. Under the Ming dynasty, the growth of population and the increasing complexity of administration led to the proliferation of local administrative units and a corresponding increase in the need for efficient co-ordination and surveillance. Such was the pattern of administrative development in the Yangtze delta region.

The removal of the Ming capital to Peking in the early fifteenth century increased the court's incentive for close surveillance of the lower Yangtze region, a region with taxes and transport facilities which were crucial to the northern capital, and with political power which the court distrusted.

The addition of four districts to Chia-hsing prefecture in 1430 was a logical outcome of the population and land surveys carried out at the

\textsuperscript{15} Chia-hsing fu chih 1681:18.50a; Chia-hsing fu chih 1878:34.3a.

\textsuperscript{16} Obata Tatsuo, "Sekkō Kaien-ken no rīko" (The li-chia system in Hai-yen district, Chekiang), Tōyō gakuhō (Tokyo) 18:141.

\textsuperscript{17} Chia-shan hsien chih, 1800:11.14a.
end of the fourteenth century (see Table I). When the Chia-hsing circuit (lu) of the Yuan period was proclaimed Chia-hsing prefecture (fu) in the year following the founding of the dynasty, its three districts continued to maintain much the same boundaries as they had since the tenth century. The surveys of the late Hung-wu period showed that these three districts then encompassed such a large population and area of cultivated land that the ability of their administrations to control them for tax and other purposes was in doubt. Chia-hsing district, the largest of the three, had over half a million people, an extremely large population for the lowest level of administrative unit, though rather common in the Yangtze delta area.

Table I
The Division of Districts in 1430

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District before 1430</th>
<th>Population in Hung-wu†</th>
<th>New Districts</th>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Ch'ung-te</td>
<td>304,859</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Hai-yen</td>
<td>266,479</td>
<td>Hai-yen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P'ing-hu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

† Chia-hsing fu chih 1878:20-1.

Note: It seems likely that the population had grown somewhat between 1391 and 1430, but taking the reasonably accurate Hung-wu figures as a guide, the new districts had populations of between 100,000 and 200,000.

In 1430 Chia-hsing prefecture's three dependent districts were responsible for administering a total of 1399 li (units of population

18 The surveys are those during which the so-called Yellow Registers and Fish-scale Maps and Books were compiled. They were carried out with a care and precision not afterwards equalled during the Ming dynasty. The land assessments for northern Chekiang in particular were done carefully twice within a short time. See Ho, Population, chapter 1, passim.
grouped together for tax purposes), a population of 296,000 households (hu) and a tax quota of 850,000 tan.\(^{19}\)

By the second decade of the fifteenth century, the three district administrations were inadequate to cope with the high population and heavy taxation obligations.\(^{20}\) The desire of the court in the north to keep close watch over the wealthy areas of the delta reinforced the submissions of local and provincial officials to increase the number of administrative units in the Chia-hsing area. All three districts of Chia-hsing prefecture had already been categorized as among the first degree of difficulty and importance because of their strategic position both on the coast and along the banks of the Grand Canal. Techniques of record-keeping ensured that the burden of clerical duties connected with district administration grew in direct proportion to the population of the district. The submission to the court recommending the break-up of the existing districts said that "the taxation schedule, military expenditure and other items required that inspection of this prefecture should be many times increased. To administer the multitude of matters, it is appropriate to increase the number of districts, set up officials and districts and distribute the management among them."\(^{21}\)

The submission to create four extra districts finally accepted by the court was put up in 1429 and the subdivision formally proclaimed in the following year. To translate the formal division into practical terms, the population registers and the land registers had to be divided.\(^{22}\) The district offices, granaries and schools had to be built. These tasks were left for the first magistrates of the new districts to work out during the following decades.

\(^{19}\) Obata, "Sekkō Kaien-ken no rīko":138-57. This estimate for households in the Hsüan-te period is 30,000 below that for the Hung-wu period. The decline reflects a withering of the number of households registered for tax purposes, rather than a demographic trend.

\(^{20}\) Chia-hsing hsien chih 1685:1.27a.

\(^{21}\) Ming Hsuan-tsung shih-lu (The Veritable Records of the Hsüan-te period of the Ming dynasty) 5/3/28 (20 April 1430), cited in Obata, "Sekkō Kaien-ken no rīko":139.

\(^{22}\) Chia-hsing hsien chih 1685:1.27a; Ching-shih pa-pien lei tsuan 1626:25.16b-17a.
Although the increase in the number of districts helped to reduce tax collection and other administrative tasks to manageable size, it also created new problems. One persistent problem was the distribution of the tax quotas between the districts. There are several suggestions that the division of Ch'ung-te district resulted in an uneven allocation of tax quotas. The first magistrate of the new T'ung-hsiang district applied successfully for a reduction in taxes because the division of the land had not been matched with the division of taxes and consequently the district was unable to meet its allotted quota.23

In 1630, two hundred years after the original break-up of the districts from three to seven, the boundaries of Chia-hsing and Hsiu-shui districts were redrawn to make equal the burden of taxes and strategic responsibility between the two.24 One of the recurrent difficulties arising from the break-up in 1430 had occurred in the prefectural city and its environs. Located at the centre of the former Chia-hsing district, the prefectural city was divided into two districts from 1430 onward: Chia-hsing district to the east and south and Hsiu-shui district to the west and north, with the boundary between them running through the city itself. The inequality had arisen because of the amount of land which each controlled adjacent to the city walls. Chia-hsing district was left with considerably more of the walls and suburbs to control than was Hsiu-shui. When the inequality was marked between districts which needed to cooperate constantly, the difficulty of achieving that cooperation was increased.

In Chia-hsing, the multiplicity of administrative units increased the difficulty of maintaining law and order. The boundaries of districts acted as limitations on the authority of the officials of those districts to apprehend criminals who passed beyond them. The more boundaries there were, the more difficulty local administrators had in coping with lawless elements in society.

23 Biographies of Sheng Yung-ho and T'ien Yü in T'ung-hsiang hsien chih 1887:10.2a and 10.3a.
24 Chia-hsing fu chih 1878:82.48b-50b "Inscription on the redefinition of Chia-hsing district's land and labor tax regulations". The work was carried out between T'ien-ch'i 1 and 10 (1621-30). Also Chia-hsing hsien chih 1685:2.3b-4a "Report of the discussion that took place under the auspices of the surveillance commissioner T'ang Jih-chao".
In the 1530s, lawlessness became severe in the neighbourhood of Ch'ing-chen and Wu-chen, the twin market towns on the western border of Chia-hsing. Wealthy local people became so concerned that they petitioned the throne to have a new district created with Wu-chen as its centre. The difficulties of maintaining control over the population of the busy trading towns are vividly related in a memorial written in 1538 by Shih Ju, a scholar official of Kuei-an district, which adjoined Chia-hsing prefecture in the vicinity of Wu-chen. In his memorial Shih Ju alludes to his experience in suppressing bandits in the mountains of Kwangtung, and in the conditions attending the creation of new districts there. Despite the differences in topography and socio-economic conditions between the mountains and the delta plains, Shih Ju saw the lessons of the one as being applicable to the other. He pointed out that the salt smugglers, gangsters, robbers and cut-throats which troubled the neighbourhood of Wu-chen had gangs and refuges in each of the six districts that abutted the town, but that government troops were limited by the prohibition on their crossing provincial borders. The malefactors were able to evade capture simply by moving a short distance into a neighbouring district where the government forces could not follow. Shih Ju related the courses of action which had been discussed by local people. Some, he said, proposed establishing an office of an Assistant Prefect for Police Matters (hsiin-pu t'ung-pan) at Wu-chen, but others had pointed out that lawlessness had flourished despite the proximity of no less than four police offices to the north, south, east and west of the twin towns and thought another would not help. Shih Ju supports the second view from his own experience in Fukien. To deal with a troubled area both a vice-prefect's office with special responsibility for police matters (pu-tao t'ung-pan) and a military chiliad (ch'ien-hu so) had been established there but local disturbances had increased despite them. Only after a district had been created had the area become peaceful.

The people of Ch'ing-chen and Wu-chen did not succeed in having a new district created, but Shih Ju's warning that "if something was not done soon a big disturbance would surely break out" was vindicated.

25 Chia-hsing fu chih 1878:82.4b-6b. "Shih Ju requests the establishment of a district administration."
almost twenty years later. In the ninth month of 1556, a renegade priest from a village near Wu-chen proclaimed himself divinely inspired and led a group of followers in a localized revolt. The uprising was only put down with the full weight of the Military Circuit Intendant (ping-pei-tao) for northern Chekiang, leading seasoned troops against them.26

While the immediate causes of this uprising lay elsewhere, the long history of disorder in the vicinity of the town owed much to the division of administrative responsibility between the six districts which bordered on the area. Problems such as these were not uncommon for local officials in the crowded and closely administered delta region.

The Administrators

The local official of Ming times did not need so much the talents of a strong decisive governor as the more subtle qualities of the modern bureaucracy — an ability to work effectively in an organization, while steering through official regulations and local custom — in order to reach modest goals of tax collection and law and order.

To govern their provinces the early Ming emperors established a deliberately fragmented and overlapping structure of administration within each province. In Chekiang as in other provinces, provincial administration was split among the heads of three parallel hierarchies — administrative, surveillance and military. The heads of this so-called three offices (san-ssu) structure held equal rank, so that no single official could dominate the affairs of the whole province. When added to the proliferation of administrative units and the growth in the size and complexity of administrative tasks, this deliberate lack of clear leadership and direction at provincial level widened considerably the distance between the authority of the central government and the responsibilities of local and provincial officials.

26 Yao Shih-lin, Chien-chih pien (after 1592) in Yen-i chih-lin 55.20a-22b; T’ung-hsiang hsien chih 1887:20.5b-6a.
The three offices structure provided effective checks against the emergence of powerful individuals in official positions at the provincial level but it was unwieldy when overall command of a region was necessary to deal with emergencies. Recognition of such problems led by the middle of the fifteenth century to the creation of ad hoc provincial governors and supreme commanders, high civil officials holding concurrent censorial and military positions, usually under instructions to cope with particular military problems for a limited duration. In some places these posts became almost permanent positions, regularly filled. In the south-east, however, even a century later, during the Chia-ching reign, governors and supreme commanders were not appointed regularly and only rather disturbing outbreaks of disorder in the coastal provinces prompted their appointment.

Whenever governors or supreme commanders were appointed, with one stroke they reversed the tendency of the regional government towards weakness and fragmentation. Invested with certain central government powers over subordinates, over armed forces, and over finances, they operated as regional outposts of the court itself. Since the court distrusted the powers which it gave to these high regional officials, the governors were vulnerable to changing fortunes in court politics and their freedom to act was limited by the degree of support which they had in the capital.

As part of the central government's attempts to keep control over the increasingly numerous and complex administrative machineries, it created greater numbers of officials whose function was to inspect and co-ordinate the affairs of local administration. Below province level but above the level of prefectures and districts, these officials provided an important element of flexibility and adaptability within the Ming structure of government. They belonged to the administrative or surveillance hierarchies of the provinces and carried out their work within the territorial limits called circuits, or tao. These circuits were by no means co-terminous, some of those with narrow functions being

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28 See Chapters Two and Three.
equivalent to the whole province, others with broader responsibilities being confined to groups of two or three prefectures. Chia-hsing prefecture was part of a number of circuits, including the general administrative circuit (fen-shou tao), which covered Chia-hsing, Hu-chou, and Hang-chou prefectures, and the general surveillance circuit (fen-hsîn tao), which covered two prefectures only, Chia-hsing and Hu-chou.29

Circuit intendants were expected to tour all of the districts within their jurisdiction, examining records, inspecting installations and official processes, and making reports to the provincial authorities about the performance of local officials. Each district yamen contained apartments set aside for the use of the visiting circuit officials. With jurisdiction which enabled them to examine problems in detail and at the same time see them in a wider context, circuit officials were ideally placed to provide a degree of co-ordination which was otherwise difficult to achieve for either local or provincial officials. In this way, circuit officials based in Chekiang but with jurisdiction over segments of Nanchihli were able to overcome some of the problems inherent in a provincial boundary which cut east to west across the delta. For instance, an assistant commissioner for water control (shui-li ch'ien-shih) stationed at Hangchow had jurisdiction also over Su-chou and Sung-chia-p'ang prefectures; given the highly integrated nature of waterways in the delta, such an official was essential.30

Throughout the Ming dynasty the role of circuit officials remained somewhat loose and undefined, which gave a certain flexibility to the way they could be used. For instance, they sometimes served in ad hoc task forces to deal with particular problems. New circuit positions were created where the fixed areas of the bureaucracy were least able to cope effectively. The Military Defence Intendants (ping-pei-tao or hai-fang-tao), for example, who were charged with supervision of all defence


30 Hsü-shui hsien chih 1596:1.8a-10b.
activities within their circuits, steadily became more influential in the course of the dynasty, and increased in numbers.\footnote{Hucker, "Governmental Organization":55; L1, "Function of the circuit":148-50.}

The prefectural administration of Chia-hsing included the prefect himself (chih-fu, rank 4a), and five assistants classed as vice-prefects (t'ung-chih, rank 5a), assistant prefects (t'ung-pan, rank 6a), and prefectural judges (t'ui-kuan, rank 7a). The division of functions between prefectural bureaux in Chia-hsing is not known, but judging by the titles of the five sub-prefects, the functions included water control, agricultural affairs, military affairs, police matters, and justice. In case of a particular large-scale local project, such as the building of a sea-wall, the relevant assistant prefect would be assigned to take a detailed part in day-to-day supervision of the project. In addition, these assistants sometimes served as acting magistrates when a subordinate district was temporarily without a magistrate.\footnote{Hucker, "Governmental Organization":45; Cartier, Une reforme locale, p.30; Hsiu-shih heien chih 1596:2.18a.}

The prefect presided over all of the affairs within the seven districts, sometimes acting as a trouble-shooter when extra official weight was needed in particular districts or he was required to arbitrate in differences of opinion, and sharing between districts burdens which befell the prefecture.

The district (heien) was the basic unit of local administration. In relation to it the prefecture was a supervisory organization, albeit a very important one. The work of the prefecture was arranged complementary to that of districts. The organization of district administration varied only in detail from one district to another. The maps of the administration offices given in the district gazetteers have some of the features of a modern organization chart, the number of rooms, pavilions and courtyards corresponding to the number of activities and the order in which they are performed. The offices of Hai-ning as shown on a map in the 1557 district gazetteer correspond to the general pattern. It shows a walled compound, the outer courtyards of which contained the residences of the magistrate, registrar and chief officer,
and residences also for touring intendants inspecting finances and military affairs. The division of work emulated that of the six ministries of the central government: personnel, rites, military affairs, finance, public works and justice. The clerks working in each of these areas had their offices on either side of the main courtyard where the principal hall was.  

Although it was the lowest level of administrative unit governed by centrally appointed officials, the district still required a considerable governmental establishment. A full description of the staffing of district administration in the mid-sixteenth century is also found in the 1557 gazetteer of Hai-ning. The numbers and functions of subordinate staff varied slightly from district to district according to local requirements, but the staffing of Hai-ning district was unlikely to have differed in any marked way from that of the seven districts of adjacent Chia-hsing prefecture. The staffing of Hai-ning district was as follows:  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One Magistrate</td>
<td>chih-hsien</td>
<td>7a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Vice-magistrates</td>
<td>hsien-ch'eng</td>
<td>8a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Chief Officer</td>
<td>chu-pu</td>
<td>9a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Registrar</td>
<td>tien-shih</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ten Officers of the six bureaux</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Personnel, Population and Rites</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Military, Justice and Works</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twenty Clerks</td>
<td>tien-li</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Personnel, Population and Rites</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Military, Justice and Works</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Tally Clerk</td>
<td>k'ân-ho k'o ssu-li</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Clerk in charge of receipt and despatch of documents</td>
<td>ch'eng-fa k'o ssu-li</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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33 Hai-ning hsien chih 1557: t'u-mu. 2b-3a.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Position/Office/Officer</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>District Instructor attached to the Confucian school</td>
<td>chiao-yü</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Teacher's assistants</td>
<td>hsün-tao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>Clerk attached to school</td>
<td>unranked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Officers in charge of police offices at Shih-tun and Che-shan (one each)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Clerks attached to police offices (one each)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Officers in charge of tax offices at Hai-ning, Hsia-shih and Ch'ang-an (one each)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Clerks attached to tax offices (one each)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Assistant clerks attached to tax offices (one each)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The gazetteer mentions at this point that the staff of two other tax offices and a postal relay station are now not functioning, and that of two water-ways offices have merged with the existing tax offices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Office/Position</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>Embankment office at Ch'ang-an</td>
<td>Pa-kuan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>Officer of the ever normal granary</td>
<td>yung-p'ing tsang ta-shih</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>Clerk attached to the granary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Officers of the Hsi-lu and Hsü-ts'un salt pans (one each)</td>
<td>yen-ch'ang ta-shih</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Assistant officers of the salt pans (one each)</td>
<td>fu-shih</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Clerks attached to the salt pans</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>Geomancer</td>
<td>yin-yang hsüeh hsün-shu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>Coroner</td>
<td>i-hsüeh hsün-k'o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>Buddhist community representative</td>
<td>seng-hui-ssu seng-hui</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>Taoist community representative</td>
<td>tao-hui ssu tao hui</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All but the last three positions were filled by non-local men in the period immediately preceding the compilation of the gazetteer. The list gives a basic staff of sixty-four administrative positions. The numerous offices probably employed additional clerical staff, and the list does not touch on the employees of the yamen used as runners, lictors, guards and so on, some of whom were raised or paid for through the corvee system.\(^{35}\)

The division of functions between the vice-magistrates, chief officer and registrar varied from district to district.\(^{36}\) In the coastal district of Hai-yen, adjacent to Hai-ning, there seem to have been in the mid-sixteenth century no less than three formal positions for vice-magistrates, one for water control matters, one for agricultural matters (called the nung-ch'\*eng), and one established only in 1544 in charge of granaries.\(^{37}\) In several districts of Chia-hsing, the Registrar was responsible for security and post stations, while in others the Chief Officer had these functions.\(^{38}\)

The post of prefect of Chia-hsing was filled throughout the mid-sixteenth century by capable men who came to the post as experienced officials and who later rose to higher positions.\(^{39}\) The magistrates of Chia-hsing's seven districts on the other hand had generally had little or no administrative experience. A high proportion of magistrates received promotions at the end of their terms, generally to posts in the bureaux and boards of Nanking or Peking, occasionally to other provincial posts within Chekiang itself.\(^{40}\) During the Chia-ching reign,


\(^{36}\) At the beginning of the dynasty, the suggested break-up of work among the subordinate district officials was as follows: "The assistant magistrate and chief officer divide between them the work of tax collection (liang), post stations (ma), security (h\*\*\*\*h\*\*\*), and police (pu). The registrar takes charge of the transmission, despatch and receipt of documents." *Ming Hui-yao* (1887), Peking-Shanghai 1956, p.730.

\(^{37}\) *Hai-yen hsien chih* 1876:2.1a-b.

\(^{38}\) Cartier, *Une reforme locale*, pp.37, 111; *P'ing-hu hsien chih* 1689: 9.3a; *Chia-shan hsien chih* 1881:13.12b.

\(^{39}\) *Chia-hsing fu chih* 1878:42.50a-52b.

\(^{40}\) For example, *Chia-hsing hsien chih* 1685:5.37a-38b. Cf. for the Ch'ing period, John R. Watt, *The District Magistrate in Late
magistrates' positions and those of subordinate district officials were usually filled, the incumbents actually occupying their positions for a high proportion of their allotted term. Chia-hsing's good fortune in this respect contrasted with remote, poor areas where travel was slow and where the death, resignation or dismissal of an incumbent left a gap which was often unfilled. Appointment to remote and unhospitable prefectures and districts was often meted out as a punishment for higher officials being down-graded. But the appointment of a new graduate to a magistracy in such an area as Chia-hsing cannot have been regarded as a hardship, despite the heavy load of administrative work. Judging by the number of magistrates who went on to successful official careers after their term in Chia-hsing, a posting there did not interfere with their chances of gaining connections and influence and advancing their careers. On the contrary, one gets the impression that a magistracy in Chia-hsing was an acceptable starting-point for a successful career, and that the men chosen were often above average in ambition and ability.

The work pattern of a magistrate in mid-Ming is a clear illustration of the nature of centralization under the Ming government. It demonstrates the distance which had evolved between the authority of the court and the responsibility of its officials at a local level. The necessity which magistrates found to refer many local questions to higher levels of the bureaucracy for decision was in most cases a direct outcome of their lack of financial autonomy. But the lack of local control over finance was only one symptom of the centralized control which characterized Ming government.

The concept which emerges from some studies of local administration of magistrates as holding a lonely responsibility for the affairs of their districts has to be heavily qualified in the case of the districts of Chia-hsing. Many of the more important issues of local administration, including water control, salt administration and

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41 Hai-nîng hsoen chih 1557:5.2a-8a shows that almost all district positions were regularly filled in the mid-Chia-ching period.

military affairs, were not under the primary direction of magistrates, although they did have a residual responsibility for them. In these areas of government, the role of the magistrate was to assist and to carry out the orders of his superiors including the prefectoral and circuit officials.

The dependence of magistrates on the co-operation of their immediate superiors is illustrated in the biography of the magistrate of Chia-hsing district from 1560 to 1562. The biography of Ho Yüan, chih-shih of 1559, written by his brother, is an account of his official career including details of the administrative issues which he faced during his time at Chia-hsing. These details included aspects of salt administration, food shortages, the re-building of the district school, and the volume of official traffic along the Grand Canal. In most cases Ho referred the matter to a higher level, made reports and put in requests. Only in dispensing justice and keeping district records is he described as taking action for which he did not have recourse to a higher authority. Ho's work as magistrate was no doubt especially overshadowed by the presence of the prefectoral offices in the same city. Had he served instead in one of the other districts of Chia-hsing, a description of his activities would no doubt show somewhat more of independent action and of inescapable responsibility on the part of the magistrate. The difference, however, would be one only of degree.

Since Ho and his immediate superior, the prefect of Chia-hsing, had to work closely together, their relationship was of some importance. Ho praised the prefect, in this case Hou Tung-lai, for his clear delegation, his incorrupt administration and his willingness to praise his subordinates and give them credit. Ho thus emphasized the prefect's administrative qualities, desirable, but often lacking, in an official who held an important supervisory position and through whom submissions from the district had to pass. The importance which Ho Yüan placed on the qualities of his superior suggests their inter-dependent relationship and Ho's reliance on his superior's co-operation in local administration.

\[\textit{Kuo-ch'ao hsien-cheng lu (1594-1616): 47.19a-25a.}\]
Seen in the context of the bureaucracy as a whole, magistrates in the mid-Ming period enjoyed little autonomy and were remote from power. They were one element only in a bureaucratic organization, forced by regulation and convention to co-ordinate their administration on a highly detailed level with other officials, but burdened with residual responsibilities over the whole range of government functions.

Central Control and Local Elites

Continuous participation by local scholar-officials in political life formed the basis of the strong and enduring connection between the central government and their home areas. At any one time, several score of Chia-hsing men had the status of scholar-officials, perhaps half of whom were actively engaged in positions in the capitals or the provinces, the other half residing in or near their home districts, either in temporary retirement for political reasons, on mourning leave, nursing ill-health, or in permanent retirement. Thus while one group was actively expanding their experience in the broader official world, the other half was able to enjoy the fruits of official status at home, and put them to work for any local or personal issue for which they were needed.

These scholar-officials, or the local bureaucratic elite as they can be called, held their status as individuals and should be clearly distinguished from the rest of the local elite on that basis. The much broader group, generally termed the local elite, has been variously defined depending on the basis of one's investigation, but that adopted by Jerry Dennerline for the elite of Chia-ting district, north-east of Soochow, during the latter half of the sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth century, is useful also for the purposes of this thesis; that is, that all people who held the status of district student (chu-sheng) or higher and their families can be considered to belong to the gentry or elite class.44

In Chia-hsing the working out of a balance between local influence and imperial authority would seem to have been rather weighted in favour of the local elites. For many centuries the lower Yangtze region had been a centre of culture and learning and the native place of a large number of the empire's officials. During the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties, the prefectures of northern Chekiang consistently produced large numbers of both successful examination candidates and of officials. For the sons of families wealthy enough to give them a good education, success in gaining the provincial and more especially the metropolitan degree meant the opportunity for an official career and of gaining personal influence within their home district. In terms of commitment to the existing imperial system, entry to the bureaucracy was the more important consequence of the gaining of degrees. A high proportion of successful examination candidates from Chia-hsing prefecture subsequently followed official careers. In the six decades which cover the Cheng-te period (1506 to 1521) and the Chia-ching (1522 to 1566), the numbers of provincial and metropolitan degree holders produced in Chia-hsing prefecture were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Provincial (chü-jen)</th>
<th>Metropolitan (chin-shih)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cheng-te period</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chia-ching period</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>323</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As this table shows, half of the provincial degree holders eventually gained the metropolitan degree. All of those who gained the metropolitan degree have an official position marked against their name in the gazetteer. A smaller but still high proportion of the provincial degree holders also obtained official posts.

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46 *Chia-hsing fu chih* 1878:45.31a-54b.
Throughout the Cheng-te and Chia-ching reigns, the numbers of men from Chia-hsing prefecture gaining degrees and entering official life remained consistently high. In fact the numbers rose in the latter half of that period.\(^{47}\) There was therefore a constant flow of new men to augment and replace the local bureaucratic elites of the generation before.

The bureaucratic elite of Chia-hsing as a group owed their position to class and imperial institutions rather than to individual clan power. There were clans within the prefecture whose members enjoyed access to official life generation after generation throughout the Ming dynasty, but compared with other important prefectures in Chekiang and Fukien, for instance, political power was shared among a large number of families. Through the study of P'an Kuang-tan of the important clans of Chia-hsing prefecture during the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties, a rough guide can be obtained to the number and size of these families in the sixteenth century. According to his research, forty-eight such families formed a closely allied elite bound together by marriage.\(^{48}\) The forty-eight families accounted for roughly sixty per cent of the 267 provincial degrees and a slightly higher proportion of the 138 doctoral degrees achieved by Chia-hsing men during the Chia-ching period.\(^{49}\)

\(^{47}\) The results for the 10 sets of examinations held in the first three decades of the two reign periods compared with the 10 sets held in the second three decades show a marked increase in the numbers of both chü-jen and chin-shih produced per triennial examination. The average numbers per triennial examination for these two periods were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>chü-jen</th>
<th>chin-shih</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cheng-te 1 to Chia-ching 15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chia-ching 16 to Chia-ching 44</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{48}\) P'an Kuang-tan, Ming Ch'ing liang-tai Chia-hsing ti wêng-teu (The clans of Chia-hsing in the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties), Shanghai, 1947, see table opposite p.93. As an example of their inter-relationship through marriage, of 55 marriages recorded for the Chu clan, who settled at Hsiu-shui in 1453, only five were contracted with families outside the prefecture, and these five were all from the immediate region. P'an, pp.32-3.

\(^{49}\) By the rough method of assuming that all chü-jen and chin-shih graduates of the Chia-ching period in Chia-hsing prefecture whose names were the same as one of those listed by P'an actually belonged to one of his clans, these percentages are arrived at. Chia-hsing fu chih 1878:45.34a-54b; P'an, The clans of Chia-hsing, p.93.
The remaining forty per cent of degree holders who do not appear to have belonged to the forty-eight families identified by P’an Kuang-tan, may be accounted for in several ways. Most of them probably were members of families whose elite status did not survive a sufficient number of generations to be included in P’an’s research. They may instead have been the first entrants to the official class from wealthy commoner families, or, in a few cases, they may have been the talented children of the comparatively poor. Besides the relatively large component of new elite or short-lived elite entrants to the scholar-official group, the examination lists show the repeated phenomena of young men from the same clan and the same generation achieving their provincial degree in one examination and their metropolitan degrees in the next or immediately subsequent series of examinations. Both features of the Chia-ching scholar-officials would have been difficult to emulate in the highly competitive system of the later Ch’ing period. These characteristics constitute a comparative ease of access to degree-holding and official status in mid-Ming Chia-hsing which helped wealthy commoner families to achieve elite status at the same time as it helped existing elite families to consolidate and continue their position. While it would be an exaggeration to see in these characteristics much sign of social mobility which included the lower classes of society, there seems to have been some room for upward mobility for wealthy families who could afford to buy education and culture. Given the steadily expanding economy of Chia-hsing, access to political power by the economically powerful was an important factor in maintaining the social stability of elites in the face of economic change.

The sheer size of local elites in Chia-hsing prefecture had some important implications for local administration. For example, magistrates of the seven districts in the mid-sixteenth century were often young and inexperienced men, who were completely outranked by at least half a dozen of the local residents. The views of such members of the bureaucratic elite and their families would have to be taken into

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50 See for instance, in Chia-hsing fu ohih 1878:34 ff., the Pu family of Hsiu-shui in the years Chia-ching 16, 17, 22, 26, 28 and 32; the T’u family of Chia-hsing in Cheng-te 11, Chia-ching 2, 4, 5, 19 and 23; and the Lü brothers who each gained their chü-jen in Chia-ching 22, and their chih-shih the following year.
account on any major issues likely to affect them. The prefect, although considerably more senior and usually quite experienced, similarly would be expected to defer to those who outranked him whether they were in retirement or not; yet by law representations from localities to higher authorities had to be channelled through the district and prefectural administrations before being considered by the higher authorities. In practice the influence that local scholar officials wielded with members of the provincial and central bureaucracy made it difficult for any local official posted in the Chia-hsing district to take a stand completely opposed to them.

It went against accepted precedent as well as common sense for a local official, particularly a magistrate, to deliberately set about policies which would bring the whole weight of the local elite against him. Nevertheless it sometimes happened. For instance, in 1553 a magistrate of Hsiu-shui district with an uncompromising approach to his job tried to protect the weak by suppressing or reducing debts they owed to the relations and servants of powerful officials in the district. This man had already been demoted from a censorial post in Kiangsi because his adamant high principles had earnt him the antipathy of important people there. He lasted a very short time indeed in Hsiu-shui district.  

If local officials could not use their rank to assert authority in their districts, the interests of the central government as against local interests, would seem to have been poorly served. In fact, the magistrate's main chance of carrying out his job properly was through the co-operation of the same local elites who also posed the most powerful threat to his authority.

The ability of a magistrate to obtain co-operation from the local elite was likely to be a test of his social talents and cultural abilities. As a poet or scholar, or simply as a good companion with the right tastes, he could join in the pastimes of the leisured classes of the prefecture. He could learn from the libraries of scholars which were plentiful in the area, or from the lips of experienced officials

51 *Hsiu-shui hsien chih* 1596:4.4a-b, biography of Ch’en Sung.
now residing at home, or he could neglect his duties for fashionable pleasures and still enjoy a good reputation. Ambitious men given a posting to the Chia-hsing area could congratulate themselves on the opportunity of making contacts with people there who could help them in their later careers, and also for the opportunity of taking part in a cultural milieu of a high level of sophistication.

The power of the local bureaucratic elite to block the purposes of local officials was tempered by other factors. More than any other group in the district, the bureaucratic elite shared the universalistic set of perceptions by which officials looked at the administrative problems of the empire. Having experienced the demands of official life they were not only better equipped to make representations in a manner calculated to achieve success, and to understand in advance what the thinking of the civil service might be. They were also to some degree committed to the goals of the state and could act as a counterweight to powerful local influence if it ran against the interests of the central government.

In addition to the formal provisions for their participation in the local administrative process, local elites could influence administrative action in a variety of ways. First, for example, members of the bureaucratic elite with connections at court could exploit political manoeuvring there to influence affairs in their own region. The higher the level of office in the provinces, the more likely it was that court issues would spill over to affect officials, holding positions outside of the capital. Governors and supreme commanders, as the most powerful regional officials, were the most vulnerable in this respect. Under the Chia-ching emperor, the manoeuvres of the Chief Grand Secretaries and opposing groups made court politics lively and often dangerous. Many senior official lost their lives. During the middle decades of the sixteenth century, the court was dominated by three Grand Secretaries: Hsia Yen from 1537 to 1542, Yen Sung from 1542 to 1562, and Hsü Chieh from 1562 into the Lung-ch'ing reign. The power of

these men was at no time absolute, and there is evidence to show that
even at the height of his influence, Yen Sung did not find it easy to
arrange appointments and establish policies as he would have liked. At
any time, however, court issues could extend through the complicated
interconnections of officials to affect the careers of men serving in
quite minor posts.

A second element in the lubrication of the formal structure was the
frequency of connections between officials and the areas they served in.
A tabulation of local and provincial officials who held positions of
importance to Chia-hsing prefecture between 1550 and 1560 bears out the
findings of other studies that, in general, officials of adjacent
provinces are significantly more highly represented among local
officials than are those of other provinces.Officials from Nanchihli,
Kiangsi and Fukien account for almost half of the total sample.

Since these three provinces and Chekiang together produced a high
proportion of the metropolitan degree holders in the empire, one could
expect them to be well-represented among the officials of any province.
For that reason the numbers of men from adjacent provinces in themselves
do not mean much. The importance of the phenomenon lay rather in its
being reciprocal: Chekiang men and therefore Chia-hsing men also were
posted in greatest numbers to adjacent provinces. Through this inter-
change of personnel between adjacent areas, Chia-hsing scholar-officials
developed broad-ranging contacts with important men throughout the

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54 The sample of fifty-three officials is made up of:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nos. of Officials</th>
<th>Nos. from Adjacent Province</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High regional officials</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circuit level officials</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefectural officials</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District magistrates</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>53</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

55 For instance in the middle years of the 1550s three magistrates and
one sub-prefect of Chia-hsing prefecture as well as the Supreme
Commander of the province all came from Fukien. These five men had
no prior connections with each other. All passed their exams at
different times, only two came from the same district; their
personal fortunes had no common thread.
region. The phenomenon is particularly evident in the case of Nanchihli, which held within its territory the southern capital, the wealthy cities of Soochow and Sung-chiang, the great commercial centre of Yang-chou, the transport routes of the lower Yangtze and the Grand Canal, and the prefecture of Hui-chou, native place of so many powerful merchants operating in the cities of the lower Yangtze area. Since Chia-hsing prefecture abutted on the border of Nanchihli, the limit which prevented officials from taking a post closer than 100 li to their own districts effectively prevented the representation in Chia-hsing, or in the circuits which included Chia-hsing, of many officials from the immediately adjacent prefectures of Su-chou and Sung-chiang. The numbers of Nanchihli officials who held posts in Chia-hsing is therefore all the more striking.56

A third and important expression of the informal systems supplementing the regular bureaucracy was that of the mu-fu, the privately engaged advisors of officials. How far this institution, so important in the later Ch'ing dynasty, extended under the Ming to the staffs of relatively minor officials, or how the composition and function of mu-fu compared with its later manifestations, are still unresolved questions.57 For the purposes of this thesis the important question concerns the nature of the mu-fu of high regional officials. Under them the institution retained some of its original flavour, in that the term could refer simply to their headquarters as the senior official in charge of military affairs in the region. However, when personal advisors formed part of the mu-fu of a high provincial official, and when that official had strong prior links with the region he governed, the mu-fu provided another, and potentially powerful, channel between central and local interests.

56 The high level of representation of officials from adjacent provinces is not an adverse reflection on the effectiveness of the rule of avoidance. On the contrary, the remaining half of the officials tabulated in the small sample discussed above came from all parts of the empire, and within each post, successive incumbents came from widely distant regions.

This chapter has shown how Chia-hsing, as part of an area of particular importance to the central Ming government, remained within its control through a bureaucratic system which provided a close and multi-layered administrative surveillance of delta life, supported by the involvement of the local bureaucratic elite in the imperial system. The nature of that involvement was not fixed, and not necessarily to the ultimate benefit of central government. For instance the existence of strong informal links between scholar-officials of key areas in the south-east created the opportunity for the interests of that region to be promoted. If these interests happened to run counter to established central government policy, there was little that the usual tripartite form of provincial government in Fukien and Chekiang could do to prevent it. Under the Ming government of the sixteenth century then, these south-eastern provinces enjoyed considerable leeway for the emergence of regional interests not necessarily endorsed by central government views.
CHAPTER TWO

PIRACY AND CHIA-HSING BEFORE 1553

For four years from 1553 to 1556, northern Chekiang suffered repeatedly from pirate invasions. Confined in the first year to sea-borne raids on coastal settlements, by early 1554 the pirates had set up semi-permanent camps on the east coast of Sung-chiang and Chia-hsing prefectures from which they made raids on inland cities and towns. Until 1555 military resistance was ineffective, and the pirates continued to penetrate deeper and to grow in numbers. In that year pirate gangs were active in the vicinity of the great cities of Hangchow, Soochow and Nanking, and their raids on the north bank of the Yangtze forced the temporary discontinuation of grain transport along the Grand Canal. The pirate attacks reached a climax in 1556 when forces many thousands strong made a co-ordinated invasion of the region between the Yangtze River and Hangchow Bay.

The response to the pirate invasions from all levels of government, including local administration, is reflected in the gazetteers of the period. After 1553 they show an interest in military affairs which had been almost entirely absent in the first half of the century. The Chia-hsing prefectural gazetteer of 1549 contains only the most casual and passing references to military affairs; not one chapter, nor section within a chapter, is specially devoted to military administration. The major interest of its compilers was the land equalization tax reform, with which the head compiler, the prefect Chao Ying, was closely connected.¹ Yet six years later, the honorary editor-in-chief of the

¹ Chia-hsing fu t'u chi 1549. Prefaces by Chao Ying and Chao Wen-hua. The two men were doctoral graduates of the same year. On Chao Ying's connection with taxation reform in Chia-hsing prefecture, see Mori Masao, "Jüroku seiki Taiko shuhen chitai ni okeru kanden seido no
gazetteer, Chao Wen-hua, was touring the prefecture as Inspector of Armies in the south-east, discussing with provincial and local officials the deployment of troops and the building of fortifications. The impact of the 1550s was reflected in the provincial gazetteer published in 1561 by the inclusion of four chapters on military administration and an emphasis on defence in other sections of the work.3

The escalation of piracy in the lower Yangtze region cast doubt on the ability of the Ming government to continue effective control of the region. The pirate invasions were like a sharp spear driven into the fat belly of the empire, making a deep and painful wound, with much blood. The invasions showed the central government that it was seriously lacking in military strength in the south-east, and that in response the civil bureaucracy could be slow and ineffectual. But the wound was not fatal: the pirates were driven from the mainland of the delta in 1556 and from the surrounding seas in the following years. In the long-run the invasions demonstrated that within the mesh of social and governmental institutions that made up the Ming system of government was a degree of strength and flexibility capable of compensating for its weaknesses.

The Rise of Piracy

The pirate invasions of northern Chekiang were part of a wider unrest which had broken out along the south-eastern sea-board. The troubles in the south-east coincided with severe instability on the northern borders which in 1550 had brought the army of Altan Khan within bowshot of Peking. The northern borders claimed the court's attention before pirate raids reached crisis level in the south-east and continued to hold higher priority because of their proximity to the capital and because the hard lessons of centuries had taught that the greatest danger to a Chinese dynasty lay on its inner Asian frontiers.

kaikaku" (Changes in the domain lands system in the Lake T'ai area in the sixteenth century), Töyöshi kenkyū 21:445-7 (1963).

