Leading through ritual: Ceremony and emperorship in early modern China

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Abstract
Ritual performance is well understood in organizational maintenance. Its role in leadership and processes of change, however, remains understudied. We argue that ritual addresses key challenges in institutionalizing leadership, particularly in fixing the relation between a charismatic leader and formal governance structures. Through a historical case study of the institutionalization of the emperor in Qing China (1636–1912), we argue that the shaping of collective understandings of the new emperor involved structural aspects of ritual that worked through analogical reasoning to internalize the figure of the leader through focusing attention, fixing memory, and emotionally investing members in the leader. We argue that data from the Qing dynasty Board of Rites show that ritual was explicitly designed to model the new institutional order, which Qing state-makers used to establish collective adherence to the emperorship. We further discuss the implications of this case for understanding the symbolic and performative nature of leadership as an institutional process.

Keywords
Leadership, ritual, social construction, China

When the Manchu military leader Hong Taiji became khan of a loosely organized confederation of semi-nomadic peoples in 1627, he had no more power than the other three Manchu military leaders, and only slightly more influence at the head of the joint council. By the time he died in 1643, however, he had built a highly centralized political and military...
organization with himself at the apex. This transformation from the leader of an informal organization of military leaders to an emperor made possible one of the largest land-based empires in history, the Qing dynasty, which ruled China and parts of Inner Asia from 1636 to 1912.

The construction of the Qing emperorship exemplifies a central problem for understanding leadership: how are new leadership forms embedded within wider polities and become normalized as new orders? In the case of the Qing, the leader of disparate groups of seminomadic peoples was transformed, symbolically and materially, into a maker of laws and administrator of an agrarian bureaucratic empire. The Manchu khan became the legitimate sovereign of a hierarchical organization of officials and nobles in a centralized state structure with an established line of dynastic succession, whereas classical social theory says such transitions are historically determined. Recent work emphasizes the contingent nature of such historical processes, opening anew the question leadership emergence. ¹ Thus the question, how did the Manchu military leader become an emperor?

A classical explanation of pre-modern leadership emergence is Weber’s (1914) analysis of the transformation of charismatic leadership to increasingly impersonal formal rule. Weber (1947: 348) defined charismatic authority as occurring when a leader is “set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities”. Weber (1968) argued that charismatic authority cannot exist in pure form and, thus, becomes depersonalized and routinized (Weber, 1914: 246, 1121–1139). Drawing on Chinese and Ottoman contexts, Weber located a leader’s sovereignty in the elimination of rivals, the shoring up of political support, the creation of administrative institutions, and the employment of professional bureaucrats (Weber, 1914). In this process, charismatic leaders became further removed from the intimacy of personal command, increasingly delegating leadership through professionalized hierarchies. For Weber, charisma moves from the singular, sublime leader (cf. Ladkin, 2006) to be diffused into a permanent structure of everyday life. In this understanding, the formalization of relations was a key task of the ruler, his staff, and subjects in order to routinize power.

Weber’s theorizing on charismatic leadership and formal governance does not account for micro-processes by which charisma functions, and has been described as deterministic (Unger, 1976: 176–217). Focusing on the enactment of leadership in practice, we identify ritual as a process where leaders are symbolically integrated into governance orders. Our ritual perspective contributes to leadership scholarship by exploring why charismatic leadership seems compelling, while “challeng[ing] the conventions of leadership research by exploring its existence beyond individual office holders or heroic charismatics” (Collinson and Grint, 2005: 7). Charismatic authority, initially a threat to established order (Weber, 1914: 245), becomes incorporated into new norms and routinized in the process of constructing a new social order (Turner et al., 1995). Without presuming any intrinsic individual “trait” of charisma as an antecedent cause of new orders (cf. Beyer, 1999), we argue that charismatic attributes and governance structures exist in a dialectical tension (Andreas, 2007; Weber, 1968: ix), and that public performances of charisma act as a catalyst for both. Specifically, we argue that ritual enactments performatively prefigure the incorporation of charismatic leadership, and thus ritual provides a mechanism by which leadership effects take hold on followers.

The tendency to see charisma as a stable, individual characteristic to the detriment of its place as a social relation (cf. Beyer, 1999; Islam, 2014) renders it difficult to understand the processes by which charisma is “socialized” (Collinson and Grint, 2005).
focused on historical context and resultant structures, he said little about the situated practices facilitating the establishment and normalization of leaders (Mann, 2012: 172–174; Unger, 1976: 176–216). How, for example, were governance projects translated into concrete practices and beliefs, where individuals recognized the leaders’ eminence in their everyday attitudes and behavior? Weber’s account of the transformation of charisma into standardized positions and chain of command may describe pre- and post-Qing China, but does not tell us how such a leadership transformation was orchestrated.2

We argue that ritual, performing displays of stable organization and charismatic leadership together, symbolically fuses the transcendent figure of the leader and everyday rule structures. In the Qing, New Year’s Day ceremonies, imperial birthday celebrations, and Winter Solstice rites worked alongside the more conventionally understood sovereign activities of defeating rivals, making laws, and setting up administrative organs. Such rituals directed the sovereign to act once his competitors were eliminated or subjugated, while signaling to others how to act towards him. Ritual solidified settlements in the struggle for power, demonstrating actors’ place and position in the new order, and shifted loyalties from the individual to the position. Ritual prefigured the political order and grounded the charisma of the leader within formalized arrangements.

We define rituals as discrete, publicly available events, which temporally mark off everyday spaces from a qualitatively distinct and elevated sphere (Islam and Zyphur, 2009), a process key to charismatic leadership effects (Andreas, 2007; Ladkin, 2006). Rituals cognitively and emotionally fix situated events in the minds of organizational actors (Islam, 2015; Koschmann and McDonald, 2015), directing the flow of everyday practices (e.g. DiDomenico and Phillips, 2011). To illustrate our argument, we examine ritual in the formation of the Qing dynasty in seventeenth-century China; this case is exemplary as a rare historical moment where ritualization is explicitly debated as a policy mechanism by a government level ministry, the Board of Rites, providing archival evidence for the explicit use of ritual as a strategic mechanism to consolidate a new leader.

The remainder of the paper unfolds as follows. After arguing for the relevance of ritual approaches to leadership, we present our case study, showing how Qing leaders and bureaucrats used ritual as a demarcating device to establish formal leadership as a semi-autonomous sphere from everyday practice, cognitively and affectively aligning members with new leadership structures. Finally, we draw out our conceptual conclusions for understanding leadership, calling for renewed interdisciplinary attention to rituals involving both macro- and micro-effects analyses of ritual action.

