

遂昌民俗“秋赛会”

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庙会的仪仗队伍旌旗簇拥，十分热闹
A procession of the July Fair



圣像到坦，响铙齐鸣
The fanfare celebrates the arrival of the Buddhist statue.

浙江遂昌县建县于东汉建安二十三年（218），是个有着悠久文化传统的山区小县，乡风淳朴、人才辈出，明代伟大的戏剧家汤显祖曾在遂昌担任5年多的知县。任期内，他经常深入乡野，与民同乐，使得本来就能歌善戏的遂昌乡民更加乐于参加民间乡俗活动。县城西乡石练镇一带的庙会，就是在明万历年间发展起来的民间庙会，名曰“秋赛会”。由于时值农历七月，当地民间称之为“七月会”。近几年，随着汤显祖文化的挖掘与弘扬，与之密切相关的“秋赛会”也在它的发祥地——遂昌石练镇悄然兴起。

关于“七月会”的起源，民间和相关的资料有好几种记载，但基本的说法都围绕着这样的一个传说：相传古时，蔡氏兄弟24人居此，在山中伐木，有仙人指点他们，悬崖下的山洞里有24把金椅子，坐上了就可以成仙，他们跳下山洞后都成了神仙。山民为这些保护神建起了神庙。神庙高大壮观，每逢立秋后第一个“辰”（百姓称“龙”）日举行祭祀，渐成庙会。其中，最大庙会就是石练的“秋赛会”。

庙会由石练16个坦（当地的村落单位名称，大的坦包括两三个村子，小的坦只有一个村子）轮番值年。届时，抬一尊木雕的蔡王圣像出巡，巡遍黄皮、苏村、石练等16个村坦。神像每村坦驻一夜，演一夜戏，会期长达20天，形成了独特的庙会习俗。

“戒斋”是庙会前的准备。16个村轮任值首。值年头坦，在会前的半个月，全村要戒斋，直到蔡王出殿为止。此外，值年理事要统计全村的人丁，确定甲旗数字，撮认祭品分派到户；检查仪仗队用具；招聘梨园名班；培训锣鼓队和“十番”乐队。同时，值年村里的群众还得每人办一套新衣，并准备会期吃食，以饗宾客。

“蔡王出巡”是庙会高潮。自立秋后第一个“辰”（龙）日为蔡王出庙日期，日巡一坦，上午仪仗游行，佛座至坦，响铙齐鸣，戏班演员登台“叠八仙”庆贺，下午及夜晚演戏娱神，观者如潮。“蔡王出巡”仪式隆重，热闹非凡，把整个庙会的庆典推向高潮。仪仗队伍前有响铙开道，锣鼓喧天，旌旗簇拥，特别是“十番”乐队的演奏在整个队伍中显得十分突出，笙歌悠扬悦耳。接着有抬阁，继以鼓乐、仙轿、佛龕、掌扇、八卦旗、七星旗等等。神像所到之处，各坦祭亭贴新联、挂官灯、披彩布横额，燃烛焚香，鸣炮迎之。佛座前，摆祭桌，陈列着二十四碗、二十四碟的祭品，还有五谷精制的工艺品，家家户户宾朋相聚，洋溢着欢乐的气氛。

“玄沙庙”演戏酬神，是庙会的余兴。“蔡王出巡”历经十坦之后，要举行归庙仪式。归庙后，在“玄沙古庙”演戏三夜。一

年一度的七月会渐入尾声。

庙会期间，远近亲友即来赶会，阡陌道路，人流接踵，晚间看戏，欢情倍增。商贾走贩毕至，贸易十分活跃。

在送神迎神的队伍中，各村坦都会拿出本村的看家本领，组成既有特色又有看点的仪式组合，各村分别有舞龙、锣鼓、十番乐队、旌旗、马灯、茶楼宴、抬阁等等，煞是壮观。

“秋赛会”风风雨雨走过400多个春秋，后世的民众不断把自己的生活经验、信仰、愿望和理想赋予它，使“秋赛会”形式在延续中不断地发展和变异。

到了2001年，沉睡70多年之久的石练“秋赛会”终于又活跃起来。2004年遂昌县对重点文化资源进行了挖掘整理，沉寂多年的“秋赛会”展示出独特的魅力。现在每年民众都自发地举办，而且，规模不减。民俗在传承中焕发出新的光彩。