2 DMB:132-6, biography of Chao Wen-hua.

3 Che-ohiang t'ung-ohih 1561.
These emergencies on China's northern and south-eastern peripheries had evolved in intimate relationship with the policies and practices of the Ming government. In the south-east, weaknesses in the institutions and policies by which the central government sought to administer the advanced sectors of that region were essential elements in the emergence of the pirate phenomenon.

Piracy was endemic along the coast of China, fluctuating in range and intensity depending on the capability of the central government to police the coastline but never entirely eradicated. Piracy was a corollary of a sea-connected economy and of officially regulated trade, and the pirate invasions of the 1550s were linked with the development of a large-scale, illegal overseas trade.

From the first reign of the dynasty, trade with foreign merchants was restricted by law to official trade conducted through designated ports in conjunction with the tribute system of government-to-government relations. At the same time private sea-going travel and trade were banned under provisions of the military law of the Ming code. The maritime interdict (hai-chin) as these bans were collectively called remained law throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Introduced for reasons of foreign policy and military security, rather than of economic regulation, the system of official trade did not satisfy the demands of foreign merchants for Chinese goods nor of Chinese who wished to trade with them. Moreover from the time of the removal of the capital to the north, the central government lost much of its interest in relations with its overseas neighbours and therefore in the operation of the trade. From the mid-fifteenth century onward, the opportunities offered by the official system for trade with Japan, for instance, were progressively narrowed.

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4 For a history of the port offices (shih-po-ssu), see Wada Sei, Minshi shokkashi yakuohit (Annotated Translation of the Treatise on Economic Matters of the Ming History), Tokyo 1957, pp.890-908.

5 For a history of the overseas trade and the maritime interdict in Ming, see Bodo Wiethoff, Die Chinesische Seeverbotspolitik und der private Überseehandel von 1368 bis 1567 (The Chinese maritime interdict policy and private overseas trade 1368-1567), Hamburg 1963.

6 Wiethoff, Seeverbotspolitik, pp.46,50.
During the last half of the fifteenth century the maritime interdict was gradually allowed to lapse and by about 1500 was virtually a dead letter.\(^8\) This and other manifestations of the court's declining interest in coastal affairs led to a corresponding loosening of control over the south-eastern provinces. Certain regional interests began to emerge and dominate long-term development on the coast. In this way the intentions of the central government's maritime interdict gradually gave way to regionally-based private trade.\(^9\)

At all times throughout the dynasty large numbers of people on the south-eastern sea-board were looking for increased opportunities to trade. The people of the coastal prefectures of Fukien were heavily dependent on coastal trade for staple foods and for selling their market-oriented agricultural produce. The neighbouring provinces of Chekiang and Kwangtung were their major trading destinations. Large numbers of Fukien people traditionally had looked to "fields in the sea" for their livelihood, and as they prospered, so their numbers continued to grow. With no official system to accommodate the trade, and with geographical conditions favouring sea transport (as much as twenty times cheaper than overland transport), coastal trade flourished and within it, the Fukien people were the most active.\(^10\)

The overseas trade was inextricably linked with the coastal trade. The demand for Chinese goods among foreign merchants steadily increased, and with it the profits which Chinese merchants could make. Foreign traders from Japan, South East Asia and later Portugal were prepared to

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\(^7\) Wang I-t'ung, *Official Relations between the Ming and Japan 1368-1549*, Harvard-Yenching Institute Studies IX, 1953, pp.110-1. Wang's thesis is that a major reason for the decline of Chinese interest in the official trade was that it had become a financial and administrative burden. However it seems to me that the reason that these burdens were judged sufficiently heavy to affect the operation of the trade was a lack of interest and knowledge of the general conditions in the south-east of which official trade was only one aspect.

\(^8\) Wiethoff, *Seeverbotspolitik*, p.50.


risk occasional skirmishes with coastal patrols and, more commonly, local pirates to make contact with Chinese merchants. The profits to be made from trading directly in foreign ports, rather than with the foreign middle-men who came close to the China coast, were even greater. By the second and third decades of the sixteenth century, Chinese merchants were trading abroad with fleets of ocean-going ships.

By the early 1500s the power of the central government to enforce its coastal policies in the south-east had long been deteriorating. In the first fifty years of the dynasty the fleets of the coastal defence forces had been capable of intercepting and destroying pirate ships at sea, and of patrolling the sea-lanes. But from the end of the Yung-lo period, with the shift of the capital to the north, the forward defence stance of the coastal forces were dismantled. By the mid-fifteenth century the off-shore patrols had ceased and the early warning stations had been removed to the mainland. The common malaise of military institutions subjected to a prolonged period of peace began to eat away at the coastal defence forces: the rate of recruitment fell below the rate of wastage through death, desertion and relocation; training and equipment deteriorated. The coastal garrisons became so depleted that few were able to mount regular patrols of the immediate coastline.

At a time when the government shipyards were neglected and no longer produced sea-going ships, the overseas traders were building

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11 For example, "Memorandum of the merchandise which the Great Ships of the Portuguese usually take from China to Japan" (c.1600), in C.R. Boxer, The Great Ship from Amaon: annals of Macao and the old Japan trade, 1555-1640, Lisbon, 1963, p.179. The memorandum indicates the profits made by the Portuguese on goods bought in Macao and sold in Japan and India. Although it applies to a slightly later period, the memorandum indicates the extent of the incentive to Chinese merchants to carry out their own overseas trading.


14 Lo, "Early Ming navy"; 161-2.
the biggest and best Chinese ships afloat. While the coastal garrisons had vessels suitable only for coastal waters and inland transport and were unable to sail much beyond the sight of land, overseas traders were making regular trips to Japan, the Ryukyus and South East Asia.

The problems which developed under the unenforced bans were precisely those which the bans had been intended to prevent. Since the overseas traders were operating almost without restriction under the unenforced bans, there was little to stop them engaging in activities unpalatable to the Ming government: unregulated intercourse with foreigners, trade in prohibited items, and the acquisition of formidable weaponry. Operating outside the regulatory controls of the bureaucracy, the overseas trading sector was not only illegal but armed and often highly organized. Its existence constituted a latent challenge to the authority of the central government.

The main threat posed by this new unregulated sector was its intimate connection with the economic and political life of the advanced regions of the empire. The overseas component was tied to the regular structure of internal trade through shore-based agents and the coastal inter-provincial trade. Through these channels wealthy merchants of the delta region invested or otherwise participated in the overseas trade.

Through their close relations with scholar gentry of the south-east coast, the overseas traders had access to the vertical structure of political power which connected localities to the court. Gentry families lent capital and used their influence to persuade local and provincial officials to collude in the trade. The coastal prefectures of southern Fukien and the Ningpo-Shaoxing region of Chekiang, which were the centres of overseas trade, also produced large numbers of entrants to the bureaucracy. Through their many connections at court they could attempt to prevent resurgence of interest by the central government in regulating coastal activities.

But the interdict had not been abolished, it had merely lapsed, and

lay in the Ming code with the prestige of the first reign of the dynasty upon it, the natural tool of anyone attempting to regulate coastal affairs in the south-east. In the late Cheng-te period there were pressures and provocations from the Japanese and Portuguese wanting official trade; and in the early 1520s signs of disorder appeared in the south-east coastal towns, side products of the attenuated official trade and the vigorous illegal trade. From the beginning of the Chia-ching period the interdict was revived in various ways, and the overseas trade was no longer able to function so freely.

Enforcement of the interdict after a lapse of half a century exacerbated instability within the now rapidly expanding overseas trade: divergence of interests developed within the structure of overseas trade which had serious long-term implications. By the middle of the century the evolution of illegal traders into pirates, and of pirates into invaders, was nearing its final stages.

Because so many maritime activities were illegal under the interdict, officials tended not to distinguish between them. In the first half of the sixteenth century, all people involved in private sea-going activity were classed by the authorities into one of two categories: either pirates (hai-tsei or hai-k'ou) or dishonest traders (chien-shang). Although illegal traders were breaking the military law, and therefore were strictly traitors (mou-p' an), they were still seen functionally as traders. Pirates on the other hand were regarded as criminals and outcasts.

Officials seldom applied the distinction consistently, and after the early 1520s when conditions on the coast grew more confused, the terms were often used interchangeably. The terms were bound to


17 See for instance the excerpts from the Ming Veritable Records: STSL 3/4/8 (10 May 1524); 4/8/17 (4 September 1525), translated in Kwan-wai So, Piracy, pp.44-5.

18 For examples of these measures, see Kwan-wai So, Piracy, pp.44-5; Wiethoff, Seeverbotspolitik, pp.71-2.
administrative concepts rather than to the social realities of the overseas trade. The failure of the language of administrators to describe accurately contemporary social and economic phenomena was a sign of either inadequate understanding or deliberate obfuscation.

The evolution of traders into pirates grew out of a contradiction between, on the one hand, coastal gentry and substantial merchants of the internal markets, and, on the other, those of the overseas traders who were independent of them. The independent traders began as men of moderate means who pooled their resources to enter the overseas trade, thus avoiding dependence upon the financial backing of gentry and established merchants. Although the leaders of the independent group became enormously wealthy, they retained their independence from the traditional alliances of China's economically dominant groups. Their position in the overseas trade led them eventually to views on the interdict and towards the Ming government which differed markedly from those of shore-based gentry and merchants. Their acquisition of economic power and military strength lent force to the independence of their position.

19 For instance, STSL 13/8/19 (26 September 1534): the reports of imperial investigators sent to look into local handling of the smuggling used the terms chien-min and chien-shang to describe those people violating the interdict (mao chin) by going out to sea and trading in contraband goods (chin wu). The emperor's reply employs the term hai-tsei instead to denote the same people. Kwan-wai So, op. cit., pp.46-7, has an English translation of the passage, and Katayama, "Kasei kalkō":407-8, 429, fn. 10, has a Japanese translation and interpretation.

20 Wiethoff, Seeverbotspolitik, pp.210 ff., has a model of the functional structure of the overseas trade, which indicates some of the terms necessary to describe it with accuracy.

21 The dangers of using oversimplified and misleading terms like "rebels", "bandits" and "Wo" (Japanese) when dealing with the phenomenon of the pirate invasions was pointed out by contemporary official and scholar Hsüeh Ying-ch'i in an essay entitled "The Rectification of Names". Part of it is translated in Kwan-wai So, Piracy, p.31. The original essay is included in Hsüeh's collected works, Fang-shan Hsüeh hsien-sheng ch'uan-chi, Chia-ching edition, Library of Congress Microfilm Edition.

22 Katayama, "Kasei kalkō":405, "... the development of a middle and lower merchant class who combined their trading resources and began going out in ships loaded with contraband goods is of particular historical significance." While Katayama's analysis still presents
At various times between 1521 and 1547 the central government put pressure on provincial officials to re-enforce the ban, and coastal authorities made sporadic attacks on the fleets and headquarters of overseas traders. The coastal gentry used their influence to protect that part of the trade which most served their interests. Consequently when enforcement activities were carried out, the target tended to be the independent traders who had less control over the political environment onshore.\(^{23}\) The maintenance of their independence in such a climate depended increasingly on their military capability to withstand the attacks of coastal defence forces.

The military strength of independent traders was a direct consequence of the conditions under which they operated. As overseas trade grew in volume, the temptations for piracy in coastal waters increased. The overseas traders had to protect themselves against both local pirates and the deadly foreign pirates likely to be encountered in South East Asian waters. For this reason they needed trading ships which were both well-defended and capable of ocean travel. Moreover, there was increasingly less distinction between the rank and file of pirates and the crews of overseas traders. The traders had been forced by the revival of the interdict to operate from off-shore islands or secluded anchorages at some distance from administrative centres where they competed with pirate groups for facilities and followers. In trying to gain some measure of control over their trading environment, the overseas traders often needed to wipe out locally-based pirate groups, or to absorb them into the ranks of smugglers and traders.\(^{24}\) In some difficulties when it comes to explaining the size of the following of the 1550s pirate invasions, it is the most useful one so far for gaining an understanding of how the developments along the coast between 1519 and 1552 could tip over into widespread disturbance. His arguments for the "small and middle merchant" origins of Wang Chih's group is contained in the above article, pp.403-5.

\(^{23}\) Katayama, "Kasei kaiko":410; Kwan-wai So, Piracy, pp.46-7: STSL 13/8/19 (26 September 1534) indicates that in 1534 overseas traders with their own fleets were pursued and attacked by government forces; of those arrested some died of torture in prison.

\(^{24}\) The relationship between individual pirates and the overseas traders is suggested by Wan Piao in Wan-lu-t’ing kao:4.31a-32a. See Kwan-wai So, Piracy, pp.31-2.
this way independent overseas traders came to command large numbers of ships and men.

The process by which traders were transformed into pirate invaders is exemplified in the career of Wang Chih and his group. A failed salt merchant from Hui-chou prefecture, Wang joined with other enterprising men of moderate means in a joint capital venture in overseas trade, at the time when there were already many illegal traders along the south-east coast. They were not wealthy enough to employ men and ships as shore-based gentry and wealthy merchants could. Instead they threw in their lot with an existing group of independent traders, and with them were able to lead their own crews and build up their business until they had fleets of ocean-going ships trading in South East Asia. Wang Chih and his colleagues became the most wealthy and powerful of the independent overseas traders during the 1540s. They had contacts at many points along the coast; their headquarters were at Shuang-hsü (Double Island Anchorage), off Ningpo, and they operated mainly along the coast of Chekiang.

Although they were independent of the capital of the land-based merchants and gentry, Wang Chih and his group still needed contacts on the mainland. They needed boats built and avenues for the investment of their profits. They needed agents to keep coastal officials from harassing them. The more the laws were enforced, the greater the need for such agents.

Some of their agents among the coastal gentry took advantage of the vulnerability of the independent traders to squeeze them for profits.

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25 A comprehensive treatment of Wang Chih's career and the nature of his involvement in the secret overseas trade are outlined in Katayama, "Kasei kaikō".


27 Katayama, "Kasei kaikō":407, 429, fn. 11, quotes an entry in STSL 8/2/12 (21 March 1529). Officers of a Guard in Wen-chou prefecture, on the south coast of Chekiang province, were found by investigating officials to have been receiving goods from merchant brokers (ya-hang), and allowing ships to go out to sea, become pirates (tao), trade in foreign goods, and plunder the area. The passage seems to support Katayama's interpretation that the ya-hang were agents of the overseas traders.
through such practices as "cunningly amassing goods without paying for them". If agents went into debt to them, traders found it difficult to collect their dues. Enmity built up between the traders and the powerful shore-based gentry who used such tactics.

During the 1530s and 1540s, reports repeatedly came from the south-east about the spread of smuggling and piracy, and the consequent deterioration of public order in coastal towns. By 1547 the Fukien

28 Cha-p'u ohh 1757:6.1a-b.
29 Kwan-wai So, Piracy, p.25, translation of STSL 28/7/5 (28 July 1549), and p.49, translation from Chu Che (1486-1552) of P'u-t'ien in Fukien, describing local events of 1544. Although Dr So does not quote the extract for this purpose, it strongly suggests such a situation of antagonism:

At sea there were notorious criminals ... and others who served as their guides to plunder the prominent families and kidnap people for ransom. ... Among the pirates there was a Lin Hsi-te, a native of Kang-tung or eastern harbour, who had been captured by the rebels and had been given the job of executioner. That man was familiar with the whereabouts of the prominent families in the area. Those families became scared and suspicious and moved into the city. They drove up the price of living quarters several-fold and all were taken up. ... When the pirates were transferred from Chang-chou to confront the victimized families, they were found to have known them well ...

Chu Che, T'ien-ma-shan-fang i-k'ao 1569:4.13a-b.

30 Kwan-wai So, Piracy, pp.46 ff. The confession of a man arrested under Chu Wan's regime illustrates graphically the melting pot of foreigners and people from many parts of the China coast, the blurring at the edges of smuggling, trading and piracy, and the lack of clear distinction between Chinese and Japanese trade, that existed on the south-east coast in the late 1540s. In 1546 the man had boarded a ship at Double Island Anchorage belonging to a merchant of Hui-chou. When the ship was wrecked off the coast of Japan, a Japanese vessel had been hired, and in the spring they had sailed back to China. This vessel had contained twenty Japanese and fifty Chinese, who were natives of Canton (Kwangtung), Chang-chou (Fukien), Ningpo and Shao-hsing (Chekiang) and Hui-chou (Nanchihli, the native place of many merchants and adventurers). The vessel had carried arms, including four Portuguese cannon, firearms and explosives as well as conventional weapons. Back on the China coast, they began with two acts of piracy, the seizing of two vessels, but then one of the men had gone ashore to buy quantities of rice and wine. Of the man's companions, one carried a sum given him by a fellow townsman of Shao-hsing, presumably to invest in goods for trade. Another was the retainer of a Guard Commander of Shao-hsing, perhaps there to further his master's fortunes. So, pp.57-8 contains a translation of this section. Chu Wan, P'i-yü tsa-ohi:
and Chekiang men at court whose interests were served by the maintenance of a partially enforced interdict, finally failed to delay decisive government action any longer. In that year the court took steps to enforce the law and close the coast, to increase the strictness of the law's provisions, and to appoint an official with the necessary authority to put these measures into practice.

The return to strict enforcement was advocated by those officials who saw the interdict primarily in the light of its original military intentions, rather than its social and economic consequences. For these officials, the troubles in the south-east, which had arisen when the interdict lapsed, vindicated the strict policies of the early Ming. After Chu Wan's death a few officials from the south-east who understood the socio-economic basis of the troubles advocated the repeal of the interdict, and thus the legalization of trade. However, the weight of opinion and the prestige of the laws of the dynastic founder were against them, and their views did not gain a hearing until well after the pirate crisis was over.

The official appointed by the court to carry out the new policy of strict enforcement of the interdict was Chu Wan. In 1547 he was appointed governor of Chekiang (hsün-fu) in charge of military affairs (t'i-tu chün-wu) with special responsibility for the security of the coastal prefectures of Fukien, and with the charge of identifying and suppressing the main centres of overseas trade along the Chekiang and Fukien coasts. A high-principled, literal-minded man, Chu undertook energetic enforcement of the law which pushed the contradictions within the overseas trade into open conflict. He organized a series of raids on the off-shore bases of the traders, and succeeded in driving them out of the islands opposite Ningpo. In so doing, he increased the

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2.58-59b.

However in yet another extract cited by So, pp.49-50, part of a letter by Chu Che of P'u-t'ien in Fukien written in the 1540s, it is clear that, however much interconnection was occurring, distinctions between coastal traders, overseas traders and pirates could still be perceived by those well-informed of coastal life. Chu Che, T'ien-ma-shan-fang i-k'ao 1569:5.8a-b.

31 Wiethoff, Seeverbotspolitik, p.103.
difficulty of communication between independent traders and their agents ashore whose relations were already strained. He antagonized the leaders of a formidable force of men and ships at a time when the coastal garrison system was too weak to resist organized attack along the sea-board. Chu Wan also alienated the Fukien gentry, who sabotaged his work and obtained his dismissal. But it was too late to retrieve the situation. Chu played the part of a powerful catalyst thrown among elements which already were sufficiently explosive.32

With the sudden stepping up of enforcement activities under Chu Wan, Wang Chih's party was cut off from its usual sources of supply on the mainland, and the pressures on the traders mounted. The inconvenience of their dependence on shore-based merchants became acute. Wang made efforts to have the ban repealed by co-operating with coastal officials in wiping out pirate groups, but these officials were unable to make good their promises.33 The traders were now placed in an unequivocally antagonistic position in relation to the coastal authorities. The distinction between illegal traders and pirates, already blurred, all but disappeared in the polarization forced on the traders by the new severe regime.

By undermining the economic base of the overseas traders, the Ming government made the normal activities of the traders impossible. In sabotaging their operations without destroying them or absorbing them back into the fold, the government assisted in the creation of sea-borne invasions against its own shores.

Wang Chih's group began to make swift raids on coastal settlements to obtain provisions and goods for trade. They took the opportunity to make reprisals against their agents for the business dishonesty and political betrayal which they felt they had suffered.34

32 DMB:372-5, biography of Chu Wan; Katayama, "Mindai kaijō".
33 Katayama, "Kasei kaikō":413-4. Katayama cites three passages from different works to support the view that Wang Chih sought legal channels for trade in 1550 and 1551, the period after Chu Wan's fall. These seem convincing and important evidence to support his general thesis. See his fns. 21, 22 and 23.
34 An instance of Wang Chih's group making a retaliatory attack on the Hsieh family of Yü-yao (Shao-hsing prefecture, Chekiang) was
In 1551 even fishing boats, which had been explicitly excluded from the original ban, were forbidden to go out to sea, because it was known they were used to make contact with overseas traders and foreign merchants. By this additional prohibition, virtually no-one engaged in any sea-oriented activity was free from the threat of official action. From 1552 onwards, after their attempts to have trade channels opened had failed, Wang and his colleagues turned their large following to an alternative course of action, and began systematically raiding the south-eastern coast of China.

The Pirates and Chia-hsing

The role of Chia-hsing in the rise of piracy was succinctly expressed in the introduction to an eighteenth century account of the pirate troubles at Cha-p'u, the walled port town of P'ing-hu district:

At the beginning of the Ming (the port office at Kan-p'u) was abolished and never re-established. The important men of the business community went away, and the population of the two towns (Kan-p'u and Cha-p'u) was desolated. But there were secret meetings at sea, for it was not possible to prevent completely the coming and going of foreign ships. One after the other they anchored close to the shore and met privately with the substantial people of the inland markets. These wealthy men of the interior cunningly amassed goods (received from the overseas traders) without paying for them, so that the illegal traders hated them, and joined forces with bandits and induced them to invade both northern and southern Chekiang, causing great trouble.

For the author of this statement, writing two hundred years after the

recorded in STSL 28/7/5 (28 July 1549). Quoted in Katayama, "Kasei kaikō":412, fn. 18. The entry notes that the magistrate of Yū-yao district in reporting this incident said that "Wo bandits came and plundered" (Wo-tei ju k'ou), while the body of the report describes Wang Chih and his colleagues as dishonest merchants (chien-shang).

Wiethoff, Seeverbotspolitik, pp.104-5.

See Katayama, "Kasei kaikō":416.

event, the link between the Hang-chou Bay ports, the overseas trade, and the development of piracy seemed clear. In contemporary accounts, however, such links are not immediately apparent.

In fact, contemporary local accounts of the first clashes in 1553 with the pirates on the Chia-hsing coast convey a sense of shock and surprise. The authors do not make explicit any prior connection between the area they lived in and the phenomenon they were experiencing. The impressions given by these accounts is reinforced by the local gazetteers of the period which suggest an abrupt change in administrative pre-occupations as officials responded to the crisis.

These suggestions, that the pirate attacks were somehow alien, unrelated to normal life and conditions, may be partly explained by the fact that the delta region was somewhat distant from those parts of the coast where in the late 1540s and early 1550s the final transformation of the overseas traders into pirates had taken place. By the time piracy erupted along the coast of Chia-hsing in 1553, the lines of conflict had already been sharply drawn: the pirates had become an invading force, directly hostile to the Ming government, attacking district offices when they could and clashing with government troops. Nevertheless the major premises of the passage quoted above — that the pirates were the culmination of an evolution beginning in the early years of the dynasty; that the invasions stemmed from the nature of the relationship between the overseas traders and those who were powerful in internal trade; and that Chia-hsing society and economy were involved in the evolution of that relationship — are borne out by circumstantial evidence of economic and social development in Chia-hsing prefecture in the decades before 1553.

In later gazetteers, the pirate invasions continued to stand out as the watershed in the sixteenth century history of the prefecture. However, succeeding generations of local historians were able to suggest the connection of the phenomenon with developments within the prefecture in the first half of the century. In the late nineteenth century, the compilers of Chia-hsing gazetteers were still adding materials from the Cheng-te and early Chia-ching reigns; these threw light on social and economic conditions and provided a background against which the pirate
invasions into Chia-hsing looked less exotic. The society reflected in the 1549 gazetteer was peaceful and prosperous despite admitted inequities in the tax system and a certain unease about the lack of military preparedness in the face of growing signs of disorder. Yet from the 1879 gazetteer, Chia-hsing prefecture in the mid-Ming period emerges as a considerably more complex and less harmonious society.

Contributing to disharmony were groups within local society over whom the authorities had little control, and whose interests and loyalties lent themselves to smuggling and other illegal occupations. These groups formed power structures outside official oversight. Their patterns of life and values were unlike those of the agricultural village communities whom the regime regarded as the basis of the empire. The major groups of this kind were the people of the coastal fringe (particularly the salt workers), the boat people of the inland waterways, and the trading communities of market towns and city suburbs. Common to most of these groups was involvement in trade, transport and communications, as opposed to agriculture or manufacture.

The sea-side and sea-going population of Chia-hsing and Sung-chiang prefectures were renowned for their hardy and independent characters and their economic vulnerability. Many of them were involved in salt smuggling and some in local piracy. Administrators were aware that if the livelihood of these people were threatened, civil disorder could be expected to follow. The most readily identifiable group among them were the salt workers. Under the Ming there were thirty-four salt-pans in the Liang-Che salt area, which covered the whole of Chekiang and that part of Nanchihli south of the Yangtze. Seven of these pans lay within the jurisdiction of the Chia-hsing salt office. They were scattered along the coast from Chin-shan Guard just inside the Nanchihli border to close to Hangchow itself, with the greatest concentration in the vicinity of Hai-yen. At the beginning of the dynasty, several

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38 See fn. 1.
39 For example, Li Kuang-ming, Chia-ching yü-Wo Chiang-Che chu-k'o-chün k'ao (An investigation of the local and extra-provincial troops in Chiang-Che in the anti-pirate campaign of the Chia-ching period), p.24; p.139, quoting the Ming shih kao; and p.139, quoting the Huang-Ming shih-fa lu.
thousand families registered as salt households (*tsao-hu*) had lived in the Chia-hsing area. A few, like the Kuo family of P'ing-hu, had since made money and entered the scholar-official class through the salt trade; the great majority were low status and poor.

In the early sixteenth century, when a gazetteer of the inland district of Chia-shan was compiled, so little was internal security on the minds of the editors that not a single reference appears on the subject or any related topic. In the section on population registers, however, an estimated "several thousand families" of boat people (*ch'uan-hu*) are mentioned for that district alone. These boat people were not included in the *li-chia* organization of population for tax purposes. Attempts to register them and to tax them had been generally unsuccessful. In other words, the local authorities had no way of controlling where they went, what goods they carried or whom they dealt with. Although there is no direct evidence that the boat people were a regular source of trouble, there is little doubt that besides their legitimate petty trading activities, they were involved in smuggling and other potentially subversive activities.

Sources of potential disruption were also found in the market towns. In the sixteenth century as many as thirty towns within Chia-hsing prefecture had been officially designated as population centres of strategic or economic importance (*chen*). Several of these towns in the wealthy silk-producing area close to the Grand Canal had populations of forty or fifty thousand people. Besides wealthy merchants, many scholar-gentry families lived in these towns, with the basis of their wealth lying in silk production and trade rather than in land-owning. With their large populations, wealth, and influential scholar-gentry,

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41 DMB:773, biography of Kuo T'ing-hsün.

42 *Chia-shan hsien chih* 1517:1.14b.

such market towns rivalled the district administrative seats as centres of economic, social and cultural life.

A dense network of trading channels joined the market towns both with distant regions and with their own hinterlands. Through these channels smuggling flourished side by side with legal trade. Salt smuggling operated from the coastal salt pans to the Grand Canal ports and into the maze of communication routes that converged on Lake T'ai. In the decades up to the 1550s, people and goods had been able to move freely between the coast and the inland markets. A system of barriers at important waterway junctions had been set up early in the sixteenth century in an attempt to control the movement of people and goods through the prefecture but these had fallen into disuse, and salt smugglers used the unimpeded waterways by night. Nor was any attempt made to impede unofficial traffic across the provincial border.

In 1536, in a formal piece commemorating the name of the prefecture, Cheng Hsiao described Chia-hsing society in the language of a sedate pastorale. Yet as he wrote, unmistakeable signs were appearing of restless and volatile elements in that society, signs of which Cheng Hsiao was well aware. For instance, in the 1530s the break-down of order around the inland town of Wu-chen so alarmed the wealthier residents that they had requested a district administration to be established there. In a memorial in 1538, a local scholar-official made a case for a new district administration and graphically described

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44 *Chia-hsing fu-chih* 1878:27b-28a, "Discussion on setting up barriers".
45 *Chia-shan hsien chih* 1892:13.8a. This proposal for security precautions on Chia-shan district's border with Nanchihli indicates that no such system had existed before the pirate incursions.
46 *Hsiu-shui hsien chih* 1596:9.22a, Cheng Hsiao, "On Chia-hsing Prefecture":

Chia-hsing occupies the area between the lakes and the sea. Its level fields and winding canals give rich yields of rice, its dams produce fish and salt, and there is profit from vegetables and fruit. The gentlemen are highly cultivated and well-bred men. The common people work diligently at ploughing, weaving and silkworm rearing and are able to store away (surplus from their labour), for there is little war and they are not anxious about calamities ...

47 See "Shih Ju requests the establishment of a district administration", *Chia-hsing fu chih* 1878:82.4b-6b.
the unruly life of the town:

The neighbourhood of the great market town of Wu-chen, though off the main routes, is densely populated and very wealthy, with merchants coming from everywhere. In recent years the behaviour of the people has been growing increasingly licentious. Salt smugglers come and go at will, bandits run wild, the streets are full of gamblers, and the alleyways full of prostitutes and actors. Even in broad daylight, murder is committed without compunction. For instance the merchants T'ang Ying and T'ang Hsün, father and son of Wu-ch'eng, Wu Kan and his wife of T'ung-hsiang, Chiang Jen and his brothers of Kuei-an (i.e. all local residents) and unknown merchants of Hui-chou and other places, all were murdered because of trifling resentments, either because on seeing their wealth (their murderers) deliberately brewed mischief, or because they gambled or slept with prostitutes, and had fatal quarrels. There have been at least a hundred of such cases which I myself have seen and heard. Furthermore, in the waterways about that town, there are innumerable cases of salt smugglers resisting arrest, of evil youths robbing, killing or injuring men and defiling women, till people far and near are afraid to sleep.48

Even allowing for some literary exaggeration, this passage reflects a boisterous, unregulated commercial life, over which district administrations had tenuous control, and in which the most unruly sectors of local society were intimately involved. The reference to salt smugglers is further illustration of the links which existed between the salt-producing areas of the coast and the inland towns. There is no reason to expect that the conditions were much worse at Wu-chen than in other market towns in the delta. The mention of the Hui-chou merchants is also noteworthy: many of them lived temporarily or permanently in towns of the delta region. Some of the leaders in the overseas trade, including Wang Chih and some of his chief colleagues, were from Hui-chou, and their common origins served as a further link between the inland towns and the overseas trade.

According to one current view, smuggling "can affect the internal structure of a society by creating new actors, power bases and patterns of consumption."49 In Chapter One, the way in which the Yangtze delta area partook in every major economic development, and specifically in

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the Fukien coastal trade, was outlined. In a similar way the economy of
the delta was connected with the overseas trade. "New actors" and "new
power bases" were found not only in the centres of overseas trade, but
also in the towns of the delta, where silk goods originated and where
wealth was generated for investment in overseas trade.

New patterns of consumption were created as overseas trade brought
foreign goods into the houses of the wealthy. Even the court expected
supplies of foreign goods. In the mid-1550s, when officials were trying
to get support to put down the piracy, the court ordered the procurement
of items which could only have been obtained through the illegal over­
seas trade. Even the court expected supplies of foreign goods. In the mid-1550s, when officials were trying to get support to put down the piracy, the court ordered the procurement of items which could only have been obtained through the illegal overseas trade.50 Far more than the northern capital, the cities of the delta were arenas for conspicuous consumption, and the demand for foreign goods was strong.

An incident occurred at Hai-yen in 1530 which showed that local
people were not used to dealing directly with overseas trading vessels
but were well-acquainted with the profits to be made from foreign goods
and were ready and eager to take the opportunity to trade in them. In
his biography of his father, Cheng Hsiao, Cheng Lü-ch’un recounted that
in autumn a huge seven-masted ocean-going vessel, heavily armed, had
come to the south-eastern corner of the district with foreign goods for
sale. Two Guard Commanders had come and asked for loans of rice in
order to buy some of the goods on which they said they expected an
immediate return of three times their investment.

As an historian, Cheng Hsiao knew about the piracy which had
troubled the early years of the dynasty. He knew too of the current
unruly state of affairs around Ningpo and on the Fukien coast where
overseas trade was common. Convinced of the pernicious influence of the
trade, he tried without success to persuade the magistrate and the
senior military commander to take action against the illegal traders.
Cheng had then written to the Vice-Commissioner for Naval Affairs
telling him of the incident. In this letter he said that because of its
secluded location in northern Chekiang, Hai-yen had not so far suffered
from the influence of dishonest merchants from Ningpo and other places

to the south. When the ship had come, upwards of a thousand local people had been attracted to the spot to take part in the trade and threatened to cause a major disturbance. In taking such a stand against the trade, Cheng was clearly in the unpopular minority. In the same letter he wrote: "Some people have said that it is not necessary to ban the intercourse of the Chinese with the barbarians for the purpose of making a profit." According to his son, the two Guard Commanders, put under official investigation presumably because of Cheng's complaints, came to hate him, and even the scholar-official group in the village thought that he had been too interfering.  

This incident was unusual because entrepreneurs at Hai-yen did not normally deal directly with the carriers of foreign goods. When the opportunity to participate directly in this profitable business occurred, local people and officials seized it with alacrity. Usually the goods were off-loaded into smaller vessels in the islands off Ningpo and then went by various routes to the main inland cities. Whichever route was taken, from the time the goods left the hands of the overseas traders, they were under the control of merchants at Ningpo, Hangchow, Soochow and other major centres. Trade in these goods was not open to small entrepreneurs of such places as Hai-yen.

The involvement of the two Guard Commanders in the Hai-yen incident is not surprising. Military officers in major centres of overseas trade commonly participated in the trade either directly or through their retainers. The magistrate of Hai-yen was not accused of profiting by the trade but his refusal to act amounted to complicity. His response in this one incident suggests the difficulty which local officials faced in resisting local pressures in places where overseas trade was regularly conducted.

Chia-hsing prefecture may not often have been involved directly in the overseas trade in 1530, but by the late 1540s, piracy and general unrest in the south-east had spread to the coast of Chia-hsing and Sung-chiang. With the benefit of hindsight, it is possible to see the

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incidents of the late 1540s as alarm signals for the pirate invasions a few years later. For instance, in 1546 pirates clashed with troops of Hai-ning Guard at Cha-p'u harbour. These pirates were identified as natives of Chang-chou in Fukien and of Ch'ung-ming, the delta island a short distance to the north, at the mouth of the Yangtze. Thus, men of southern Fukien and of the delta coast were already joined in piratical activities which brought them into direct conflict with local authorities.

In the years following 1546 piracy among Ch'ung-ming islanders increased, stimulated in 1547 by a disastrous flood which washed the major saltern of the island into the sea. Eighty to ninety per cent of the salt workers and their families were said to have been killed. Many of the remainder, having lost their usual livelihood, became pirates.

In addition to the spread of piracy in surrounding waters, activities of robbers and gangs on-shore in the coastal districts of Chia-hsing appear to have increased in the decade prior to the pirate invasions. As in Ch'ung-ming, their numbers had probably been increased by a series of natural disasters. In 1539 and 1540, the most severe famine since the Yüan dynasty struck the prefecture. Again in 1543 and 1544 there was famine, which was particularly severe in Hai-yen district. In 1544 conditions there were so bad that "thieves and bandits were openly active." Between 1550 and 1552 the magistrate of Hai-yen ordered towns and villages to set up palisades and drafted able-bodied men to patrol the district because so many bandits were abroad.

The prefectural gazetteer of 1549, the last before the invasions,

52 The earliest reference to this incident is in Chia-hsing fu t'u chi 1549:20.9a. Also see Cheng Hsiao, Chin-yen 1566:4.42a in Yen-i chih lin, chüan 34; and biography of P'eng Yün, Chia-hsing fu chih 1878: 2.27b-28a.

53 Hsü Hong, Ming-tai ti yen-fa, p.7b.

54 Chia-hsing fu t'u-chi 1549:20.8b; Hsü Hsien, Hsi-yüan tsa-chi (late Chia-ching period) in Yen-i chih lin:22.33b-34a; Ch'ien Wei, Ch'eng -chü-i-t'ang k ao (Töyö bunko copy) : 24.11a-13b.

55 Chia-hsing fu t'u chi 1549:20.8b.

56 Chia-hsing fu chih 1878:43.29a-b, biography of Chang Tsai-yang.
contained little to foreshadow their coming besides brief notices in the section on omens and calamities on the recent famines and isolated clashes with pirates. The exception was a short passage expressing unease at the lack of military preparedness on the coast. Referring to the recent incidents of piracy, the writer pointed out Hai-yen's continued strategic importance under the Sung and the Ming; he recalled that it was piracy in the fifteenth century which had justified the establishment of substantial military forces in the town. He put forward the view that if piracy were to continue to spread, first priority for strategic preparation should be given to Hai-yen. Without a strong defence there, he said, none of the prefectures and districts bordering the sea, including Su-chou and Sung-chiang, could rest easy. 

Coastal Defence and Security before 1552

When the rise of banditry on-shore and piracy at sea could no longer be ignored, the initial response of local officials was to look at the forces locally available for resisting pirate raids and to attempt to up-grade methods of preserving internal order. Because military and security institutions had held low importance for so long, they had withered away from neglect. By the 1540s, all were in a decrepit state, quite inadequate to cope with the security emergency.

Aware that the existing security forces were only vestiges of the original institutions, administrators searched the district records to find what had happened to the funds and manpower they now needed. As gazetteers written after 1553 attest, the records contained incomplete lists of troops, equipment, rates of pay, and instructions for training.

57 Chia-hsing fu t’u-chi 1549:1.32a-b.
58 Magistrate Ts’ai Wan, Hai-ning hsien chih 1557:Preface.1a-b, wrote that in order to find out all about the district, and learn about the changes in local institutions over time, he turned to the archives, but found "nothing more than calculations of salary for the military, judicial matters and local literary works not worth mentioning. I began to realize that it was a long time since old documents had been kept." His investigations were hampered because of the pirate invasions: he was constantly busy overseeing defence measures and coping with its attendant problems.
The jumble of data bore little relation to the forces actually available and was of little use in tackling the problems now being faced.

On the eve of the pirate invasions, the forces available in Chia-hsing were broadly of two kinds: the coastal defence forces whose original military function was defence of the coast against external threat (including piracy in surrounding waters); and those which were subordinate to the local civil administration and whose original function was internal security.