**Leadership as historical enactment**

In the leadership literature, a small but emerging discussion cites rituals as a mechanism by which ideological adhesion to leadership is achieved (Mumford et al., 2007) and leaders achieve mythical status (Kuronen and Virtaharju, 2015). Ritual provides an explanation of how situated “micro” events ground the formation, maintenance, and change of “macro” governance orders (Collins, 1981; Dacin et al., 2010; Powell and Colyvas, 2008; Summers-Effler, 2002). Leadership scholarship, through examining ritual practices, is in a unique position to theorize the micro–macro interface (cf. Collinson, 2005; Collinson and Grint, 2005) although such contributions are limited at present.

Specifically, historical leaders have secured the cognitive-emotional acceptance and integration of new leadership norms into subjective experiences, an issue key to recent debates
around representing historical phenomena as cultural constructions of everyday life (e.g. Coraiola et al., 2015; Rowlinship and Hassard, 2014). Understanding the history of organizational phenomena has increasingly involved exploring how such phenomena are culturally constructed in practice (Rowlinson and Hassard, 2013). Historical phenomena seen in this light involve questions of how events are constituted by actors, rather than simply forming an objective sequence (Rowlinson et al., 2014). Such approaches highlight the meaning-making practices of actors, and show how symbolic actions structure historical developments. Increasingly, scholars call for long-range, historical analysis that both focus “inward”, seeing macro-transformations in the light of micro-practices, and contextualize “outward”, using diverse historical contexts to illustrate organizational phenomena.

Leadership in particular is an area where individual rule and governance structures come together in a unique way (cf. Andreas, 2007); ritual may offer way to consolidate the two within leadership structures (e.g. Kraatz, 2009). Because leaders are both actors within and representatives of a structure, tensions between structure and agency are embodied in the figure of the leader (Islam, 2014). Much of leadership theory attributes excessive agency to the figure of the leader (e.g. Beyer, 1999; Tourish, 2014), while agency is likely distributed and relies on “dynamics of interaction” (Tourish, 2014: 87). How leadership agency constitutes and is constrained by structuration processes, however, has been notably absent in organizational scholarship (Kraatz, 2009). Surprisingly so, because the intersection between charismatic leadership and formalized bureaucracy was central to Weber’s (1968) understanding of governance. Moreover, political theorists have long understood the dual nature of leaders as both singular individuals and markers of organizational, institutional, or even cosmic orders (Kantorowicz, 1957). Thus, the person of the leader, converted through ritual to a symbol of the social order, is an ideal focus to theorize micro–macro interactions.

**Leadership, rituals, and the problem of formalization**

Ritual perspectives are instrumental as a way to explain formal orders in terms of situated practices (e.g. Collins, 1981). While this theme is still nascent in the leadership literature, some authors stress the need to examine micro–macro linkages within leadership (Collinson and Grint, 2005; Islam, 2014), and others note how symbolic rituals are instrumental in creating leadership myths (Kuronen and Virtaharju, 2015). Recent perspectives on ritual (e.g. Dacin et al., 2010; Islam, 2015) emphasize the constitutive nature of practices by linking ritual to the symbolic governance of organizations. Ritual, by creating a sense of the sublime (e.g. Ladkin, 2006), can support the establishment of new meanings by leaders.

Although some literature discusses leadership as an experience of the transcendent or sublime (e.g. Cohen et al., 1998; Ladkin, 2006), less studied is how such transcendence is established by leaders (e.g. Grint, 2010). The micro-foundations of sacralization (e.g. Jones and Massa, 2013) in a nascent social order pose a particular problem because established norms do not yet guide micro-behavioral enactments. In moments of systemic transition, practices do not simply reflect established norms, but must constitute them, which is why ritual is particularly important at such “life crisis” moments (van Gennep, 1960).

Ritualized events link the everyday to the transcendent by focusing intense symbolic meaning on a particular local site, and marking that site for cyclical and repeated enactments. Rituals thus exist simultaneously at the level of concrete action, and at the abstract level of organizational meanings (for a presentation of ritual according to these two levels, see Shore, 1996).
Both once-in-a-lifetime, highly formalized activities (e.g. rites of passage; van Gennep, 1960) and seemingly common yet symbolically important activities like communal dining (Dacin et al., 2010; DiDomenico and Phillips, 2011) have been discussed as rituals, leading Smith and Stewart (2011) to classify collective events on a spectrum of high-low ritualization. The most immediately recognizable rituals (e.g. weddings, funerals, graduation ceremonies) involve “life-crises” (van Gennep, 1960), moments where contact between groups, the forces of time, the seasons, or decay threaten the stability of the social order. Through ritual, the performance of a concrete act is given general significance and used to typify and illustrate collective principles and structures (Rappaport, 1999), in events which are salient, memorable, and emotionally rich for participants (McCauley and Lawson, 2002).

Rituals have received increasing attention in organization studies, for example, Koschmann and McDonald’s (2015) study of rituals in an HIV/AIDS advocacy group, Johnson et al.’s (2010) discussion of the ritualization strategy workshops, Anand and Watson’s (2004) study of Grammy award rituals, and Dacin et al.’s (2010) study of Cambridge dining rituals. Such studies build upon a modest but consistent number of empirical cases appearing since the 1980s (e.g. Kamoche, 1995; Rosen, 1985). With very few exceptions, however (e.g. Kuronen and Virtaharju’s, 2015 study of ritual in the symbolic construction of Presidential leadership in Finland; Mumford et al.’s 2007 quantitative link between ritual and ideological protection), little of this empirical literature has been applied to leadership (cf. Grint, 2010, for a theoretical link between ritual and leadership).

Although rituals appear to run counter to Western conceptions of purposive and instrumental action (Marshall, 2002), scholars have noted that highly “rationalized” administrative systems are built from ceremonial, symbolic, and even sacred foundations (e.g. Grint, 2010; Meyer and Jepperson, 2000). Particularly in the case of China, some have suggested that link between ritual and bureaucratic functioning holds important lessons more generally for understanding formal governance (Puett, 2006; Wechsler, 1985). Thus, examining the establishment of new leadership in this context can provide a paradigmatic case for theorizing about leadership and ritual more generally.