“秋赛会”民俗是民众集体的创造，在“秋赛会”上很有特色的石练“十番”的形成与发展，与汤显祖有密切的联系。

明万历二十一年（1593）至二十六年（1598），汤显祖任遂昌知县五年多，他勤政爱民，为官清廉，公余之暇和诸生讲读同学，邀好友诗酒唱和，并一直在收集素材，构思传奇，为“抛冠”后的惊世之作《牡丹亭》积累了创作的养分。同时，他还积极推进昆曲在遂昌的传播，当地群众传习昆曲，把昆曲演奏运用于民间喜庆活动之中。石练“秋赛会”的迎神活动采用了这种形式，石练“十番”由此而形成，而且石练“十番”作为“秋赛会”迎神活动的重要内容，一直延续了下来。新近，该县县委、县政府又拨出2万元专款，以夯实石练十番艺术的基础。县文化部门制订了《石练十番开发利用工作方案》，拟定了石练十番今后的发展方向。宣传、文化、旅游等各部门联合，给予资金等多方面支持。目前，石练十番民间演奏队伍，已能演奏汤显祖《牡丹亭》中的《游园》《数花》《皂罗袍》《折柳》等多个曲目。



在送神迎神队伍中的抬阁民俗

Villagers carry the Buddhist statue.



By Lan Chunxiao

July Fair in Rural Suichang

Suichang as a county in southern Zhejiang dates back to 218 AD. Although it is just a small county landlocked in mountains, the rural life there has maintained its pastoral essence and produced quite a few outstanding personalities. Tang Xianzu, a great playwright in the years of the Emperor Wanli of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), worked as county magistrate in Suichang for five years (1593-1598). Many historians attribute to Tang the local people's passion for singing and dancing and other folk festivities. One of the evidences is a local celebration called Autumn Fair or July Fair. The ten musical pieces played for hundreds of years at the fair can be traced back to Tang who wrote timeless masterpieces such as "The Peony Pavilion" in Suichang.

There are different theories about the origin of the July Fair in Suichang, but they have one thing in common. Once upon a time 24 brothers surnamed Cai took refuge in Suichang and they made a living by cutting firewood. One day they ran into a deity. The deity told them that there were 24 golden chairs in a cave at the foot of a steep cliff and that they would become immortals if they found the chairs and took seats there. The brothers jumped from the cliff and found the chairs. Gradually local people came to

believe that the brothers were their guardians. So temples were built to worship them and ceremonies took shape. On the first dragon day after the Beginning of the Autumn (which is one of the 24 solar terms in the Chinese lunar calendar and falls on around August 8 in the solar calendar) every year, local people would hold sacrificial ceremonies in honor of the guardians. The biggest ceremony was the July Fair in today's Shilian Town. This celebration has survived.

The July Fair in Shilian has always been held by a neighborhood of 16 villages. Each of the sixteen is put in charge of a 20-day annual celebration in turn. Fifteen days before the celebration starts, the sponsoring village will get busy with preparations. The village head will count male heads in the village so as to make sure how pairs of flags in five colors will be made. Each household will be instructed to make an offering. The village will inspect the devices to be used by honor guards, train the drum and gong team and the band, and repaint the theater stage and prepare food to entertain visitors. Everyone in the sponsoring village will get a new dress for the 20-day celebration. And villagers in the village will practice fast before the big day.

The 20-day celebration goes around 16 villages. A statue of the god (isn't strange that 24 brothers shared just one image to mortals?) is the centerpiece of the parade. The parade starts in the morning after a grand ceremony. The gala parade proceeds with banners, sedan chairs, Buddhist statues, accompanied by a great fanfare of music and percussions and escorted by

priests and other important people. The parade stops one night at one village. When the statue arrives, it is placed on a special platform which is garishly decorated with couplets, lanterns and banners. A table near nearby is heaped with offerings in 24 bowls and 24 plates. Each village stages a play at night to express gratitude to their guardians for their blessings. The statue relay goes around 16 villages and then it comes back to the starting village and stays there for another three nights. There will be dramas staged to pay homage to the guardians for three nights on end. Then the fair ends.

The annual celebration is more than parades and folk opera performances. The stage serves as the center of trading activities. Vendors set up their stalls around the stage and in many villages the stalls will radiate out to neighboring lanes and streets. As the July Fair is 20 days long and important, vendors prepare their goods long before the fair and people from villagers in mountains



夜晚演戏娱神，洋溢着欢乐的气氛

The happy shows at night are designed to please gods.

come to watch the parade and plays and buy things they need.

The July Fair started in the 12th year of the Emperor Wanli of the Ming Dynasty and lasted for about 400 years. The fair evolved and changed to cater to local needs and wants and wishes. However the fair stopped in the 1930s. It was not until 2001 that villagers decided to bring the custom back.

The new fair has modern elements. Spectators flood in from all over the region in buses, cars, and motorcycles. Modern musical instruments in a parading band can be spotted now and then. Loudspeakers are used to broadcast the traditional 10 musical pieces. Police are usually called in to keep order.

The county government has started to salvage local traditions and customs since 2004, and the county's cultural authorities has formulated plans to help promote the fair and given funds to support the band and the ten musical pieces, but the fair essentially remains a big event of the sixteen villages as it was for hundreds of years. □

July Fair in Rural Suichang