The coastal defence forces of northern Chekiang consisted of three Guard units (wei): defending the Chia-hsing coast was the Hai-ning Guard, with its headquarters at the walled town of Hai-yen, which was also the civil administrative seat of Hai-yen district, and battalion units (so) subordinate to the Hai-yen headquarters, stationed in the walled towns of Kan-p’u and Cha-p’u respectively. Closer to Hangchow, the provincial capital, were Hang-chou Front and Rear Guards. One Battalion detached from Hang-chou Guards was stationed within the walls of the Hai-ning district seat, a short distance to the south of Kan-p’u. Another Battalion within the city of Chia-hsing was attached to Su-chou Guard. Apart from the Battalion at Chia-hsing city all the wei and so of northern Chekiang came under the administrative control of the Chekiang Regional Military Commission (tu chih hui shih ssu).59

Between the four walled towns in which these Guard units were stationed, and between the provincial capital to the west and the provincial border to the east, were scattered a score of forts and a similar number of look-out points.60 The only fort with a substantial wall comparable to those of the towns was at Liang-chuang, between Cha-p’u and the provincial border, where pirates had often attacked in the early fifteenth century.61 The accounts of military administration

60 Listed in Hai-yen hsien t’u ching 1624:7.17b-18a. A map indicating the positions of the forts and lookouts is to be found in C.O. Hucker, "Hu Tsung-hsien's campaign against Hsü Hai", p.285.
61 Hai-yen hsien t’u ching 1624:7.22b.
included in the later Chia-ching and Wan-li gazetteers do not indicate whether these forts and look-out points were manned in the early 1550s, but when operative in later years, each were allotted five men to watch for ocean-going ships.\(^{62}\)

In common with other Guard units along the coast of Chekiang and Fukien, the Hai-ning Guard in the early 1550s was a shabby remnant of its earlier strength, having scarcely a third of its full complement of men.\(^{63}\) Because of widespread piracy at the beginning of the dynasty, a heavily manned coastal defence force had been set up in Chekiang. At the beginning of the fifteenth century, the military households of the province, who were liable to provide men for military service, were able to supply 130,188 men. By the second half of the sixteenth century, this number had been reduced to 78,062.\(^{64}\) Just prior to the pirate invasions the number actually filling the ranks was even lower. In 1557 a local historian wrote of the Battalion of the town of Kan-p'u: "Over the last seventy years many have shifted away or died, so that only 680 regular troops remain of a number which ought to be 2,240."\(^{65}\) Another gazetteer says: "In the Ch'eng-hua and Yung-chih periods and afterwards for a long time, nothing much happened at sea. Three so of troops (out of the five which made up Hai-ning \(\text{wei}\)) fell into abeyance."\(^{66}\)

From the mid-fifteenth century onwards, the forces of northern Chekiang had been limited to positional shore-based defence. Because of sand-bars and shallow waters in Hang-chou Bay, the Guards and Battalions there had never been equipped with ocean-going vessels.\(^{67}\) However, until the late 1440s, they had contributed funds and men towards the fleets which for half of each year patrolled the open seas off the

\(^{62}\) *Hai-yen hsien t\'u-ching* 1624:7.18a.


\(^{64}\) Quoted in Cartier, *Une reforme locale*, pp.30-1, quoting Wu Han, "Ming-tai ti chün-ping" in his *Tu-shih cha-chi* 1961, p.103; on the numbers of men still registered at coastal defence units, see Kwan-wai So, *Piracy*, p.139.

\(^{65}\) *Kan-shui chih* (Gazetteer of Kan-p'u) 1557:5.19a.

\(^{66}\) *Hai-yen hsien t\'u-ching* 1624:7.23b.

\(^{67}\) *Ta\'ui Chia-hsiang, Ming-wu chi shih* (after 1589) in *Yen-i chih-lin* 48.8b.
central coast. These fleets were stationed at Shen-chia-men naval headquarters in the Chusan Islands off Ningpo. Because the fleets had been allowed to deteriorate, they failed to prevent pirates from attacking the coast of Chia-hsing in Cheng-t'ung 7 and 8 (1442 and 1443). Because of the ineffectiveness of the patrols and the hardships involved for the men who served on them, local residents pressed to have the men withdrawn and their "going out to sea" subsidies were diverted to build forts and strengthen defence on the coast itself. From then on, instead of relying on patrols of the open sea by large warships, Hai-ning Guard was equipped with a number of small flat-bottomed "crab" patrol boats, suitable only for sailing on inland waterways and hugging the coast. As a primarily land-based defence force, they also had 154 horses for cavalry.

By the Chia-ching period, Hai-ning Guard had no sea-worthy vessels and few horses. Other nearby Guards were little better equipped. When Chu Wan investigated the sea-going capacity of the Chekiang Guards in the late 1540s, he found almost none operational out of an original 439 warships attached to the forty-one garrison posts of the province. He was reduced to rounding up forty patrol ships from Fukien and distributing them in Chekiang as a stop-gap measure.

With the dissolution of their power, and the lack of external threat to keep the idea of coastal defence alive, many military families (generally the more adventurous and able) had gone into trade or had been absorbed in the farming population. Others escaped military service by becoming the personal retainers of their officers. By the mid-sixteenth century, the men left in the ranks were those too old, too young, too ill or too feeble to change their situation.

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68 These attacks are cited in Cha-p'u chih 1757:6.1b.
69 On the history of Hai-ning Guard in the fifteenth century, see Chia-hsing fu chih 1600:8.31b; Hai-yen hsien t'u-ching 1624:7.23a-b; Lo, "Early Ming navy":159, 161; Ts'ui Chia-hsiang, Ming-wu chi shih. 8b; Ping-hu hsien chih 1689:9.5b-6a.
70 Ping-hu hsien chih 1689:9.6a.
71 Kwan-wai So, Piracy, p.55, translation of biography of Chu Wan in Ming shih.
72 On the process of deterioration of the military in southern Chekiang see T'an Lun's analysis, translated in Kwan-wai So, Piracy, pp.137-8.
In keeping with the dilapidated state of the wei-so forces in general, the officers of Hai-ning Guard were ill-prepared to cope with military emergency. The officers were members of an hereditary officer class; a number of them held the same post in the Guard as their third or fourth generation ancestor, and even those who had been posted in from elsewhere tended to have been in the area for many years. They formed a close-knit group and their personal relations worked against discipline and strong chains of command. The training of most officers through long years of peace had cultivated an elaborate sense of military ritual with little idea of practical warfare. Only the most senior military officers had been submitted to examinations for military degrees and had been screened for promotion.73

Corresponding to their lack of power and erosion of function, military officers had a low status in relation to the civil bureaucracy.74 Individuals with education and other personal qualifications which allowed them to take part in the social life of the local scholar-gentry fared better than others,75 but in general military officers were held in low esteem as uncultured fellows. Although senior Guard officers held higher formal rank than magistrates or prefects, in practice they had difficulty in asserting that rank in their relations with the civil bureaucracy. In Chia-hsing, where the elite had so many wealthy and highly cultured members, conditions for social acceptance

Although T'an's jurisdiction as an official in Chekiang was restricted to Che-tung, the compilers of the Hai-yen gazetteer for 1624 quoted his analysis of the wei-so forces immediately prior to 1547 to support their description of the deterioration in numbers and quality of Hai-ning Guard in the period from the mid-fifteenth to the mid-sixteenth century. Hai-yen hsien t'u ch'ing 1624:7.23b.


74 See examples given in Kwan-wai So, Piracy, pp.135-8.

75 For instance, the biography of hereditary Guard Commander P'eng Yün and his descendants. P'eng is described as having the Confucian virtues of a human-hearted temperament (jen-hsing), and filial piety. His son was noted only for his military prowess, but his grandson was said to have had both culture and military qualities (wen-wu ts'ai-hsing). Chia-hsing fu chih 1878:42.10a. See also biography of Hsü Hsing-chien, Yu-chi pien (1605) by Chu Yüan-pi in Yen-i chih lin 46.1a; biography of Wan Piao, DMB:1337-9; biography of Ch'i Chi-kuang, DMB:220.
were perhaps more stringent than elsewhere and military officers did not enjoy a high status. Local civil officials had little reason to be optimistic about the capabilities of military officers in times of emergency.

The isolated pirate attacks recorded in the late 1540s exposed the weakness of Hai-ning Guard as a coastal defence force, seven or eight years before the major pirate raids began. When pirates clashed with government forces near Cha-p'u in 1546, the Guard troops were so inadequate that the son of one of the officers hired irregulars to assist his father.76

Thus, Hai-ning Guard shared the shortcomings of the coastal defence system as a whole. It was an institution without power, without status, without resources. The institutional basis for its effective functioning had been eroded over a long period. By the 1550s, when the forces had nothing but ill-maintained and obsolete equipment and no sea-going capacity, they no longer had the financial or administrative power to improve their military capability. Much of the finance originally allotted for coastal defence had been diverted elsewhere by the provincial civil administration.77

But Hai-ping Guard was not the only resource available for the defence of Chia-hsing on the eve of the pirate invasions. Several institutions had been set up in the course of the dynasty which, unlike the coastal defence forces, were intended to assist in the maintenance of internal order. Under the control of local civil officials they were supposed to cope with police and security matters and to protect local agencies of the imperial government. These institutions, the police offices (hsün-chien-sau) and district militia (min-chuang) constituted a reserve army which could be used in emergencies either to protect the local civil administration or to supplement the ranks of the coastal defence forces.

76 Cha-p'u chih 1757:6.2a; Chia-hsing fu chih 1878:42.10a.
77 See, for instance in Fukien, Wang Yu, "Submission on restoring to the coast its absconded forces and surplus funds", in Pu Ta-t'ung, P'ei Wo chih (1554 or 1555) 2:8b-9a, contained in Hsieh-k'ai lei-pien. This memorial was written at some time during Wang Yu's term as Governor of Chekiang, between 1552 and 1554.
Police offices, staffed by corps of bowmen (*kung-ping*), had been established at the beginning of the dynasty under the control of district and prefectural authorities for use in maintaining civil order. They were located at strategic points both inland and in fortified places along the coast. The *kung-ping* were raised as one item of the labour service levy. For the most part stationed at points outside the district administrative seats, the functions of the police offices were to watch and prevent the activities of criminals and salt smugglers. They were supposed to drill with the regular army from time to time, and could be absorbed into the ranks of the army in an emergency. At such times, they probably passed out of the control of the district civil official in charge of police matters, into the charge of military officers.

As late as 1530, according to one gazetteer, police offices were re-established at Kan-p'u and Cha-p'u with one hundred bowmen allotted to each, implying that the earlier offices had ceased to operate effectively. These coastal towns therefore each contained a police office headed by a civil official, as well as the regular Battalion establishment. Some sources suggest that in the 1550s the coastal police offices were manned, not by hired or conscripted civilians, but by troops of the Hai-ning Guard. The suggestion is not easily confirmed, but if true is an interesting combination of civil and military institutions. Whatever the source of its staff, the cost of the service in the coastal district remained part of the service levy. There is also conflicting evidence about the numbers of men at each office, before, during and after the pirate invasions. Most sources

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76 *Chia-shan hsien chih* 1892:13.12a.
79 *Che-chiang t'ung-chih* 1561:57.11b-12a, lists the sites of police offices in northern Chekiang in the 1550s; *Hsiu-shui hsien chih* 1596:2.18a.
80 *Chia-shan hsien chih* 1892:13.12a.
81 *Ping-hu hsien-chih* 1689:9.3b.
82 See for instance *Kan-shui chih* 1557:2.9a.
83 Hucker, "Hu Tsung-hsien's campaign against Hsü Hai", p.285. The local gazetteers do not make clear reference to such an arrangement.
84 See for instance *Kan-shui chih* 1557:3.12b.
agree that each inland office was meant to have a staff of thirty, but for the coastal offices, the figures vary between seventy and one hundred and twenty.\textsuperscript{85} None of these figures need bear much relation to actual staffing levels in the early 1550s, and it seems unlikely that they were at full strength at that time.

The other security institution under the control of civil district officials was the district militia, an institution dating back to the first half of the fifteenth century. Late Ming sources indicate that the service was being performed personally in Chia-hsing prefecture in the early sixteenth century; that is to say, each \textit{li} (unit of families grouped together for tax purposes) contributed a man or men to do the service. By the 1550s, the service had become a tax in cash, at least in the inland districts, and the men were hired at a figure set for each district at one man per \textit{li}.\textsuperscript{86} In the 1550s, three inland districts should have had militia corps of 235, 316, and 300 men respectively, and the coastal districts, 161, and 160.\textsuperscript{87} In the inland districts, militia came under the control of the Chief Officer (\textit{chu-pu}) called in Hsiau-shui district the Chief Officer for Superintending Police Matters (\textit{hsin-pu yü chu pu}), but in the two coastal districts, the officials designated as Registrar (\textit{tien-shih}), were in charge of such matters.\textsuperscript{88}

\textsuperscript{85} Che-chiang t'ung-chih 1561:57.11b-12a; Kan-shui chih 1557:3.12b; P'ing-hu hsien chih 1689:9.3b.

\textsuperscript{86} The system is described in Hsiu-shui hsien chih 1596:2.18a; Chia-shan hsien-chih 1892:13.3b. In 1441 when banditry was widespread in Kiangsi province it was proclaimed that each district should raise one thousand militia for its own defence. In one inland district of Chia-hsing prefecture, Chia-shan, five hundred of the one thousand set off to fight in Kiangsi led by the Chief Officer of the district. Chia-shan hsien hsien chih 1892:13.3b; Chia-hsing fu chih 1600:8.29a.

\textsuperscript{87} Chia-hsing fu chih 1600:8.29a-b. Figures for the other two inland districts are not clear in the text. P'ing-hu hsien chih 1689:9.3a (9.2b has one per \textit{li} = 160 men, but 9.3a has that there was a fixed figure of 316). Chia-hsing hsien chih 1685:4.16b has 361, but I have taken the figure in the earlier gazetteer as correct.

\textsuperscript{88} The functions carried out by subordinate district officials varied from district to district according to local conditions. According to the \textit{Ming shih}, the Registrar was responsible, as the title implies, for documents and accounting, while police matters rested with the Vice-Magistrate or Chief Officer, his superiors. However in some districts, including Shun-an in the north-west of Chekiang, and P'ing-hu and Hai-yen districts of Chia-hsing, it was the
Over the long years of peace, the district militia had been used to perform more immediately necessary tasks than that of defence preparedness. They were employed as messengers or as guards of grain stores and public buildings. Unlike the employees of the police offices, they generally had no police function and were not often the "able-bodied men between twenty and fifty" that they were originally required to be.89

The min-chuang were originally founded to raise troops for suppressing insurgency in adjacent provinces and for protecting the local district city. But in fact, local defence had never been part of their duties in Chia-hsing prefecture. Although their function had changed, they still had potential as a reserve army or, more accurately, as reserve military funds.90 In the late 1540s, one-fifth of the hire money (yung-ohih) for the militia of the inland district of Chia-shan had been diverted to coastal defence expenditure (hai-tao pei ping fei). It was only restored after the pirate incursions escalated in the mid-1550s and Chia-shan district needed its own defence force.91

From the above outlines of the three existing institutions — the coastal defence forces, the police offices and the district militia — it is obvious why the gazetteer of 1549 expressed some disquiet about the current state of military preparedness.92 But in the wake of Chu Wan's disgrace, the climate for decisive administrative action was unfavourable, and the apprehensions of Chia-hsing officials were tentatively expressed and difficult to act upon.

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89 The reason for the difference in evolution of function between the staff of police offices and the militia is that each were the responsibility of a different division of district and prefectural work. The militia came under the division concerned with defence, public buildings and the postal service; the police offices under the division concerned with police matters. When defence duties were not required, duties connected with public buildings and the postal relay were naturally given to the min-chuang.

90 Cf. Cartier, Une reforme locale, p.42.

91 See Chia-shan hsien chih 1892:13.3b.

92 See fn. 1.
As partial compensation for the poor state of its defence and security institutions, the prefecture was well endowed with a certain kind of human resource. Within Chia-hsing society, members of the bureaucratic elite had considerable knowledge and experience of warfare, combined with a strong intellectual interest in the subject. The large number of written works about coastal defence, military organisation and related subjects, dating from the late 1540s, shows how many scholar-gentry there were both within and outside official life who were deeply interested in questions of military affairs, particularly coastal defence.93

The main military problem in the south-east in the fifty years before the Chia-ching pirate invasions was banditry which affected widespread areas of the mountainous interior. Out of the campaigns to put down these disorders came officials experienced in bandit suppression. In the latter part of the period, these campaigns also produced scores of fighting men, some recruited from among former rebels and bandits, who were subsequently used in the anti-pirate campaigns. These experienced officials and fighting corps compensated in part for the loss of defence capability along the south-east coast.

Because of the tendency of the appointment system to post southerners to the south and northerners to the north, the southern military experience was the dominant one among the bureaucratic elite of Chiang-Che. In the hill country of the south, civil officials commanded military affairs at all levels. They recruited armies, imposed taxes to raise the money to support them, planned campaigns, interviewed captive rebels, went out to preach "soothing edicts" to them, and led their forces into battles. The armed forces were often locally raised and

93 To give two examples, the collected writings of Ch'ien Wei of Hai-yen district who was living at home through the pirate invasions until his death in 1554, contain the pieces: "Discussion of maritime affairs", Ch'eng-ch'i-t'ang kao 10.22b-29a, and "Discussion on locally-raised troops", Ch'eng-ch'i-t'ang kao 11.10a-22b. While T'u Chung-lü of P'ing-hu district was censor for the Hu-kuang circuit based at Nanking, and thus not officially involved in anti-pirate campaigns, he nevertheless submitted to the court a memorial "Five matters concerned with resisting the pirates". STSL 34/5/9 (28 May 1555); P'ing-hu hsien chih 1689:8.15a-20a.
trained by the civil officials. Thus, in mid-century, there were scholar-officials in Chia-hsing, numbering possibly dozens, who had gained first-hand experience in military affairs during their postings as officials.94 These scholar-officials had a breadth of vision about military affairs which the local military officers, for instance, many of whom were restricted by their education to a knowledge of military arts like horse-riding and archery, had no opportunity of matching.

In contrast to the pool of experienced scholar-officials, the ordinary local people (those called by the administration and the elite, the min) had little military potential. On its fringes the min had many unruly elements, but the majority were people whom contemporary authors described as hard-working agriculturalists, tenders of silk-worms, grain crops and fish, who after the long period of peace had no experience of warfare and were singularly lacking in martial temperament or military skills.95

The pirate leaders who began to attack the delta coast in 1552 aimed at plunder but also carried a strong resentment of the economic and political elites of the region. Through the contacts they already had with the people of the coastal fringe, they were quickly able to make connections with the illegal, potentially seditious elements of delta society. Chia-hsing was part of a region of unequalled wealth where grain-boats and granaries, ware-houses of valuable woods and silks, and the houses of the rich offered unlimited opportunities for plunder. The pirates came at a time when social dislocation and civil disorder were rising among what was generally considered a peaceable population and when the capability of the authorities to resist attack was extremely limited. Under the circumstances, the outlook for the government could be nothing but grim.

94 See the biographies of Chia-hsing men who were officials during the Cheng-te and Chia-ching reigns in Chia-hsing fu chih 1878: chüan 51 to 61.
95 See for instance fn. 46.
Because of the wealth and strategic importance of the Yangtze delta, the pirate invasions of that region in the 1550s were of particular significance to the central Ming government. Having unconsciously assisted in the creation of the pirate threat, the Ming government now faced the task of consciously organizing to suppress and resist it. The military crisis created by the invasions put peace-time institutions under pressure. In this crisis the existing administrative structure did not allow adequately for efficient deployment of the government's resources in the south-east. On the contrary, positional defence and fragmented military control was a deliberate part of the Ming defence system, designed to keep local and specifically military power subordinate to central civil control. Accordingly, military emergencies commonly required that a tactical force combining civil and military officials be established quickly to by-pass the inbuilt barriers of the peace-time system. Even at the height of military emergency during the pirate invasions, both this tactical force and all other aspects of the anti-pirate administration were dominated by civil rather than military officials.

The pirate crisis highlighted not only the problem of co-ordinated control over a wide region, but also the latent difficulties in reconciling local interests with those of the central Ming government. The senior officials in charge of the anti-pirate campaigns made their decisions not only in response to the pirate raids themselves but also in the context of factional manoeuvring at court and pressures from local officials and bureaucratic elites. The arena where pressures from above and below met was the office of the high regional command in the person of the Governor, or from 1554, the Supreme Commander. In 1556,
Hu Tsung-hsien, the most famous of these key officials, achieved an organization and a strategy to cope with the pirate raids. Not least among Hu's achievements was his astute handling of the problem of gaining local co-operation in the pursuit of regional defence goals. In many respects his success was based on the experience of his predecessors whose contributions are easily over-looked in the glare of admiration surrounding Hu Tsung-hsien.

Through an outline of the course of the pirate invasions into Chia-hsing between 1553 and 1556, these two themes — of civil officials in military affairs, and of regional versus local interests — clearly emerge, forming a common context for a variety of local responses.

Wang Yü, who was Governor of Chekiang during the first years of the pirate raids in 1552 and 1553, was aware of the weakness of his defences and the vulnerability of the region. He was forced to conduct a holding operation, spreading meagre resources thinly along the coast, and rushing to reinforce those places where pirates had already attacked. The early raids betrayed the weakness of the existing defence forces and showed the strength of the pirates. Small and insignificant as they were by later standards, the early raids had a disproportionate effect on policies for regional defence. The early interaction between minor local events and regional policy can be traced in the first raids on the Chia-hsing coast.

The First Months

The pirate crisis began in Chia-hsing early in the fourth month of 1553 when a look-out reported that a sea-going ship carrying about

1 The two main sources for the events of 1553 along the coast of Chia-hsing are the accounts by local Hai-yen men Ts'ai Chiu-te and Ts'ui Chia-hsiang (henceforth called Ts'ai and Ts'ui). Additional details concerning Cha-p'u and P'ing-hu are included in the section on the pirate invasions in the Cha-p'u chih 1757, and in the biographies contained in the contemporary gazetteers. While all the sources agree in broad outline, they differ slightly on details like the dates and sequence of events, the numbers of pirates, troops and civilians captured and killed. In general I have followed the sequence of events and dates given in Ts'ai, except where these are obviously incorrect, as it is the fullest, most coherent account.
eighty men had anchored off the town of Hai-yen.\(^2\) The gates of the town were open, and most of the local Guard forces were absent. Some locals went off in fishing boats to get a closer view of the ship, and one of the Guard Commanders led a company of a hundred soldiers along the shore to investigate. The strangers floated a box to shore with a message which said that they were Japanese and that their ship was damaged; they wanted to make repairs and take in supplies so that they could return to their country. However, when the Guard Commander brought his troops closer, the men on board fired arrows and killed some of the soldiers. The rest fled back to the city and closed the gates.\(^3\)

In the events of these first few hours, a number of things are already apparent. With the gates open by day and residents curious rather than apprehensive, clearly few people were expecting immediate trouble. Yet the fact that senior Guard officials were absent with companies of troops at other nearby strategic points implies a degree of organized coastal defence activity. The posting of look-outs and the investigation carried out by the Guard Commander suggest that serious efforts were being made to patrol the shore. This relatively alert state of local defence arose from pirate attacks in the previous year. The fall of the town of Huang-yen in southern Chekiang and raids closer to home in the Shanghai area had been serious enough for the court to appoint a governor in Chekiang for the first time since the dismissal of Chu Wan.

The Guard forces made no further attempt that day to deal with the pirates and during the night half of the pirates came ashore unhindered. Those left on board were attacked early the next morning by a party of

\(^2\) "Sea-going ship": Both Ts'ai and Ts'ui have hai-ch'u'an which tends to denote a large merchant ship used for long-haul coastal trade rather than an ocean-going ship, but still large enough to make regular crossings to Japan. It appears from the details given here that the ship carried many more than the number of men necessary to crew her, suggesting that the ship was being used to transport a large raiding party rather than for any more innocent purpose. Cf. J.W. Cushman, *Fields from the Sea: Chinese Junk Trade with Siam during the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Centuries*, pp.65-6.

\(^3\) Ts'ai:1.1a-b; Ts'ui:2b-3a.

soldiers who managed to set fire to the ship with gunpowder, effectively disabling it. Ten soldiers were killed and half a dozen pirates captured and displayed, bound, outside the north wall of the town. This rather costly incident for both sides still left about forty pirates on shore.5

One group of these drew near the town of P'ing-hu. Because the town was without walls, the registrar of P'ing-hu district, Ch'iao Teng, and his son, led militia out to confront them. Ch'iao and his son were killed when their men deserted them, but according to one source, not before seventeen of the militia had also been killed.

P'ing-hu, a district town a few miles inland, seems to have been left out of any new arrangements for coastal defence, and still retained only its militia corps under the leadership of the registrar. From the term used in the local accounts, min-ping, it is not possible absolutely to identify the militia as the min-chuang. The behaviour of the men indicates that they were a scratch force, but whether drawn from the guards and messengers usually employed under the name of min-chuang, or specially raised with min-chuang funds in the climate of defence alert, is not clear.6 As registrar, Ch'iao was responsible under the magistrate for the security of the district town, but P'ing-hu was then without a magistrate; the previous incumbent had already left to take up his new position, and the next had not yet been appointed. It is clear from this incident that the notion of this responsibility was seriously held, and could easily lead to death for a local civil official.

Their ship disabled, the remaining pirates went north along the shore towards the port of Cha-p'u, looking for food, killing or injuring anyone who opposed them, and watching for other ships in which they could escape. Finding none, they forced locals to lead them to the harbour at Cha-p'u where they set up camp in the T'ien-fei temple.

On their third day ashore, the pirates had a skirmish with a group

5 Ts'ai:1.1b-2a; Ts'ui:3a.
6 On the min-chuang, see Chapter Two.
of soldiers, killing eighteen. On their side the troops had only a few severed heads of pirates to exhibit on the bridge where the fight had taken place. Most of the pirates still remained at large.

The T'ien-fei temple where the pirates were camped was a group of buildings dedicated to a goddess of sailors and fishermen. It was situated on the embankment at Cha-p’u harbour, overlooking the sea. There the pirates were surrounded by Hai-ning Guard troops, led by the Chief Commander (pa-tesung), Wang Ying-lin, who was normally based at Cha-p’u. The reluctance of Wang to engage his troops, and his credulity (or alternatively his cowardice) is illustrated by the tale Ts’ai tells of the pirates’ escape from the encirclement. They persuaded Wang that they were afraid to fight him, and desired to be allowed to end their lives by throwing themselves into the sea if they could only wait for the high tide. Wang withdrew his men. Meanwhile the pirates had plaited strong rope from the hangings of the temple. When high tide arrived they used the ropes to break out, seized one of the garrison’s boats and escaped.

Apart from being further evidence of the capacity of the Guard forces, this incident indicates that the Guard then had at least one vessel for its use. It is possible, although there is no direct evidence for it, that the Guard had been supplied with some sea-worthy craft in the period since the new governor had come to the office the year before, perhaps by hiring or buying privately-owned local craft.

Later that month a group of forty-two bandits came along the coast from Chin-shan across the provincial border and camped at the White Horse Temple only five kilometres from the drill ground at Cha-p’u, where about one thousand troops were camped. A military officer commanding a score or so men at the fort of Liang-chuang attempted to attack them, but was out-maneuvered and killed as were most of his men.

7 T’ien-fei, or T’ien-hou, was a sea-goddess whose cult was variously supposed to have originated in Chekiang or in Fukien. The temple at Cha-p’u was the site of large annual local ceremony to propitiate the peculiarly destructive tidal bore of Hangchow Bay. See Chia-hsing fu-chih 1878:11.2a; Cha-p’u chih 1757; "Map of the Town Environs"; P’ing-hu hsien chih 1790:4; sui-shih 1b,2b; Cha-p’u pei chih 1826: 20.7b-8b.

8 Ts’ai:1.2b.
AT CHA-P’U — The Sea-Wall, the T’ien-fei Temple, and the Outlet of the Canal System to the Sea.

From: Cha-p’u pei chih, 1826 edition.
The pirates remained at the temple, and the troops remained in camp at the drill ground for several days while their commanders debated how they should approach the problem. No watch was posted on the movements of the pirates, and they were able to slip out dressed like locals and merge with the population.9

On a foggy, drizzling morning, the troops were scattered about preparing food and their officers were in their quarters in the homes of the people of the adjacent village. Suddenly, these few score bandits made a co-ordinated attack on the force at the drill ground, routing the troops and killing several of their commanders.

The military officers had not been idle up to that point. According to Ts'ai, they had been deliberating on a campaign to wipe out these forty-two pirates in the White Horse Temple. But their discussion centred on the protocol of who should take which flank and whose company should be the standard bearer. In the meantime they had put out no spies and collected no information on the movements of the enemy. They were like men discussing a ritual dance rather than tackling the practical issue of making a decisive stand against the raiders. Over this group of inexperienced officers with their close personal ties, the Chief Guard Commander, the luckless Wang Ying-lin, found it difficult to impose his authority.10

To celebrate their victory according to their custom, the pirates set out to give thanks at the Temple of the Dragon King,11 just inside the barrier guarding the eastern approaches to Hai-yen, a strategic point for the defence of the town. The registrar of Hai-yen, named Li Mao, defended the barrier with 400 locally recruited men (yung-shih). Under his leadership the men stood firm, the barrier was held and the pirates had to turn away. They passed on to the west, leaving a trail of plundered villages and humiliated Guard troops in Hai-ning district

9 Ts'ai:1.2b-4a.
10 Ts'ai:1.4b.
11 This temple (also called the Hai-shen miao, Temple of the Sea-spirits), was built on the embankment outside the east gate in 1405, at the time of the construction of the embankment. See Ch'ia-hsing fu chih 1878:11.2a; Cha-p'u pet chih 1826:20.7a.
and as far as the environs of Hangchow before finally seizing boats from
the Ch’ien-t’ang River and escaping out to sea.\textsuperscript{12}

Li Mao, like his less fortunate counterpart, Ch’iao Teng in the
neighbouring district, was the senior civil official in Hai-yen
responsible for the security of the district city, because, as in P’ing-
hu, no incumbent magistrate was present. Unlike Ch’iao Teng, Li Mao had
the advantages of a barrier behind which he could defend the city, with
the walled town as a fall-back. He seems also to have had a larger and
stronger body of men to support him. It seems possible that his 400
\textit{yung-shih} were formed from the group of men whom the previous magistrate
had selected to patrol the district because of the numbers of robbers
abroad. Four hundred was, in any case, considerably above the fixed
number of district militia (\textit{min-ohuang}) to which Hai-yen district was
entitled, and therefore indicates some recent action to improve the
ability of the local civil administration to police or to defend the
district. Since Hai-yen was also the headquarters of a Guard unit whose
duty it was to keep the coast clear of trouble, the expansion of
civilian forces at this time, and the necessity of using them to defend
the town, are further indication of the weakness of the Guard forces.

From the criticism levelled at the Guard forces by a Shanghai
scholar and expert on naval matters, Li Chao-hsiang, it seems that this
state of affairs was not confined to Hai-yen:

\begin{quote}
When the officers of the \textit{wei-so} are not performing their office
of fighting, they still receive their monthly stipend, but when
bandits come to the city they regard the responsibility of
fighting as the militia’s, so that those who are supported are
no use, and those who are useful receive no support \ldots\textsuperscript{13}
\end{quote}

The first raids on the Chia-hsing coast showed that even in small
numbers the pirates were more than a match for the local defence forces,
and that local civil administration could not rely on the military for
protection. In assessing the local Guard forces, it should be pointed
out that the arrangement of troops into Guards and Battalions was

\textsuperscript{12} Ts’ai:l.5b.

\textsuperscript{13} Li Chao-hsiang, \textit{Shang ohang pan chou tsung ohth shu}, as contained in
intended to be the permanent defence stance of peace-time. In a military emergency it was normal practice for a tactical force to be set up under a governor or supreme commander, containing both military and civil officials and commanding mobile forces drawn from the Guards and Battalions. In the fourth month of 1553 the Governor of Chekiang was still in the early stages of organizing his tactical defence force. Nevertheless, Guard units were responsible for the defence of the immediate coast-line against minor disturbances, and in this duty the Hai-ning Guard failed miserably.

Officials and local notables were convinced by the events of the first weeks that they could not entrust the protection of their property and administrations to the Guard troops. Influential men of the coastal districts immediately petitioned prefectural and provincial authorities for military reinforcement to be provided from outside the prefecture. Among the requests were one from a scholar of P'ing-hu district (the sheng-yüan, Chang Ho) who asked the prefect to obtain reinforcements, and another from the eminent scholar and writer of Hai-yen district, Ch'ien Wei, who wrote to the Governor of Chekiang also requesting more troops. Whether or not their prompting was needed to goad officials into action, within weeks the defence of northern Chekiang had been reinforced by 1,000 extra troops and a number of experienced military and civil officials who had been transferred from other parts of the south-east.

When the next pirate groups appeared in northern Chekiang several weeks later, towards the end of the fourth month, that coastline, and particularly the town of Hai-yen, were considerably better prepared against attack. The following month a much larger pirate fleet besieged Hai-yen for three days without breaking through the walls but inflicting considerable damage in the suburbs. Immediately afterwards, they over­whelmed the town of Cha-p'u in a day. By the end of that year, local witnesses maintained that the town of Hai-yen had suffered four attacks.

The respective destinations of their letters reflect the different levels of status each held, Ch'ien being a particularly influential member of the local bureaucratic elite, Chang being a man whose connections, though still important, were more confined. Chia-keung fu chih 1878:56.29a-b, biography of Ch'ien Wei; Cha-p'u chih 1757: 6.3a.
by pirates with a loss of some 3,700 local people. P'ing-hu and Cha-p'u had each suffered three raids and Kan-p'u and Hai-ning, further to the west, one.\textsuperscript{15}

Although the pirate raids of 1553 were disturbing and destructive, they were, nevertheless, restricted to the immediate vicinity of the coast. The pirates were relatively few in numbers and kept to their piratical mode of surprise attacks from the sea.

One of the most damaging results of military ineffectiveness in the first year was that pirate groups saw the possibility of putting aside their immediate dependence on sea-borne raids in favour of setting up long-term camps on shore. Had government forces been able to remove the pirates decisively, they may have remained content to confine themselves to swift raids from the sea, thus limiting the numbers of attackers and the amount they could carry away to the capacity of their fleets, and the scope of their raids to the coastal districts. Instead, resistance was feeble and the pirates were ashore long enough, and travelled far enough, to sight the places they subsequently captured as stockades for their own semi-permanent camps. In these they could camp in large numbers, and accumulate booty and vessels from a wide area over a long period. These camps formed the basis of pirate activity in the Chia-hsing area over the next three years.

Raids and Resistance, 1554 to 1556

In 1554 there was a marked escalation of pirate activities. By the end of the fourth month pirates had entrenched themselves in camps along the Sung-chiang and Chia-hsing coast. The largest was at the fort of Che-lin in Sung-chiang, but smaller groups took over a number of other fortified points along the coast. In the fourth month a small group of pirates captured the police office at Shih-tun, on the coast between Kan-p'u and Hai-ning. For seven weeks they caused continuous trouble in the surrounding districts and resisted all attempts to dislodge them.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{15} Ts'ai:1.11a-b.

Earlier, in the third month, pirates went inland for the first time, on looting expeditions through the market towns of Chia-hsing. They raided store-houses, seized grain-boats and looted wealthy estates, burning houses as they went. During the spring and summer, town after town in Chiang-Che was attacked: almost every district between Lake T'ai and the sea was affected.\textsuperscript{17}

Piracy also stimulated the activities of local robbers and bandits in the unsettled atmosphere of the coastal districts. From the time of the first attacks in 1553, villagers (including some of the military families) had packed up and left the coastal districts. Some moved into the protection of nearby walled towns, and wealthier fugitives moved to big inland cities such as Chia-hsing or Soochow. Other local people, in increasing numbers, took advantage of the pirate raids to carry out similar activities in their wake or to join forces with them. Even in 1553 there had been instances of local robbers doing their own looting during moments of chaos, but in 1554 the participation of local people became an acknowledged problem.\textsuperscript{18} Not only inveterate robbers and bandits but fishermen and salt-workers of the coast began to join the pirates.

The continued deterioration of order in the south-east prompted the court to make new administrative arrangements to cope with the problem. In June of 1554 the Chia-ching emperor approved the appointment of Chang Ching as Supreme Commander (tsung-tu) with territorial jurisdiction and powers unprecedented for a regional official in the Ming dynasty. He was to have charge of the entire coastline from Shantung to Kwangtung "with full authority to control supplies and rations and to deal with his subordinates of or below the fifth rank civil or the second rank military (regional)".\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{17} See Ch'en, \textit{Wo-k'ou k'ao-lüeh}, pp.52 ff., 76 ff.
\textsuperscript{18} E.g., Ts'ai:2.12a.
\textsuperscript{19} DMB:632, biography of Hu Tsung-hsien. In May 1554, a joint memorial submitted by Hu and several other censors recommended a number of measures to meet the emergency in the south-east, including one that the field commander be permitted to make critical decisions in order to enable him to take more positive charge of the situation.
Until Chang's appointment the most senior official with responsibility for putting down piracy had been the Governor of Chekiang (heün-fu) in charge of military affairs (t’i-tu chün-wu) with responsibility also for the coastal prefectures of Fukien. This was the position that Chu Wan had held in 1547-1549 and which had been abolished with his dismissal. It was revived in the third month of 1552 with the appointment of Wang Yü, an official with extensive experience in regional military commands during the recent troubles on the northern borders. Wang Yü was a native of Shanghai district, one of the earliest and worst affected by piracy, and he was acquainted at first-hand with the problems and issues of coastal defence.

Wang Yü was an experienced administrator and was able to command the support of the emperor against his detractors through a number of setbacks. But he repeatedly proved unable to obtain decisive military victories or to prevent military disasters in the successive high defence commands which he held. Eventually one such failure led to his arrest and execution in 1560.

While Wang was in the south-east, institutional factors had contributed to his ineffectiveness, but these were altered with the appointment of his successor. One weakness had been territorial jurisdiction: as Governor, Wang was responsible for a territory which stopped short at the provincial border running arbitrarily across the delta plains from Lake T'ai to the sea. The border was an obstacle to co-ordinated tactics against the invaders, to whom it presented no obstacle at all. The invasions of inland Chia-hsing, which extended as far as the provincial capital of Chekiang, originated from the substantial pirate bases on the coast of Nanchihli. In order to mount a campaign against the camp at Che-lin, the Supreme Commander of Nanchihli borrowed forces from northern Chekiang. Local officials and notables in northern Chekiang complained loudly that those forces had no business to be absent outside of the province. From mid-1554 on, Chang Ching's appointment as Supreme Commander for the entire coast unified command

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20 Biography of Wang Yü in Ming shih, Peking, 1974 chüan 204, p.5396; DMB1399, biography of Wang Shih-chen.
21 Ts'ai:2.1a, 4a; Cheng Mao, Ching-hai chi lüeh.3b-4a.
over the Yangtze delta region and eliminated this anomaly. Even so, inter-provincial rivalries continued to obstruct co-ordinated strategy. One of the accusations which brought about the dismissal of Chang Ching illustrates this. Chang, who had his headquarters at Soochow, on one occasion promised to send 8,000 newly arrived Miao troops from Soochow to Chekiang. The next day he changed his mind and kept them at Soochow and was accused of "ignoring the needs of Chekiang".22

In addition to institutional problems such as the territorial limitations on his authority, Wang Yü was forced to prepare the defence of Chekiang and Fukien from meagre peace-time resources. Because he was the first governor to contend with sustained piracy, his responsibilities included preparations for both immediate and long-term defence. Means of raising funds had to be established, and court approval obtained for even minor redeployment of troops and officials. Among the more lasting contributions to the anti-pirate campaign begun under his governorship were the establishment of a new structure for tactical command within the provincial administration, and a programme of wall-building in hitherto unprotected administrative towns of the threatened regions.23 The wall-building programme was carried through but not completed until well after he had been transferred to the governorship of Shansi.