**Grand Ceremony and Qing leadership**

We selected the case of the Qing emperorship, following Siggelkow (2007), based on the particularly detailed manner in which ritual behavior was designed and discussed in this context. Case studies allow the articulation and preliminary illustration of theory, serving as bases of theorization (Flyvbjerg, 2004; Siggelkow, 2007). The clarity of ritual intent makes this case ideal, compared to the ambiguity often surrounding the intentionality of ritual processes (Islam and Zyphur, 2009). In the current case, archives of the Board of Rites demonstrate an explicit, self-conscious adoption of ritual institutionalization by state actors to establish the leader’s authority and design a new social order. Seventeenth-century Chinese and Manchu state-makers deployed the vocabulary of ritual to outline the political and social structure of the emergent state, to define political relationships and distribute political resources.³

**Data collection and analysis**

We drew our data from a wider research project on the making of the Manchu state and its subsequent consolidation of power in the seventeenth century. The second author spent
eighteen months in archives in Taipei and Beijing, collecting primary documents from the target period. Materials were in both Chinese and Manchu languages, and were drawn from imperial memorials, government orders and transmissions, official records of daily events, contemporaneously published government accounts, and rare books. Some of the key collections include, in chronological order of production, the *Manwen yuandang* (Original Manchu archives), *Manwen laodang* (Old Manchu archives), *Neiguo shiyuandang* (Inner History Office archives), *Neigen daku* (Grand Secretariat Archives), *Chuzhuanben Shilu* (Draft copy of the veritable records), and *Shilu* (Veritable records). The data used for the wider project totaled several hundred Manchu documents and over a thousand Chinese documents and books.

Our analysis of this material began with the question of the symbolic instauration of the Qing leadership during what were referred to as the “Grand Ceremony” rituals. First, we narrowed the archival data, and noted references specifically concerned with rituals. Second, from a close reading of the materials, specific ritual functions were outlined. Third, each ritual act was coded in terms of its performative elements and use of cognitive and affectively salient features.

In the results section below, we first describe the context within which Grand Ceremony ritual occurred. Then, we present the three Grand Ceremonies in terms of their form and content elements. In addition, we present a table of the internal (Table 1) and external (Table 2) elements of the rituals with regard to each of the Grand Ceremonies.

**Background of ritual in Qing context**

Historical accounts of the Manchus and the early Qing dynasty can be found in Wakeman (1985) and Roth Li (2002). To briefly summarize, in the early seventeenth century, semi-nomadic tribes, later referred to as Manchus, inhabited the area of what is today northeast China. United in a confederacy and a highly flexible and decentralized military force, they came under the command of Hong Taiji in the 1620s, who together with his staff began to transition the semi-nomadic force into a centralized state that would occupy land and tax surpluses. A new dynasty was announced in 1636, the Qing dynasty. In 1644, the Chinese Ming dynasty imploded and the Manchus swept south into Beijing and declared themselves the legitimate rulers of China. The Qing went on to expand the territorial boundaries of China to what they are today, and ruled for more than two and a half centuries until abdicating in 1912.

The role of ritual in establishing the Qing leadership has been noted (Rawski, 1998), particularly in positioning actors in a stratified hierarchy signified through symbolic honors (Keliher, 2016a). Social privileges and behaviors were associated with each rank, from the emperor to the lowest official. Sumptuary, for example, ensured that higher ranking officials were ordained to wear more elaborate clothing; or greetings rites required lower ranking officials to bow in certain ways according to status. Similarly, all political actors were required to adhere to a rigorous annual ritual schedule, attending state ceremonies, banquets, and thrice-monthly meetings with the emperor; such ceremonies were similarly performed so as to emphasize rank (Keliher, 2015). Ritual laid the basis for foreign affairs, with ceremonies facilitating interaction and trade with surrounding states (Hevia, 1995). Ritual, further, defined the urban space of the capital through physical layout, as the city was organized around the Grand Ceremonies and other routine and nonroutine rituals. Altars were set up in the four
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of ritual</th>
<th>Cognitive/Emotional mechanisms</th>
<th>Collective social mechanisms</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Indexicality”/Performative value commitment</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Collective cognition/Attentional through public spectacle</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Year’s Day ceremony</td>
<td>- Festivities with wine and exotic foods</td>
<td>- Crowd follows emperor physically to site</td>
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<td>- Public homage by banner-men</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- Lowered seating of brothers collectively</td>
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<td>- Visibility of the elevation of the emperor over brothers</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- All homages paid publicly</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Banquet collectively ranks members</td>
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<tr>
<td>Winter Solstice</td>
<td>- Slaughtered animal as emotionally evocative</td>
<td>- Crowd follows emperor physically to site</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Aesthetic elements of incense, silk box</td>
<td>- Emperor “dares to speak kneeling” to heaven</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Shifting collective attention between Secretary, Board of Rites, Emperor, and the Heavens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emperor’s birthday</td>
<td>- Forgiveness of crimes as a show of compassion</td>
<td>- Crowd follows emperor physically to site</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Positive emotions of gift-giving</td>
<td>- Gift exchange as public commitment</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- Collective dining</td>
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### Table 2. Content/Process features of ritual.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of ritual</th>
<th>Bracketing mechanism</th>
<th>Processes during liminal phase of ritual</th>
<th>Post-liminal transitionary mechanism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ritual space set off from the ordinary</td>
<td>Juxtaposed transcendence/immmanence Analogical schematization</td>
<td>Ordinary space is restituted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| New Year’s Day ceremony as institution of representation | - Orchestrated opening procession  
- Actors led into sacred space | - Homage to Emperor juxtaposed with passing of time and beginning of New Year  
- Seating of Emperor at center with brothers less elevated to the sides  
- Banner chiefs led in order of military ranking  
- Respects paid to emperor by banner chiefs, foreign officials, scholars, and envoys in order | Banquet festivities at closure of rituals, organized in analogous manner to homage during ritual |
| Winter Solstice as institution of depersonalization | - Abstention for three days prior  
- Morning ritual led by Emperor outside city gate | - Cup and silk box offered between emperor, officials, and Heaven, and back  
- Sacrificial text frames emperor as representative to heaven  
- Passing cups figuring relationship between administrators, emperor, and heaven, with emperor as mediator  
- Ascension/descending of emperor on stairs mimics heaven/earth relation | - Folding of letter closes the sacrificial text  
- Offering of sacrifice closes the prayer  
- Communal dining and Emperor’s war speech bring attention to earthly action |
| Emperor’s birthday as institution of legitimation | - Entrance into ancestral temple  
- Reception of foreign gifts  
- Entrance of nobles in order of rank | - Statement about birthday as articulation between past and future  
- New year as erasure of institutional memory | - Descent of Emperor from the temple  
- Banquet and sending off of foreign visitors |

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cardinal directions, and the streets laid out in a directional axis with the imperial residence at the center (Zito, 1997).

Ritual, to be sure, had long preceded the Qing. Already part of political life in premodern China, a ritual system appeared in the mid-Western Zhou around the tenth-century BCE, based on political rites and sumptuary regulations (Pines, 2000). A ritual code entitled Zhouli, or the Rites of Zhou, emerged, and along with the Liji, or the Book of Rites, and Yili, or the Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial, became references for debates in political philosophy over the next millennium. Ritual was formally integrated within the imperial bureaucratic state around 200 BCE; yet, by 600 CE, discourses arose bemoaning the decline of ritual practice since the Zhou, and scholars and state-makers set about compiling and implementing a new ritual code (Wechsler, 1985: 40–42). This renewal laid the basis for imperial Chinese ritual practice up through the Qing (Yamane, 1993).

