activism attempting to reconfirm genealogical trees of knowledge for that region. Through such activities, literati were able to strengthen mutual solidarity and reconstruct regional consciousness.

Perceptions among Policy-Makers Concerning Social Problems during the Mid-Ch’ing Period: The Roles of “Dereliction of Duty” and “Notorious Pirate Leaders” in the Debate Over the Piracy Problem

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This article takes of the piracy problem which arose during the end of 18th and early 19th centuries in order to examine perceptions about social problems held by policy-makers (emperors, military advisers and provincial governors) of the mid-Ch’ing Period.

The piracy problem at the stage of the 1790s was attributed in origin to provincial administrators or the Green Standard Army 綠營, an ethnically Han military regiment responsible for law enforcement; that is, to “dereliction of duty” on the part of local administrators. Early on, the cause of the piracy problem along the entire Chinese seacoast was attributed to such “inaction” in the Chekiang region, due to the frequent occurrence of political scandals there. Later, Fukien, as well, when misconduct on the part of its viceroy and governor was discovered and both summarily executed, became the “main source” of the piracy problem. During that time, no matter at what level “dereliction of duty” was occurring, whether in the Green Standard Army command or the provincial administrations, whole provinces were deemed “derilect” by association and accused of giving rise to social problems.

Then beginning in 1799, mainstream opinion about the piracy problem shifted from administrative “dereliction of duty” to the rise of ringleaders among the pirates themselves, attributing the problem to the work of “notorious pirate leaders.” As a matter of fact, it was in 1799 that Grand Councillor Hešen was accused of causing such social problems as “corruption,” “greed” and “dereliction of duty,” as well at inciting rebellion. With Hešen’s execution, which accompanied the establishment of the new regime of Emperor Jiaqing, the problem of “dereliction of duty” could therefore no longer be cited as the
cause of social problems. Consequently, the notorious leaders pillaging the
countryside became the cause of the piracy problem, and it was now their
elimination that would solve the problem.

It is in this manner that perceptions about social problems during the mid-
Ch’ing period were determined not by examining the actual problems
themselves, but rather by identifying the unstable, stressful elements and factors
within overall social trends and political conditions of the time. As to the
allegations of “dereliction of duty” that we see so often made during the last
years of Emperor Ch’ianlong’s reign, whether or not malfunctions were
actually occurring in the administrative mechanism and whether in fact these
problems were the actual cause of civil unrest were really not directly relevant
to policy-makers. Rather it was a series of issues stemming from the short
term political situation of the time that became the focus of discussion.