By the middle of 1554, towards the end of Wang Yü's period as Governor, there was growing criticism of the lack of co-ordination evident in defence strategy, in which the pursuit of local over general defence goals was dominant. As the pirate invasions escalated, demands from communities for protection had increased. Once the inland attacks began, Wang Yü stationed detachments of troops in important market towns on major routes within Chia-hsing and Hang-chou prefectures.24 One effect of the emphasis on positional defence was that tactical forces were too small and weak to mount effective campaigns against the pirate bases on the mainland. For instance, on the coast of Chia-hsing, troops were immobilized in the more important towns, leaving the few score
pirates at Shih-tun free to cause havoc in the unprotected towns and in the countryside.25

Even with his much wider powers, Chang Ching as the new Supreme Commander was not able to halt the escalation and spread of piracy. Throughout the winter of 1554-5, pirates in thousands remained camped at their strongholds on the Chiang-Che coast. With the spring, their activities stepped up again, and their attacks penetrated more deeply into the Kiangnan region, extending to Soochow and the north bank of the Yangtze, including the grain depots at the mouth of the Grand Canal, threatening the cessation of the transport of tribute grain to the north. A small group reached the outskirts of Nanking itself. A year after his appointment, and only a few weeks after the first major victory under his command, Chang Ching was arrested and sentenced to death for his alleged failures. The jurisdiction and powers of his office were reduced when the next incumbent was appointed. Chang Ching's successors commanded three provinces only: Nanchihli, Chekiang and Fukien, thus much reducing their jurisdiction whilst preserving unified command of the Chiang-Che region.26

As the military situation deteriorated still further, a series of rapid appointments and dismissals to the two senior regional positions were made in the months following Chang's arrest. They culminated in April 1556 with the appointment of Hu Tsung-hsien as Supreme Commander.27 Hu, a key figure in the ending of the pirate invasions, had been a magistrate in the Ning-Shao area in Chu Wan's time, and one of the few local officials to win his praise. In 1554, he was a low-ranking regional inspector of Chekiang (rank 7a). In the summer of 1555 he received unusually rapid promotion to become Governor of Chekiang (rank 4a) and Supreme Commander less than a year later.28 He had by that time a number of years of experience in Chekiang, and had shown himself to be a man with a practical grasp of tactics. Moreover he had support at court from the powerful Yen Sung through the patronage of Inspector of

25 Ts'ai:2.9a.
Armies Chao Wen-hua, which gave him the freedom to take bold initiatives in running his campaign.  

In 1556 Hu's leadership contributed to the collapse of pirate invasions in northern Chekiang, a few brief months after they had reached their most intense level. Late in 1555, the pirate leader, Hsü Hai, one of Wang Chih's colleagues, had landed on the Sung-chiang coast with large numbers of followers and had set up camp. In the third or fourth month of 1556 Hsü Hai came south from Che-lin to Cha-p'u with a force of many thousands and began a great offensive. At Cha-p'u, they burnt their ships to indicate their determination. In apparently planned co-ordination with this attack on Cha-p'u, other pirate forces launched raids on other parts of the delta. Hsü Hai's forces fought their way without much difficulty through inland Chia-hsing, amassing booty in hundreds of canal boats as they went. During that spring and summer they laid siege to several Chia-hsing towns and fought a large-scale and prolonged battle at Tsao-lin which eventually proved disastrous for the government side. With morale low and forces depleted, the government's position on the delta may have seemed more precarious than at any time in the past few years. However, Hu Tsung-hsien had some advantages over the earlier regional high command. Through his efficient intelligence network, he knew much about the pirates and also had a detailed understanding of his own strengths and weaknesses. From among his subordinates in the bureaucracy and the team of personal advisors which he had built up, he obtained both workable strategies and the people to execute them. By a combination of ruthless diplomacy and cunning ploys, Hu created and then capitalized on dissension among the pirate leaders. When the pirate leaders had weakened each other sufficiently, he was able to wipe them out without much difficulty. By the end of the eighth month of 1556, the main pirate threat had been removed from northern Chekiang.  

On the politics of this period, see DMB: biographies of Chang Ching, Chao Wen-hua, Hsü Chieh, Hu Tsung-hsien and Yen Sung. Also Kwan Wai-so, Piracy, 85 ff.  

Hucker, "Hu Tsung-hsien's campaign against Hsü Hai" is an account and analysis of the events of 1556 that led to the removal of the main pirate threat from northern Chekiang.
Civil Officials and Military Affairs

The above chronological account illustrates the unopposed dominance by civil officials over military affairs which was general in the south-east over the four years of pirate invasions in Chiang-Che. Unlike civil officials on the northern borders, those in the south-east did not have to compete against senior military commanders with influence resting on their personal relations with the emperor in Peking. No such access to the court existed for military men who served in the south-east, and they were limited to the role of subordinates to powerful civil officials.

The defence resources of northern Chekiang during the period of the pirate invasions fell into three functionally distinct groups: the regular civil service officials of the province, the regular military establishment, and the "active tactical force". The first two categories have been discussed in Chapter One and Chapter Two respectively. From the point of view of defence administration, they were characterized by their immobilization in fixed positions. To mount a campaign against the enemy independent from the claims of localities, the regional high command had to develop an active tactical force. Having civil officials at its head (the Supreme Commander and the Governor), the tactical group of officials included both civil officials (for instance the military circuit intendants) and military officials detached from their regular provincial positions to special tactical military posts.

Some of the attitudes among high civil officials which shaped the civil and military elements of the tactical defence force are found in a memorial by the first of the regional high commanders, Governor Wang Yü. The memorial was prompted by the raids in the fourth and fifth months of 1553 which had exposed the general weakness of the administrative structure for defence in northern Chekiang. On the advice of circuit

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31 See for instance DMB:252 ff., biography of Ch’iu Luan; 998-9, biography of Lu Ping.
33 Hucker, "Hu Tsung-hsien's campaign against Hsü Hai", pp.286-7, gives a list of these tactical military posts.
officials, some of whom had witnessed the siege of Hai-yen in the fifth month, several new positions were created. One was a military position, that of Assistant Regional Commander (ts'an-chiang) stationed at Hai-yen; the other was a civil position of Military Defence Circuit Intendant (ping-pen-tao), based at Chia-hsing city and responsible directly to the Governor. In his memorial Wang Yü sought the court's approval of these positions, outlining the duties of each and the justifications for them.34

According to Wang, the wealth of northern Chekiang was a lure to the pirates, but the area's army was useless for defence and the population was timid and fearful. Wang could not expect them to defend themselves without outside assistance. Moreover, in the west of the sector, in An-chi district, serious trouble caused by local bandits still persisted, requiring some attention to be paid to internal order. The current structure of active defence administration tended to by-pass northern Chekiang. For instance, the Coastal Defence Intendant (fen-shou hsien-fu-shih, a civil official) was based at Ningpo and the Assistant Regional Commander (military) was also based to the south of Hang-chou Bay. Together with the Regional Commander (taung-ping, military), based at Chin-shan, seawards of the northern Chekiang coast, they were expected to intercept pirate vessels entering the bay and thus to protect that coastline. In practice, however, the warships at the disposal of these officials could not negotiate the shallows and sandbars and therefore could not intercept the small craft used there by the pirates.

Looking at other current civil positions whose incumbents could be supposed capable of co-ordinating defence in northern Chekiang, Wang cited two vice-commissioners of the provincial surveillance office (fen-hsin ch'ien-shih) who each controlled several prefectures of northern Chekiang. The boundaries of their territories, however, cut right through the coastline, so that P'ing-hu and Hai-yen districts came within one territory and Hai-ning district within the other. This

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34 Wang Yü, Yü-shih ta-fu Sau-chih Wang-kung tsou-i 5.22b-25b, "Consideration of how to deal with serious piracy". Also see Hai-yen hsien t'u ching 1624:7.25b-26a; Ta Ming hui-tien (1587):128.10b.
boundary made co-ordination of activities over the whole sector difficult for the vice-commissioners. The inclusion of all of that coastline within the territories of the two proposed positions was therefore of some importance.

The duties of each position as Wang outlined them indicate the complementary role which civil and military circuit officials were expected to play. The Military Defence Intendant was expected to tour his circuit collecting and training troops, seeing to the maintenance of equipment, and to the repair and strengthening of the walls of towns and ports. He was to arrange for the construction of vessels for use by the army, to register and establish mutual surveillance among the population (pao-ohia), administer salaries and troop rations, and ensure that vacancies in the ranks were filled. The Assistant Regional Commander was to recruit troops within his sector, oversee their deployment, institute an intelligence network, and ensure a co-ordinated approach by land and water in the event of an attack. He was to co-operate with his counterparts up and down the coast in a common effort to suppress large-scale offensives by the pirates. The two officials were intended to co-operate with each other in working to achieve a general goal in suppressing piracy and banditry. The holders of these positions became the most important officials for northern Chekiang in the mobile tactical component of provincial defence.

The fighting forces available to the tactical group of civil officials and military officers were generally a poor lot. Since the central government was committed to a full defence effort on the northern borders at the same time, neither troops nor the funds to pay and equip them were easy to come by. Over the four years of pirate invasions, Chia-hsing prefecture saw a strange and motley collection of armed forces take the field. Among the locally-raised forces were bands of Shao-lin monks, gentry-led militia, and hired gangs of ruffians. From other parts of Chekiang came "mine troops" and "water-borne troops"; from Fukien, forces of ex-pirates; from the south-west provinces, armies of tribal peoples, strange to the local people in their language, dress and customs. They generated many stirring stories and fascinating anecdotes, but generally had two things in common: they were ineffective, and they needed to be fed.
Of this plethora of troops, a good proportion were raised within Chekiang itself. Prominent among these were the mine troops (keng-ping) from Ch‘u-chou in the south-west of the province, where companies of men had been formed in the course of fighting silver-mine bandits. Some of them were ex-bandits themselves. With them came a civil official and a number of military officers whose leadership was especially valuable in subsequent fighting. They formed an addition to the active tactical force of competent field officers. Another major group was raised late in 1553: the Assistant Regional Commander and the Military Defence Intendant, adhering to the statement of their duties outlined in Wang's memorial, jointly raised 5,000 men from the northern Chekiang area to supplement the existing Guard forces. It is not clear on what basis they were raised, but one gazetteer of inland Chia-hsing records that in 1554 each li was required to provide five men for the local troops (hsiang-ping), their rations to be paid by the li heads (li-ohang). However it was done, the resulting 5,000 troops were used mainly for positional defence to protect the cities by providing guards and outposts and by manning walls. They were not generally used for battles in the open.

Until the end of 1556, the conduct of the more strictly military aspects of the anti-pirate campaigns remained generally unco-ordinated in approach, uninspired in tactics, and unsuccessful in performance. Even under Hū Tsung-hsien's relatively firm co-ordinating hand, there were instances of large contingents of troops going into battle at the whim of their commanders without heeding overall strategy. Indeed, Hū's strategy against the pirates was partly determined by his inability to count on military support at any crucial stage. The final

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35 See Li Kuang-ming, Chia-ching yü-Wo Chiang-Che chu-k’o-chiin k’ao, (The repulse of the Wo pirates by provincial and extra-provincial armies in Kiangsu and Chekiang during 1551-1561), Peking, 1933, passim. On the Shao-lin monks, see DMB:1338, biography of Wan Piao.
36 Li, Yü-Wo chu-k’o-chiin, pp.101 ff.
37 Chia-hsing hsien chih 1685:4.17a.
38 Chia-shan hsien chih 1892:13.5a. If accurate, this method would have raised 1500 men in Chia-shan district alone.
eradication of pirates from northern Chekiang at Cha-p’u and Shen-chia-
chuang in the eighth month was done with overwhelmingly superior numbers
on the government side. Only when the government began to acquire
naval strength after 1556 was its military performance against the
pirates more successful.

The poor performance of forces in the field blocked the one route
for military officers in the south-east to achieve power and influence
equivalent to senior regional civil officials — outstanding and
consistent military success. Despite the ability and occasional
victories of such military commanders as Lu T’ang and Yü Ta-yu in the
period 1553-6, working with inadequate equipment and untrained men,
their careers remained throughout tied to the fortunes and patronage of
the senior civil officials under whom they served.

At the end of Chapter Two it was pointed out that the local
bureaucratic elite was often more expert in military affairs than local
military officers. Similarly, many officials in the higher levels of
the provincial civil hierarchy had military experience which rivalled
that of the senior provincial military commanders. The men who were
appointed as Governors and Supreme Commanders not surprisingly had as
one of their qualifications for the job their previous experience in
military command posts, but many of their subordinates down to the level
of circuit official at the time of the pirate invasions also had had
military experience.

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40 Ibid., pp.300 ff.; Ts’ai:4.12b ff.; P’ing-hu hsien chih 1689:
9.19a-24a, "Feng Ju-pi’s account of the suppression of the pirates
at Tang-hu."

41 For instance DMB: biographies of Ch’i Chi-kuang, T’an Lun, Yü Ta-yu.

42 DMB:1004, biography of Lu T’ang; 1616-8, biography of Yü Ta-yu.

43 For instance, Chia-hsing fu chih 1878:42.18a, biography of Ch’en
Tsung-k’uei, who had achieved recognition for pirate suppression
activities as a regional inspector in Fukien prior to appointment as
military circuit intendant in northern Chekiang. Lo Kung-ch’en,
(Ts’ai:1.9b), a former local educational official from Kwangsi,
skilful at military arts, whom Wang Yü brought in to lead troops in
northern Chekiang; Tung Pang-cheng, from Shantung, formerly a
magistrate, was brought to Shanghai as an assistant surveillance
commissioner to lead coastal defence activities. He several times
led troops into battle (Sung-chiang fu chih 1663:33.11b-12a).
With civil officials holding the highest military command positions, and having a substantial share of military experience and knowledge, still another factor strengthened the civil bureaucracy at the expense of any emergent military mode of operation. This factor stemmed from the regional ties which linked many key civil officials in an informal network, facilitating an integrated approach to anti-pirate administration.

The economic inter-dependence of advanced regions of the south-east, which lay behind the rise of overseas trade and piracy, was paralleled by an inter-relationship between the politico-bureaucratic elites of these same regions. The inter-relationships between elites were based on the phenomenon, already discussed in Chapter One, of officials in the south-eastern provinces tending to serve in adjacent provinces. More particularly, officials from key areas involved in overseas trade and the rise of piracy to serve in one of the other such areas within the south-east.44

Except for a few months in late 1555 and early 1556, the Governors of Chekiang and Supreme Commanders in the south-east were all natives of key areas of the south-east region. Wang Yü came from Shanghai, not far from Chia-hsing and one of the first districts to be affected by pirate raids in 1552. Chang Ching was from Soochow in Fukien. The "king maker" of these years, Chao Wen-hua, closely allied with Yen Sung and the patron of Hu Tsung-hsien, was a native of Ningpo prefecture, at the heart of the overseas trade and pirate phenomenon in Chekiang. Hu Tsung-hsien himself was from Hui-chou prefecture in Nan-chihli, the same prefecture as the pirate leader, Wang Chih. Hu's origins also gave him connections with the many wealthy Hui-chou merchants who lived in

44 Many examples can be given to illustrate this point. For instance, the biographies of Chia-hsing scholar-officials show that quite a number of them held posts in Fukien during the 1550s, the height of the pirate troubles. They include Chung I-yüan, who in 1556 as a magistrate lost his life fighting against the pirates of Fu-ning (Chia-hsing fu chih 1681:17.33a; Ch'en, Wo-k'ou k'ao-lüeh, p.86); Pu Hual, who as a local educational official in Fukien worked with the district magistrate on drawing up defence plans (Chia-hsing fu chih 1681:17.11a); Pu Ta-t'ung, who was surveillance vice-commissioner for maritime affairs in Fukien. He compiled the Pei-Wo chi, in Hsiun-hai hai lei pien (see Franke 7.8.4); Hsiu-shui hsien chih 1596:6.18b-19a.
Chekiang, particularly in Hang-chou and the towns of the northern Chekiang plain.  

In addition to their backgrounds in the south-east, the course of their careers had brought these men in touch with key localities in Chekiang before the pirate invasions began. Chao Wen-hua had been editor-in-chief of the 1549 Chia-hsing prefectural gazetteer. Chang Ching had been magistrate of Chia-hsing district from 1521 to 1525, thirty years before he became Supreme Commander of the south-east. Hu Tsung-hsien had been magistrate in a district of Ningpo prefecture in 1547-8.  

Administrative experience and backgrounds in the south-east not only meant that the high civil officials were already familiar to some extent with conditions there, but also that they had ready contacts with other scholar-officials and local gentry, both in their home districts and in those where they had worked or visited. Thus, in addition to their connections at court, they had valuable contacts at the local level within the provinces they were required to administer.  

Through such channels, the civil bureaucracy maintained its domination over the politics and style of the anti-pirate campaigns in Chekiang. In this bureaucracy, military officials played a subordinate role and civil officials native to key areas of the south-east were a major influence.

Regional Policies versus Local Interests

In the development of overseas trade and piracy, local elites had pursued economic goals which were at variance with central government policies. But once piracy had turned to invasion, the goals of the central government and local elites became united: to remove the threat to life and property, and to minimize disruption to the order and

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45 DMB: biographies of Chang Ching, Chao Wen-hua and Hu Tsung-hsien.  
46 Ibid. Chang's name in the early part of his career was Ts'ai, and it is under this name that he is entered in the lists of magistrates of Chia-hsing. Chia-hsing fu chih 1878:37.11b.
stability of local society.

However, when concrete measures to resist the pirates had to be decided, it was not easy for all levels of political power to agree on what these measures should be. Each saw the problem most clearly from his own vantage point. For instance, wealthy residents of market towns or country estates wished to have continuous and reliable military protection close at hand. If they were to provide funds for the defence effort, then they expected to see the results in improved protection for themselves. The regional high command, on the other hand, needed to build mobile forces capable of defeating and removing pirates from the mainland. In the first years of the invasions, the high command did not have an organization capable of resisting pressures from localities for troops to be garrisoned in their towns. Yielding to such pressures served to fragment and immobilize troops during Wang Yü's governorship, and was one of the chief criticisms made of him.

In its pursuit of regional defence goals, the high command could not station troops in towns indiscriminately, but at the same time needed to provide for the protection of local administrations. The collection of taxes and the maintenance of order (the basic functions of local administration) were of even greater importance within the overall strategic goals of the anti-pirate campaigns than in times of peace. Furthermore, properly defended local administrative towns provided bases for troops, headquarters for military administrations, and obstacles for pirates.

47 It is beyond question that many gentry families, particularly those whose homes were in coastal areas, suffered very great losses. The libraries of the Ho family at Che-lin and the Kuo family at P'ing-hu were among the gentry property destroyed, and Cheng Hsiao's family property at Hai-yen also was affected. Local accounts cite a number of instances of members of gentry families being tortured to death or struck down in the road, or slain in their homes. Other families, like that of the Wan-li prime minister Hsü Kuang-hsi, were ruined financially by the local exactions for defence purposes. See DMB: 517, biography of Ho Liang-chün:773, biography of Kuo T'ing-hsun:202, biography of Cheng Hsiao; Ho Ping-ti, The Ladder of Success in Imperial China, p.278. Ts'ai:2.5a, 6a, 6b; 3.2a, 7b; Ts'ui:4b. The fact that the common people suffered in far greater numbers only increased the incentive to the elites to put down piracy. See Chapter Six.
The number of districts partly determined the size of the defence task, especially the pattern of fortification building that the high command deemed to be necessary. If there had been only three districts as there were until 1430, only one completely new wall (as opposed to four) would have been required in Chia-hsing prefecture in the period 1553-65, greatly reducing the total expenditure on public works in the area and the burden of those able to pay. Although the successful defence of walled towns was often claimed to have "saved numberless lives", the reason for the walls was not the safety of the populace so much as the protection of official staff, records and property to minimize disruption to orderly rule and the collection of taxes.

The methods proposed by the regional high command for the protection of districts were not always well received by the local elites. For instance, Wang Yü instituted a programme of wall-building to fortify hitherto unprotected administrative towns in Chekiang, including some in Chia-hsing prefecture. The projects were eventually completed but often in the face of apathy or spirited opposition from wealthy local residents. Given time, those with local power were able to manipulate the permanent system of taxation so that it fell most heavily on the shoulders of the powerless. But in a military emergency, when funds were needed for immediate expenditure, the financial burden fell not only on the usual tax paying households, but heavily also on those most able to pay and who had most to lose by not contributing.48

In Chia-hsing, where large market towns competed as centres of economic power with the district administrative cities, the difficulty of obtaining whole-hearted co-operation from local elites for district projects was greatly increased. It was possible to break up companies of troops and station them in as many towns as called for them, but a district level public works project which relied partly on government funds could only be supported at the rate of one per district. That one project inevitably was aimed at the protection of the district administrative city.

It was quite likely that some administrative towns occupied less

48 See Chapters Four and Five.
important strategic positions than other major settlements within their
districts. The invariable decisions to fortify district towns rather
than any other town in the vicinity, was an indication of the importance
of administrative control through the continuation of local
administration as opposed to immediate strategic considerations.

The chief cause of disputes between central and local during the
pirate campaigns revolved around the raising of funds to pay for the
campaigns. Since the central treasury was fully extended paying for
military defence on the northern frontier, all funds were raised in the
south-east. These funds were not handled by the ministry of revenue.
Instead the court allowed the regional high commands to make their
own arrangements and approved levies at the rates they requested. The
sources of funds for the campaigns were very diverse and the amounts
raised enormous. Although the high command had extensive powers to
raise funds, all extra collections had to be kept separate from regular
revenues and audited separately.\(^4^9\) It was through this process of audit
that the charges of corruption and gross embezzlement of funds were laid
against Hu Tsung-hsien, Juan O and other leading figures.\(^5^0\)

Generally imposed levies and surcharges tended to fall on the part
of the local population which was already taxable, though some
previously lightly taxed categories were caught up in the net through
the urgency of the need for funds. But there were as well, especially
in those districts like Chia-hsing which were directly affected by the
pirates, many extra local impositions. These tended to fall more
heavily on those who had an immediate capacity to pay, and tended to
intensify local feelings.

The bridge between particularistic views at a local level and the
general aims of the high command was made during this crisis, as in
ordinary times, by the bureaucratic elite and by local officials. The
local bureaucratic elite saw the pirate incursions as a problem which
only high level, centrally delegated authority could quash. Those among

\(^{49}\) Ray Huang, *Taxation and Governmental Finance in Sixteenth-Century

\(^{50}\) Huang, *Governmental Finance*, p.278; DMB:636, biography of Hu Tsung-
hsien; 1318, biography of Tsung Ch'en.
the local elite who had served as officials were more inclined to see
defence problems within the context of region and empire, and took a
broad rather than parochial view of the defence and related issues of
their own localities. As Cheng Hsiao's stand in 1530 against the
prevailing view among local gentry on overseas trade showed, some
members of the bureaucratic elite were prepared to take positions which
were at variance with those around them, on the basis of general
principles drawn from education and experience. At the same time, the
influence of their views on the policies and strategies of the high
command ensured that local considerations of wider significance did not
go un-noticed or unconsidered.

Piracy was far from being remote from the experience or interests
of the Chia-hsing scholar-officials. In common with others in the
south-east, these scholar-officials had found that military campaigns
constituted a normal part of their work in provincial postings. With
the example of Wang Shou-jen and others in the generation before, they
regarded involvement in military affairs as a worthy challenge to a
civil administrator at whatever level of the bureaucracy he was working.
While some owed their grasp of military affairs to personal experience,
others owed their knowledge to their general intellectual interest in
practical matters of state which had led them to study seriously in the
field.

None of the interests, experience or talent of the local
bureaucratic elite would have been of much use either to their home
districts or to the general defence effort without the opportunity to
put them to work through their access to local administrative processes
and their personal contacts with senior provincial officials. The men
most able to exert influence in the interests of their home districts
were those currently serving in senior official positions away from home.
Often they were able to act as a channel for the attention of the court
as an alternative to the regular channel through district, prefect,
circuit, and high command. The number of such men was naturally small,

51 See Chapter Two.
52 On the latter group, see for instance DMB: biography of Cheng Jo-
tseng, p.205.
but their influence was disproportionately great. For instance in 1555, when Cheng Hsiao was in charge of the transport of tribute grain in the region north of the Yangtze, he wrote a memorial about the arrangements for the transport of tribute grain in northern Chekiang, particularly requesting relief for Chia-hsing prefecture and its subordinate districts. He mentioned that, besides the reports which he had received from the regional inspector of Chekiang and other officials, he had also received representations from "elders" (li-lao) of some of Chia-hsing's districts. The elders had already jointly submitted their case through the regular channels to the Supreme Commander but had come to see Cheng Hsiao to reinforce their efforts.53

Other means were available too for bridging the gap between central and local interests. To some extent, the tactical group of officials provided the machinery for by-passing the existing channels of communication between local, provincial and court level offices. But if this short route for communications was to be effective, the tactical group had to work together closely and harmoniously, and it seems that in fact they often did not. Hu Tsung-hsien had ample opportunity to observe lack of co-ordination among members of the tactical group in 1554 and 1555. By the time he became Supreme Commander in 1556, he had devised his own method of conducting his tactical forces and maintaining communications with the districts beneath him.

Hu's method was to make extensive use of a group of advisors recruited from outside the bureaucracy who served in his military headquarters. The method was an illustration of Hu's political astuteness — the men he recruited were not only well-versed in military theory and practice but also were chiefly natives of Chiang-Che. He thus reduced the distance between the district towns and military headquarters, assuring that his own views were widely-known locally and that he had access to local views.

The question of the nature and significance of the mu-fu of officials at all levels in the Ming period is unresolved,54 and will remain so until the methods of operation of Ming high officials like Hu

have been studied in more detail. The need for expertise and trusted advice other than that supplied by the professional clerks; the uncertainties of politics which obliged talented and ambitious men to withdraw from official positions, although they still might be available for official work; the difficulty which high regional officials found in imposing a strong control over provinces through the existing bureaucratic structure—all were conditions favourable to the development of a personal staff of scholar-officials within the headquarters of governors and supreme commanders like Hu.

Nevertheless it seems possible that Hu's use of the *mu-fu* was an unusual case. The contemporary material does not reveal whether his predecessors in the positions of Governor and Supreme Commander made use of their headquarters in the way Hu did. But since none of his predecessors enjoyed the long period in office, or the opportunities for making and consolidating support among south-eastern scholar-officials, which Hu did in the course of the eight years he spent in Chekiang, he was in an unusually strong position to develop a system of personally-recruited local advisors as part of his *mu-fu*.

The term *mu-fu* when used in relation to Hu denotes his headquarters' staff in general, not his personal staff in particular. Since he was the senior military commander in the region, as well as a civil official, the term is used in a straightforward way in its ancient sense to mean the headquarters of a military commander. In this sense

54 Kenneth E. Folsom, *Friends, Guests and Colleagues: the mu-fu System in the Late Ch'ing period*, Los Angeles and London, 1968, pp.33 ff. contains a survey of the origins of the *mu-fu* from antiquity and through the Ming and earlier Ch'ing dynasties, summarizing the views of such scholars as Chang Ch'un-ming and Ch'üan Tseng-yu on the subject of *mu-fu* in the Ming. Two opposing views are taken by Ch'ü, *Local Government*, p.258, talking of the early Ming official, K'uang Chung, and Chaoying Fang in the biography of K'uang in DMB:754. Although Folsom mentions Hu Tsung-hsien's case (p.42) neither he nor other scholars who have paid most of their attention to the Ch'ing system have explored the details and significance of his case.

55 See, for instance, the way the term is used in *Chia-hsing fu-chih* 1600:25.2b-3a, "On the Chia-hsing military defence circuit" by T'ang Jih-chao; *Hsü chih tsung-p'u* (Genealogical record of the Hsü clan): 14.4a, biography of Hsü Tsao; *Chia-hsing fu chih* 1878:43.43a, biography of Hu Sung.

it was interchangeable with the more commonly used term *chih-men*. It did not mean the formal headquarters in Hangchow where Hu was usually stationed, but was used of the headquarters he had with him wherever he happened to be, for instance during his tour of northern Chekiang in the winter of 1555, and at Ch'ung-te during the campaign against Hsü Hai in 1556. The *mu-fu* thus consisted of officials of the regular bureaucracy as well as men whom he invited to join him as personal advisors, and also included commoners with particular skills whom he used for certain missions, but who held no official status. Some of these advisors were stationed permanently in his headquarters acting as his secretaries or as practical advisors, others were in his employ or enjoyed an invitation to contribute to his deliberations for short periods only.

Problems arose from the fact that some men of the *mu-fu* held no official positions and were not subject to the regulations which forbade excessive demands by officials on localities. In such cases, the only recourse was to the head of the *mu-fu* himself. One such case records that the magistrate of T'ung-hsiang, Chin Yen, confronted Hu with an accusation against one of the advisors (called in one source a *mu-k'o*) who had demanded that wood from an ancient tree in the district be given him to have a coffin built. Chin threatened to petition the court about the matter. Hu had had to take a conciliatory approach to the irate magistrate.57

Men recruited by Hu to execute rather than to devise his strategies were, unlike his personal advisors, generally not of the scholar-official class, and were treated as subordinates, not equals. They were hired or commissioned functionaries often operating away from the direct control of Hu's immediate presence. The problems which these men could pose to local officials, carrying authority from the Supreme Commander and rival to that of the local officials, can be imagined. If Hu lacked the men he needed inside the bureaucracy, and also lacked the structure to run things as he wished, then in his use of privately-employed persons he also ran the risk of undermining his relations with subordinate districts through the high-handedness of some of the people.

57 T'ung-hsiang hsien chih 1887:10.15a, An-ch'ing fu chih, 1681:36a-b, both biographies of Chin Yen.
who operated in his name. Such a one was the merchant Wu Ying of Hui-chou whom in about 1560 Hu commissioned to build granaries in the Chia-hsing area. The villagers complained about him, and the district and prefectural officials had to make representations to curb his activities.  

Other local non-scholar-officials whom Hu employed were Shen K’un and his son of P’ing-hu district. Shen’s family worked as tax collectors in the district on behalf of the yamen. During the famine years of 1539-45, Shen was said to have dispersed all the family wealth as well as the tax silver which he collected to help the hungry people. He was imprisoned, presumably for defaulting on his tax collection, and there met pirates. One source says that Hu Tsung-hsien was recruiting brave and daring men (yung-kan chih shih) in Hangchow when he heard of Shen K’un, and when Shen came out of prison he retained him in his headquarters staff (mu-hsia) to take part in discussions on carrying out Hu’s strategies.  

Another of Hu’s protegés, a man named Ch’ien Ts’ai of Chia-hsing district, had also been languishing in jail when Hu recruited him. Ch’ien was a gang leader and a ruffian, the most disreputable of Hu’s Chia-hsing connections. He was made a captain of locally-recruited troops. Later Ch’ien abused the authority which he felt Hu’s patronage gave him by running a protection racket, and then stirring up an uprising among villagers when the authorities finally came to deal with him.  

However the problems were far outweighed by the benefits such as those which flowed from the local connections of mu-fu members. Hu’s practice of inviting knowledgeable scholars to join his personal staff began as soon as he became Supreme Commander in April 1556 and probably several years earlier. As early as 1554, Hu sought the advice of his

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58 Chia-hsing hsien chih 1685:5.81b; Kuo-ch’ao hsien-cheng lu 47.21a (Both biographies of magistrate of Chia-hsing, Ho Yüan).
59 P’ing-hu hsien chih 1689:10.22a-b, biography of Shen K’un.
60 Ts’ai:3.6b; 4.1b.
61 However, apart from Mao K’un, many of the men best known as Hu’s advisors did not join him until 1557 or later, after the crisis in
friend, Mao K'un, who became one of the most outstanding members of his mu-fu. Mao was a scholar-official of Kuei-an in Hu-chou prefecture, a district adjoining Chia-hsing to the north-west. Prior to his service with Hu, Mao had been involved in military affairs as a civil circuit official, both in the south against tribesmen in Kwangsi, and in the north. In both postings he had shown a strong grasp of theoretical and practical tactics.62

During the campaign against Hsü Hai in 1556, Mao's usefulness to Hu as a native of northern Chekiang was perhaps as great as his military expertise. While Hu was in temporary headquarters at Ch'ung-te, he also invited two scholar-officials of districts of Chia-hsing adjacent to Kuei-an to become his advisers. These two were P'u Wen-ch'i of T'ung-hsiang district, and Lü Hsi-chou of Ch'ung-te; both belonged to important clans of their respective districts.63 It is quite clear that it was their local connections as much as their knowledge of military affairs which made them valuable to Hu.

For instance, while P'u Wen-ch'i was attached to Hu's military headquarters the administrative seat of his home district of T'ung-hsiang was under siege for thirty days. According to the account which Mao K'un later wrote of the campaign, Hu deliberately allowed the siege to continue while he waited for reinforcements and carried out his northern Chekiang area was over. They include T'ang Shun-chih (DMB: 1254-5), who actually held an official position, but who also enjoyed a special relationship with Hu; Hsü Wei (DMB:610, Shen Te-fu, Yeh-hu pien, 17.10a-b); Cheng Jo-tseng (DMB:204 ff.); T'ang Shu (DMB:205). All of these men came from the Chiangnan, Chekiang region.

62 DMB:1042 ff., biography of Mao K'un. Echoes of the tactics Mao used in the south-west occur in Hu Tsung-hsien's strategies against Hsü Hai in 1556. Having been discharged from official duties on a pretext for political reasons, Mao was free to serve with Hu, with whom he remained until Hu's arrest in 1562. Thereafter Mao defended Hu by writing accounts of his achievements against the pirate leaders Hsü Hai and Wang Chih.

63 T'ung-hsiang hsien chih 1887:15.i-hsing 7a, biography of P'u Wen-ch'i; Chia-hsing fu chih 1878:61.7b. Lü Hsi-chou was a chin-shih of thirty years previously and had held the position of Transmission Commissioner in the Office of Transmission. See Ming-jen chuan-chi tzu-k'o so-yin, p.259. Lü Hsi-chou wrote a number of the inscriptions and other brief records pertaining to the years of the pirate invasions.
stratagems against the pirate leaders. He pursued this policy in the face of protests from his second-in-command, the Governor Juan 0, who had been caught in the siege and who had smuggled out sharply-worded letters requesting the siege to be raised. Presumably Juan's feelings were echoed in those of the hundreds of wealthy families who had been evacuated into the recently walled town and who were now required to contribute heavily to the cost of defending it. In addition there had already been some friction between the magistrate of T'ung-hsiang, Chin Yen, and Hu over liberties which a member of his staff had taken in the district during his tour of northern Chekiang in the previous winter. How useful in that case to have at hand a respectable witness from the district to vouch for Hu's side of the story, particularly after his strategies seem to have been vindicated by eradicating the pirates within a few months of the T'ung-hsiang siege. Furthermore, P'u came from the unwalled market town of P'u-yüan which, along with many other such towns, had suffered from ineffective government action in the previous two years. He was perhaps therefore the more inclined to appreciate and contribute to Hu's long-term approach and accept the necessity of gambling on the ability of the newly fortified town to survive under the siege. Lü's term of consultancy on Hu's staff, along with P'u's term, seems to have terminated with the end of the campaign against Hsü Hai and Hu's return to Hangchow.

Hu Tsung-hsien's use of his mu-fu was the perfect expression of the mechanisms by which the key sector of the Yangtze delta was bound to the on-going imperial system. In an objective situation of considerable weakness, containing many divisive and limiting factors on the government side, the alliance between local scholar-officials and this high provincial official stands out as a strong point in the defence against the pirates.

Although the outbreak of piracy was an indication that the central government had been dilatory in recognizing and then acting upon its own interests as against regional pressures, the overall response to the

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64 Mao K'un, Hsiu-k'ou hou-pien, hsia.3a ff.; also Ts'ai: 4.4a ff.; Hucker, "Hu Tsung-hsien's campaign against Hsü Hai", pp. 292 ff.
65 See above, fn. 57.
pirate raids showed the underlying strengths of the regime at that point in the life of the dynasty. In a period of a few years, the right men had been found for the job of putting down the pirate invasions, although only at the expense of some ruthless politicking which had cost some officials their lives. Success was achieved sooner in building an effective organization of scholar-officials both within and outside the bureaucracy and in strengthening the defence of localities than in building up a tactical military capacity. The greatest threat posed by the pirates – their invasions of the Chiang-Che region – was largely over by the time efficient forms of military resistance were beginning to emerge. While the local-central nexus of the bureaucratic elite of the south-east can be identified as a crucial factor, the precise contribution which it made to the anti-pirate campaigns may only be seen by studying the course of the resistance at local level.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE DEFENCE OF WALLED TOWNS

The only consistently effective resistance which the government offered to the pirates in the Yangtze delta was in the defence of walled towns. From the time of the first attacks on the coast of Chia-hsing in 1553, most of the direct confrontations between pirates and Ming authorities occurred when pirates attacked walled towns. In the first year it became clear that only within walled towns was the local administration able to provide protection for the population. Consequently the efforts of local civil officials and the local elites to defend themselves was concentrated on strengthening town fortifications and providing adequate manpower to defend them.

A study of the defence of walled towns suggests some ways in which the formal structure of local government worked in practice, including the roles played by local elites, methods used to tap the resources of the population to provide defence, and the working relationship between local civil authorities and the local military. It also incidentally sheds light on the level of military technology practised in small administrative towns at the time.

Considering the number and importance of so many of Chia-hsing’s towns, the limitation of successful defence to towns that were walled was a severely selective process. In 1553, only four towns in the prefecture were walled: the district town of Hai-yen and the two garrison towns of Kan-p’u and Cha-p’u on the coast, and the prefectural city itself. By the middle of 1556, this number had been increased to eight, with the building of walls at the four hitherto unprotected district towns of P’ing-hu (finished late 1553), Chia-shan (completed 1555), Ch’ung-te (completed mid-1555) and T’ung-hsiang (completed mid-
In a population of around one and a half million, these eight walls could not provide a refuge for more than a small proportion of the people. At the time of an attack there was often a sudden flood of people from the countryside to the security of a nearby walled town, creating a dilemma for the town authorities over whether they would be putting the whole town at risk by allowing mobs of panic-stricken people to enter.\(^1\) The longer-term refugees were wealthy, including many from the unwalled market towns who had sufficient movable property to be at risk from pirate looting.