Despite this long tradition, the rituals of the Qing state were unique, and were constructed from an amalgamation of both Chinese and Manchu practices. The Qing New Year’s Day ceremony, for example, shared a similar Chinese name with that of the Ming and a similar prominence of place at the very beginning of the ritual statutes, but otherwise the ritual form varied drastically. Foremost, the Qing ceremony differed from previous dynasties by opening the ceremony with a visit to the shamanistic temple to worship the shaman deities of the Manchus. Ritual activity in the palace focused on the actions and position of the emperor, with the different groups of ranked officials, military units, and foreign states paying their respects and kowtowing to him. In contrast, the ritual under the Ming had primarily emphasized the respective positions of the political actors, with little role for the emperor himself. Whereas the Ming ceremony focused on the proper political relations and ranks among the bureaucracy (Ho, 1976), the Qing ceremony focused on the sovereign and the assertion of the authority of this position over the different groups and political actors. Such differences set the tone for the ritual activity throughout the life of each dynasty (Keliher, 2015, 2017).

The Qing political order and the nature of the emperorship have been well studied (e.g. Crossley, 1992, 1999; Kuhn, 1990), along with the formation of the administrative structure of Qing China (e.g. Guy, 2010; Metzger, 1973). However, this historiography focuses on the “rational” aspects of the state, for example, the centrality of administrative and military departments, assuming the pre-existence of such formal structures and the direct effects of such structures on the form of governance (Keliher, 2016a, 2016b). Such perspectives focus on the emperor as leader adept at military conquest and possessing imperial vision; perhaps guilty of the “heroic charismatics” warned against by Collinson and Grint (2005), such perspectives focus on the military victories and shrewd leadership of Hong Taiji, in his decisions to employ Chinese officials and copy Chinese style-institutions to build centralized administrative apparatus. Through force and bureaucracy, the story goes, the emperor emerged and the Qing state was created.

Such views overlook the process of leadership construction of the Qing emperor and assume the existence of the institution of the emperor that Hong Taiji as khan naturally occupied. Neither the Qing state nor the Qing emperorship can be assumed, however. Given the phenomenal rise of the Qing state and the unique institution of the Qing emperor, the construction of this position through ritual is key to understanding the historical event as a leadership phenomenon. Conceptualized as such, Qing ritual is both an explanation of the construction of the imperial leadership and an unparalleled case of the power of ritual organization.
Action sequences in the Grand Ceremony

We selected the most important of the many ritual events, the Grand Ceremonies, which focused on the central role of the emperor. The Grand Ceremonies consisted of three temporally separated ritual events that took place annually, the New Year’s Day ceremony, the Winter Solstice, and the emperor’s birthday. According to a Chinese advisor in 1634, “Practicing these rites will enable the emperor to obtain the blessing of heaven and the heart of the people. It will enable him to successfully govern the great affairs of the world.” The rites were grouped together as the “three grand ceremonies” in the administrative statutes of the Qing dynasty, first published in 1690 (Yi, 1690: 1916–1942), and were first inaugurated as regular practices during the height of the state building efforts of the 1630s.

The New Year’s Day ceremony was first practiced in 1632, and the Winter Solstice and emperor’s birthday in 1636. Ceremonies for these dates may have previously been held and not recorded in the early Manchu state, for it is likely that the khan did celebrate his birthday in some capacity, but given the late mention in contemporary state records, it is safe to conclude that these ceremonies were not integral to the political order. The New Year’s Day ceremony is on record prior to the 1630s, although references are scattered and inconclusive—Manchu records cite New Year’s ritual practices in 1622, 1624, and 1627. Apart from the lack of politicization of the ritual prior to 1632, records also show a marked difference in practices in the rituals before and after this date; while previously, the khan sat together with his brothers, he now would sit alone in the middle in the position of power. Consider the contemporary Manchu text highlighting this aspect:

Up until now, for these past five years, the khan and the three nobles all one and the same sat together to receive kowtows. From this year it is corrected. The khan distinguishably sits alone facing south.

Editors of the court records made sure to point out the ceremony had been revised in order to account for the elevation in status and power of Hong Taiji. Rather than sharing the stage and the representation of authority, this privilege was now to be reserved for Hong Taiji alone. Moreover, Hong Taiji would face south in the symbolic position of emperor. This was the first stage in the institutionalization of Hong Taiji as emperor.

Below is a summary description of the three Grand Ceremony rituals. Following Shore (1996), we divide each description into two parts: the concrete action sequences, and the symbolic components of each sequence. Following van Gennep (1960), we divide the sequences into (a) a preliminal, bracketing phase, where the formal ritual is symbolically marked and set apart from the everyday, (b) a liminal period, in which the institutional configuration processes occur and (c) a post-liminal, consolidation phase, where the new order is consolidated with closure processes, such as symbolic value commitment, binding, and festivities (Table 2).

New Year’s Day ceremony

The New Year’s Day ceremony began before dawn with the emperor leading the senior relatives and high Manchu officials out of the city to a shamanistic temple to sacrifice to Heaven. They all burned paper money and performed the Manchu practice of three genuflections and nine prostrations. They returned to the palace and the emperor would lead them in praying to the ancestors.
Next, the emperor ascended to the ritual palace and sat in the middle on an elevated throne, before which administrative and military officials kowtowed. First, the members of the imperial family came through and kowtowed before the emperor, followed by the generals in order of rank and position leading their units. Foreign visitors and recently subjugated tribes or populations came next in the procession, kowtowing in the same way before the emperor. After all performed the appropriate kowtows in turn, the emperor exited the ritual palace followed by the imperial relatives and officials. A banquet was then held with rich foods and wine. After the banquet, foreign envoys offered gifts to the emperor.

The New Year’s Day Ceremony emphasized rank, status, and position throughout, foremost, that of the emperor. Throughout the ceremony the emperor was at the focus of attention. He led the procession and received the reverences of genuflections and prostrations. Most forcefully, he sat in the middle on an elevated throne. He was raised above others and at the center of all attention and action. All subjugation was directed towards him, and came from all political actors.

Similarly, the procession of reverence was organized by rank and position. Those with high position and of greater division of political resources came first in the procession, as did those military units higher up in the hierarchy or closer to the emperor. Prior to the first institutionalized New Year’s Day ceremony of 1632, there was no formalized ordering of the procession; it had often followed the seniority of the generals. A reorganization around a set of codified ranks occurred beginning with the 1632 ceremony. Actors took these positions very seriously. In the 1634 ceremony, for example, the emperor asked two newly surrendered Chinese generals to join the head of the procession with the Manchu nobles. Parties protested vehemently, however, citing the lack of rank and position. In the end the emperor insisted and all relented.12

Winter Solstice ceremony

According to the Qing ritual code, the ritual events of the Winter Solstice were supposed to be similar to that of the New Year’s Day ceremony. The first edition of the statues, published in 1690, offer but two lines of text (compared to the seventeen pages for the New Year’s Day ceremony), “Set up the parasols and banners, prepare the imperial carriage and the music instruments. The officials offer their congratulations. Everything is the same as the New Year’s Day ceremony, except there is no banquet” (Yi, 1690: 1934).

In practice, however, the Winter Solstice in the early years of the Qing differed markedly from the New Year’s Day ritual. Consider the detailed Manchu-language account from the ceremony in 1636, the first year it was held.13 The “preliminal”, i.e. pre-transformational (van Gennep, 1960), process began with the emperor, the imperial relatives, and all the officials abstaining from food, sex, and drink for 3 days. On the day of the solstice an ox was sacrificially slaughtered and the emperor exited the city through a certain gate en route to the Altar of Heaven. The main body of the ritual, or “liminal” (van Gennep 1960) followed: upon arriving at the Altar of Heaven, ritual specialists would lead the emperor to the eastern part of the altar and position him facing west. All participants then lined up according to rank and position and advanced in order. The emperor ascended the east side of the altar and knelt in front of the throne of Heaven. He was given a box with incense, which he lit and handed to a ritual official. The emperor descended to the right and stood in the middle facing the throne, where he led all in three genuflections and nine prostrations. The emperor then offered the prepared ox meat and other foods at the eastern stairs. The Manchu nobility then each in turn
offered a cup of wine by giving it to a ritual official who passed it to the emperor to offer to Heaven. The cup was passed back to a ritual official and given to another noble who symbolically offered it to Heaven by holding it skyward.

Upon the conclusion of the ritual, the participants ate the offerings and withdrew with one genuflection and three prostrations. The emperor proceeded to the ancestral hall, where he lit incense and led prayers to the ancestors.

**Emperor’s birthday ceremony**

The imperial birthday ceremony was a smaller affair than the other two Grand Ceremonies, but it was still meant to elevate the emperor as an institution. The day before the emperor’s birthday, an official was sent to make sacrifices at the ancestral tomb and the ancestral temple. On this day, parasols, banners, and ritual halberds were set up along with the imperial retinue and musical instruments in front of the palace. All of the nobility entered and offered gifts. They were followed by foreign envoys. The emperor read a statement pardoning crimes. The officials lined up in front of the palace gate in order. The emperor ascended the throne, and all the nobility and officials entered in turn to do the congratulatory rite and kowtow. Upon conclusion, the emperor descended from the throne. The ritual was followed by a banquet.14

These schematic descriptions give a general idea about the performative shape of the rituals, which involved a symbolic entrance, an action phase, and closure, throughout which the imperial role is reinforced. Below, we describe how these performative structures performed a vision of leadership, and represented an emergent political order.

**Grand Ceremony in constructing the emperorship**

The Grand Ceremony rituals framed how the emperor related to a political constituency, and communicated a particular sociopolitical organization and practice. Setting the emperor in the center and making him the focus of all activity gave him primacy of place and symbolic centrality in the new political order. The hierarchical organization of the political actors in deference to the emperor stratified political society and showed actors how to relate to one another. The subjunctive notion of opening possibilities, created by the ritual, enacted certain relationships in a closed-off space that could translate into the everyday and form the basis for social and political interaction (Sharif, 2005). The bowing, passing of wine, and grouping of constituencies constructed relationships of superior and inferior, lending precedent to the emperor at the top of the order, and signaling control and distribution of political resources.

Early Qing state-makers were conscious of these effects and employed rituals towards these ends. The New Year’s Day ceremony, for instance, was first argued for by advisors and formulated in 1631, and then practiced on the first day of the following year. Officials argued that in order to consolidate political resources and establish a bureaucratic hierarchy, a full ceremony was required, with the emperor in the middle.15 Similarly, four years later, officials instituted the Winter Solstice and imperial birthday. These were first practiced in 1636, the year of the announcement of the Qing dynasty, and Chinese advisors explicitly argued that practicing the Grand Ceremonies would transform the ruler into an emperor.16 In short, the Grand Ceremonies were designed and practiced in order to move the loose, decentralized sociopolitical-military order towards a formalized system of administration over a diverse constituency and bounded territory.
New Year’s Day ceremony

The New Year’s Day Ceremony made analogies (Shore, 1996) between the order, physical positioning, and seating of the various constituents vis-à-vis the emperor. Recognizing the need to focus political power on the position of the sovereign, the New Year’s Day ceremony focused attention toward a physical position at the top of a hierarchy, physically placing actors into certain relationships. State-makers discussed situating the ruler at the center in order to make him an emperor, organizing the processions and audience in a hierarchical order. The seating of the emperor as elevated and alone demonstrates an analogous schematization (Shore, 1996), and is significant because of the collective attention that will thereby be focused on the emperor. The emperor leading everyone to the sacred hall also serves as an analogy of the practice of leading and ruling, while marking the collectively focused attention on the emperor (see Zito, 1997).

Regarding the actual reverences paid during the ceremony, the re-ranking of order from seniority to military rank likewise represented the new structure of the emerging sociopolitical order, with the colored military units of each group organized by bureaucratic position rather than seniority, which furthered the work of formalizing the organizational structure of the administration and bureaucratic chains of command. A practice of hierarchical organization was here established. The action of paying homage itself commits each actor to perform his submission before the emperor, and doing so publicly, constituted a dramaturgical value commitment to the leader. Finally, the post-ritual banquet symbolically returns the group to a post-ritual state, emotionally marking the event with celebratory and intoxicating elements. Thus, the elements of the New Year’s Day ritual set the social psychological coordinates for both marking and remembering the social order, but do so in a dramaturgical performance that goes beyond individual psychology.

Winter Solstice ceremony

Similar to the New Year’s Day ritual, the Winter Solstice ritual bracketed off normal reality through symbolic markers. According to the Qing statutes of 1690, “Every year on the Winter Solstice, set up the ritual fans, parasols, the great carriage, and the music instruments. All officials should come to court to offer congratulatory praise” (Yi, 1690: 1934). Rather than simply represent the emperor as an object of reverence, the solstice ritual positions him as offering gifts to Heaven and receiving the blessing of Heaven. The passing back and forth of the incense box and wine horizontally along the administrative chain, and vertically to Heaven, analogically schematizes a hierarchy of relations with the emperor at the top. He is here a servant of Heaven, merely representing the cosmos, not imposing his will, which naturalizes the political order.