Just as the administrative towns had no monopoly on wealthy residents, so the pirates did not have only looting in mind when they attacked walled cities. With so many wealthy unprotected towns there for the picking, it was pointless to persist in attacks on walled towns for the sole sake of looting inside them. Continued attacks on the walled towns were aimed not so much at capturing the walls as at keeping the defenders busy while taking a free hand with the suburbs outside the walls where many of the houses of the wealthy were situated.

The presence of suburbs, which in some cases were more heavily populated than the area within the walls, complicated the defence of towns in the Chia-hsing area. An ancient principle for the preparation of walled towns for defence was the removal of anything of potential value to the enemy from a wide area around the walls — to provide an unobstructed view for the defenders, and to deny the attackers cover or the materials for use as weapons.\(^2\) In the delta region where towns were at least as important for transport and trade as they were for their administrative functions, the decision to destroy considerable amounts of property in the suburbs, or to abandon the suburbs for the sake of the city, was not likely to be easily taken.

While the aim of local defence was confined to the protection of walled towns, there was often criticism that local authorities were neglecting the population outside of the walls. Ts’ai Chiu-te, from his

\(^1\) For instance see Chu Shih-ch’ien, *Ch’uan-ch’eng chih*, postscript to Cheng Mao, *Ching-hat chi lüeh*, in *Yen-i chih-lin* 19.12a-b.

vantage-point at Hai-yen, commented on the events of 1554: "At this time, places under threat (from pirate raids) did not come to each other's aid. The country people were abandoned to their fate, and only the cities were protected, like snails closing their shells to hide and not daring to come out." Kuei Yu-kuang, famous litterateur living to the north of Chia-hsing, had similar criticisms, directed specifically at the authorities of Chia-ting district. He accused them of basing their policies on their desire to avoid criticism from the central government, and consequently concentrating their efforts on preserving the granary and the city walls to the detriment of broader defence priorities. Such problems were easier to acknowledge than to remedy, and defence of walled towns remained almost the sole aim of local defence activity during the whole period of the pirate invasions.

The towns of Chia-hsing fall naturally into three categories in terms of their experience in defence against the pirates: the coastal towns, in the first line of attack, were seats for both military and civil administration, and carried the brunt of the pirate invasions in the first year, and a considerable share of them for the rest of the period. The second category contains only the prefectural city itself: its size and importance lent special circumstances to its defence and its experience of attack. The third group, the inland district cities, experienced pirate attacks both before and after they became walled; along with the prefectural city, they were almost wholly the preserve of civil officials and the scholar-gentry.

Coastal Towns

The coastal areas were worst hit by the pirates, and the three walled towns on the coast suffered repeated attacks over the period of the pirate invasions. A local resident described the effect of the pirate troubles in Hai-yen district as follows:

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3 Ts'ai:2.6b.
During the four or five years from 1553 the city gates have been closed during the day, and the (surrounding) district has been desolated, with the farmland turned into battlefields and half the dwellings reduced to ashes.\(^5\)

As soon as the first pirate attacks on the coastal districts occurred, in the fourth and fifth months of 1553, an exodus from the countryside around Hai-yen began. A local scholar records:

> At this time (i.e. in the fourth month of 1553) the people lived closely together and there was a dense population and a large number of hamlets, but in the twinkling of an eye (the people had) loaded up and gone.\(^6\)

During the next three years Hai-yen and the other two coastal garrison towns were for long periods partially isolated from the rest of the prefecture, caught at times between pirate camps at Shih-tun, Liang-chuang and Cha-p’u harbour, and surrounded by deserted farmland. The importance of these coastal towns to the defence of northern Chekiang, guarding as they did the sea route to the provincial capital at Hangchow and the southern entrance to the Grand Canal,\(^7\) had led to the setting up of a series of walled towns, subsidiary forts and lookout points, and permanent Guard forces in the early years of the dynasty. Despite long years of peace, and the deterioration of the Guard system, the fortifications had been maintained sufficiently well so that when the pirates came, they still afforded a solid obstruction to attack.

The first extended defence of a walled town in the Chia-hsing area was at Hai-yen in the summer of 1553, when thirty-seven boatloads of pirates besieged the town for three days.\(^8\) The town was to some extent prepared for the attack: a week earlier, the newly appointed assistant regional commander, T’ang K’o-k’uan, and his three hundred P’i troops (from northern Nanchihli) had arrived in the Hai-yen area on transfer

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5. Ts’ui:7b.
6. Ts’ui:4a.
7. On the strategic importance of Hai-yen and Cha-p’u as mid-sixteenth century writers saw it, see Chia-hsing fu t’u chi 1549:1.32a-b; Hai-yen haien t’u-ohing 1624:7.22b.
8. This attack is described in detail in both Ts’ai and Ts’ui, and confirmed in broad outline in several memorials of Governor Wang Yu. See the collection of his memorials Yu-shih ta-fu Ssu-chih Wang-kung tsou-i:5.2b-3b and 5.3b-22b.
from Fukien. They came in time to wipe out a small group of pirates who had been causing trouble in the vicinity of Cha-p’u. The day after T’ang’s triumphant entry into Cha-p’u, five boats had anchored off Hai-yen and pirates had come ashore and plundered the suburbs outside the walls to the north-east of the town. The population of the suburbs and surrounding villages packed up and left, "realizing that the bandits must be about to make a great offensive in order to get what they wanted."9 The next day T’ang assigned the Chief Guard Commander Wang Ying-lin to head the defence of Cha-p’u while he withdrew with his troops to Hai-yen. There, two circuit intendants, who had arrived in Hai-yen to oversee defence preparations and to advise the tactical commander, greeted T’ang and gave him a feast in the yamen in honour of his initial victory.

Scarcely were these celebrations over when the worst fears of the townspeople were realized: within a few days the thirty-seven boatloads of pirates arrived. The soldiers and townsfolk watched from the walls, "their hearts quaking like fish in a cooking pot",10 and saw the fleet "like mountains obscuring the sky, their sails like floating clouds."11 When T’ang tried to lead troops out from the walls to meet the pirates, the crush of panic-stricken people on the streets was so great that his horses could not pass through.12 T’ang gave up the venture, and mounted the walls to supervise defence preparations. Already the pressure on military commanders like T’ang to confine their efforts to defensive operations from within the walled towns was apparent.

From the walls, T’ang made a speech to re-assure the terrified people: "Don’t be afraid! This is my responsibility. I will conduct the defence for you, but if you follow me, you must agree not to make obstacles and not to be lazy."13

Thus, to meet the first major pirate offensive on the Chia-hsing

9 Ts’ui:4a.
10 Ts’ui:4a.
11 Ts’ai:1.6b.
12 Ts’ui:4a-b.
13 Ts’ai:1.7a.
coast, Hai-yen was led by the most senior officials in the northern Chekiang sector. It happened that the three officials represented the three arms of provincial government: the two circuit intendants were from the administrative and surveillance hierarchies respectively, while T'ang was a military man. However, T'ang formed part of the active tactical force being organized under the governor, and was not part of the normal positional military hierarchy. His position had been specially created to meet the pirate crisis in that sector, and was so new that the formal request to the central government for the creation of the new position was not made until several months later. T'ang, as the above quotation implies, took direction of operations, while the two civil officials played a consultative, advisory role. Since the problem at hand was one in which the military official had recent and extensive practical experience, he was the natural leader in the defence.

T'ang had some 2,000 troops, half of them non-local soldiers, to defend a town whose population had been swollen by refugees from the surrounding district. The several miles of walls around the town, however, were in fair condition, and offered T'ang his most valuable asset for defence.

The two accounts of T'ang's defence arrangements differ somewhat in their details but a similar principle emerges in both: that of joint responsibility and participation by military and non-military forces. To every pair of the two thousand crenellations of the wall, one soldier and one or two civilians were assigned. Supervising every five crenellations was one member of the household of a local scholar recommended by the local gentry. One of T'ang's P'i troops was in charge of every ten crenellations. The next level of supervision above the troops was given to men referred to as chia-chang who were probably civilians. A score or more soldiers and civilians led by a battalion

14 See Chapter Three.
15 This term is a little ambiguous, since it is conceivable that it refers simply to the position held on the walls, and thus may denote either a civilian or a soldier. A more likely explanation is that chia-chang were men who held responsibility under the li-chia system, raised from the li of Hai-yen's city and suburbs. (See H. Franke, "Defense of Towns", pp.173-4.) Since the rest of the hierarchy of defenders are described in terms of their origins rather than the
or company commander manned each tower. Each gate was under the command of a Guard Commander, with someone from the local civil yamen in attendance. At the gates, towers and shelters, a ranking military official was responsible for defence against localized attacks, while elsewhere the chia-chang or P'i troops took responsibility.  

T'ang was given moral and logistic support by the civilian officials and the local gentry. The circuit intendants and the Hai-yen scholar-officials waited on T'ang on the walls ready to be consulted. Together with T'ang they formed the council of war. Other local gentry backed up the defence effort by urging on the defenders, organizing rations and arranging transport. An acting magistrate, Teng Ch'ien, who had recently been despatched by the prefecture to take charge of the district, seems to have played only a minor role: he is described as patrolling the walls on horseback, carrying a lamp to signal his approach, and encouraging the troops and checking security. There is no other evidence to suggest what his role might have been in directing defence, in comparison with the circuit officials.

On the first day the pirate attack was fierce and prolonged, beginning about midday and intensifying in the early evening. T'ang had the walls lit up with lamps to prevent a surprise approach of pirates under cover of night. When attacks came, the watchers gave the alarm with clappers and gongs. Smoke and flames from inside and outside the city obscured vision. The north and east gates had been attacked during the day, and the north wall was almost scaled in several places during the night, but each time the defenders were able to ward off the pirates. The pirates had built scaling ladders higher than the walls to assist their attack on the east and north gates. The circuit intendants, making use of the fact that some locals had been taking initiative in capturing pirates and presenting them to the authorities, ordered the Hai-yen district administration to post a reward of three taels for each positions given them on the walls, the latter explanation appears the more likely to be correct.

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16 Ts'ui:4b; Ts'ai:1.7a-b.
17 See the appreciation of Teng Ch'ien by the Hai-yen scholar-official Ch'ien Wei in his collected works Ch'eng-ch'i-t'ang kao 19.20b.
scaling ladder. The pirates had no sooner made one ladder than they lost it, and after three days of fighting the pirates went off, some by land, some by sea, in the direction of Cha-p'u.\textsuperscript{18}

There is no indication how accurately the strategy for defending the walls was put into practice, but the rationale behind it is clear. The concern of the officials for internal security and morale, as much as for maximizing the defence capability of their troops, is reflected in the deployment of men with military expertise, of strangers and locals, evenly around the walls, and the interlayering of civilian and military levels of command. The P'i troops were scattered thinly along the whole length of the wall despite their probable inability to communicate verbally with the local people under their command. In this way, they created an impression of strength among the pirates, with whom the P'i troops were said to have a formidable reputation. The troops' loyalty to Commander T'ang, their experience and their higher level of pay made them trusted supervisors of the civilians and soldiers under them.\textsuperscript{19}

The responsible civilians were the members of gentry or aspiring gentry households who had both the obligation and incentive to remain at their posts. Ranked above them were the \textit{ohia-ohang} who had an official responsibility to render service for the term of their office. The one or two thousand untrained local men who took part in the defence and over whom the officials and community leaders had no particular hold, were regarded as unreliable and uncommitted.

The principles underlying this arrangement of defence accords closely with the conventional and recommended arrangements outlined in handbooks on military strategy dating from the Sung and late Ming periods.\textsuperscript{20} The numerical predominance of civilian forces manning the walls, the elaborate system of multiple layers of supervision, the supervisory responsibilities of gentry household members, all are to be found in the handbooks. The arrangements for Hai-yen thus involved the

\textsuperscript{18} Ts'ai:1.9a; Ts'ui:4b.

\textsuperscript{19} Ts'ai:1.6a.

\textsuperscript{20} See H. Franke, "Defense of Towns", pp.173 ff.
practical application of well-known principles, tailored to meet 
 immediate local conditions.

The defence during this first siege was led and dominated by three 
circuit-level officials; district officials played only a small part. 
Since the efficiency of the defence operations depended heavily on the 
support from local leaders, it was important that the three newly 
arrived higher officials should quickly form a strong working partner­
ship with them. Despite his reputation for military ability gained in 
naval engagements against pirates in Fukien, T'ang, like most military 
men, had little cultural polish, and was a stranger from the north. He 
would perhaps have found it difficult to get the close co-operation he 
needed from the local scholar-gentry without the assistance of the two 
circuit intendants who not only had sufficient status as scholar-
officials to deal easily with the most important of the local 
bureaucratic elite, but also had links with the region and the 
provincial command which lent authority to their support of T'ang's 
efforts. P'an En, assistant administrative intendant for the Che-hsi 
circuit, was a scholar-official from Shanghai, a district with defence 
problems and cultural traditions very similar to those of Hai-yen.21 
Chiang T'ing-i, intendant of the general surveillance circuit, knew 
Governor Wang Yü, having worked with him at the time of the northern 
border crisis in 1550.22 Wang Yü himself, who had despatched the two 
intendants to Hai-yen, was from another part of the delta, T'ai-ts'ang 
department, and like P'an En, could be counted upon to understand the 
point of view of local spokesmen. The defence of Hai-yen thus provides 
an illustration of the way in which informal connections through 
regional or personal affiliations oiled the wheels of administration.

The first defence of Hai-yen showed that strong leadership and 
efficient organization could see a town through a pirate attack. The 
converse also applied. The pirates, frustrated in their attempts to 
sack Hai-yen, approached Cha-p'u, the garrison town guarding Hai-yen's 
eastern flank, in a determined frame of mind, and within a day had over­
run the city. The pirates, however, went away again within a day, with- 

21 Biography of P'an En, Chia-hsing fu shih 1878:42.18a. 
out the expected degree of looting and violence: carrying out their customary reverence for their favoured deities, they received the augury that they should not stay at Cha-p'u. The town had been left in the charge of Chief Guard Commander Wang Ying-lin and local Guard troops. Like Hai-yen, Cha-p'u had walls, but they were inadequately defended. No help for the town was sent from Hai-yen although most of the reinforcements in the area were located there. Ts'ai Chiu-te and Ts'ui Chia-hsiang each reports that Commander T'ang knew that the pirates were headed for Cha-p'u and that the town would be in difficulties. Ts'ui quotes T'ang as saying that "If they don't attack Cha-p'u then they will return to pounce on Hai-yen, and we must be prepared."\(^{23}\) Ts'ai merely asks "Who bears the responsibility for it (the disaster)?"\(^{24}\)

At least one local commentator saw in the differing fates of Hai-yen and Cha-p'u a reflection of the virtues of military officers who, like T'ang, were imperially appointed, as opposed to those like Wang Ying-lin who were attached to the local Guard forces.\(^{25}\) One was capable of organizing the defence of a town, while the other, it was not at all surprising to find, lost his town with scarcely a fight and saved his own skin. Expectations among local residents of local Guard officers plunged still lower after this event.

The two attacks on the coastal towns provoked the building up of defence capacity along the coast over the months that followed, and by the time the next major attack on Hai-yen came, in the fourth month of the following year, the coastal towns of northern Chekiang, including the district town of Hai-ning, had been reinforced both by personnel and by added fortifications.

During the winter of 1553-4, new magistrates arrived to take up their appointments in all of Chia-hsing's seven districts. Most of them remained in their districts until the pirate invasions of Chia-hsing ended in the eighth month of 1556, seeing through more than two and a half years at the height of the pirate invasions. Two young men "with

\(^{23}\) Ts'ui:4b-5a.

\(^{24}\) Ts'ai: 1.9a-b.

\(^{25}\) Ts'ui:5a.
reputations for talent were chosen from among the successful candidates for the metropolitan degree of 1553 to fill the vacant positions of magistrate in the coastal districts of P'ing-hu and Hai-yen. They were Liu Ts'un-i, from Hsiang-yang in Hukuang, and Cheng Mao, from P'u-t'ien in Fukien. Though appointed on the same day, Cheng arrived in the early winter of 1553 and Liu not until the third month of the following year. Coming from one of the centres of overseas trade in Fukien, Cheng Mao had the opportunity of knowing what kind of force he was up against in preparing for the next attacks. Perhaps this helped stimulate him to the high degree of activity in defence preparations which he undertook during the first six months of his term in Hai-yen.

The organization of the defence at the time of the second attack on Hai-yen showed some striking contrasts with the first, the major one being the role played by local civil officials. The second attack occurred at the beginning of the fourth month of 1554, eleven months after the first, and it lasted this time for only a day and a night. The town had warning of their arrival and had begun preparing the defence. The outlandish dress of the pirates and the sound of the conches which they blew as they approached, made an intimidating impression. The pirates burnt down the wooden barriers guarding the approaches to the east gate, as well as many houses in the area, but the east gate itself had over the past year been flanked by two forts with gun emplacements, and the wall now was broken at intervals by newly built towers. The pirates then made for the west side of the town, where houses were clustered densely outside the protection of the walls. Here they robbed and burnt, and at night attacked the west wall with a battering ram and the north gate with scaling ladders. The defenders threw rocks and tiles to deter them. In the morning, having achieved what they could around Hai-yen, the pirates went off, and the following day seized the police office at Shih-tun in Hai-ning district, a stronghold which periodically, until mid-1556, they used as a camp.

26 Ts'ai:1.8a.

27 This account of the second siege of Hai-yen is based on Cheng Mao, Ching-hai ch'i lüeh:la ff., in Yen-i chih-lin, chüan 19 (hereafter cited as Cheng Mao). Cheng's account of the pirate invasions at Hai-yen is the only one by a local official for the Chia-hsing area. Said to be compiled from his official reports, it covers the period...
Although by the time of the second attack, the structural defences of Hai-yen had been considerably strengthened, the town had lower ranking officials in charge and fewer troops than had been the case the year before. A week or so earlier, when the military circuit intendant had been in the district he had received orders to go with 500 troops into Sung-chiang. The assistant regional commander, now a man named Lu T'ang, together with the 2,000 troops usually stationed in the Hai-yen area had already been away fighting along the Sung-chiang coast where the pirates were entrenched in camps. Only the troops of Hai-ning Guard remained within the city. The only officials were magistrate Cheng himself, his chief officer, and two local Guard Commanders. The other subordinate military and civil officials of the district were absent.

Magistrate Cheng Mao took charge of the defence. When the first warning of the approach of the pirates was given from the lookouts, he ordered the residents to distribute themselves along the battlements. He spread his civilian and military forces evenly around the walls as T'ang had done the year before. However, unlike T'ang, supervision under Cheng was carried out, not by troops or trusted gentry household members, but by employees of the yamen (hsü-shih), one of whom was in charge of every ten men. The assault towers were manned by selected Guard troops and local militia (yung-chuang), assisted by respected older residents (lao-jen). Each man was issued with two pints of rice and five candles. The local scholar-officials led the gentry in going on foot to round up civilians to man the walls. The four gates were divided between the four senior officials — Cheng, the chief officer, and the two Guard Commanders.  

This organization reflects strongly Cheng Mao's position as district magistrate. Not only the yamen clerks, but also the local militia were groups of people under the specific control of the civil district administration. The militia (yung-chuang) were perhaps raised on the same basis as the auxiliary district security force that had from the fourth month of 1554 to 1556. See Wu Yü-nien, "Ming-tai Wo-k'ou shih chi chih mu" (A listing of historical works on the Wo pirates of the Ming dynasty), in Wang Yung, Chung-kuo ti-li t'u chi tsuang-k'ao, Shanghai, 1956, pp.157-8.

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28 Cheng Mao:2a-b.
already been in existence under the previous magistrate, and who had fought under Registrar Li Mao at the time of the first pirate incidents the year before, although one source indicates that they were recruited by Cheng Mao especially to man on a continuous basis these newly-built assault-towers. The local Guard troops and their officers played a role subordinate to the local civil officials. The other change of note was the absence in the second defence of members of gentry households as part of the supervisory structure, and it must remain a matter for speculation why they were replaced by yamen clerks.

With the city even more strongly fortified than during the first attack, although with a great reduction in the numbers and quality of men and officers, the bandits were not able to make any impression on the walls. They attacked with sufficient ferocity to preoccupy the defenders who were anyway too nervous to venture outside the walls. The pirates were thus able to plunder the suburbs and surrounding villages unhindered. Magistrate Cheng was not at all happy that the normal complement of troops and the chief military leaders of Hai-yen were absent at such a distance. He sent messages to Commander Lu T'ang four or five times a day, urging him to return. When Lu eventually did return, he brought his 2,000 troops a distance of 50 miles by forced marches with neither food nor rest. They were ambushed near Hai-yen and more than half of them killed. Lu himself managed to escape. Cheng made a detailed criticism of Lu and his tactics: first, he criticized him for being outside Chekiang at all, when his position was to defend northern Chekiang, and particularly the Chia-hsing coast; second, he was at fault for bringing the troops back without allowing them to rest when it was highly probable that they would be called upon to fight soon after they arrived; and third, he questioned Lu's deployment of the troops at the time when the ambush took place, although other accounts blame the Chang-chou troops and their betrayal to fellow Fukienese among the pirates.

Cheng's argument about the correct role for forces headquartered in

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29 See Chapter Three. On Cheng Mao's recruitment of these men, see Chu Shih-ch'ien, Ch'uan-ch'eng chih, postscript to Cheng Mao:11b-12a.
30 Cheng Mao:3b-4a; Ts'ai:2.4a.
his town reflects one side of the debate then taking place over positional versus tactical defence policies. At this time, the spring of 1554, Wang Yü was still Governor of Chekiang, and the overall administration of the Chiang-Che region was divided between him and his counterparts on the Nanchihli side of the provincial border, both scrambling to secure the available troops. In the sixth month of the previous year, Nanchihli regional officials had requested the court for troop reinforcements and in particular had asked that Wang Yü be ordered to make available some of his forces from Chekiang. The request was granted, and imperial authority was supplied for the situation which Cheng so much deplored.31

Cheng's position as magistrate in a city that was also the headquarters of a Guard and of an assistant regional commander was not enviable. As magistrate of a border district of strategic importance, he was held responsible equally with the local military commander (in this case the absent Chief Guard Commander) for making adequate defence preparations against the enemy.32 His own considerable efforts to safeguard the town and its important store-houses in the six months prior to the attack should have stood him in good stead against accusations of neglect if the city had fallen.33 The effort by civil officials and the civilian population in building fortifications made it hard to contemplate defeat caused by the absence of those military leaders who were seeking honours in battle in Sung-chiang.

Soon after their second attack on Hai-yen, the pirates captured the police station at Shih-tun near the Hai-ning border. Thereafter the fortress of Kan-p'u, which was like a sentinel at the approaches to the provincial capital, and formed the western flank of Hai-yen, was increasingly exposed to attack. On one occasion in the summer of 1554, a group of pirates from Shih-tun came to Kan-p'u to capture naval vessels, but when they did not succeed, they turned their attention to

31 STSL 32/6 (June 1553):399.5a-b.
33 See Chu Shih-ch'ien, Ch'uan-ch'eng chih, postscript to Cheng Mao. 11a ff.; Ch'ien Wei, Ch'eng-ch'ie-t'ang kao, 18.13a-15b, "On the achievements of Cheng Mao in defending the town"; Hai-yen hsien t'u-ching 1624:9.23a-b.
the town, attacking first the south and then the east gates. In their attempts to scale the walls they used doors taken from nearby houses as shields, but could not withstand the hail of missiles hurled at them, and they eventually left. It is reported that Kan-p'yu was ill equipped, with military equipment either in bad shape or non-existent. Their supplies were replenished by shipments sent from the prefect in an effort to prevent the town becoming "a fox's lair or a rat's hole." In charge of Kan-p'yu at this time were the registrar of Hai-yen district, Li Mao, who had already fought pirates outside Hai-yen in 1553; a vice-magistrate of the same district; and the Guard Commander, Hsü Hsing-chien. The presence of both a Guard Commander and the district official who took particular responsibility, under the magistrate, for military affairs, is further reflection of the shared responsibility between the local civil administration and the military administration for the safety of walled towns.

Perhaps deterred by the city's defences, and with their main targets lying further inland, the pirate attacks on Hai-yen city grew less severe with each year. When several thousand pirates came ashore at Hai-yen on New Year's Eve, 1555, they did not attack the walls at all but camped in the surrounding countryside, stealing and indulging in the wine and food which the inhabitants had prepared for their New Year celebrations. The townspeople on the walls saw the sea glow red from the fires that the pirates left in their wake, but "not one soldier dared to go out of the city to oppose them." The soldiers and their commanders knew well enough how many troops had been killed in previous years by the pirates, and their policy was to retreat within the strongholds and secure their defence.

Although the pirates did not attempt to take Hai-yen again, Cha-p'yu was less fortunate, for in 1556 it was laid under siege for ten days. Cha-p'yu's fortifications had been strengthened since the town had fallen to the pirates in 1553, but it was nevertheless severely threatened when, late in the third month of 1556, the pirate leader Hsü Hai approached

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34 Ts'ai:2.7b; Cheng Mao:6a-b.
35 Cheng Mao:6a-b.
36 Ts'ai:3.1b.
the town with many thousands of followers. They burned their boats to indicate their determination, and surrounded the town. Requests for assistance which were smuggled through the pirate encirclement to military headquarters went unheeded, and the town was forced to withstand the siege alone until the pirates withdrew of their own accord. Inventive and energetic as they are often shown, the pirates tore down houses to build movable towers as high as the walls, and placed on top of them firewood covered in green wheat to produce smoke which blinded the defenders. Nevertheless, during the siege the defenders cut down or captured over two hundred scaling ladders.37

In contrast to the poor leadership of 1553 when the town had fallen, Cha-p'u this time was commanded by Liu T'ao, who had been the Circuit Intendant for Military Affairs for northern Chekiang since 1554. Like T'ang K'o-k'uan in the first siege of Hai-yen, Liu T'ao, although a civil official, had his own "household troops" (chia-ting), a small force of experienced and loyal men whom he used to lead and supervise the regular government troops. Liu led "men and women" in throwing rocks down onto the heads of the pirates. Again the civilian population was essential in the defence, and for the first time women are mentioned as taking an active role. He picked groups of men to go out on sorties by day and on missions to pick off pirates in their camps by night.38

From the attention which the pirates paid to Cha-p'u on this occasion — ten days was the longest sustained attack on any coastal town — it seems possible that they planned to take it as they had in 1553, but this time meaning to stay and use it as a base.

Despite the energy and ingenuity of the pirates they did not this time succeed in breaking through the defence. As at Hai-yen, although the pirates could not take the city, the surrounding countryside was theirs to use as they pleased, and a group of pirates remained camped at Cha-p'u harbour until they were routed in the eighth month.

37 Ts'ai:4.2a-b.
38 Chia-hsing fu chih 1600:30.29a, "Record for the shrine at Cha-p'u to Commissioner Liu" by P'ing-hu scholar-official Feng Ju-pi; Ts'ai: 4.2a.
The experience of coastal towns under attack was one of leadership either shared between civil and military officials, or led by civil officials. The expectation that civil officials would lead or take a major share in the defence of these coastal garrison towns extended even to subordinate district officials. There was no clear demarcation line between local defence and that undertaken for the security of the entire sector. The military presence appears to have complicated the task of local civil administration, rather than relieving the defence burden to any marked extent.

The Prefectural City

The administrators of the prefectural city faced particular problems in arranging its defence. Its walls dated from the beginning of the Yuan period and were somewhat more impressive than those surrounding the coastal towns, but were neither extensive nor high considering the size of the city. Spread outside the city walls were suburbs and densely clustered villages which included many houses of rich merchants and gentry. The Grand Canal hugged two sides of the city, and, on its banks, close to the city, was the important station of Hsi-shui, with its 500 foot wharf on stone piers, and its extensive shipping and warehouse facilities. Clearly the prefect could not make an easy decision to defend the walls and abandon the environs.

Quite apart from the problem of the suburbs, the defence of the walls was not easy to arrange. No more than 400 troops remained of the full complement of 1,200 supposed to be attached to the Guard battalion traditionally stationed in Chia-hsing city, and several dozens of these were old and feeble. The population registers of Chia-hsing and Hsiu-shui districts were used as a basis for the selection of able-bodied men who could be spared from the families liable for corvee. Although the fortifications of Chia-hsing had been repaired during the preceding year, it was difficult to raise adequate manpower and

39 Chia-hsing fu chih 1600:8.27a.
40 Chia-hsing hsien chih 1685:2.3b.
41 See Chapter Five.
particularly men capable of supervising the defences of the several miles of the perimeter. By early 1554, the armed forces of the city had been reinforced by troops from neighbouring Hu-chou prefecture, and a company of Ch’u-chou troops.  

Furthermore, responsibilities delegated by the prefect to the two subordinate districts which shared the city and its environs had to be carefully divided between them and co-ordinated to avoid any gaps in the defence preparations. Since one of the districts had within its borders very much more of the environs of the city than the other, responsibility for defence was unevenly distributed between them, and disputes arose.

The first threat by pirates on the prefectural city itself was early in the summer of 1554, when the 500 or more pirates who had been harassing Hai-yen for twenty-four hours turned and made for the inland. The prefectural officials had had word that pirates were headed towards Chia-hsing and had begun making preparations. The prefect Liu Ch’üeh ordered that houses immediately outside the city walls should be pulled down, and eventually burnt, in order to remove opportunities for cover.

The clearing of a swathe around the walls still left, however, a considerable number of suburbs around the city. Soldiers and civilians prepared ambushes in the wards of the suburbs, which were flimsily protected by the walls of buildings and wooden street barriers. When the pirates arrived late in the afternoon they found that people and possessions had been evacuated into the city. Troops concealed themselves near the gateway of a market place and managed to kill or disable some of the pirates. As pirates entered the south street quarter, soldiers managed to close the gates of the ward behind them and trapped the pirates within. People hurled tiles and stones from the roofs, and fired arrows and knives from inside the houses. The pirates wrenched out window bars to defend themselves, but they could not escape. The number trapped in this way could not have been very large for many made

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42 Ts’ui:5b.
43 Chia-hsing haien chih 1685:2.3b, quoting a discussion in the early seventeenth century on the problems of distributing responsibilities between the two districts in time of military crisis.
44 Ts’ai:2.5a.
their way back to the coast, after causing extensive damage to the suburbs.\textsuperscript{45}

One of the accounts of these events relates that prefect Liu Ch’üeh and the military circuit intendant made a contract with Hang-ch’ou and Hu-ch’ou troops to go out of the city to take on the resistance against the pirates.\textsuperscript{46} The offering of rewards for troops to carry out specific tasks as the need arose remained the main method employed by the prefect to protect his city. Less than a week later, several hundred bandits came into the prefecture from Sung-ch’iang, plundering boats, burning and looting houses in Chia-shan and then Chia-hsing districts. Since the previous pirate attack a contingent of "wolf troops" (\textit{lang-ping}), mercenaries chiefly from the mountainous regions of Kwangsi, had arrived in the prefecture. Prefect Liu offered them rewards and feasts to induce them to attack the bandits.\textsuperscript{47} The wolf troops do not seem to have been particularly successful, but did divert the bandits from the vicinity of the prefectural city, which was one of their main aims.

A short time later, a group from the new pirate stronghold of Shih-tun was active in the area along the Grand Canal south of Chia-hsing city. The wolf troops were hired "for seven hundred taels"\textsuperscript{48} to go out and kill or capture them. A week later, when bandits were again headed towards Chia-hsing city, one thousand "prefectural troops" (\textit{ohiin-ping}: probably the Hu-ch’ou and extra local troops newly stationed in the city) were sent to intercept them. Simultaneously a Guard Commander led a thousand Guard troops from Hai-yen. As the two groups drew near to each other the bandits hid in a field of hemp; the troops from the prefecture, catching sight of the Hai-yen troops, suspected they were bandits, and in the ensuing confusion more than one hundred of the prefectural troops were killed. The next day prefect Liu offered a prize of several hundred taels to the wolf troops to pursue the pirates to the Mao River in the west of Sung-ch’iang. On the same day Liu sent more wolf troops to exterminate a small group of bandits looting in the

\textsuperscript{45} Ts’ai:2.5a-b.  
\textsuperscript{46} Cheng Mao:2b.  
\textsuperscript{47} Ts’ai:2.6a. On wolf-troops, See Li, \textit{Yii-Wo chu-k’o-chiin}, pp.41 ff.  
\textsuperscript{48} Ts’ai:2.7a.
vicinity of the town of Hsin-feng, where a company commander from P'ing-hu had already died in an attempt to get rid of them.49

Unlike the situation at Hai-yen and the other coastal towns, where troops generally remained within the walls and waited for an attack to begin, the city of Chia-hsing was protected by a policy of forward defence. The basis of this policy was the raising of special funds for hiring troops to deal with the pirates at a distance from the city and its suburbs. This fund was raised locally, and chiefly from wealthy residents.50 Later in 1554 when prefect Liu needed money for improving the fortifications of the city, a compulsory levy yielded as much as was needed within a few days.51 The chief resource of the area for use against the pirates was sufficient wealth to buy protection.

The jobs of the magistrates resident in Chia-hsing city during the pirate crisis were different from those of magistrates in their own administrative towns, mainly because overall responsibility for the city lay with the prefect rather than with them. However, the prefect had heavy duties in all seven districts, and apart from taking charge of the overall defence policy, had left the daily tasks connected with manning the walls and keeping watch to his two local magistrates. For instance, Wang Ying-hsien, magistrate of Hsiu-shui district, is said to have "planned the defence with prefect Liu Ch'üeh: by day he distributed rations, controlled military supplies, and supervised the officers and men. By night in full official dress he toured the walls without a moment's rest."52

The prefect himself was of great importance not only in the instances outlined above, but to all of the Chia-hsing districts throughout the years of the pirate invasions. He was the one official in Chia-hsing whose tenure spanned the whole four years of pirate attack,

49 Ts'ai:2.8a.
50 Only one of these contributors is mentioned by name, the local scholar-official Shen Ch'î-yüan, grandfather of Shen Te-fu. His family had been scholar-officials for generations and owned extensive property in the area. Hsiu-shui hsien chih 1596:6.12b.
51 Ts'ai:2.11a.
remaining in his office from 1552 until 1556. During his unbroken five year term, he held office under all the regional high commanders. Liu Ch'üeh survived the conflicting demands made by these successive high officials, and enjoyed good relations with local bureaucratic elites. He had previously been senior secretary in the Estimates Bureau (yü-heng sau lang chung) and there had learned something about the administrative aspects of military affairs.  

The prefectural city did not suffer such close attack again, but the policy of intercepting and diverting pirates who were making for the city was repeated in 1556. One of the first threats from the huge pirate gangs of that year came from a group of several thousand which was making its way through Chia-shan district towards Chia-hsing. Supreme Commander Hu Tsung-hsien and his staff devised a scheme to divert them from their goal. A hundred jugs of poisoned wine were placed as bait for the advancing pirates, who duly stopped and took advantage of the chance to drink wine they thought intended for government troops. Some of them died and the rest were delayed long enough to be engaged by some thousands of government reinforcements who had newly arrived in the prefecture. Although the government troops came off badly in the encounter, the pirates were successfully diverted north in the direction of Su-chou.

Responsibility for the defence of Chia-hsing city throughout these years was entirely in the hands of the local civil officials: the military circuit intendant, the prefect, and under him the two magistrates of Chia-hsing and Hsiu-shui districts. Paradoxically, through the policy of forward defence, regular armed forces played a greater part in the protection of the city than they did for any other. This policy, pursued by both prefect Liu and Supreme Commander Hu, required access to considerable amounts of cash and other valuables at short notice. Although it is to be expected that Hu would be able to draw on such resources, it says something for the wealth of Chia-hsing

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53 Biographies of Liu Ch'üeh: Ts'ai Ju-nan, Tsu-ohih-t'ang chi (1558): 11.8b-11b; Wan-an heien ohik 1876:12.23a-25a; Kuo-oh'ao heien-cheng lu (1594-1616):53.40a-b.

54 Ts'ai:4.2b-3a.
city and its environs that the prefect was also able so quickly to raise the necessary funds to pursue such a policy.

The Inland Towns

The conditions under which the four inland district towns — P'ing-hu, Chia-shan, Ch'ung-te and T'ung-hsiang — faced pirate attacks differed from those of both the coastal garrison towns and the prefectural city in several important respects. In all four towns, the district civil administration was left to cope with defence almost entirely without outside help. Regular military officers and troops were scarcely involved. At the beginning of 1553, none of these towns had either physical defences or armed forces capable of defensive action: they had no walls and their security forces consisted of the police force and the so-called militia, who were mainly used to guard the yamen and its storehouses. By the summer of 1556, all of the towns were walled and equipped with weapons and had bodies of men on constant alert as well as systems for raising extra manpower at short notice. All of them suffered direct attacks by pirates, both before and after their walls had been built. These attacks proved that without walls, local civil administrations found it almost impossible to put up a useful defence, whereas provided that they could make their stand

55 \textit{Chia-shan hsien chi} 1892:13.8a; "Of the 300 \textit{min-chuang}, half filled various kinds of labour service (\textit{ch'a-i}) and were only nominally trained. None understood soldiering. If there was an alarm, what chance was there of resisting it?"

56 On the building of walls around these towns, see Chapter Five. \textit{Chia-shan hsien chi} 1892:13.7a gives an example of the changes in defence preparation brought about by the pirate invasions. It gives a long list of the items of military equipment held in the district after the pirate invasions, whereas before there had been "nothing with which to defend it".

The period of the pirate invasions saw the introduction of western-style muskets modelled on those of the Portuguese, and of western-style cannon in the south-east. This development is confirmed in the accounts of the defence and equipping of the towns of Chia-hsing. By 1556 a certain number of \textit{fo-lang-ohi} and cannon were standard equipment in each of the towns and there is evidence of the uses to which they were put in the fighting. However arrows, spears, stones and incendiary devices remained the main weapons used by the defenders.
from behind city walls, they had every chance of defending themselves successfully.

The pre-wall phase of defence in these towns exposed local civil officials to the dangers of their responsibilities. At times they faced a bleak choice between taking up arms against overwhelming odds, or making their escape. In such cases, the only men to "achieve merit" had died for it.

The town of P'ing-hu, being the closest of these four towns to the coast, had the earliest experience of pirate attack. During the first encounters, the registrar of the district had died when he led a small group of militia out to intercept the pirates. Shortly afterwards, the acting magistrate of the district had armed himself and, at the head of a boatload of militia, had gone out of the town in an effort to head off the pirates, and was saved from a sad end only by the arrival of relief forces from the coast. In 1553 the pirates came close to the town only in small numbers and for short periods, but the experience was sufficient to stimulate the district to making hasty defence preparations. By the time the pirates returned in greater force the following year, the town was modestly protected by a low rammed-earth wall, and the new magistrate had taken up his position.