From the schematic description of the Winter Solstice ritual, the emperor maintained centrality throughout the sacrificial process. He was physically at the center, and thus at the focus of collective attention. This was paralleled by leading officials to the ritual site. The aesthetic markers, such as incense, the silk box, and the raising of the cup, provided an emotional salience that made the event memorable. Through ascending and descending stairs, transferring offerings, and paying reverence, the leader accepted and bound his commitment to the role through his engagement with these acts. The emperor is thus both central, and more importantly, constrained to act within a defined, institutionalized role.
**Emperor’s birthday ceremony**

The third of the Grand Ceremonies, the emperor’s birthday, was broadly similar in form to the Winter Solstice and New Year’s Day rituals. As outlined in the statutes, the ritual space was bracketed with “fans, parasols, and other ritual instruments, along with the great carriage and musical instruments” (Yi, 1690: 1937), creating an emotionally charged and salient space, where institutional work could be carried out. Similar to the New Year’s Day ritual, the post-liminal period was marked by a celebratory banquet, carefully managing the boundaries of the liminal space in which institutional work occurred.

The birthday ceremony allowed the emperor to express his leadership directly to the social polity by pardoning criminals. Because the emperor as an institution was woven into the social fabric generally, crimes that threatened the constitution of society (e.g. murder, treason) were not pardonable. However, for lesser offenses, the emperor could demonstrate his compassion and legal prerogative by pardoning crimes. By forgetting crimes prior to the birthday, but not after, the birthday became analogically schematized as the day where benevolence began. This adroitly framed the emperor as the basis of the social order—the foundation upon which the present was built.17

While this aspect of the birthday ritual highlights memory and forgetting, the emotional binding effect of pardon should also be emphasized. By holding the possibility for and control of forgiveness, the emperor ritualized generosity and reciprocity, feelings important in the maintenance of allegiances. In addition, by reiterating the “unpardonable” crimes, he placed the role of forgiveness in a symbolic hierarchy that accorded him flexibility in controlling the law without undermining the essential legal order of society.

In sum, all three of the Grand Ceremonies used emotionally salient, attention focusing stimuli to establish memorable moments in institutional formation. They bracketed off the ritual space from pre- and post-liminal everyday life. Taken together, these three rituals were important components in institutionalizing the role of the emperor in the Qing state.

**Ritual elements in the Grand Ceremony**

In order to understand how the Qing formalized leadership through ritual performance, both the internal elements of the ritual must be attended to (e.g. Handelman, 2005; Handelman and Lindquist, 2005), as well as ritual as a performance that invokes psychological effects on actors and their audiences (e.g. McCauley and Lawson, 2002). In the first instance, focusing on “ritual in its own right” (Handelman and Lindquist, 2005), an internal analysis treats ritual as a form of text, whose enunciation enacts analogy, narrative, and myth (Shore, 1996). In the second, ritual directs attention and builds memory around salient structural features (McCauley and Lawson, 2002). We treat each of these analytical levels in turn.

**The ritual process and the opening and closing of liminal spaces**

Considering the internal structure of ritual as a system of signs (Robbins et al., 2001), ritual works “indexically” (Rappaport, 1999) and “analogically” (Shore 1996), meaning that ritual signification is not arbitrary but rooted in material aspects of its content. In this view, the indexical aspect of ritual means that its correct performance guarantees its social validity, irrespective of the internal intentions of its actors. The analogical aspect of ritual means that the ritual features structurally resemble the social relations they signify.
(Gentner and Holyoak, 1997). Analogical representations can be highly variable but are not arbitrary—they are often rooted in embodied relations of closeness, distance, or movement (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003; Shore, 1996). Both indexical and analogical aspects fix ritual as a material, embodied component of institutions, with ritual’s success depending on material “proofs” (e.g. an exchange of gifts, a ring in marriage, a contract of sale), reflecting social structure through material relations.

The indexical and analogical use of ritual is evident in the Qing Grand Ceremony rituals. The emperor seated in the middle of the other military leaders and at the focus of the ceremony, for example, symbolically identifies the position as the central authority, while directing others to acknowledge his superiority. From this position of symbolic authority, he would then receive the acknowledgement of others, as they walked through and kowtowed. From their inferior position, the other actors would move from their staging position of hierarchical ranks, approach the center, where the emperor was seated, and offer their subservience in the form of the kowtow.

Structurally, the organization of the Grand Ceremonies established “liminal spaces”, in which transformation became symbolically possible. These involved ritual openings, a bracketing event separated the ritual from the everyday, followed by an invocation of a sacrosanct space where the symbolic place of the leader is displayed, and finally a closing phase where the new order is consolidated. To illustrate, the Qing New Year’s Day ceremony opened at dawn with the emperor leading the imperial relatives to the shamanistic temple to offer prayers. They would then return to the palace and the emperor would ascend the throne. The next moment of the ritual began with political and military actors offering their subservience to the emperor through the symbolic act of approaching the throne in order of their hierarchical ranks and kowtowing with three genuflections and nine prostrations. The ceremony then concluded with the holding of a banquet. Each of the three Grand Ceremonies contained these aspects, and their performance further marked the passing of time. The New Year’s Day ceremony opened the new year, the emperor’s birthday reflected upon the life of the individual, and the Winter Solstice delineated the seasons. Together the annual performance of these ceremonies created a symbolic space that emphasized the role and position of the emperor and organized political life in Qing China.

In the case of the Winter Solstice, after a pre-liminal, 3-day abstention, the liminal period beginning the festival was symbolically marked with the slaughtering of an ox on the first day. The emperor then exited through the Gate of Virtue on his way to the Altar of Heaven to sacrifice to Heaven.

In short, regarding the structure of leadership rituals, several key points may be summarized. First, leadership rituals analogize social relationships, performing these analogies to indexically display the centrality of the leader. Further, these performances symbolically link the transcendent and the immanent—the abstractness of the social order with individuals’ lived experiences. Finally, these performances may be structured to bracket off a liminal space from everyday life, symbolically marking a difference between formal and informal social levels.

Internalizing leadership enactments: Attending to and encoding ritual enactments

In terms of mobilizing actors’ attention and emotion, and fixing leadership frameworks in public display, we note several features of the Grand Ceremonies.

First, their bounded, sequential ordering, and their provision of cognitive “anchors” of salient features, involved sensually marked moments of lighting, smell, sounds, and tastes.
The New Year’s Day ceremony opened at dawn with an assembling of parasols, chariots, and musical instruments. When the emperor entered or exited, music would play and incense would be lit. When the imperial relatives kowtowed, music played, but of a different tone. Upon conclusion of the ceremony, tea was served. Such sensory markers created aesthetic correlates to the symbolic structures being enacted.

The rituals’ bounded, event-like aspect makes them useful as sources of episodic memory (e.g. Brown and Kulik, 1977), establishing salient anchors of events. By focusing collective attention on highly salient, shared aspects of the environment, the ritual is marked out from the undifferentiated flow of experience, providing a reference point. As Rossano (2012) emphasizes, ritual works by creating “representations and reminders” of important institutional inflection points. Episodic memory has been posited as the basic underlying modus operandi of ritual. As Donald (1991) argues, the oldest rituals involved purely episodic memory generation systems, with more semantically complex rituals developing later in history.

The Grand Ceremonies also promoted internalization through group emotion and attention, for example, in demanding disciplined staging of actors in preparation for the main rituals. All the political and military actors would assemble themselves into groups according to rank and stage themselves at various gates. The nobility would gather in hierarchical rank according to their title and position at an innermost gate, the Gate of Heavenly Harmony. The Manchu officials of nonimperial status would gather in formation of rank and title outside an outer gate, the Meridian Gate. All other officials would gather at the Gate of Lasting Peace, about a mile from the palace. They would be organized into groups according to their ranks and titles, and follow the Board of Rites to the Gate of Heavenly Peace and then enter through the Meridian Gate after the Manchu officials had completed the rite. Throughout the course of the ritual, the actors exert full attention, entering, exiting and performing their kowtows together, according to hierarchical rank. The attentional structure is superimposed on the social ordering designed by the Board of Rites.

In addition to structuring attention and episodic memory, the rituals encoded social information through emotionally shared displays (Collins, 2004). Organizational rituals characteristically exploit emotionally charged language, music, and aesthetic aspects (McCauley and Lawson 2002), which increase memory coding and provide a shared emotional life for group members (Collins, 2004). In what Rossando (2012) calls “emotional binding”, moments of value commitment are marked emotionally, so that that the cutting of a ribbon of a new building, the moment of a diploma conferral, or the announcement of a competition winner are accompanied by music, cheering, or other emotional binders that make the value commitment unforgettable and emotionally invested for members.

Finally, beyond symbolic representation, ritual comprised performative actions, connected to discrete learning processes involved in the active engagement in practices. In the case of the Qing under examination here, the central performative act was the kowtow to the emperor. Each subject was required to kneel before the throne and undertake the sequences of genuflecting then prostrating and knocking the head three times on the ground. This sequence would be repeated three times, for a total of three genuflections and nine prostrations. The emperor, by contrast, performed acts reflecting superiority. He led the imperial relatives to the shamanistic temple and ascended the throne, in the case of the New Year’s Day ceremony. He lit incense and he offered sacrifice to Heaven by presenting incense and sacrificial foods on an altar, in the case of the Winter Solstice ceremony. Such performances attached the figure of the leader to specific actors and expectations, linking the new order with collective representations of performed public action.
We thus distinguish three broad mechanisms, based on the cognitive/attentional, emotional, and action-orientation aspects. The rituals included mechanisms to focus and frame attention, anchoring collective schema around these key episodes. Collective attention was marked by shared emotional salience, linking value commitments to collectively shared emotion. Finally, these commitments are integrated into action representations, such that beliefs about who actors are and what they are expected to do become fixed through the ritual process.

Discussion

The preceding discussion explored the ritualization of leadership using a historical case to show how early Qing state-makers self-consciously took up ritual. This case is revealing of how certain action sequences are seen as ritual, solving the problem of deciding if certain acts comprise a ritual (Robbins et al., 2001), and also in how actors imagined the specific components of ritual and designing these aspects for strategic purposes.

By focusing on the ritual demarcation of formal spaces and symbols around a historical leader, this article stress assert the cultural underpinnings historical accounts (e.g. Rowlinson and Hassard, 2014), positioning leadership as an object of cultural construction. Since Weber (1914), the relation between a charismatic leader and a rationalized governance structure has been a source of contention (e.g. Andreas, 2007; Islam, 2014), making leadership rituals an ideal terrain for this relation to be explored. Because rituals treat the commerce between formalized structure and a lived, immediate reality, they are poised to bridge these perspectives.

Specifically, leadership rituals are positioned at the crux of agency and structure debates. On the one hand, they are geared toward the establishment of bureaucratic structures and rely heavily on repetition and formalism. On the other hand, rituals are possible only because of the local, active engagement among participants, and they showcase the notion of personal charisma as a transcendent virtue while simultaneously grounding charisma in the social order. In other words, they emphasize the operation of communicative processes in leadership above and beyond individual agency (e.g. Tourish, 2014), yet because these processes require enactment and rest upon legitimacy recognition, they avoid critiques of determinism (e.g. Unger, 1976). The performative ability of ritual to contain agency-structure tensions, as well as the conditions of possibility for success (and possible failure) of such performances are an area of great potential for leadership studies.

Additionally, our focus on the situated construction of historical events resonates with recent organizational literature stressing the need for scholars to see such events as constructions of meaning rather than as taken-for-granted facts (Rowlinson et al., 2014). Such views stress that the use of history should acknowledge that dominant narratives shape historical events; ritual processes are one way in which new imaginaries of empire and leadership are created in the wake of conquest. Although we draw on historical archives, we treat those archives as traces of strategic action, where meanings of leadership are up for grabs, and note how ritual was envisioned as a way to stabilize those meanings.

As for our findings, our contributions to the understanding of ritual and leadership are twofold. First, we established links between leadership and ritual, building on recent leadership studies (Kurounen and Virtaharju, 2015), while expanding ritual theories that largely focus on maintenance (e.g. Dacin et al., 2010). By focusing on the establishment of leadership structures, and not simply the reproduction of norms, we drew a close link between
ritual and leader emergence. While leadership was a key issue in Weber’s original writings, and survives somewhat in discussions of formal versus informal authority (Andreas, 2007), this link is rarely acknowledged. Such a link follows Weber’s (1914: 1111–1146) early recognition of the complex relationship between charismatic leadership and bureaucratic processes, and provides a performative angle on issues of agency and structure more generally. Currently, the leadership literature has recognized the importance of symbols, myths, and “enchantment” in leadership (Islam, 2014), but little work has been done to show how the “romance of leadership” (Meindl et al., 1985) can be codified into formal orders that are durable over time and outside of the person of the leader.

Second, we contribute to understanding the processes by which ritual supports leadership. Many organizational approaches have invoked ritual. For instance, Dacin et al. (2010), highlight the performative aspects of rituals, while Anand and Watson (2004) highlight the attention focusing aspects. The current paper adds to the known mechanisms of performativity (through the discussion of the indexical), attention (through the link with immediacy and episodic memory), and social status (by showing how ritual not only establishes relative social positions, but also can create new ones). It also demonstrates new aspects, such as analogy, complementing recent work around symbolic uses of analogy as a leadership process (e.g. Marotto et al., 2007).