The second of the inland district towns to be attacked was Chia-shan, not far across country from the pirate camp at Che-lin, in Sung-chiang prefecture. In 1554, when the pirates made their first forays inland, Chia-shan was one of the first places to be attacked. Responsibility for the defence of the town lay with the magistrate Teng Chih who had taken up his appointment earlier that year. On hearing of the arrival of the pirates, he gathered men and supplies and took refuge in a monastery. They had begun preparing a meal there when the pirates arrived and set fire to the place. The troops scattered and many were killed. The district offices were also set alight. Only a Guard Commander from Fukien and his isolated company fought the pirates while his superior officers looked after their own safety; he was drowned when a shot from a hidden gun felled him. The magistrate Teng was

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57 Cha-p'u chih 1757:6.4a.
arrested and tried for fleeing his duty.\(^{58}\)

In contrast to Teng Chih's dereliction of duty, the new magistrate of Ch'ung-te, Ts'ai Pen-ju, made an auspicious beginning in defending his district. Not long after the incident at Chia-shan, a small group of about fifty pirates from the Shih-tun camp came towards Ch'ung-te. Ts'ai came out of the unprotected town at the head of a militia band to oppose them, and succeeded in heading them off. But less than a year later Ts'ai was dismissed from office. The new walls of the town were not yet complete when in the first month of 1555 the pirate leader Hsü Hai, with a very large number of followers, besieged the city. Ts'ai escaped from the north gate of the city, leaving behind a scene of death and large-scale looting which went on into the following day.\(^ {59} \)

The behaviour of Teng and Ts'ai in these instances was contrary to the law, but was certainly the saving of their lives. As well as the death of the registrar at P'ing-hu in 1553, several magistrates in neighbouring prefectures in Nanchihli had died in similar situations at that time. On Ch'ung-ming island, for example, a district notorious for smugglers and pirates, the magistrate was deserted by the townspeople and was cut down in front of his yamen; at Ch'ang-shu, the magistrate Wang Fu died while he was actively involved in the fighting. Without walls or a trained force of men, the officials of these districts had little chance of protecting their cities or themselves.\(^ {60} \)

Magistrates who were not forced to face such a challenge until their towns were securely walled were more fortunate. In the first place, the walls acted as a deterrent to the pirates: neither Chia-shan nor Ch'ung-te were worried with attacks after their walls were completed, although pirate activity in surrounding market towns and countryside was frequent.

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58 Chia-shan hsien chih 1800:6.8b, 29a-b, biography of Lai En. A report on the background of the incident by Hu Tsung-hsien, then investigating censor in Chekiang, in STSL, chikan 419, is quoted in Li, Yü-Wo chu-k'o-ohün, pp.100-1.

59 Shih-men hsien chih 1677:11.18b-20b.

60 Biography of T'ang I-ts'en, Ch'ung-ming hsien chih 1760:14.15b-16a; Li, Yü-Wo chu-k'o-ohün, p.144; Ming-jen ch'uan-chhi tsu-k'o so-yin, Taipei, 1964, p.58.
Secondly, given well-organized supervision and funds to pay the men, defence even with untrained men became feasible. The magistrate was generally supported by a council of local gentry. While there is no instance in Chia-hsing towns of gentry members actively leading troops in battle, they played a role like that of their counterparts in Hai-yen, of going about recruiting men, requisitioning and organizing supplies, and using their knowledge of local people to keep an eye on internal security. The degree of organization made possible by walls enabled the setting up of quite elaborate town defence techniques. On such a basis, the magistrate Liu Ts'un-i at P'ing-hu, who did not arrive until after the walls were complete, successfully led the town against two short but violent attacks in 1555. The most vivid illustration of the rather self-contained local defence of a district town was provided by the siege of T'ung-hsiang.

The longest siege in the Chia-hsing area occurred at T'ung-hsiang late in the fourth month of 1556, directly after the battle of Tsao-lin. At that battle, after three days of fierce fighting, the pirate leaders Hsü Hai and Ch'en Tung with tens of thousands of followers had finally inflicted a heavy defeat on the government forces by isolating and massacring a large force under the command of Tsung Li. Hsü Hai had been wounded and his followers exhausted. They needed to rest and to find themselves a large store of supplies. They had heard that the nearby town of T'ung-hsiang was well supplied with food, and they surrounded it so quickly that there were no forces immediately available with which to intercept them. The siege was maintained for three or four weeks.61

Of all the towns they might have selected, the pirates happened to choose a target which perhaps was best equipped to resist them. The wall at T'ung-hsiang had been completed only one month before. Not only food but military equipment, gunpowder, candles and other important supplies were stored there in quantity. Because of the prolonged and heavy fighting nearby, the town was filled to capacity with "several tens of thousands of souls", including many of the wealthy people of the surrounding area and their valuables. Manpower and the means to pay it

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61 See Hucker, "Hu Tsung-hsien's campaign against Hsü Hai, 1556", for a detailed account of the external circumstances of the siege.
were therefore equally available.\(^62\)

T'ung-hsiang was also fortunate in the quality of its leadership at the time. The magistrate of the district, Chin Yen, a chin-shih of 1553 from Ch'ien-shan in Nanchihli, was a capable and forthright man. He had been in charge of the district since late 1553 or early 1554, and had supervised the building of the wall. Now in the last year of his magistracy, he knew the human and material resources of his town and had gained the respect of local people.\(^63\) Throughout the siege he received strong support from different sections of the local population.

Just before the pirates appeared, the governor of Chekiang, Juan 0, arrived with his troops from the battlefield at Tsao-lin. Accounts differ as to why he went to T'ung-hsiang, but it seems certain that he was dismayed to find himself trapped inside a small besieged town, and therefore his motives in arriving there were probably to seek temporary refuge.\(^64\) The pirate forces followed hard on his heels, some say because they anticipated that where Juan and his forces went there must be food.\(^65\) Within a matter of hours the local magistrate had acquired both a full-scale siege and high-ranking colleague to whom he would have to subordinate himself. Because of his overall defence strategy, Supreme Commander Hu in his temporary headquarters at the neighbouring town of Ch'ung-te deliberately withheld relief from the town, and ignored Juan's constant entreaties for help which were smuggled through to Hu.\(^66\) Because of Juan's high rank and responsibility in the resistance to the pirates, he presided over the councils of war at

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\(^62\) T'ung-hsiang hsien chih 1887:10.15b.

\(^63\) Biography of Chin Yen in T'ung-hsiang hsien chih 1887:10.14b-16b; including the text of a "Memorial tablet for magistrate Chin", by Mao K'un, native of the neighbouring district of Kuei-an, and prominent member of Hu Tsung-hsien's personal staff. (See Chapter Three.) An earlier text of the latter is included in Mao K'un, Mao Lu-men hsien-sheng wen-chi (after 1601):21.5a-7b. Also An-oh'ing fu chih 1681:16.36a-b.

\(^64\) Mao K'un, Hai-kou hou-pien, hsia (1565).2a, in Chin-sheng yu-chen chi (Chia-ching period); Ts'ai:4.4a. On the dating of the former work, see DMB, biography of Mao K'un, p.1045.

\(^65\) Ts'ai:4.4b.

\(^66\) Ts'ai:4.5a-6a; Hucker, "Hu Tsung-hsien's campaign against Hsü Hai", pp.292 ff.
T'ung-hsiang, but he seems to have left the direction of planning and
the conduct of the siege almost entirely to Magistrate Chin. The close
relations which Chin developed with local scholar-officials may have had
a bearing on the later reporting of these events, in the stressing of
Chin's importance in comparison with the unpopular Juan who later fell
from grace and was arrested and tried for corruption in Fukien.67

The first act of Chin and Juan was to assemble the local gentry and
hold a council on defence measures. Only one of the local men present
at this meeting is mentioned by name, Wang San-hsi, recently prefectural
judge of Pao-ting prefecture in Peichihli, home on mourning leave. Wang
proposed that the district put up a large sum of money to recruit men
for a commando force which would go out at night and harass the
pirates.68 His suggestion, when put into practise, was the only attempt
at this time to fight the pirates from beyond the safety of the walls.

The pirates again showed energy and initiative in their attacks on
the walls of T'ung-hsiang in the early days of the siege, but the
counter-measures of the defenders were a match for them in determination
and ingenuity. For instance, a businessman named Shen Hua, who in
normal times was in the smelting business at the town of Lu-chen in
T'ung-hsiang district, was playing wei-ch'i in a Buddhist establishment
in the city when the combination of the game and his profession made him
think of a way to deter the pirates. He proposed that all the cooking
pots in the city be gathered together and melted down under his
supervision, mixed with gunpowder and poured on the heads of pirates
beneath the walls. The suggestion was taken up and proved effective.69
It was by no means a new technique in town defence, but it was a
sophisticated one. A student from P'ing-hu, Lu Wan-chung, who had
already some experience in defending his own district town against the
attacks of pirates, was in T'ung-hsiang during the siege, and gave use-

67 Shen Te-fu, Yeh-hu pien (1619):22.6b-7b, "Governor Juan under
siege"; Ch'en Chi-ju, Ch'en Mei-kung hsien-sheng oh'uan-chi, 38.12a-19b; DMB, biography of Tsung Ch'en, p.1318; T'ung-hsiang
hsien chih 1887:15.5b, biography of Wang San-hsi contains
reservations held locally about Juan's role at T'ung-hsiang.
68 T'ung-hsiang hsien chih 1887:15.5b-6a, biography of Wang San-hsi.
69 T'ung-hsiang hsien chih 1887:15.6a-7a, biography of Shen Hua; Ts'ai:4.5a.
ful instruction and supervision on the foiling of a particular pirate siege engine. A local commoner, named Chu, performed the same kind of service on another occasion. A local athlete evaded the pirate blockade by means of his swimming prowess to fetch a further supply of candles when the town ran short.70

Many other instances are given of the tactics of the defenders, which attest to continuous exploitation of the skills and abilities of the community for the defence effort.

Despite the presence of the Governor and his troops, the defence of T'ung-hsiang was largely a task for local civil administration, in which the magistrate had the role of director. Not only were the outstanding contributors of tactical ideas and technical knowledge local civilians of various classes, but the whole style of the defence reflects a civilian response to a military situation — an emphasis on improvisation and organization rather than training and discipline.

The predominance of civilian over military personnel in the defence of towns was reflected in the use of ad hoc forms of organization based equally on ancient conventions of siege warfare and on the structure of local society. Even during the defence of Hai-yen in 1553, when a senior military officer directed operations and the town was heavily reinforced with troops, there was a majority of civilians among the defenders on the walls at all levels of command as well as among the men. Most striking was the need on each new occasion to undertake recruitment of the majority of the defence forces from the civilian population. A variety of means was used to find the numbers, ranging from the use of local population registers to put the recruitment on an official and thorough basis, to the methods universally used by the local gentry of "going about drumming up recruits". The gentry's methods sometimes depended on their close tie with the men they recruited, as was the case with those recruits described as members of gentry households. Often, however, the recruitment had an element of naked coercion, tempered by the provision of pay, or at least rations. To this end, the ad hoc activity that accompanied each of the attacks included the rapid raising

70 T'ung-hsiang hsien chih 1887:20.3b.
of funds to pay for the manpower.

The role of local gentry both as organizers and as the source of funds to pay for immediate local defence requirements complemented that of the leadership which local civil officials were expected to provide. It seems that the capacity of the gentry to pay wages was at least as important to local defence as their influence over men which derived from their social status.

The experience of Chia-hsing's towns from the attacks of pirates showed that walls were the single most important resource for the defence of civilian population and property and the preservation of local administration. In the study of wall-building, the mobilization of the resources of the Chia-hsing area for local defence can best be observed.
CHAPTER FIVE

WALL-BUILDING

In the decade from 1553, more wall-building activity took place in the towns of Chekiang than at any time since the early years of the dynasty. Undertaken in response to the pirate invasions, wall-building programmes in the 1550s reflected a tendency to provide fortifications in compensation for declining military institutions. This tendency was part of the general retreat from offensive to positional defence of the empire's borders which had been going on since the mid-fifteenth century. More immediately, the wall-building programmes were a response to the obvious inability of government forces to provide security for local population or local administration.

Although the sixteenth century generally was a great period of wall-building, of which the additions to the Great Wall were the most complex and sophisticated undertaking, many towns in the delta region had quite substantial walls dating from before that century. Walled towns and fortified points had been an integral part of the coastal defence system of the early Ming. Moreover all towns of Chia-hsing which, prior to the founding of the Ming dynasty had been administrative centres, were already walled, a legacy of the periods of inter-dynastic

1 Ch'en, Wo-k'ou k'ao-lüeh, pp.139 ff., says that in the last year of the Chia-ching period, forty prefectural and district towns were walled, and of those, thirty-two had been built during the Chia-ching period.

2 See Elvin, Pattern, pp.101-2; Lo, "Early Ming Navy"; 157 ff. The debate over forward defence as opposed to positional defence policies remained alive, despite the overall trend to the latter. See for instance the DMB:1033 ff., biography of Tseng Hsien, on the debate over defence policy towards the Mongols in the late 1540s.

3 The nature of the fifteenth and sixteenth century Great Wall is briefly outlined in Elvin, Pattern, pp.101-2 (see also Map 4, p.102).
wars when successive armies had fought for control of the lower Yangtze region. From these origins came the walls which in 1553, in various stages of repair, protected four towns of Chia-hsing. By mid-1556 substantial extensions and repairs had been made to these four, and the number of towns protected by walls had been increased to eight by the building of new walls at four additional inland towns.4

Individually they were not large projects, but when taken together, the wall-building projects carried out in the south-east in the late Chia-ching period represent a very large expenditure of funds and labour over a relatively short period. Within each district, moreover, particularly those where entirely new walls had to be built, the projects were of outstanding importance, and not only for the heavy demands they placed on local resources. For the inland towns in particular, where the pirate menace was less often a tangible presence than along the coast, the planning and execution of the local fortifications programme was the most sustained effort and controversial issue of the period of the pirate invasions.

The histories of the wall-building projects, preserved in a surprising number of inscriptions, biographies and literary notes of the period, offer an opportunity to pursue at a purely local level some of the themes which so far have been seen only in connection with direct confrontation with pirates. These themes include the respective contributions which local military and civil institutions made and the role of economically powerful classes within the districts.

Although approval for projects and their financing had to come from the central government, generally the planning and supervision of building works was expected to be organized by local officials in consultation with the local population.

Before the building of a wall (or any other public works) could be undertaken, detailed plans had to be prepared at the district level. This task in itself was a large one, requiring that agreement be reached on the site of the wall-base, that the land be measured, that the construction costs (including labour, materials, and the acquisition of

4 *Chia-hsing fu chih* 1878: chüan 4, and see below.
land) be estimated, and that the possible sources of funds to pay for the project be examined. This latter subject in particular was one which concerned the prefectural and circuit level officials whose wider jurisdiction made them conscious of competing demands on limited resources within a broader area. The other questions were more strictly local concerns. When completed, the plans were examined and approved in turn by the prefecture, by the provincial authorities and by the central government. At the central government level, the Board of Works and the Board of Revenue examined the scheme and if they gave it their approval, funds were allocated. The laws which set the obligations of officials involved in public works generally forbade starting a project before these steps had been completed. The centralized control and multiple levels of bureaucracy involved in the process of obtaining permission and funds was cumbersome, but necessary if the central government were to retain control over the deployment of manpower and material resources, and in particular to keep track of the destination of incoming funds, even if those funds originated in the district where the project was to be carried out.

Of the local physical conditions affecting wall-building in the delta region, the presence of waterways was perhaps the most important. Waterways made the provision of wide moats a relatively easy matter, but also presented problems of engineering and expense. Since towns were generally situated on the junction of two or more waterways, the walls had to contain water-gates as well as land-gates to allow the passage of water-borne traffic. Since each gate was a weak point needing extra fortification, waterways increased the cost and difficulty of building the wall itself. Bridging of these waterways was often difficult and there were problems of seasonal changes in water levels, which could result in too much or not enough water flowing into the channels dug for the moat.

5 A list of the processes already completed before proposals for a new wall at P'ing-hu were put to the imperial government is contained in a memorial of Governor Wang Yü in which he sets out proposals for walls to be built at a number of Chekiang administrative towns. Wang Yü; 6.1a, "Appealing for the building of walls in order to safeguard localities".

6 Ta Ming hui-tien (1587):172.1a-b.
An ancient principle in agricultural societies, China not excepted, was that public works should not take place in the period when all available labour was needed in the fields. The necessity for planning the routing of waterways and digging or deepening canals for moats meant that construction work had to be carried out in the dryer season, that is in late autumn and winter. Although in that region of China there was no absolute cessation of agricultural work during the year, the dry period coincided with the slack agricultural season, when labour could be spared from the fields.

Although the pirate crisis precipitated all of the wall-building projects in Chia-hsing after 1553, different circumstances surrounded each of them. In terms of the tasks they presented and the conditions under which they were carried out, the projects fell into three groups: the coastal towns, where the basic structures of the walls had existed since the beginning of the dynasty, so that only repairs and additions were required; the prefectural city, where large suburbs posed special problems; and the inland district administrative towns, where entirely new walls were constructed.

Coastal Towns

The walls of the five coastal towns, Hai-ning, Kan-p'u, Hai-yen, Cha-p'u and Hai-ning, owed their form largely to the setting up of the coastal defence system in the Hung-wu and Yung-lo reigns over 100 years earlier. All of these walls were made of rammed earth faced to some extent with brick. The walls at Hai-yen were somewhat smaller than those of the other four towns, and the existing foundations had been built earlier, at the beginning of the Yüan period. The walls were over two miles in length and about thirty feet from base to top on the outside. There were three water-gates and four land-gates. Like most other walled towns in the delta, Hai-yen's canal system had been used to provide a deep, wide moat. After the redredging in late 1553, the moat averaged thirty feet in depth and seventy feet in width. At the beginning of the dynasty when Hai-ning Guard headquarters were stationed in the town the four land-gates had been strengthened, and the last
major repairs were carried out in 1418.\footnote{Chia-hsing fu chih 1878:4.13a-14b; Hai-yen hsien t'\`u ching 1624:7.23a.}

The Hai-ning wall also dated from before the Ming dynasty.\footnote{The town of Hai-ning, although not part of Chia-hsing prefecture, is considered together with the three walled coastal towns of Chia-hsing, as forming with them the original Ming system of fortified coastal towns in northern Chekiang.} It was built by the war-lord of the late Y\`uan period, Chang Shih-ch'\ eng, in 1353. When Hai-ning became part of the coastal garrison system in early Ming, the walls were raised in height, and were gradually faced with brick. The walls which the pirates attacked in 1554 had five gates surmounted by towers, three water-gates, encircling walls fortifying each entrance, and shelters along the walls for the protection of the defenders. In 1555 substantial repairs were made, so the condition of these facilities in 1553 may not have been good, but they were sufficient to enable the combined defence force of soldiers and civilians to prevent the pirates from entering the town.\footnote{Hai-ning hsien chih (K'ang-hsi edition): 3.2a; Hai-ning hsien chih (Kuang-chii edition): 3.1b-2a.}

The walls at Cha-p'\u and Kan-p'\u were built in the Hung-wu period as part of the coastal defence system.\footnote{Hai-yen hsien t\`u ching 1624:7.23a.} The Cha-p'\u walls was partly constructed of material taken from a wall built at the Grand Canal town of Ch'un-\'ung-te when Chang Shih-ch'\ eng occupied that area. This wall was rectangular, and so low that "those inside and outside the wall could see each other, and a deer could jump over it ..."\footnote{Chia-hsing fu chih 1878:4.17b, from the abbreviated "Record of the newly-opened water-gate at Cha-p'\u" by Hs\u P'i-tso, on the additions of the Ch'un-\'ung-ch\en period.} In the Yung-lo period the walls of both towns were gradually faced with brick.\footnote{Chia-hsing fu chih 1878:4.17b (Cha-p'\u); 4.15a (Kan-p'\u).} Cha-p'\u, though built in a strategic position on the coast, was difficult to defend. Its low walls were overlooked by hills quite close to the town; in 1842 the town came within range of British field guns on the hills,\footnote{John Ouchterlony, The Chinese War, 1844 edition, reprinted New York, 1970, pp.269-71.} and as in the sixteenth century it was difficult for the defenders to
conceal from the attackers what they were about. Unless the outlying watch-towers were properly manned it was easy for sea-borne invaders to land out of sight at several points close to the town. The debacle of 1553 at Cha-p’u was but a repetition of what had occurred in 1442, when the pirates of the earlier period had attacked the town, and walls had collapsed, rendering defence impossible. In the same year it was ordered that the damage be repaired and civilians and soldiers combined to carry it out, completing the work in a hundred days. When part of the Cha-p’u wall collapsed again the following year after long rains, and the Kan-p’u wall was also in need of repair, the three northern prefectures of Chekiang, Hang-chou, Hu-chou and Chia-hsing, were given joint responsibility for repairing them. The last major work done on the walls of the coastal towns was at Cha-p’u in 1451, when a Guard Commander added four towers.

In addition to the walled towns there were in 1553 a number of small forts and stockades along the coast. The only one about which information survives is the stockade of Liang-chuang, on the southeastern coast of P’ing-hu district. During the pirate troubles in the early fifteenth century, Liang-chuang had been so often used by Japanese boats, that in 1440 the circuit intendant made a submission that a large stockade should be built there consisting of a wall somewhat smaller in circumference than those built at Cha-p’u and Kan-p’u, with two gate towers and four corner towers. A Commander of Hai-ning Guard was stationed there, but could not hold the fort against pirate attacks in 1553. Although some troops later occupied it, no attempt was made during or after the years of the pirate troubles to maintain it in good repair.

After the first attacks in the spring of 1553, efforts were made to strengthen the fortifications of the coastal towns. Just before the first siege of Hai-yen, the circuit intendants had inspected the wall,

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14 Cha-p’u chih 1757:1.2a.
15 Chia-hsing fu chih 1878:4.17a-b (Cha-p’u); 4.15a-b (Kan-p’u).
16 Hai-yen hsien t’u ching 1624:7.22b; Chia-hsing fu chih 1878: 4.19a-b.
17 Ts’ai:1.2b-3a.
and finding that the brick facing was sufficiently uneven to provide hand and footholds for attackers to make use of, had them chiselled flat. A Chief Commander of T'ai-chou Guard in southern Chekiang, Chang Fu, was appointed to a military post giving him responsibility for all of Che-hsi which involved supervising construction work in the towns of Hai-yen, Hai-ning, Kan-p'u and Cha-p'u, and the other forts and stockades of that coast. Chang built an outer wall at Hai-yen, which was constructed from the mud thrown up by deepening the moat. A fence of bamboo stakes was built between the main wall and the moat. The work force was composed of soldiers of Hai-ning Guard and civilians in the ratio of three to seven, the civilian component being raised through the li-chia system. Ts'ai Chiu-te says of Chang's building arrangements that "the people of Hai-yen regarded it as Chang's imperishable accomplishment and year after year the system of using soldiers and civilians to dredge the moat and maintain the fortifications continued."

Despite Ts'ai's praise of Chang's achievement, his method of distributing work between soldiers and civilians in the ratio of three to seven was a conventional arrangement in the building of defence fortifications. Ts'ai's remark should be taken as admiration for Chang's success rather than for the originality of his methods. Like the defence arrangements under T'ang K'o-k'uan outlined in the previous chapter, Chang's fortifications programme was carried out according to accepted principles of organization adapted to local conditions. Chang showed that not all hereditary Guard officers were a liability to the defence effort. Nevertheless, his was the only case during the 1550s of a military official directing a public works programme in the Chia-hsing area.

Although some repairs may have been carried out at Hai-ning under Chang Fu's supervision in 1553, the gazetteers only record that a number

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18 Ts'ai:1.7a.
19 Chia-hsing fu chih 1878:82.45a-46b, "Hsü T'ai's record of the outer embankment of the Hai-yen wall".
20 Ts'ai:1.10a.
of additions were made during 1555 under the direction of the magistrate of Hai-ningsheng district, Ts'ai Wan. These additions included building twenty-four watch-towers, the setting up of tall lanterns at every ten embrasures, rebuilding shelters along the walls, and the addition of several metres of brick to the facing of the rammed earth walls. Outside the walls, the moat was deepened and a horse pasture was encircled by a low earth wall.22

Chang Fu's work at Hai-yen was taken over by the new magistrate of Hai-yen, Cheng Mao, when he arrived in the winter. Under his supervision, four low walls were built within the city, including one to enclose the granary which he had moved from its old site in the western suburbs of the city to greater security within the town walls. Twenty-four towers were built along the walls, and Cheng recruited irregulars (yung-chien) to defend them and to keep a permanent watch from them. Two forts were also built flanking the east gate, with emplacements for the firing of catapult-type weapons or cannon.23

Cheng obtained the funds to pay for the towers and forts from a levy which he imposed on the wealthy of the district soon after he took up his post.24 No sum for the cost of the project is mentioned, but there is no indication of contributions from public funds. It is not clear who the irregulars were who were set to defend the twenty-four towers, whether they were local recruits in the regular army, or were hired and came under the control of the civil district officials.

The repairs at Kan-p'u and Cha-p'u were carried out in 1554 under the supervision of the magistrates of the two districts to which they belonged. A number of assault towers were added at both towns;25 three sides of each tower protruded from the wall to enable various types of firing weapons to be used to best advantage. These weapons may have included cannon.26

23 Chu Shih-ch'ien, Ch'uan-ch'eng shih, in Cheng Mao:11b-12a; Chia-heisn shih 1878:4.14a.
24 Ts'ai:2.2a.
25 Chia-heisn shih 1878:4.15a-b, 17a-b.
26 Cha-p'u shih 1757:1.2a. The editor notes that in his time these
THE COASTAL GARRISON TOWN OF KAN-P'U IN 1557

From: Tung K'u's Revised Gazetteer of Kan-p'u, 1557.
These additions of the 1550s were a high point in the maintenance of the coastal walls. At Hai-yen, no other major repairs or additions were made until forty years later, or to Cha-p’u and Kan-p’u until the mid-seventeenth century.

The brief accounts given above show a distinct change in the management of local public works in the coastal towns from the early years of the dynasty. Until the mid-fifteenth century, the building and repairs to the coastal walls were carried out under the supervision of the Guard Commanders of the local garrisons. All of the work done during and after the years of the pirate troubles, with the single exception of the Chief Guard Commander Chang Fu who had been specially appointed from outside the area, were under the direction of local magistrates. Military personnel were effectively excluded from taking a leading role in public works connected with defence preparations. This change is a further reflection of the relative power of the military and civil hierarchies at the beginning and towards the end of the dynasty; the loss of responsibility by the local military for the upkeep of walls was specifically related to both the loss of financial resources on the part of the military hierarchy, and the shift of the administrative duties of military commanders to the shoulders of civil officials. The management of granaries which had been the responsibility of the military was in 1435 turned over to the civil administration. The produce of military colonies had gradually merged with the civil tax collections.\(^27\) In the 1550s, the local magistrates of the coastal districts of Hai-ning, P’ing-hu and Hai-yen were the only local officials with the means to obtain local funds for building projects; and in the distribution of functions between senior civil and military officials within the northern Chekiang sector, the defence circuit intendant was responsible for all matters of military administration which involved the collection and disbursement of funds.\(^28\)

The dominance of the civil administration at local level had an effect on the priorities for defence works. In the context of regional towers had long since fallen into disuse.

\(^27\) Huang, *Governmental Finance*, pp.29-30.

\(^28\) See Chapter Three.
defence, repairs and additions to the coastal garrison towns had the purpose of maintaining and up-grading the strong points in an established system of coastal defence, of which walled towns and fortified points formed the most palpable and useful remnant. Despite their broad strategic importance, much of the energy and direction for the improvement of the defence capacity of Hai-yen and Hai-ning came from the local civil officials whose primary interest was to preserve the local administration and to fulfil the desires of the local elites for a secure city.

Perhaps under a military command, the forts and stockades like those of Liang-chuang and Shih-tun would have also been brought back into use at an early date, and become an asset to the government side rather than being abandoned to serve as bases for pirate groups. Both Hai-yen and P'ing-hu districts were responsible for the fortifications of two walled towns with walls of about equal size, one of which was the district city. In each case the district city was the first attended to. The repairs at Hai-yen and the building of the P'ing-hu wall preceded the additions made at Kan-p'u and Cha-p'u. In P'ing-hu district it was arguably more important to concentrate first on strengthening Cha-p'u, which had of all the Chia-hsing towns perhaps the most vital strategic position. But such a consideration was easily outweighed in the minds of those who were responsible for wall-building in that district (the prefect, acting magistrate and local notables) by their apprehension at the completely unprotected state of the district city, some miles inland. In this field, as in many others in the first years of the pirate troubles, the interests of the civil officials and the civilian inhabitants were considered before wider military considerations.

The Prefectural City

The planning of wall repairs was not as simple at Chia-hsing as it was in the coastal towns. Local officials had to bear in mind that the wall, first built when the city was much smaller, now enclosed only a

29 Chia-hsing fu chih 1878:4.3a-7a. The walls of the prefectural city had been substantially rebuilt and the perimeter slightly enlarged
part of the population and the activities properly belonging to the city, and did not provide any protection for the vital artery of the Grand Canal and its facilities. If the local population were to be expected to help fund repairs and new projects, then the interests of the many people outside the existing walls would have to be taken into account. Eventually these considerations led to the adoption of a fortifications programme which differed from that of other cities which were already walled. The first steps taken, however, were simply to repair the existing wall.

It seems probable from the gazetteers that repairs were undertaken between the first attacks on the coast in the spring of 1553 and the fourth month of 1554 when pirates attacked the suburbs of the city and caused widespread damage. A local man, Tou Ch'ing, is said to have requested prefect Liu to have the walls repaired in preparation against pirates. Liu accepted and requested his superiors for funds to pay for labour. Responsibility for the wall was shared between the two districts of Chia-hsing and Hsiu-shui: each district divided its half of the wall into twenty-four tasks, and for each of these tasks commissioned a trustworthy commoner (i-min) to supervise the work. The work was completed within a year. It would seem from the number of tasks and the length of time it took to complete them that the repairs were substantial, although no details are given of what the tasks were.

With repair work completed, the walls of Chia-hsing had been able to protect a large number of people evacuated from the surrounding district from the attacks in the early summer of 1554, but the suburbs received extensive damage. The policy of hiring government troops to divert pirate groups away from the prefectural city was successful, but depended too much on the ability of the troops for its effectiveness. The question of improved defences for the prefectural city was sufficiently important to warrant several high level conferences of officials, including the Supreme Commander, in 1554 and 1555. In 1554, the high military command under Supreme Commander Chang Ching,

in early Ming. From then until 1553, no substantial repairs or additions were made.

30 Chia-hsing hsien chih 1685:2.2b; Chia-hsing fu chih 1878:4.3a.
31 See Chapter Four.
discussed with local officials possible projects for improving the
defence of the city including the suburbs outside the existing walls.
They discussed building an outer wall to the east of the city, where
suburbs and villages clustered thickly around the approaches to the city
and along the banks of the Grand Canal. The cost of this ambitious
project, which presumably would have involved extensive bridging works
and the acquisition of expensive land, was found to be prohibitive in
the face of heavy demands on available official funds. Nor were the
private resources of the Chia-hsing wealthy sufficient to support such a
scheme, although in the ninth month of 1554 a levy which was imposed on
them to finance fortifications raised "several tens of thousands of
taels" within a few days.\(^{32}\)

The following year, after Hu Tsung-hsien had been made governor,
further discussions with the Inspector of Armies, Chao Wen-hua, and
local prefectural and district officials\(^{33}\) again discarded the idea of
an outer wall because of lack of sufficient funds and decided on a
quicker and cheaper alternative.

Instead of further wall-building, the defences of the city were to
be augmented by the construction of a series of six forts on the main
approaches to the city.\(^{34}\) Each fort had a base of masonry which
contained kitchens, bath-house, latrines and a well, and three upper
storeys of brick, pierced with windows, surmounted by embrasures as on a
city wall. These forts were capable of holding several hundred troops
altogether. They guarded the approaches to the city, one to the south,
two to the east and three to the north. Their presence outside the
walls provided some protection to the suburbs and villages which
clustered around the city. The area adjacent to the southern fort,

\(^{32}\) Ts'ai:2.11a.

\(^{33}\) Chia-hsing fu chih 1681:18.51a-b. The officials who consulted
together on this occasion included, besides Chao and Hu, a vice-
prefect and prefectural judge and the magistrate of Chia-hsing
district. The prefectural judge, Teng Ch'ien, had earlier been
involved in wall-building activities at Chia-shan, and prior to that,
had been acting magistrate at Hai-yen for part of 1553. By late
1555, he had acquired considerable experience in local public works.

\(^{34}\) Chia-hsing fu chih 1681:18.49b-51b; "Inscription on the newly-built
assault towers" by Chao Wen-hua; Hsiu-shui hsien chih 1596:2.18a.
which commanded a lock on the canal, was set aside for a drill ground. The fort and ground together were planned to serve as a camp for the militia. Chao Wen-hua records that the forts were built between the seventh and tenth months of 1555, and cost over four thousand taels.\textsuperscript{35} The forts were the outcome of an emergency in which heavy demands competed for the available funds. The amount spent on wall repairs and the building of the forts was considerably less than the amount spent on wall-building in inland district towns.\textsuperscript{36}

However useful and cheap an alternative the forts might have been, it does appear that they were a stop-gap measure forced by the exigencies of inadequate funds rather than a long-term substitute for traditional wall defence. In 1560, the governor of Chekiang ordered prefect Liu Ch'ueh's successor, Hou Tung-lai, to raise the level of the wall from its existing height of about fifteen feet to about twenty-six feet. In the course of this work, for which over 18,600 taels were allocated from public funds, twenty-seven towers along the walls were rebuilt.\textsuperscript{37} These major additions of 1560 were directly inspired by the pirate troubles; no further large-scale work was done on the wall at Chia-hsing until after 1600, although regular minor repairs were carried out during the latter part of the sixteenth century. The magistrates of Chia-hsing and Hsiu-shui were made officially responsible for the general management of the 1560 works, but a commemorative description of the repairs records that the prefect made special use of three men who were being held in prison at Chia-hsing: after reviewing their cases for signs of unjust accusations, the governor allowed them to work for their release through assisting in the wall additions. The three men were to be responsible for the funds, for keeping track of materials and labour, and the supervision of the daily work schedule. If they acquitted themselves well they were to go free.\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{35} *Hsiu-shui hsien chih* 1596:2.18a. This source says that the three forts built within Hsiu-shui district cost 700 taels each to build, indicating that the sum quoted by Chao was the cost of all six.

\textsuperscript{36} For instance, the P'ing-hu project was said to have cost 32,000 ounces of government money, the one at Chia-shan a total of 30,857 ounces. See below, section on "The Inland Towns".

\textsuperscript{37} *Chia-hsing fu chih* 1878:4.3b.

\textsuperscript{38} *Chia-hsing fu chih* 1878:4.3b-4a. A summary of Wu P'eng's "Record on
three malefactors as works managers suggests that at that time it was not easy to find people with the means and necessary experience who were willing to take on responsibility for the work. These three must surely have been men of wealth with some experience of management themselves to have been so employed. It seems that they performed satisfactorily since it is recorded that the work was completed within fifty days. Unfortunately there is no indication of the crimes of which they were accused which could point to their background.

The choice of the series of forts to fulfill immediate defence needs in 1555, and the postponement of major additions to the Chia-hsing wall until some years after the end of the pirate crisis in the area, indicate the way in which, in the prefectural city, pressure on funds forced local government to seek ad hoc alternatives to the standard defence method of wall-building.

The availability of competent management and of sufficient labour was a further limiting factor on the size of the contemplated project, perhaps not much less important than the availability of finance. In contrast to the coastal towns, the work was undertaken on a piecemeal basis by private individuals under the general supervision of local officials, a method of organization which seems to have been general in all of the inland cities of Chia-hsing.

The Inland Towns

In the years between 1553 and 1556, walls were built around the four district seats within Chia-hsing prefecture, three of which had been newly created in 1430. It is a sign of the tranquility of the century which had followed the creation of these districts that the administrative towns remained without walls until the pirate crisis.

Although in several cases the inland administrative towns could claim some strategic importance (Chia-shan, Ch'ung-te), the primary rationale for the projects being undertaken and approved was the repairs to the walls." Wu was an eminent local scholar-official.
preservation of local administration.

The building of walls that took place in Chia-hsing and other parts of Chekiang in the 1550s was undertaken for the immediate purpose of providing defence against the pirate raids. The varying histories of these sizeable public works within each district demonstrate the importance of direct experience of piracy to the mobilization of local energies to complete the projects.

Unlike the walls of the coastal towns built at the beginning of the dynasty as part of a defence institution with social and bureaucratic dimensions, the Chia-ching walls were the hasty contrivances of civil administration and local rich who turned to this method as the only feasible way of providing a measure of security against a growing threat.

Attacks on administrative towns were not frequent, but pirates moved freely in the surrounding countryside and market towns. For instance during 1555 pirates were camped in the Wu-chen and Wang-chiang-ching area. By that time too many local people had joined the pirates and the whole countryside was becoming increasingly insecure. A safe place for life and valuables became more and more desirable for all who anticipated trouble.

In a sense, the wall-building in Chia-hsing shows the lack of a coherent policy governing south-eastern coastal defence in the first years of the pirate attacks. The proposals for the first group of walls, "for districts bordering the sea and therefore most exposed to danger", included P'ing-hu in Chia-hsing district, and clearly originated within those districts as a direct response to experience of pirate attack. Similarly the second set of proposals which included those for Chia-shan, Ch'ung-te and T'ung-hsiang, were only submitted after the pirates began extending their raids to the inland in 1554. Although these proposals cumulatively took on the appearance of a regional defence programme, many of them began as individual local initiatives, woven together by prefectural and particularly circuit-level, officials, of whose reports

40 Wang Yü: 6.1a ff., "Appealing for the building of walls in order to safeguard localities".
Wang Yü's memorials to the throne were largely composed.  

The first completely new wall to be built in the Chia-hsing area was at P'ing-hu. This town was one of three in the prefecture which had been an administrative seat only since 1430, and no occasion had arisen since then to provide any fortifications. In the first attacks of early 1553, P'ing-hu, being only a few miles from the coast, had been alone among the inland towns of the prefecture in experiencing an attack. Pirates came to within a few hundred yards of the district yamen, and there were local skirmishes and considerable damage done. The local people then became determined to improve their defences. Under the auspices of acting magistrate Yin T'ing-lan, the local notables met, agreed, and made a submission to the prefect, and through him to the circuit intendant and provincial authorities.

With P'ing-hu, the road from conception to realization proved generally smooth. The stages of gaining consensus, winning permission and funds from the central government, and finalizing plans were rapidly passed, taking at the most five months; by the end of the ninth month the work was underway, and ninety-nine days later the completion of the work was announced. The work of this period may not have included more than the wall and gates, but certainly, soon after the new magistrate arrived early in the following year, everything was finished, including the moat and towers along the walls.

Local initiative was an important factor in the rapid progress of

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41 Ibid.
42 Chia-hsing fu chih 1600:30.17a-19b, "Record of the wall", by Chang Shih-ch’e (1500-77). Chang, a chin-shih of 1523, was an official and litterateur from Ningpo prefecture.
43 The only suggestion that any trouble occurred during the P'ing-hu wall-building is contained in two biographies, one of an acting magistrate of the district, Hu Sung, and the other new substantive magistrate Liu Ts'un-i. The tenor of each is that difficulties arose in gaining the co-operation necessary to carry the work forward, when the urgency of it was strongly felt in view of pirate attacks. Each man is credited with having taken this complaint to the military headquarters (mu-fu). However the evidence for both claims contains contradictions and ambiguities, inclining one to leave them aside. Cf. Chia-hsing fu chih 1878:43.43a, biography of Hu Sung; Wang Tao-k'ün, T'at-han chi (Wan-li period): 48.10b-14a, epitaph for Liu Ts'un-i; P'ing-hu hsien chih 1889:12.4b.
the P'ing-hu project. Although the acting magistrate had legal responsibility for the matter, the commemorative account of the building of the wall, which was written "at the request of the magistrate" says that the six local scholars who are named therein were the "real leaders" (shih-oh'ang).\textsuperscript{44} These six men are an interesting group: they were relatively young men, not far advanced in the series of examinations and official careers that lay ahead of some of them. Three of them, Lu Wan-chung, Lu Wan-kai and Lu Wan-li, were members of the large, powerful Lu clan of P'ing-hu. Lu Wan-chung, chu~sheng, later took a leading part in the defence against pirate attacks both at P'ing-hu and during the siege of T'ung-hsiang in 1556.\textsuperscript{45} Lu Wan-kai achieved the chin-shih degree, and went as departmental magistrate to Fu-ning in Fukien, where he was also involved in pirate disturbances.\textsuperscript{46} The gazetteers record nothing of Lu Wan-li. Another of the six was Feng Min-kung, 27 years old in 1553, who gained his doctorate ten years later, and enjoyed a long official career, largely in the provinces.\textsuperscript{47} His father, Feng Ju-pi, was a retired official who had held minor posts in the provinces, including the post of magistrate of Ch'ang-shu district and then of T'ai-ts'ang department, both a short distance away in the north of Chiang-Che. In those districts Feng Ju-pi had experienced the problems of administration in a district very similar to his own. While at Ch'ang-shu he had supervised the building of canal locks, and had dealt with smugglers among the salt workers. When he was moved to T'ai-ts'ang he set up a scheme to deal with robbers who were troubling the area "between the Yangtze and the sea". After he retired to his home district, his activities mirrored those in which he had been involved in Ch'ang-shu and T'ai-ts'ang. One biography credits Feng Ju-pi with having requested the Governor of Chekiang to build a wall at P'ing-hu, and with having been the chief subscriber of funds to the project, and the leader of the people.\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{44} Chia-hsing fu chih 1600:30.17b.
\textsuperscript{45} Biography of Lu Wan-chung, Chia-hsing fu chih 1878:58.29a.
\textsuperscript{46} Biography of Lu Wan-kai, Chia-hsing fu chih 1878:58.29b-30a.
\textsuperscript{47} Biography of Feng Min-kung, Chia-hsing fu chih 1878:58.28a-b.
\textsuperscript{48} Biography of Feng Ju-pi, Chia-hsing fu chih 1878:58.20a-b. In other respects too the senior Feng continued the activities of his magistracies into his life of retirement in P'ing-hu. In Ch'ang-shu
The task of the P'ing-hu notables in so rapidly winning approval for their proposals was no doubt aided by the fact that the Governor's native place was T'ai-ts'ang, where Feng Ju-pi had been magistrate. Given his father's background, the son's involvement in the planning of the P'ing-hu wall is not surprising. Later Feng Ju-pi wrote appreciative records of Supreme Commander Hu Tsung-hsien, and the Military Commissioner Liu T'ao. Without doubt he had the prestige necessary to deal with these officials whenever he wanted to represent the interests of his district.48a

The remaining two of the six local leaders mentioned have more obscure backgrounds. Chang Ho is described only as a local sheng-yuan. In the very first weeks of the pirate attacks in early 1553, he is credited with having requested the prefect to raise troops. With Lu Wan-chung, he took a prominent part in the defence of P'ing-hu against pirate attack. Of Ch'en Shih nothing is known but his name. Four of the six demonstrated by their later contributions or by their personal successes, that they were able men in their own right.

In none of the other wall projects in Chia-hsing was local leadership so explicitly mentioned and so important a role ascribed to it as in the case of these six notables at P'ing-hu. It seems likely that these gentry leaders were the special manifestation of a district where unusually few powerful clans took an active part in local affairs.

After the wall was completed, the people of P'ing-hu had several occasions on which to test the adequacy of the wall as a defence against pirate attack. Later, in 1556, the town was used as the venue for a meeting between a group of high officials and the pirate leader, Hsü Hai. For a time Hsü Hai and the remnants of the pirates were settled at the Shen family manor, not far from the town. On other occasions in 1555 and 1556, too, P'ing-hu had been used in the way that Cha-p'u and other

he had been concerned with the introduction of the chün-t'ien tax reform, and the collection of surplus grain in local granaries against famine. His activities in P'ing-hu included establishing a charitable cemetery, provision of grain for famine relief; and numerous instances of involvement in bridge-building and in particular in the building of the sea-wall.

48a On Hu Tsung-hsien: Chia-hsing fu chih 1600:30.26a-28b; on Liu T'ao: Chia-hsing fu chih 1600:30.28b-29b.
coastal towns were used, as a useful base for forays against pirates by government troops. The efficacy of the wall-building programme was therefore enjoyed by the military high command as much as by the people of the district.

In contrast to the plentiful remarks on leadership at P'ing-hu, very little is recorded of the way in which the work of building was organized there. The gazetteers mention that a hundred men were roused each night so that work could proceed continuously. The sum of 32,800 ounces of official funds (kuan-yin) is mentioned as the cost of the project, but no indication is given of how much more was contributed by local people, although it is clear, from the example of Feng Ju-pi, that contributions from local sources were made. It seems certain that the work force was composed entirely of civilians, because P'ing-hu had no regular garrison, and troops were not stationed there until just after the walls were built.

The increasing usefulness of the town from a military point of view was probably the justification which lay behind the additions to the wall which were made under a new magistrate in 1556 and again five years later: in 1556 the east and west gate walls were rebuilt, and in 1562 the height of the wall was raised by about five feet, and over a hundred shelters constructed along it.

The early and relatively smooth completion of the wall at P'ing-hu was not matched in other district towns. Some time early in 1554, Governor Wang Yü successfully requested the court to approve the building of walls at seven more unprotected district cities of Chekiang, including three in Chia-hsing prefecture. Two of the three Chia-hsing projects were underway in the autumn of that year, but the third was not finished until 1556.

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49 Chia-hsing fu chih 1600:30.18a.
50 Chia-hsing fu chih 1878:4.16a.
51 See H. Franke, "Defense of Towns", p.161. Gate walls (weng-ch'eng) reinforced the entrances, which were natural weak points in town defences, and created a courtyard between the inner and outer gates.
The way in which the building of a wall was undertaken at Chia-shan was in great contrast to the local initiative evident at P'ing-hu. Provincial officials felt the importance of Chia-shan city as a strategic point some time before the inhabitants became concerned for their own safety. Though ordered to begin work on the wall it was a long time before the prefect could achieve the obligatory first step of gaining consensus on the project from the local people.

The local people of Chia-shan had reason to be reluctant to engage in a project which would be "the largest undertaking in the district for over two hundred years." The major part of the cost was to be met by the government, but the rest had to be raised locally. The wealthy feared for their reserves of money and grain, the less wealthy for their manpower which would be diverted from productive uses. Moreover, the residents of Chia-shan had already felt the sting of extra levies to pay for the troops brought into the prefecture during the spring of 1554, sometime before the district experienced a pirate attack.

The prefect, Liu Ch'üeh, persisted against the strong local opposition, but consensus was won only when Chia-shan began to experience at first hand the horrors of constant and vigorous brigandage. In the early summer of 1554 the district offices were damaged and many houses burnt. People fled from the district, or if they stayed, experienced constant anxiety, never knowing when pirates would descend upon them from one of their nearby camps. The inertia and disdain for spending resources on defence, created by many generations of scarcely disturbed peace, was quickly shaken off. Since they realized they were powerless to protect themselves by force of arms, the project of building a wall was seen as their only means of gaining security.

Once consensus had been reached, plans were drawn up and funds from the central government obtained. The prefectural judge, Teng Ch'ien, was sent as acting magistrate to Chia-shan and commissioned to supervise the project. A suitable day for the commencement of the work was

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53 "Inscription on the achievements in building the wall" by Yao Hung-mo in Chia-shan hsien chih 1800:11.15a ff. Yao (1531-89), was a native of Hsiu-shui district, a 1553 chin-shih who later became a high official. Unless stated otherwise, the following account of the wall-building at Chia-shan is based on Yao's description.
announced. However, the problems were by no means over. It seems that those with responsibility for the work were hesitant at first, apprehensive about their ability to carry out the task. The detailed direction of the project was divided between the vice-magistrate and the chief officer of the district, who were in charge of a labour force composed of men taken from, or hired by, 740 families. Some troops were also used as labour.

A substantial amount of land had to be acquired, 350 mou in all, and the owners compensated. One reason for the delay in reaching consensus about the project lay in the problems associated with the acquisition of this land. It is reported that "in the east and west there were people occupying the wall site ... and the matter was not able to be settled." Opposition came from those who were being asked to sell their land cheaply, or whose businesses were so located that the building of walls would place them at a disadvantage.

Such problems derived in part from the fact that Chia-shan, like other towns of the delta, had developed ribbon-like along the main thoroughfares. It was clustered in long lines, east to west, on the banks between paddy fields and canals. A city wall was required to be as close to a square or circle as was compatible with local topography. Walls were planned to be no larger than was necessary to contain all of the administrative buildings and a reasonable proportion of the local population in case of evacuation, and at the same time easily defended, with all sections of the wall in easy reach of the centre. The imposition of a wall on the town of Chia-shan meant that a swathe was cut through its eastern and western extensions, which then became suburbs. The recalcitrant people "occupying the wall site on the east and west" can then be identified as those whose interests were threatened by these sudden alterations to the economic and social geography of the town.

A local man, Ku Ch'eng-hsin, who was from a scholar-official family and had himself held a minor provincial post, is said to have built an "eastern pass" and contributed "one thousand taels". This eastern

54 Chia hsing fu chih 1878:4.10a-b.
55 Biography of Ku Ch'eng-hsin, Chia-shan hsien chih 1892:22.hsing-i.10a.
pass would have been a large gate or barricade, perhaps built across a waterway, and set some distance from the wall, commanding the eastern approaches to the town. It seems then that the eastern suburbs were not left entirely "out in the cold" by the new wall. There is no evidence that another such pass was built on the west side.

Of the total cost of the Chia-shan wall, given as 30,857 taels, 20,000 taels are said to have come from the public treasury, and the rest from special local levies. There is no indication whether this sum included the cost of acquiring the site for the wall, or the 127 tan 7 tou of grain which was set aside for the rations of labourers.

If the reluctant contributors to the Chia-shan wall gained comfort from hopes of leaving behind an edifice which later generations would thank them for, their hopes proved hollow. Perhaps the lack of heart which had been apparent from the beginning seriously impaired the quality of the construction, for as early as 1555-7, it was said that "the wall and moat had been roughly built." In 1592 when further alarms of pirates again turned the minds of local officials to town defence, the existing walls of Chia-shan were described as "the rough beginning of a connected single wall, surrounded by a large waterway, and not higher than twenty feet, so that the stern of some ships is on a level with the parapets!"

Some of the problems encountered at Chia-shan were encountered also at Ch'ung-te, complicated by various local misfortunes. Ch'ung-te was located on the Grand Canal about mid-way between Chia-hsing city and the provincial capital. Situated on such a thoroughfare it was perhaps the busiest administrative town in Chia-hsing, apart from the prefectural city. Though it was only one of a number of large and prosperous towns in the north-west of the prefecture, its position was such that if it were walled it would be a valuable defence acquisition to the region. The town had been a district seat since the Five Dynasties period; when Chang Shih-ch'eng occupied the area in the period leading up to the establishment of the Ming dynasty, he is said to have had a wall built

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56 Chia-shan hsien chih 1800:6.8b-9a.
57 Chia-hsing fu chih 1878:4.11b.
at Ch’ung-te. This wall was demolished and its materials used for the walls built at Cha-p’u in the early Ming years. By the mid-sixteenth century the town had some handsome gates, but only the ruined foundations of the old walls.\(^5\)

Discussions and planning began in the district after the successful representations in the summer of 1554 by Wang Yü to the court to have walls built at Ch’ung-te and other towns. There were many problems: people were now living on the site of the old foundations, and the configurations and levels of the waterways in the vicinity presented difficulties. Consequently the planned site for the wall was changed several times, entailing the personal intervention of prefect Liu before the wall could be completed.\(^5\)

Towards the end of the year work began. The project was dogged from the start by unforeseen external circumstances: during the wet season of 1554 no rain fell for four months, affecting the main autumn harvest, and prefect Liu had to request a remission of taxes for Ch’ung-te. In the first month of the following year before the work was finished, the town suffered a devastating attack by pirates, as a result of which the magistrate was accused of negligence and dismissed from office.\(^6\)

The 1611 Ch’ung-te gazetteer recorded what the local elders then recalled about the wall-building events of the 1550s. People living in the south-east of the city who were motivated by selfish considerations were blamed for the fact that the wall in that area was not completed by the time of the pirate attack. "Consequently the south-east quarter was devastated as if the town's left leg had been cut off."\(^6\) The south-east quarter of the town was the area which bordered on both banks of the Grand Canal. "In former days noble families lived east of the

\(^5\) Lü Hsi-chou, *Shih-men hsien chih* 1677:7.44a-45b. Lü was a native of Ch’ung-te, a chü-jen of 1525, who had held various official posts, and became advisor to Hu Tsung-hsien in 1556. (See Chapter Three.)

\(^6\) Lü's "Record of the walls", *Shih-men hsien chih* 1677:7.44b.

See Chapter Four.

\(^6\) Chu-hsing fu chih 1878:4.21b, quoting Ch’ung-te hsien chih (Ming Wan-li edition).
embankment (that is on the opposite side of the canal from the main part of the town). Now they have all been swept away.\(^6^2\) On the model of Chia-shan, it seems very likely that wealthy and influential house- holders of the south-east quarter found their interest at odds with the building of a city wall on the west bank of the canal at that point, and did what they could to resist its going ahead.

The depredations of the pirates affected food supplies: the labourers on the unfinished wall were in a desperate situation, and prefect Liu ordered the distribution of grain.\(^6^3\) Liu also came to inspect the damage, and settle where the boundaries of the wall were to go, for the disaster which had occurred since work first began on the walls had changed the map of the city, and fresh geomantic indications had to be taken. Judging from the alternative proposals recorded in this memoir, the chief technical difficulty was the effect of the provision of a moat on waterways into the city. The geomancers reported that, under the original scheme, water would collect in the channels only at the west gate, but at all the others would simply drain away.\(^6^4\) A man called Chang, probably the vice-prefect Chang Jen, was appointed in charge of the project in the absence of a local magistrate, and in the fifth month of 1555 the main part of the project was finished.\(^6^5\)

During 1556 Ch'ung-te was used as a "supplementary provincial capital", from time to time being the headquarters of the Supreme Commander. Possibly from the influence of his proximity, further work was carried out on the walls in that year. The new magistrate, Ts'ui Chin-ssu, was in charge. Work went on day and night to complete towers and parapets and the casting of firearms.\(^6^6\)

When the final and largest invasion of pirates occurred in the first month of the summer of 1556, Ch'ung-te had the extra protection of two forts, commissioned by Ju Ts'ung-hsien, like those which had been

\(^6^2\) Ibid.
\(^6^3\) "Tablet in memory of Chia-hsing prefect Liu T'ang-yen (Ch'ieh) in Ch'ung-te district", Ts'ai Ju-nan Tzu-chih t'ang chi (1558) 11.10a.
\(^6^4\) Chia-hsing fu chih 1878:4.21b.
\(^6^5\) Chia-hsing fu chih 1878:4.20a.
\(^6^6\) Lii's "Record of the walls", Shih-men hsien chih 1677:7.44a.
built around Chia-hsing city.\(^{67}\) It was claimed that it was the sight of one of these forts which turned the pirates away towards Hsia-shih and T'ung-hsiang, which they then besieged, leaving Ch'ung-te completely untouched.\(^{68}\)

The history of wall-building at Ch'ung-te represented the opposite experience from that of P'ing-hu, and provided an object lesson in the obstacles which could be encountered in the course of carrying out local public works.

T'ung-hsiang was the last of the district seats of Chia-hsing prefecture to be walled. Its wall was completed a bare month before the siege of the town began in 1556.\(^{69}\) The wall-building at T'ung-hsiang left no history of dissension and difficulty behind it comparable with Chia-shan and Ch'ung-te. The reasons for the difference lay partly in the more favourable circumstances under which the district faced the task. The works project was carried out from the planning stages until completion entirely under the magistracy of Chin Yen, a strong and competent man, with a reputation for fearless honesty like that of Hai Jui, with whom he was associated.\(^{70}\) He had in his favour that T'ung-hsiang was not attacked by pirates at all until after the wall was built, and that a longer period of time elapsed between the initiating of the project and the undertaking of the work. This extra time, a year longer than Ch'ung-te and Chia-shan took, possibly allowed difficulties and grievances to be gradually ironed out, and the co-operation of energetic local men won over in supervising the work. One local man, a well-respected commoner, is said to have "given subscriptions and assisted in the work."\(^{71}\) Another, named Wu Chan, of the wealthy market town of Ch'ing-chen (twin town of Wu-chen), came from a family which had

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\(^{67}\) This is the only mention to be found of forts like those built at Chia-hsing being built at other strategic points along the Grand Canal. Since the writer of this record is Lü Hsi-chou, a man intimately involved in the defence plans of Hu Tsung-hsien during 1556, as well as a native of the district, it is a reputable source. Lü's "Record of the Walls", & 44b.

\(^{68}\) Ibid.

\(^{69}\) See Chapter Four.

\(^{70}\) An-ch'ing fu chih 1681:16.36a-b, biography of Chin Yen.

\(^{71}\) Biography of Chang Ni, T'ung-hsiang hsien chih 1887:15.5a.
acquired wealth "through working hard at the cultivation of silkworms." Magistrate Chin knew him to be reliable and capable as well as rich, and sought his aid in the project. Wu took on the task of overseeing the construction of the north water-gate, where the flow of the stream made work especially difficult. His achievement was the greater when this gate withstood a heavy onslaught from the pirates during the siege. 72

The contributions of local commoners to defence work in T'ung-hsiang thus was a characteristic of the town's experience both in the wall-building phase and during the siege. Whether it is a reflection of Chin Yen's style of administration, or of a relatively greater involvement of wealthy non-gentry in local affairs in that highly commercialized part of the prefecture can only be surmised.

The wall-building was completely overshadowed by the momentous events of the siege. 73 Chin Yen's undeniably able leadership during that crisis sealed his local reputation. Whereas we have many details of the events of the siege from a wide variety of sources, almost none survive on the wall-building, less than for any other project undertaken in the area. Although a commemorative record of the wall-building survives it is an uncommunicative panegyric on Chin Yen, written by a subordinate district official. 74

The contrast between the story left to later generations about T'ung-hsiang on the one hand, and Ch'ung-te and Chia-shan on the other, is very great. The reasons are both historiographical and historical, and are connected with the continuous presence of a magistrate or the lack of it during the period of wall-building. The disgrace and dismissal of their magistrates in the middle of their complex wall-building programmes must have exacerbated the problems of both Ch'ung-te and Chia-shan. In each of these cases the prefect had to step in as trouble-shooter, and it was only to his greater glory if the difficulties and dissensions in the two districts are clearly shown up in the records. On the other hand, continuity of local administration

72 Biography of Wu Chan, T'ung-hsiang hsien chih 1887:15.4b-5a.
73 See Chapter Four.
74 The Ming dynasty chief officer Chiang Yi-t'ung's "Record of repairing the wall", Chia-hsing fu chih 1878:4.24a.
under such a man as Chin Yen under the favourable circumstances mentioned above certainly provided a firm basis for success. T'ung-hsiang's relatively smooth path was perhaps exaggerated by the chroniclers who, in their gratitude to Chin Yen, were not inclined to mar their admiration with intimations of incidental difficulties.

Left to themselves, as districts were for the most part during the pirate crisis, they were not equally capable of running their own affairs. Given the similarity of the social and economic basis of all the districts, the differences in their experience in managing works projects is very marked.

In the coastal towns, both the general and the works supervision were in the hands of local civil officials or military officers. Although the local civil population had to contribute to the cost of the projects, the local notables did not appear in important roles as advisors or initiators of proposals. In P'ing-hu a local management committee saw through a project which had been initiated from within the district. In Chia-shan and Ch'ung-te, where local leadership was perhaps more diverse, and consensus on the projects more difficult to achieve, the local people found themselves overtaken by the events of the pirate campaign and the decisions of officials.

Continuity of administration can be identified as an important element in the fortunes of these projects. In this regard the role of the prefect Liu Ch'üeh stands out. During his five year term of office, from before the pirate crisis started in 1553 until after it was over in 1556, every district of the prefecture had at least two and in some cases four different men in charge of local affairs. At Chia-shan and Ch'ung-te his intervention was necessary to settle the disputes that interrupted work there. Although he appointed acting magistrates from among his assistant prefectoral staff, their temporary status made it difficult for them to fill the place of a regular magistrate, and they tended to act as prefect's deputies, referring back to Liu for assistance.

The same element of continuity of administration was important in the districts as well. Although their terms of three years were not as
long as prefect Liu's, the magistrates at Hai-yen, P'ing-hu and T'ung-hsiang were able to contribute much to the welfare of their districts by remaining in their posts for most of the crisis period.

Judging from the examples of wall-building projects, the imperial bureaucracy was capable of processing local public works proposals quite rapidly if necessary. The whole process did not need to take longer than a matter of months, as the example of P'ing-hu shows. It seems that the bureaucracy moved no more slowly than the limitations imposed by the season, and that planning and execution could be rapidly and efficiently carried out.

Local dissension which arose over some wall-building programmes derived largely from the sudden imposition of defence requirements on areas where commerce was normally carried out unrestricted by walls and barriers. Only the very strong fear of pirates could persuade local leaders to accept wall projects, and even then a consensus of powerful and interested parties was not always obtained. Among people with wealth and property there were clearly grounds for considerable divergence of opinion about the need for and the siting of walls.

While the involvement of local elites in the planning and organizing of the wall projects varied so markedly between districts, they appear to have taken no part at all in the field supervision of the work. With the exception of P'ing-hu, they generally seemed to have confined themselves to a role of advising, consulting, and contributing funds. Field management instead devolved either on subordinate officials, mainly civil, or on private individuals of more wealth than status, commissioned to complete sections of the task.

The wall-building programmes had not initially formed part of an integrated defence policy, but their successful completion and eventual role in the removal of the pirate threat revealed the extent to which the general defence of the region relied on the ability of local administrations to organize and defend themselves. Many of the projects contributed in major ways to the defence not only of their own districts, but also of the entire sector. For instance, in 1556, the year by which all projects were completed and the last year of invasions
into northern Chekiang, Chung-te was used as temporary headquarters by Hu Tsung-hsien, T'ung-hsiang was able to withstand a month-long siege at a crucial point in the campaign, and P'ing-hu served as the government headquarters in the last dramatic meetings between Hsü Hai, Hu Tsung-hsien and Chao Wen-hua. The ability of individual local administrations in northern Chekiang to carry to completion a number of separate projects provided, in this way, a defence resource which could then be brought into the general defence strategy as it gradually evolved in the region as a whole.
CHAPTER SIX

LOCAL ADMINISTRATION AND THE PEOPLE

During the pirate invasions, the government needed to rely, even more than in peacetime, on the labour, skills and crops of the broad mass of people. At the same time, however, the support of the general populace grew more tenuous and difficult to ensure. Policies towards recruitment, taxation and the building of fortifications were therefore strongly influenced by the administration's assessment of the effects that these policies could have on the local people and the consequent support which officials might be able to command.

Evidence about the role of ordinary people is scanty and ambiguous. Although the society of Chia-hsing was complex and varied, an individual's background is rarely mentioned unless he is a member of a scholar-gentry family. For their part, the ordinary people saw the pirate invasions through a different frame of reference from the authors of accounts of the pirate invasions. The villager relied on the gossip at the town where he marketed his produce for the information on which to consider and judge matters, or on his own experience of pirates and troops who encroached on his daily life. His interpretation of events and the options open to him were therefore likely to be different from those of the influential men of the district where he lived.

The People as Victims

Even if economic and social historians could agree on the nature of classes in Chia-hsing, it would be difficult to relate their categories to the terms used to describe the population in the contemporary accounts of the pirate troubles. The broad term usually used to denote
the people was simply min. Like the English word "people", min carried a wide range of subtly different meanings. It can most easily be defined negatively: the min included, depending on the context, those who were not privileged (as the scholar-gentry were), not soldiers, and not connected with the yamen. The term became more specific when qualified: for example, country people (hsiang min) being those outside the cities, and townspeople (chen min), the inhabitants of market towns. It was thus a term often used for convenience rather than to convey a specific meaning. In the context of local administration, the word was able to arouse high philosophical or rhetorical overtones in the public utterances of men for whom the welfare of the masses was part of their responsibility.1

While official local defence efforts were limited to the walled towns, the burdens of war fell heavily on the populations as a whole. The majority of people in Chia-hsing lived in modest to very straitened economic circumstances, and the stability of their livelihoods was vulnerable to a wide variety of external forces. The burdens of war were partly inflicted by the invading pirates, but even more often derived directly from the defence policies and decisions of regional and local government. It is worth looking more closely at these burdens and the reactions they provoked, for there is no doubt that the capacity of the local populations to bear various strains entered importantly into the calculations of the administrators.

It is not a new idea that the ordinary people are the chief victims of war. Wherever widespread fighting took place, the destruction of the livelihood of the inhabitants inevitably followed. Suffering, family dislocation and death are so essential a part of war that descriptions in the accounts of the pirate troubles read like patterned set pieces. The reluctant recruits, the labourers forced to do transport work, refugees from the villages clamouring at the gates of the walled towns for admission, villagers fleeing with their babies on their backs, the bodies of raped women floating in streams, rioting troops, people "sweating blood" under the weight of extra levies to finance the fighting — all of these events were repeat performances of scenes

1 Cf. Watt, District Magistrate, pp.82 ff.
already staged many times and readily recalled well-known phrases to the minds of those describing them.

One thing is common to all of these familiar events — the people are seen as the sufferers in circumstances which are beyond their control, and the general import of contemporary accounts is that they suffered most at the hands of pirates.

The main charges against the pirates were that they robbed grain and other valuables, that they killed indiscriminately and viciously, that they forced both men and women into their service, that wherever they went they caused hundreds of families to flee, leaving a trail of burnt dwellings and thousands of people homeless and without a livelihood. Wherever the pirates were camped for an extended period, their continued depredations in the nearby countryside would leave the area bare, stripped of all its goods, denuded of its people, full of the smoking shells of dwellings and the blackened stalks of crops.

The surviving accounts of the pirate raids, especially the account of Ts'ai Chiu-te, support the charge that the pirates not only robbed and destroyed property, but also killed and wounded without reason. The most detailed descriptions focus on the deaths of gentry families. Since gentry estates were prime targets, such families were particularly in danger. Some stores have an air of exaggeration: one story says that in an attack on the Ch'iang family in the north-west of the prefecture the pirates killed five of the males in the family, including a great-nephew whom they killed in his bed, drawing his blood and drinking it. But the pirates killed and injured ordinary people as well, often for simply getting in their way: only six weeks after their first major incursion in 1553, pirates were reported to have killed "more than one hundred inhabitants of P'ing-hu": Ts'ai Chiu-te estimates that for the rest of that first year, more than 3,700 people, including both civilians and Guard troops, died in Hai-yen district alone.

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2 Ts'ai:2.5b.
3 Ts'ai:1.9b.
4 Ts'ai:1.1la-b.
Since the number of pirates and the frequency of attacks escalated very much in the following two and a half years, the death toll among civilians must have continued to be high. Even allowing for considerable exaggeration by the one writer who gives estimates of civilian deaths, it still seems that local people, and not only gentry families, would have been wise to avoid any encounter with the pirates.

Despite the grim nature of their presence, the pirate incursions did not bring the normal activities of the people to a stop. The following account of an incident which took place at the height of the pirate raids in 1555 suggests this fact, and also illustrates the kind of brutal rowdyism which characterized the pirates in their dealings with local people:

That evening pirates attacked the town of Ch'ang-an (in Hai-ning district). This town is a junction for traffic, and although it was still the early hours of the morning (fourth watch or one to three a.m.), the business people were already opening their doors and displaying their lanterns in order to serve the boats plying up and down the canal. Some bandits, including some men of Chang-chou (Fukien) and (local) people whom they had captured, pretended to be buying food. When they had finished their meal, they broke up into groups and entered inns, attacking and killing townspeople. Having stirred up trouble they disappeared, leaving dead and wounded choking the streets.

This incident indicates that even at the height of the pirate troubles night trading persisted in the market towns, at least to the west of the prefecture, and that there was a flow of traffic along the main canal routes during both day and night. No mention is made of curfews or barriers placed at night across the main thoroughfares, or of special guards in populated places like this market town. While the vandalism of the pirates was both arbitrary and severe, it was not apparently seen as a sufficient threat to cause interruption to the normal procedures of daily trading.

The same episode also reveals clearly the participation of local people in the pirate raids. Other accounts generally refer to such collaborators as wo-nu ("slaves of the Wo"), implying that such local participation was generally not a matter of choice for the people.

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5 Ts'ai:3.5b.
concerned. It seems to be true that pirates forced people to guide them about the countryside and to find the houses of the rich;\(^6\) they sometimes also forced groups of locals to serve as a vanguard in their clashes with government troops, using them to block the first hail of arrows and spears. There are references too to women being carried off to serve the pirates in their camps, and to women being forced to "reel silk for them by day and sleep with them by night."\(^7\) Yet while the pirates captured and coerced some locals into their service, others followed them voluntarily. In the attack on Ch'ang-an, quoted above, it seems unlikely that the locals who were identified as part of the marauding group were there because they had been "captured by the pirates", unless the term is meant in a psychological rather than physical sense.

The pirates, being experienced and efficient traders, as well as plunderers, were not haphazard about their expeditions. They were interested in grain stored in bulk and attacked grain ships and grain stores. (This was not necessarily against the interests of the populace: in 1554 in K'un-shan district, for example, pirates seized a large store of rice and announced that they would sell it to the local people at four \(ch'ien\) per \(tan\), which was evidently an attractive price since the store was sold out within ten days.)\(^8\) The pirates were also interested in precious woods, and at Yüan-hua amassed a considerable amount of wood from the stores of merchants.\(^9\) Apart from large public stores of such goods, the pirates focussed their attacks on the largest and richest houses and estates, expecting to find there the most valuable spoils.

The pirates of the earlier years of the crisis were relatively small gangs of tough, experienced fighting men. Their ruthless effectiveness against the defending forces and their unerring aim for the richest stocks of valuables gave them a formidable reputation, which no doubt led to exaggeration of their brutality and the extent of the

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\(^6\) Ts'ai:2.3a.

\(^7\) E.g., Ts'ai:2.6b, 4.3b. The fact that the pirates seem to have put an economic as well as domestic value on the women of Chia-hsing is a testimony to the importance of women in the economy of the area.

\(^8\) Ts'ai:2.10b.

\(^9\) Ts'ai:2.6a.
damage. As their numbers grew from year to year, although their quality as a fighting force was somewhat dissipated, the grief they caused the local population must have substantially increased. However, except for the coastal area and a few inland places where pirates were camped for considerable periods, most parts of the prefecture suffered only a few swift, if devastating, attacks during the whole four years of pirate incursions. This uneven distribution of the burden of the pirate attacks was largely offset by the measures taken by the government to resist them. The most obvious and burdensome of these measures was the quartering in Chia-hsing prefecture of an enormous inflow of troops.

Compared with the attention given to the depredations of the pirates in the accounts, mention of the troubles caused by troops is less common and is couched in more general terms. From small hints and occasional specific evidence a picture of the burden caused by the presence of troops begins to emerge: after allowance is made for the bias of the accounts against the pirates it is possible to see that from a peasant's point of view, a soldier and a pirate were much the same thing.

Few local inhabitants had had any direct experience of armed conflict, but no-one in Chia-hsing who knew the old tales of war could doubt that their countryside would suffer from the presence of troops. Even so, they were not prepared for the degree of rapaciousness and violence which at times they suffered from the incoming troops. Even early in 1554, cases of looting were widespread.10 In 1555, when there was a meeting of commanders at Hai-yen, troops numbering in tens of thousands were said to have been camped at Chin-shan.11 In the latter days of the crisis, in the middle months of 1556, troops numbered at least twice as many as the highest estimate of pirates.12 In the final

10 Chia-hsing fu chih 1878:42.18a, biography of Ch'en Tsung-k'uei. Ch'en was transferred to the Chia-hu military circuit from Fukien in early 1554. He found that incidents involving troops were already "as many as the spines of a hedgehog". He had plans to reduce the incidence of trouble caused by troops, but could not get on with his superiors and was transferred.

11 Ts'ai:3.3a.

12 Hucker, "Hu Tsung-hsien's campaign against Hsü Hai, 1556", pp.286-7. Hucker calculates that there were roughly ten thousand troops in
year of the troubles in Chia-hsing, the personal troops of the military
circuit inspector, Liu T'ao, caused such trouble in P'ing-hu city that
the powerful triumvirate Hu Tsung-hsien, Governor Juan 0 and Inspector
of Armies Chao Wen-hua, went there to restore order.\(^{13}\)

The incoming troops, who were as good as foreigners to the local
people, needed food and shelter. Although they were supposed to be
provided with at least a minimum of both, the experienced ones among the
troops knew that this minimum often failed to materialize, as profits
from the rations set aside for them disappeared into the sleeves of
their commanders and officials. Men like these had learned to look
after themselves by living off the countryside. There were plenty of
troops too who took full advantage of any chance to improve their
financial position or afford themselves a little good food or entertain­
ment at the expense of the local people.

Writing some years later in the Wan-li edition of the Hsiu-shui
district gazetteer, a local scholar said:

Wherever they went the 'guest-troops', boastful and swaggering,
robbed and plundered. Fowls and dogs scattered and were silent,
pedlars closed down their stalls. They do their work with their
eyes only on bounty for the capture of the pirates, and then
fight over the reward. They remove their head-gear (by which
people could tell they were soldiers) and create disturbances.\(^{14}\)

One incident which occurred at Hai-yen, a town which had heavy
centres of troops throughout this period, is reported by Ts'\(i\)l
Chiu-te:

Early on the eighth day (of the second month of 1555) a detach­
ment of 'guest-troops' came north along the coast blowing horns
to announce their presence. When they arrived at Hai-yen, they
clamoured outside the north gate, (but) the guards were

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positional defence, and another ten thousand available for tactical
warfare in the Che-hsi sector when Hu Tsung-hsien became Supreme
Commander in early 1556. This number had increased by approximately
another ten thousand by the climax of the campaign against \(H\)si\(H\) Hai
in the seventh and eighth months. The pirates in 1556 were said to
number ten thousand, more rather than less. The total figures given
in Ts'\(i\)l Chiu-te's account are either wrongly transcribed or
completely inaccurate on his part, e.g. 4.10b.

\(^{13}\) Ts'\(i\)l:4.8b.

\(^{14}\) Hsiu-shui hsien chih 1596:2.19a.
suspicious and would not receive them. Some military officials arrived and handed over their permits to enter, from which (the guards) learnt that they were soldiers of Shantung. Once the officers had entered the city, the troops dispersed outside the walls, and went about stealing, raping and demanding food, no less than if they had been pirates. The people had no way of redressing their grievances. Later (these troops) were sent into battle at Chia-hsing. Incomparably stupid and cowardly, they absconded as they were about to go into battle. In this futile manner the military funds for our prefecture were eaten up.\textsuperscript{15}

The disgust of this native of Hai-yen in contemplating the men who were sent to protect them from the pirate menace is understandable. Not only did the troops behave no better than pirates, but local people had been burdened with extra taxes to support them. What seemed shameful to a scholar was a basis for cynicism and despair among the people who were the victims.

For those who had wealth to lose, especially those whose large country estates made them a target, there was certainly a distinction between pirates and troops. While the rape of a peasant's wife or the loss of his small store of grain might escape the notice of the authorities, the molestation of a well-known and wealthy family would not. While the pirates concentrated on large stores of grain and other goods and on the valuables from wealthy private houses, the troops, when forced to fend for themselves, concentrated on those people who had least chance of obtaining official attention. This distinction cannot be taken too far, but as a tendency in the troops' behaviour it was magnified by the far greater number of troops compared with pirates.

The size and regularity of the pay of incoming troops became a matter of local concern both for officials and the local population, although strictly it was a matter for the regional commanders and the circuit level officials. Although officials below that level had some duties involving troops and military installations permanently stationed within their districts, they were not otherwise responsible for the well-being of troops transferred to their district to handle temporary military crises.

\textsuperscript{15} Ts'ai:3.2b-3a.
Magistrates and prefects were responsible for the collection of taxes and also of the special levies which were to pay for the defence effort. They therefore had a general interest in keeping troop unrest to a minimum to keep their tax-payers undisturbed at their job of earning a livelihood.

When troops were stationed near towns, it was in the interest of business people, including the owners of small shops and eating stalls as well as the proprietors of larger establishments, to see that the troops were properly paid and fed. The alternative was to suffer petty thieving and brawling from frustrated and hungry men.

Thus both local officials and local people were interested in minimizing the trouble caused by troops by guaranteeing as far as possible that they were properly provided for. Ordinary incoming troops were supposed to be paid five fen a day; occasionally a particularly experienced group would receive a higher daily amount plus extra allowances; for example T'ang K'o-k'uan's 300 P'i troops who were capable, battle-hardened and experienced in fighting pirates in Fukien, were to be paid eight fen a day plus meat and wine every ten days.

The distribution of rations was also a responsibility which devolved upon the local civil officials. The public granaries associated with their administrative towns were used to house grain brought in to help feed the troops, or to reserve grain which was made exempt from tax. When the town was under threat of attack, the accepted behaviour for an official was to distribute arms and rations from the granaries and store houses to both locally-stationed soldiers and civilian recruits who were being made to man the walls. To maintain the minimum of morale under an attack, a guaranteed supply of food from a safely-guarded store was important.