Limitations and future directions

With regard to our approach, some potential questions might be broached. Regarding our historical focus on a site geographically and temporally removed from the contemporary centers of management thought, it is worth noting the wider implications of such a move. Emergent literature on historical perspectives (Ruef and Harness, 2009) argues that the use of historical cases, as well as non-Occidental cases (e.g. Ezzamel, 2004; Sui Pheng, 2007), can dispel the “myth” that administrative thought is limited to post-industrial revolution European and U.S. social dynamics. Rather, administrative planning marked diverse historical periods and geographical areas.

Further, by linking “rational” depersonalized bureaucratic structures with paternalistic, ceremonial, and “magical” forms of social control, we question attempts to separate the two (Eisenstadt, 1971). As our case highlights, the emperorship was established as a formal, depersonalized order through ritual framing of the emperor as the head of a bureaucratic state. Thus, as some note (e.g. Grint, 2010; Islam, 2015; Meyer and Jepperson, 2000), there exists a tight link between “worldly” rational structures of depersonalized bureaucracy and sacred legitimation. What the current paper adds to such a perspective is a description of the particular micro-linkages through which such a bridge between the everyday and sacred spheres is established. In the Qing case, differently than the occidental description by Meyer and Jepperson (2000), the link between these two spheres did not develop tacitly, but was designed and performed by powerful actors.

Thus, when we speak of ritual “mechanisms”, we suggest that rituals have effects—that they do things. To paraphrase Seligman et al. (2008), ritual does work to further human ends. Recent treatments in ritual studies (e.g. Puett, 2006) have argued that such uses are explicit and conscious on the part of actors, and thus avoid the agency problems pointed out by critiques of functionalism. Furthermore, Handelman and Lindquist (2005) argue that, while functional, ritual deserves to be studied “in its own right”. Following Puett (2006), we reject the notion that the functions of integration via ritual in the Qing were either
necessary or unconscious: they could have been carried out otherwise, and actors explicitly stated their intentions in ritual design. That said, we note that ritual has two important features that make it unique as a leadership practice.

First, rituals involve agency (Seligman, 2010) and enactment (Bell, 1997). The enactment requirement is important because leadership mandates, in order to become manifest in the lived realities of organizational members, must become reflected in daily observances and practices (e.g. Bell, 1997; Howard-Grenville et al., 2011). Ritual provides one bridge towards the enactment of abstract mandates.

Second, the intense symbolization involved in highly ritualized events provides members with the experience of “imminence”, or the immediacy and co-existence of the mundane, everyday, and cosmic (e.g. Rappaport, 1999). Rituals in the anthropological literature have been used to explain how notions of the cosmic have been “brought down to earth” through their embodiment in ritual action (e.g. Rappaport, 1999). Ritual not only embodies and represents collective values, but also legitimizes the group by linking collective action to an experience of imminence or transcendence (Seeman, 2005). In this way, the literature on “peak experiences” during task performance (e.g. Marotto et al., 2007) might benefit from a discussion of how organizations can make such peak experiences collectively available.

In sum, our perspective contributes to understanding how leadership is established through a process of symbolization and the collective psychological fixation of cultural meanings in singular, highly salient events. Fruitful lines of research could be developed by examining the structure of rituals as analogy, symbol, and narrative, on the one hand, or as psychological event or group micro-process on the other. Rather than choose one of these perspectives to analyze exclusively, we attempt to show how both reinforce each other in the singular cultural event of a ritual. In Shore’s (1996) phrase, cultural and historical events are thus “twice born”, occurring as historical events and transcribed into the mental models of individuals. Such a double birth, however, requires a moment of exchange between the abstract, idealized dimension of institutional structures and the lived, experiential world of individual lives. This moment is the crux of the ritual event.

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Notes

1. In the case of the Manchus, scholars previous told the story of a necessary, law-like development from tribe to state, as the Manchus moved from slave society to feudalism. New historical research has complicated this story and shown it to be far more contingent that previously thought (see below). The problem of historical change and contingency is taken up generally by Sewell (2005) and Unger (1987), and in historical study by Goldstone (2000) and Padgett and Powell (2012).

2. Mommsen has suggested that historical process for Weber was a constant struggle between charismatic innovation and bureaucratic rationalization (Mommsen, 1980). Others have suggested that Weber either had no clear theory of historical change (Unger, 1976) or had to rely on outside variables to explain change (Mann, 2012: 173).

3. Furthermore, by selecting a non-Occidental, pre-industrial revolution case, we contribute to the growing evidence (cf. Ruef and Harness, 2009) that stable bureaucratic governance should be studied over a wider purview of time and space than previously acknowledged.

4. Scholars long assumed that the Manchus became Sinicized and the Qing state adopted the ritual practices of previous dynasties. Historians are beginning to show, however, that each successive dynasty recast existing rituals and employed new ones in service of the immediate political and cultural needs of the time (Keliher, 2017).

5. There was a slight variation in characters: yuandan vs. zhendan.

6. The Qing kowtow was another invention, and consisted of a series of kneelings and knocking one’s head on the floor before the emperor (Keliher and Chi, 2012). The number of kneels and head-knocks varied according to the event and the rank of the official.

7. In contrast to previous dynasties, the Qing had a multiethnic administration and ruled over a culturally and ethnically diverse constituency. The Qing emperor was cast as a universal emperor-ship, rather than simply a Chinese emperor (Crossley, 1999).

8. This was advice given by Liu Xuecheng in a long memorial to Hong Taiji and the importance of ritual and the need to establish ceremonies and sacrifice. The memorial is reproduced in Luo (1632: 3.10a).

9. For a complete discussion of these events and developments see Keliher (2015).

10. This text is found in The Original Manchu Archives and with slight variation in The Old Manchu archives. This document is reproduced and analyzed in Keliher (2015: 81–130).


12. Hong Taiji made this move in attempt to undermine the power and position of the Manchu nobles in the struggles for political power and state vision. By elevating generals he appointed and who owed their positions to him alone, he was gradually able to assert his prerogative as emperor. The ceremony was the key in this endeavor (Keliher 215: 182–226). The document is found in the Neiguo shiyuan archives (Compilation of Manchu archives of the early Qing inner historical office), which has been reproduced in (Kusunoki and Matsumura, 1634: 1).

13. Qing court records from the winter of 1636 give a full description of the ceremony held that year (Kanada, 1631: 7.1462).

14. This description comes from the administrative statues (Yi, 1690: 1937–1942).

15. Hong Taiji advisor Li Bolong of the Board of Rites made the case of the need for the New Year’s Day ceremony and how it would help institute the position of the emperor (Keliher, 2015: 81–130).

16. The most explicit connection between ritual and being an emperor comes for Liu Xiucheng in 1634, as cited in note 8. For a discussion of the establishment of these ceremonies see Keliher (2015: 293–364).

17. This general pardoning first occurred in 1640. The document is preserved in the Grand Secretariat Archives, no. 107569.
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