The regular supply of food to troops presupposed that the government had acquired the ability to pay for such rations through taxation. The troops not only had to be endured as unpleasant guests

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16 Ts'ai:2.12a; Li, Yü-Wo chu-k'o-chüan, p.28.
17 Ts'ai:1.6a.
whose keep had to be carefully provided for, but they had to be paid for as well. The court, heavily committed to the financing of defence of the northern border areas, had already fully committed the ordinary taxes of the south-eastern provinces to help pay for defence in the north. There was no alternative but for the wealthy south-east to pay for its own defence, in addition to its regular taxes.

The general extra levy of 0.103 taels per mu imposed in 1554 on the south-eastern provinces, was said to have caused widespread distress among the coastal population.\(^{18}\) There were also other local charges that soon became regular levies: these were the class of levy known as ping hsiang or "military supplies". The ping hsiang levies varied in amount from district to district, and in many cases survived as local charges long after the pirate menace had been removed.\(^{19}\) The general levy and the ping hsiang were regular levies; once the taxes had been instituted the taxpayers knew they were liable for them and could allow for them in advance. But there were as well many ad hoc levies imposed, especially collections made for particular defence projects. The money paid out by the prefect Liu Ch’ueh to hire the "wolf troops" on a number of occasions was probably raised each time by a quick levy of those who had ready cash. The "very large sum of money" which was collected within a few days to pay for repairs and extensions to the fortifications at Chia-hsing seems to be a similar case. Cheng Mao also made such a collection when he first arrived to take up his post at Hailyen. Each time a town came under attack, one of the tasks of the gentry was to take up a collection of food and cash to hire local mercenaries and to pay for those defending the walls. At the four towns where new walls were built, half at least of the total amount spent on the walls was supposed to come from local sources, that is, from sources other than the regular tax collections, very little of which were usually earmarked to be used for work within the district itself.

Both the Supreme Commander, Hu Tsung-hsien, and his second-in-command, the Governor of Chekiang, Juan O, were noted for their venality, even in an age when most officials expected good incomes from their

\(^{18}\) Ts’ai:2.12a.

\(^{19}\) Huang, Governmental Finance, pp.134-5.
posts. With the example they set, it would be surprising if many of their subordinates missed out on a piece of the enormous funds spent on defence. It was a calculated risk that the local population, having been taxed once already to pay for the troops, could stand another and more direct imposition in the form of the troops themselves taking what they needed from the people they were supposed to protect.

Extra levies in the hands of the high command and of local officials were a double-edged tool. Chia-hsing and the surrounding prefectures were better able to pay than most other parts of the empire. But both physically and psychologically, there was a limit to what could be imposed. Because risking a dangerous level of disaffection and lack of co-operation not only from the poorer people but also from those whose greater sources of income would normally make them strong supporters of government defence efforts, officials risked cutting off the long-term source of supply in order to make large short-term collections.

The proximity of magistrates and prefects to the basic level of tax collection put into their hands in times of emergency the opportunity to raise extra money. If a local official used this opportunity, he also had a means of control over troops stationed in his area. To follow such a course, he would need the backing of the local notables, and also support from influential areas of the bureaucracy since his fund-raising would be irregular. Liu Ch’üeh, prefect of Chia-hsing from 1553 to late in 1556, seemed to have all of these conditions in his favour, in his bold use of locally raised funds to hire the "wolf troops" on a daily basis for the protection of the prefectural city.

Besides taxation, there were other problems for local administration in preventing undue disruption to economic life in the face of large-scale military crisis. Two of these were the practice of crop destruction to prevent ambushes, and the institution of barriers on waterways to prevent easy access of pirate groups to the inland.

Time and again the pirates inflicted heavy losses on government troops by ambushing them. Occasionally the ambush was set up in a group of temple or monastery buildings. More usually though, the pirates were
simply hidden in the fields among the hemp or ripening wheat. For this reason orders were often given for crops to be mown or burnt so as to leave no cover for the pirates. It is understandable that a commander in the field may find it necessary to carry out burning or mowing of crops to promote the ends of his particular expedition. The military headquarters themselves issued orders to every district in Chia-hsing, evidently intending that the destruction of crops should be widespread. Ts’ai reports that early in 1555, when very large numbers of troops were concentrated at Chin-shan, military headquarters sent dispatches to the districts ordering them to prepare dry provisions, to detail labourers to transport them to Chin-shan, and to mow the wheat "so that it would be easier to capture bandits." On the seventeenth of the month in Hai-yen district they began mowing the wheat, and two hundred men set off two hundred tan of rice and two hundred catties of flour for Chin-shan. It is possible, even probable, that the orders were not carried out entirely. The order was the easier to give because the armies were not dependent on grain grown within the area for supplies. Nevertheless, it must have had a severe effect on the economy of individual households that season, and gone some way towards disrupting the general patterns of economic life.

It had always been difficult to maintain control over the traffic using the network of waterways in the prefecture. Local authorities wanted to control the traffic chiefly to prevent salt smugglers from having unchecked use of the routes. A system had once been set up of movable wooden barriers placed at important junctions and bridges in the district, particularly those along the borders, and it had been the responsibility of the local dyke captains (l’ang-chang), working with the heads of the local li in rotation, to ensure that the barriers were closed at night and opened in the morning. Since the local people gained no personal advantage by maintaining the system, it fell into disuse once the barriers began to need repair.

By the time of the pirate incursions, there was no effective means of denying the pirates access to the inland waterways. By the beginning

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20 Ts’ai:3.3b.

21 "Discussion on setting up barriers", Chia-hsing fu chih 1878:27b-28a.
of 1554, the local authorities had felled trees across and installed wooden stakes into the junctions of waterways. The Assistant Regional Commander T'ang K'o-k'uan ordered them to be pulled up again, because they restricted people fleeing from the pirates, without unduly worrying the pirates.\footnote{Ts'ai:2.2a-b.}

These makeshift and inflexible barriers provided no problem to the pirates; as they poled they way along the canals from village to village and came across one of these barriers, they would simply tie a rope around the stakes and pull them out, "like pulling up weeds". There is no indication that the barriers were guarded by either vigilantes or troops.

Ts'ai Chiu-te writes that the local people opposed the building of barriers by the local administration for the same reason that the Assistant Regional Commander had opposed them, because they obstructed routes of escape from the bandits. At the same time, Ts'ai Chiu-te records that during 1554 the poor people along the coast "took on the form of pirates" at night and that whatever had not been touched by the sea pirates was seized by the local bandits.\footnote{Ts'ai:2.12a.} It seems from this, and from information given in a "Discussion on setting up barriers", that in normal times salt smugglers made use of unimpeded waterways at night,\footnote{See fn. 21.} and that the building of barriers was as much an attempt to control local bandits as it was to discourage the pirates.

It seems likely that the opposition of local people to the barriers was at least partially based on the interruption caused to the economic life of the district. The local economy was heavily dependent on the waterways: besides those in the carrying trade, and the itinerant peddlers, many people living in the villages had to make trips several times a week to local markets, and the merchants in the market towns needed normal marketing schedules to operate. Except in a few places close to the coast, pirates and local bandits were an occasional not a constant menace, and the local people had much to lose by having the
requirements of their daily lives subordinated to half-hearted efforts to prevent the expansion of banditry.

Pirates, Troops and Peasants

To distinguish between the three groups — pirates, soldiers and local people — is in several senses artificial. Many locals joined the pirates; those of the soldiers who were of the local hereditary garrisons should perhaps be classed as locals; and many auxiliary troops were also recruited from the local population. Moreover troops brought in from Fukien on several occasions collaborated with the pirates who came from the same districts.

The members of these three groups, common people without power or privilege, the soldiers in the ranks, and those pirates who were followers rather than leaders, can all be considered as members of oppressed classes, from similar socio-economic backgrounds.

The rank and file of pirates, or petty merchant sailors, were originally from the poorer groups of people living along the south-east coast, unlike their leaders who were men of some capital. Contemporary analyses support this view. The scholar-official from P'ing-hu, T'u Chung-lü, in an analysis of the causes and possible cures for piracy, says that while some of the pirates were Japanese, and more were Chinese of the class of vagrants (liu-jen), many more were from the ordinary registered population of the Ning-Shao region, and of the prefectures of Chang-chou, Ch'üan-chou and Fu-chou in Fukien. The magistrate of Hai-yen during the disturbances gives an account of an eye-witness report of an ordinary peasant who had been captured by the pirates and had returned. He said that, at the time he was with them, that is in the early part of 1554, there were no more than two or three hundred "wild fellows" from areas of Ning-Shao, Chang-chou and Kuang-chou.25

25 T'u Chung-lü, "Five ways of resisting the pirates", in P'ing-hu hsien chih 1689:9.15a. T'u was a local man, chin-shih of Chia-ching 23 (1544). See Chia-hsing fu chih 1878:45.43b. In 1555 T'u was censor of the Hukuang circuit from Nanking. Li, Yü-ko chu-k'o-chih, p.30.

26 Cheng Mao:6a.
Among the incoming troops, contingents from Ch'u-chou in south-west Chekiang had their origins in the period of suppressing the "mine bandits" in that prefecture, and some of the former bandits were now members of the regular army. Commander T'ang K'o-k'uan's P'i troops who played such an important part in the first siege of Hai-yen were also said to have been recruited from among the bandits.

In practice, the Ch'u-chou and P'i troops, despite their origins in local banditry, were among the more well-disciplined, well-led and effective troops. The Chang-chou troops on the other hand collaborated with their fellow Fukienese among the pirates and behaved very much like them towards the local population.

The local people who joined the pirates were described in the same terms as the general analysis of the composition of the pirate followers: as local vagrants and robbers, and as poor people from along the coast.

For the administrators, the decision to bring in troops from outside created difficulties, since they knew it would inevitably mean a sharp increase in the strain of the local population. Because of the community of interests between certain groups of pirates, the troops and the local population, local administrative responsibilities were made more complicated and wider in scale than they had been before any troops arrived. On the other hand, troops from elsewhere were conspicuous — their manners and language marked them immediately among the locals — and hence desertion was not as easy for them, and looting and other crimes were more easily traced to their source. Local recruits by contrast had a great temptation to abscond, and sympathetic families and friends could assist them. Their misbehaviour was harder to bring home to the perpetrators simply because of their connections in the area.

The blurred distinctions between the pirates, peasants and soldiers was reflected in the way in which the accounts analyse certain events. We hear of troops who removed their distinctive head-gear so that they

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29 Ts'ai:2.4a; Cheng Mao:3b-4a.
could mix with the local population and create disturbances without being detected.\textsuperscript{30} There were members of the local population who were said to have taken on the form of pirates by night, and emulated their activities.\textsuperscript{31} And there were pirates who, dressed in the clothes of the local people, were said to have come up to a detachment of government troops, said "The Wo are coming", and through false information led the detachment into a pirate ambush.\textsuperscript{32}

It was difficult in the case of these events for observers to separate appearances from facts, and there seems to be room for a number of interpretations. All that can be said for certain is that there were times when even the closest observers from the elite classes were puzzled in determining who among the three groups of men should be blamed for particular acts of violence or vandalism. The tendency in the accounts was to blame pirates and troops as culprits, and local people were singled out only in the face of incontrovertible evidence.

In drawing up the long list of burdens placed on the shoulders of the people by the combined forces of pirates and the decisions of government, it is easy to move from the idea of them being victims to the idea of their being passive, and to interpret all events connected with them as if this was the case. For instance, when the pirates were joined by local people in their activities they were usually seen as the forcible minions (\textit{wo-nu}) of the pirates.

The passivity which characterized ordinary people in the historical accounts is mainly the result of their having left no record of their thoughts and motivations, let alone their activities, other than those ascribed to them by people somewhat removed from their realm of life. The chronicler, busy describing the plans and motives, the actions and their results, of the officials, the military and the gentry, tends only to notice what the common people are doing when they are already in full flight or when they are already clamouring at the gates.

\textsuperscript{30} See fn. 14.
\textsuperscript{31} Ts'ai:2.12a.
\textsuperscript{32} Ts'ai:3.2b.
Yet the officials and local gentry who together devised the policies which affected their lives saw them not only as a sensitive tax base, to be preserved as far as was practicable from undue disruption. They also saw them as being as capable as the pirates or troops of taking part in the conflict in a way advantageous or otherwise for the government. The way the officials and their local advisors saw the potential of the local people to play an active part in the pirate troubles was important in determining the policies they pursued, particularly in the field of recruitment and militarization.

Militarization

As a process of moulding social institutions into forms capable of military activity, militarization did not substantially occur in Chia-hsing during the pirate invasions. From the beginning, there was little effort on the part of the authorities to bring local people into permanent or part-time military activity.

The complete collapse of wei-so forces before the attacks of quite small pirate gangs in 1553 drew two responses from officials and influential local people. The first was to request troops from other areas, and the second, to raise local forces to deal with immediate problems. Whenever there was an attack, magistrates, acting magistrates and their subordinate district officials rounded up groups of militia to go out and face the pirates, or recruited larger numbers to guard the walls of their towns. These ad hoc forces never amounted to more than a few thousand men, usually less.

Generally they did not remain in existence beyond the end of a particular attack which they had been raised to resist. Untrained and often coerced into service, the men in these local defence corps were poor fighting material. They were invariably routed when expected to take some offensive action or to meet the enemy in open battle.34

33 For instance, requests were made by the influential scholar-official Ch’ien Wei of Hai-yen (Chia-hsing fu chih 1878:56.29a-b); and by Feng Ju-pi of P’ing-hu (Chia-hsing fu chih 1878:58.20a-b).

34 See Chapter Two.
At the sieges of Hai-yen and T'ung-hsiang, "death-defying" corps, composed of volunteers or of men selected for the purpose and offered a special reward, were sent out on sorties. These groups contained the better fighting men from among all of the available forces, both regular and ad hoc, but they were small groups and their use was limited.

The high command and district administrators continued to use these somewhat inefficient sources of defence manpower until the end of the crisis four years later. Other involvement by local people in the military campaigns was restricted, on the one hand, to 5,000 men recruited locally as long-term auxiliary forces to the regular wei-so troops (a small number out of a total population of about one million), and on the other, to scattered private attempts to form local militia corps.

Kuhn, in his study of aspects of militarization in nineteenth century China, says that "the search for the governing principles of militarization must range beyond the particular requirements of local defense and must relate militarization to other modes of social activity and organization." The same applies to an understanding of the lack of militarization in Chia-hsing during the years of the pirate invasions.

The reasons why both local and regional officials, urged on by local scholar-officials, brought in troops from outside rather than stepping up local recruitment is perhaps obvious. The importance of not unduly disturbing the economic life of the region has already been noted. The local people too would on the whole rather pay increased tax, and otherwise be left alone, than to have their way of life disrupted when able-bodied men were recruited and taken away. And then, bringing in outsiders to fight local battles, from the viewpoint of the administrators, almost guaranteed that a mutual suspicion and dislike would keep local people and troops at a distance from each other. If the troops were isolated from the normal population they could be more easily disciplined, and would be more cohesive in unfriendly or

35 Chia-hsing hsien chih 1685:4.17a.
unfamiliar territory. Troops from outside may be sent home again after peace has been restored, and the harmful legacy of war not increased by a large number of unemployed fighting men.

Officials and local scholar-gentry repeatedly characterized the people of Chia-hsing as hard-working, prosperous people who after successive generations of peace knew nothing of war and arms. Such people individually did not readily take to arms, nor did local forms of community self-defence organizations exist in ways which could mould the people into fighting forces, as had happened in some less peaceful parts of the empire. When the pirate invaders came, the Chia-hsing people "did not know about bows and arrows, spears and knives, and, timid as mice, did not want to find out."  

Only relatively small groups, like the boatmen, the salt-workers and the fishermen, through the competitiveness, poverty or danger of their normal lives, were known to value physical courage and aggression in ways that made them potential fighting material.

This general absence of martial spirit was also strongly evident in the local gentry. The intellectual and practical interest in military matters found among a number of local scholars was rarely directed towards initiatives in their immediate vicinity, other than their contribution to district-level organization which they made in conjunction with local officials. Local defence forces organized by local gentry in the Chia-hsing area were notable for their rarity.

The number of small militia groups and the actions in which they were involved were probably greater than the sources indicate. But in the case of Hai-yen, for instance, about which Ts'ai Chiu-te gives so much detailed information, the efforts must have been of such localized significance as not to be worth noting outside of the village where it occurred. We have the record of only one village-level corps and the response it elicited from the district administration: in the summer of 1554 pirates attacked a small place near an important bridge in the

37 Hsiu-shui hsien chih 1596:2.19a; see also Wang Yü: 5.24a, "Considering how to deal with serious piracy".

38 Li, Yü-Wo chu-k'o-chiûn, pp.24-5, 137-9.
ninth sub-district of Hai-yen. Two men, Ts’ao Fu and Ts’ao Chen, had been preparing a local militia (hsiang-ping), and, hoisting a flag and beating gongs like regular commanders, came out to oppose the pirates, who, encountering this unexpected spirited resistance, did not cross the river. Cheng Mao, magistrate of Hai-yen district, who includes this story in his account, says that he sent the Ts’aos a tablet with a message of commendation.39

This group of the Ts’aos seems to have had some prior organization. Not only did the men have the paraphernalia at hand, but they stood their ground and won the psychological advantage over the particular pirate group, a type of success which the regular government forces all too rarely enjoyed. No indication is given at all about the status of the two Ts’aos. The fact that Cheng Mao records the incident, and his encouragement of the local effort, leads one to suppose that if there had been other such groups, he would have told us of them. The group was notable because it was unusual.

The most famous privately organized local militia corps was the "sons and brothers corps" (tzu-ti ping) who had won fame at the battle of P’ing-wang in 1555. This term is used by Magistrate Cheng Mao to describe the group.40 Elsewhere they are called "the sons of worthy families" (liang-chia tzu ping).41 Tzu-ti means only youth, as opposed to aged, or juniors as opposed to seniors, but in this context denotes the younger members of respected peasant or gentry extended households linked by family ties.

This corps had been in training for several years before going into battle. They were well-trained, and at home on the waterways of the districts around the Grand Canal. Entirely organized and funded by private initiative, this corps raised the question in the minds of those who saw how well it fared, why more corps of a similar nature were not created. In the 1596 gazetteer for Hsiu-shui district, the formation of this corps is represented as a response to the ravages caused by

40 Cheng Mao:6b.
41 Hsiu-shui hsien chih 1596:2.19a.
incoming troops.\(^{42}\)

One local scholar-official who is credited with making efforts to expand basic local defence was Shen Ch’i-yüan, of a well-known wealthy family of Hsü-shui district. Shen gave a good deal of money to assist defence work, and took an active part himself. He is said to have gathered a group of strong men and given them good rations so that they would not be tempted to abscond. He supervised them in the building of boats and trained them in techniques of fighting on water. His aim was said to be to provide protection for the villages. This is one of the few references to locals being trained specifically for basic level defence in the countryside, and it was an isolated and private initiative.\(^{43}\)

Perhaps the most common local initiative in creating groups of fighting men emanated from the "natural leaders" in the community. Sometimes they were young students, perhaps of good families, with a bent for physical action and leadership. For example, Fan Hsi-yün, a prefectural student of Hsü-shui district skilled in riding and archery, was among a number of local men selected by prefect Liu Ch’üeh to lead local troops. He volunteered for offensive action and was killed fighting near P’ing-hu in 1554 at the age of twenty-six sui. Another local student Wang Ssu-ching, a protegé of T’ang Shun-chih, was said to be so strong that he could "draw a bow with his teeth", and so accurate a shot that when pirates captured a pagoda outside Chia-hsing which gave them a view into the city, Wang was able to pick one off "with every draw of the bow".\(^{44}\)

Just as often they were local "tough guys" or bullies who in normal times would have remained in obscurity. Among the men of humble origins who won notoriety was one who owed his power initially to the favour of the authorities: Ch’ien Ts’ai, from Chia-hsing, was serving a prison

\(^{42}\) Ibid.

\(^{43}\) Chia-hsing fu chih 1878:52.19b-20a, biography of Shen Ch’i-yüan.

\(^{44}\) Fan Hsi-yün, Chia-hsing fu chih 1878:52.22a; Wang Ssu-ching is also said to have taken part in the planning of the series of forts built at Chia-hsing and Ch’ung-te in 1555–6 (Chia-hsing fu chih 1878:50.39a).
sentence when he was recommended for his ability as a tough, successful organizer, received a pardon, and was recruited into the regular ranks. In 1555 he led a group of small boats to relieve some government forces who were losing badly in an engagement with pirates. Ch'ien subsequently considered the patronage which Hu owed him for this success as a licence to pillage the countryside as he pleased. Early in 1556 his activities attracted the attention of the magistrate of T'ung-hsiang, and Ch'ien fled to Hai-ning. The next day his party "coerced" several hundred people in villages near Hsia-shih to tear up clothes to make flags and to take up sticks and go on a rampage. The group was pursued by government troops and fled into the Lake T'ai region. Ts'ai Chiu-te, who records the saga of this small rebellion, comments: "I heard later that (Ch'ien's gang) had gone in with the sea pirates. I never found out what happened to them in the end. Hu and Hsü (Ch'ien's accomplices) died in prison."

Ch'ien was an ambitious and dangerous man, who had already fallen foul of the authorities. It is ironic that the conditions created by the pirate troubles should conspire to elevate this man, among all of the many people in the prefecture, and place him under the protection of the most powerful official in the whole of the south-east. His local following and the rumoured collaboration with the pirates points up the risks that administrators ran in employing this type of man, and how little difference it made, from the point of view of Ch'ien and his followers, which side they fought on.

Ch'ien was not the only recruit to the government forces to be taken from a county prison. Another, Shen K'un, whose profession was collecting taxes for the yamen, had been imprisoned for defaulting on his collections. While there he had become acquainted with pirates and presumably with their attitudes and methods. He had been recruited to Hu Tsung-hsien's staff because of his reputation for daring and initiative. Like Ch'ien Ts'ai, he had been able to render service to Hu at the battle of Wang-chiang-ching. In 1556, Shen and his son had

\[45\] Ts'ai:3.6b.

\[46\] Ts'ai:4.1b, 4.7b.
carried out the poisoned wine stratagem by which pirates advancing on Chia-hsing city had been delayed and diverted away.47

Recruiting men from prison or from among the local underworld to take on the unpleasant and difficult tasks of war was a conventional defence strategy.48 It reflected a legalist approach in which rulers felt the greatest confidence in men whom they could control through rewards and punishments.49

Such ad hoc measures were supplemented in other nearby prefectures in ways which were noticeably absent in Chia-hsing. In neighbouring Sung-chiang prefecture, for example, direct forms of control were imposed over parts of the countryside where pirates had been camped for long periods. A Sung-chiang scholar-official outlined several proposals for defending and securing the coastal regions of the prefecture. The coastal people, he pointed out, had only two choices: to fight against the pirates or to support them. Piracy destroyed their livelihoods, so unless the government stepped in to recruit them to the government side with regular stipends as government troops, they must become bandits and swell the ranks of the pirates. It was necessary therefore to round them up and give them regular training and a salary. The series of eight fortified places along the coast needed to be repaired, so that when pirates approached, the armed men could go out to face them, and the rest of the people could take shelter in the forts and resist the pirates from behind the walls. In this way the coast could be made secure for the inhabitants and at the same time the need for bringing in troops from other provinces could be removed.50

Something along the lines of these proposals was introduced: some time after the pirate camps at Che-lin and Nan-hui along the Sung-chiang coast had been wiped out, low walls were built at Che-lin and at Ch’uan-

47 P’ing-hu hsien chih 1689:22a-b; Ts’ai:4.2b-3a.
50 Li Chao-hsiang, Shang chang pan chou tsung chih shu, from Sung-chiang fu chih, quoted in Li, Yu-ko chu-k’o-chih, pp.24-5; DMB: 804-5, biography of Li Chao-hsiang.
sha further north along the coast. A detachment of 500 troops and a military officer were stationed at Ch’uan-sha and "households from along the coast were shifted there to give substance to (the settlement)."  

Although there were also pirate camps for considerable periods at Cha-p’u and Shih-tun on the coast of Chia-hsing, no comparable work was carried out there. The wall of Cha-p’u was strengthened, but its strategic position rather than the control of the surrounding population was the reason for the additional fortifications. The stockade at Shih-tun was not touched. The administration of these two stretches of coast differed partly because the Sung-chiang coastal areas formed a wider and more definite belt, economically and socially distinct from the hinterland, and yet, until the 1550s, had been inadequately provided with forts and troops to divide it into manageable sections. The northern Chekiang coast, on the other hand, had four substantial fortified towns, all well-populated, and capable of sustaining a heavy concentration of troops in some safety.

As a further contrast, coastal areas quite close to Chia-hsing, yet differing in economic and social circumstances, produced corps of men to serve local needs which were then able to form part of regional defence resources. The island district of Ch’ung-ming in the Yangtze delta was an off-shore extension of that coastal society which existed along the Sung-chiang coast, and to a lesser extent along the Chia-hsing coast. Originally settled only in the Sung and Yuan dynasty, Ch’ung-ming in the 1550s still retained a frontier character which was disappearing in the coastal fringes of the mainland. Because it held a strategic position in the Yangtze estuary, and yet was isolated from the mainland, it was a haven for vagrants and renegades from mainland areas. Salt-smuggling and illegal overseas trade attracted gangs of men to settle or establish semi-permanent bases there. Its old families often owed their wealth to illegal activities and were tough independent people. Even two centuries later, when the island was much more agricultural and

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51 Fan Lien, Yün-chien chü-mu ch’ao (1593):5.2a; Hua-t’ing hsien chih 1880:2.3a.
52 See Chapter Five.
prosperous, it produced very few scholars and was regarded by the mainlanders as a backward and barbarian place. The islanders therefore did not have access through informal channels with the bureaucracy comparable with that of Chia-hsing's districts. When piracy along the coast began to escalate rapidly in the early 1550s, the balance between official and unofficial commercial activities became so unstable that the landowning families felt a need for protection. Because of their isolation and lack of high-level influence in the bureaucracy, the people of Ch'ung-ming were not successful in attracting government troops to augment their defences, and consequently they had no alternative but to form their own forces. In this too their experience differed greatly from that of the districts of Chia-hsing.

The immediate stimulus to the formation of the corps on the island was the fall of the district city to the pirates in mid-1554. Government troops on the mainland were unable to cross to the island and meet the emergency, and some local sheng-yüan organized a militia of a thousand men who were divided into companies each led by a local senior commoner (chi-min'). Because of the leadership of these elders, the corps became widely known as "the elders' corps". They drove the pirates from the district town. The new magistrate, understandably anxious for some protection, placed them on an official basis: their names were recorded and they received regular rations, with extra pay whenever they had to meet an attack. From that time on the elders' corps was often deployed for duty on the mainland as well, and saw action in the districts along the coast on the southern bank of the Yangtze estuary. In this way, a considerable body of men, recruited and trained locally, without official initiative, was incorporated in the armoury of the regional military command.

The scarcity of such examples of local militarization may be partly attributed to the central government's traditional fear that such militarization would lead to decentralized bases of command and loyalty,

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54 Ch'ung-ming hsien chih 1760:8.13a-b.
through the creation of a highly mobilized local population outside the
controls to which the official military forces were subject. Yet, when
regular government forces repeatedly suffered heavy losses and failed to
halt the escalating incursions of the pirates, it was natural for
scholar-officials to consider local alternatives, such as militia
forces, to supplement the weakness of the regular forces and to reduce
dependence on costly and troublesome troops from other areas.

Thus if more highly organized forms of local military institution
did not appear in Chia-hsing, it was not because local scholar-officials
were uninterested in the subject. Both Ch’ien Wei of Hai-yen and T’u
Chung-lü of P’ing-hu considered that a greater participation by local
people in military aspects of the anti-pirate effort was desirable to
reduce the harmful effects which large numbers of troops from elsewhere
were having on local finance and local economy. T’u Chung-lü argued
that policies for improving local security should be based on the
principle that men will fight to the death to defend their own homes,
but all their vigour disappears when recruited to a large army and asked
to fight in the public interest.55

Ch’ien agreed that people of both town and countryside wanted to
protect their families, and to that extent they were willing to resist
the pirates. For country areas he recommended that men from large,
important clans who understood correct behaviour (li) and respected the
laws, be selected as leaders. These chosen leaders should then submit
to the authorities a list, by sub-district (tu) and village, of the
number of boats and able-bodied men. The men should be called together
to train regularly, and while in training should be subject to the laws
pertaining to the regular ranks. In particular, quarrels among the men
and travel across district borders by night should be forbidden.56

Both T’u and Ch’ien gave prescriptions for action rather than
descriptions of concrete achievements. Their prescriptions seem
practical enough, the product of an era when practical statecraft was

55 T’u Chung-lü, "Five ways of resisting the pirates", P’ing-hu haien
    chūn 1689:9.17a.

56 Ch’ien Wei, Ch’eng-ch’i-t’ang kao: 11.10a-13a, "Discussing locally-
    raised troops".
particularly highly regarded, but considered against the scanty evidence of activity in the area they were discussing, their proposals indicate a gap between words and action which often remained unbridged among the scholar-gentry class of Chia-hsing. The members of the bureaucratic elite in particular seem to have preferred to put their proposals to the bureaucracy and have them adopted and carried out as official policies, rather than to take upon themselves the initiation of local defence organization.

If the period of pirate invasions is to be considered as an illustration of class relations in Chia-hsing, then the evidence does not offer much firm basis for conclusion. It is certain that the local population suffered much from both pirates and troops, and that for many peasants there was little difference between either side. Yet in a civilian society where the values of work and the market place and of the large Confucian-educated elite served to limit violent forms of social activity to a small minority of the people, it is perhaps not surprising to find that a brief four years of pirate incursions did not greatly affect the internal stability of that society. The lack of militarization in the countryside at large was less a reflection of the administration's distrust of the populace as of the fact that militarization was never really necessary in Chia-hsing.
CONCLUSION

The pirate crisis had its roots in local developments within the advanced sectors of the south-east. In developing a large-scale extra-legal overseas trading sector within the economy and society of the south-east coast, these advanced sectors had engaged in activities which were distinct from the interests of the central Ming government. Contradictions within the overseas trading sector gave rise to large-scale piracy when the Ming government re-enforced its laws on overseas trade and travel. Thus the crisis which threatened the security of Ming authority in the south-east developed in intimate relationship with the policies and practice of the Ming government and the society and economy of the south-east.

Yet from the resources to which it had access in this region, the Ming government was able to suppress the violent manifestations of autonomous regional change before irreparable harm was done to the structure and power of local Ming rule. The resilience which the Ming displayed in coping with this crisis rested on a basis already familiar to historians of late imperial China - the continuing success of the central government in making local elites dependent on central government institutions for status and power. Regardless of the degree of involvement by the coastal gentry and the elites of the Yangtze delta in overseas trade, once piracy threatened the established order, their support for the administration became a major source of governmental strength. Thus, although the advanced sectors displayed a measure of independent regionalism, within these same areas the Ming government was able to marshal a viable resistance to the pirate invasions because of the extensive involvement by the elites of the region in the institutions of the central government.

A striking characteristic of the anti-pirate administration was the dominance of civil officials over military affairs and the continuing weakness of military institutions in the south-east. The experience of Chia-hsing during the pirate crisis, as well as the condition of local defences before the crisis, confirms the dilapidated state of the military in the south-east during the mid-Ming period. By 1553, the military was ill-prepared for active resistance to armed threats. The
deployment of large numbers of troops from all parts of China to the 
south-east during the crisis period did not substantially increase the 
military effectiveness of the government forces. Only after the main 
pirate threat had been removed from Chiang-Che in 1556 did the government 
begin to acquire a more effective military capacity. Because of 
this military weakness, and the initial tardiness of the regional high 
command in imposing an overall defence strategy, positional as opposed to 
forward defence remained the hallmark of regional strategy for the first 
few years of the pirate invasions. Primary emphasis was placed on defending 
walled towns and on building new walls or extending old ones, and the 
countryside and unwalled towns were left with no capacity to resist the 
Pirates.

The emphasis on defence from within walled towns which were the seats 
of local administration reflected the importance of the preservation of 
local administrative authority to the central government and in the overall 
defence strategy of the regional high command. The ability of local 
administrator to successfully carry through wall-building projects and to 
defend themselves from behind those walls, largely without outside help, aided 
substantially in the removal of the pirates from northern Chekiang in 1556.

While regional defence policies relied heavily on the individual 
districts to cope within the limitation of utilizing their own resources, 
the difficulties which some districts experienced in achieving a consensus 
on wall-building projects required the intervention of higher levels of 
the bureaucracy. These were cases where the interests of local administration 
and the central government were at variance with certain groups within the 
local influential people. In each case, the disagreements seem to have 
stemmed from legitimate but highly sectional grievances over the effects 
of the proposed walls on the social and economic geography of the towns. 
These difficulties reflected the competing interests of strategic and economic 
priorities among local elites in a highly commercialized region.

Evidence on the relations between the elites and the commoners at the 
local level which emerges from the accounts of wall-building and the defence 
of towns suggests that the elite relied on their wealth to hire men to 
defend cities and to protect their property. Payment was the means by 
which the elite classes gained the labour and defence manpower of the 
poorer classes, this device was reinforced by the power of the local yamen 
to coerce people into action through the existing systems of registration.
Recruitment through forms of customary obligation, or as groups of permanent employees or servants, on the other hand, were the exception.

Another aspect of the response to the invasions which suggests that there were limits to the ability of Chia-hsing's elites to mobilize the population for their own ends was the low level of local militarization. However in part it was a conscious choice by the administration to leave the people be, given the economic importance of the continuance of the normal agricultural life of Chia-hsing, and the strategic importance of not unduly disrupting that life for fear of driving large numbers of people into the ranks of the pirates. Only in the coastal areas where the choice was more stark between instituting closer administrative controls or permitting the absorption of the population into the pirate forces, were steps taken on a wide scale to recruit able-bodied men to arms and to place others under the protection of walled towns.

Although the bureaucratic elite was rarely found taking initiative in the organization of local defence, their experience and interest in military affairs and coastal defence was a major resource for the Chiang-Che region. This resource was tapped through the participation of these men at several different levels of the bureaucracy — as consultants rather than as initiators of local defence and wall-building activities, as advisors connected with high regional officials like Hu Tsung-hsien, and as individuals able to exert powerful influence with high officials in other parts of the country. Their contribution to the defence effort was made primarily through the manipulation of bureaucratic channels, such as securing the diversion of central government resources as aid, rather than through participation in the organization of the resources of their own districts for the purposes of defence.

Finally, this study suggests that an assessment of the Ming government facing the mid-century crisis on its south-eastern borders requires an examination of performance of all levels of government. The reports of events which had taken place within districts, exposing the strengths and weaknesses of local civil and military institutions, were the basis of decisions by the regional high command towards defence policies and practice. The connections which the regional high command and their subordinates had with local elites of northern Chekiang emerges from local sources as a major factor in the conduct of defence. Only through the accumulation of such local evidence can the contribution of local administration to the Ming government's response to the military crisis be given its proper weight.
GLOSSARY

TERMS

ch'ai-i 差役
chen 鎮
chen-min 鎮民
ch'eng-fa k'o ssu-li 承發科司吏
chi-min 香民
chia-chang 申長
chiao-yü 教諭
ch'ien 錢
ch'ien-hu so 千户所
chien-min 奸民
chien-shang 奸商
chih-fu 知府
chih-hsien 知縣
chin-shih 進士
chin wu 禁物
chü-jen 舉人
chu-pu 主簿
chu-sheng 諸生
ch'u-an-hu 船戶
chün-ping 郭兵
chü-t'ien 均田
fen 分
fen-hsün ch'ien-shih 分巡督事
fen-hsün tao 分巡道
fen-shou hsün-hai fu-shih 分守巡海副使
fen-shou tao 分守道
fo-lang-chi 佛琅機
fu 府
fu-shih 副使
hai-chin 海禁
hai-ch'uan 海船
hai-fang-tao 海防道
hai-k'ou 海寇
hai-tao pei ping fei 海道偏兵費
hai-tsei 海賊
hsiang-min 鄉民
hsiang-ping 鄉兵
hsien 縣
hsien-ch'eng 縣丞
hsü-shih 軍吏
hsün 巡
hsün-chien-ssu 巡検司
hsün-fu 巡撫
hsün-pu t'ung-pan 巡捕通判
hsün-pu yü chu-pu 巡捕於主簿
hsün-tao 副導
hu 户
i-hsüeh hsün-k'o 醫學訓科
i-min 義民
k'an-ho k'o ssu-li 勘合科司吏
keng-ping 坑兵
kuan-yin 官銀
kung-ping 马兵
lang-ping 狼兵
lao-jen 老人
li 禮
li 里
li-chang 里長
li-chia 里甲
li-lao 里老
liang 糧
liang-chia-tzu ping 归家子兵
liu-jen 流人
lu 路
ma 馬
mao-chin 冒禁
min 民
min-chuang 民壯
ding 民
mou 敵
mou-p'an 謀叛
mu-fu 墓府
mu-hsia 墓下
mu-k'o 墓客
nung-ch'eng 極巫
pa-kuan 坊官
pa-tsung 把總
pao-chia 保甲
ping-hsiang 兵鄕
ping-pe-tao 兵備道
pu 捕
pu-tao t'ung-pan 捕盗通判
san-ssu 三司
seng-hui-ssu seng-hui 僧曾司僧會
sheng-yüan 生員
shih-ch'ang 質倡
shih-po-ssu 市舶司
shui-li ch'ien-shih 水利食事
so 所
sui 廳
tan 石
t'ang-chang 塹長
tao 道
tao-hui ssu tao-hui 官會司官會
t'i-tu chün-wu 提督軍務
tien-li 感史
tien-shih 典史  
tou 斗  
ts' an-chiang 参将  
tsao-hu 坍户  
tsung-ping 隨兵  
tsung pu t'ing t'ung-chih 總捕廵同知  
tsung-tu 隨督  
tu 都  
tu-chih-hui shih-ssu 都指揮使司  
t'ui-kuan 推官  
t'ung-chih 同知  
t'ung-pan 通判  
tzu-ti ping 子弟兵  
wakō (wo-k'ou) 廷官  
wei 衛  
wei-ch' i 圓棋  
wei-so 衛所  
weng-ch'eng 藥城  
wo 倭  
wō-nu 倭奴  
yu-hang 廬行  
yen-ch'ang ta-shih 景場大使  
yin-yang hsüeh hsün-shu 陰陽學術街  
yü-heng ssu lang-chung 廣衡司郎中  
yung-chien 勇健  
yung-chuang 勇壯  
yung-kan chih shih 勇敢之士  
yung-shih 勇士  
yung-chih 勇直  
yung-p'ing tsang ta-shih 永平官大將  

N A M E S

Chang Ching 張絳  
Chang Fu 張缺  
Chang Ho 張浩  
Chang Jen 張任  
Chang Shih-ch' eng 繆士誠  
Chang Shih-ch'e 繆時徹  
Chao Wen-hua 趙文章  
Chao Ying 趙瀛  
Ch’en Tung 陳東  
Ch’en Shih 陳賓  
Ch’en Sung 陳松  
Ch’en Tsung-k’uei 陳宗夔  
Cheng Hsiao 鄭蛟  
Cheng Jo-tseng 鄭若曾  
Cheng Lü-ch’ un 鄭履淳
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