

QIN AND HAN (221 BC–220 AD)



COMBINING THE GHOSTS AND SPIRITS, CENTERING  
THE REALM: MORTUARY RITUAL AND POLITICAL  
ORGANIZATION IN THE RITUAL COMPENDIA OF  
EARLY CHINA

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The *Liji* 禮記 (*Book of rites*), *Yili* 儀禮 (*Rites and ceremonies*) and *Zhouli* 周禮 (*Rites of Zhou*) would become, in later Chinese history, the three most significant classics from early China for defining ritual behavior. Each purports, albeit in different ways, to provide descriptions and explanations of proper ritual behavior. This chapter will analyze the notions of rituals that are presented in these texts, discuss why such notions were developed and analyze how and why the texts came to prominence over the course of the Han and subsequent periods. I will focus in particular on mortuary rituals and rituals of statecraft.

*Recent trends in secondary scholarship*

For lack of other evidence, earlier generations of scholars tended to mine the three ritual compendia to reconstruct early Chinese ritual practice. With the explosion of archaeological finds over the past several decades, however, we have now begun to gain a much better glimpse of at least certain elements of early practice. This has in turn opened up a new set of questions for texts like the *Liji*, *Yili*, and *Zhouli*. When and why were these ritual texts composed? In what ways were they building upon and appropriating ritual practice of earlier or contemporary times? How and why were the texts edited into the form they took in the Han? At what times and for what reasons did they become important? How were they read, utilized, and appropriated throughout Chinese and East Asian history? These and related questions have become the dominant ones in scholarship throughout the past 25 years.

*The arguments of the three ritual texts*

I will begin with a brief overview of the nature, structure, and arguments of the three texts.<sup>1</sup> Since the texts are so different from each other, I will begin by discussing them separately. Then, in order to provide a concrete example of the arguments of the texts, I will focus on one theme that appears in all three texts, namely, mortuary rituals, and compare how the different texts approach the topic.

*The Liji 禮記*

The *Liji* is, by far, the most disparate of the three ritual compendia. It consists of distinct texts, dating from the 4th through 2nd centuries BC, which were compiled in the Western Han as chapters of a single work.<sup>2</sup>

That many if not all of the chapters were originally separate texts has long been clear from the heterogeneous nature of the extant *Liji* itself, but recently the observation has received archaeological proof. The “Ziyi” 緇衣, one of the texts later made into a chapter of the *Liji*, was discovered in 1995 in a tomb at Guodian, sealed roughly in 300 BC.<sup>3</sup> It would certainly appear to be an independent text; there is nothing to imply that it was at the time part of a larger corpus of texts on ritual. In all likelihood, most if not all of the other chapters were similarly distinct texts later compiled into the *Liji*.<sup>4</sup>

Considering this disparate nature, generalizations about the themes of the text are difficult. Nonetheless, there are some arguments that recur throughout the work, so it certainly seems likely that the compiler had

<sup>1</sup> The best overall discussion of the establishment of the ritual compendia as classics is Michael Nylan's chapter, “The three rites canons” in her *The five “Confucian” classics* (New Haven, 2001), pp. 168–201. The chapter also contains an overview of the arguments of the three ritual texts. See also Qian Xuan, *Sanli Tonglun* (Nanjing, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> For an overview of the dating of the text, see Jeffrey Riegel, “Li chi,” *Early Chinese texts: a bibliographic guide*, ed. Michael Loewe (Berkeley, 1993), pp. 293–97.

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of the Guodian find, see Hubeisheng Jingmenshi bowuguan, “Jingmen Guodian yi hao chumu,” *Wenwu* 7 (1997), 35–48. For a study of how the “Ziyi” was transformed into a chapter of what would ultimately come to be seen as one of the classics, see Edward Shaughnessy, *Rewriting early Chinese texts* (Albany, 2006), pp. 63–130.

<sup>4</sup> Based in part on the Guodian discovery, Li Xueqin has argued that archaeological finds may demonstrate the *Liji* chapters to be of an earlier date than had recently been believed. See Li Xueqin, “Guodian jian yu Li ji,” *Zhongguo zhaxue shi* 4 (1998), 29–32.

a general vision in mind for at least some of the texts that were chosen and revised for inclusion in the volume.

The goal throughout the chapters of the *Liji* is to provide a theory of ritual: why rituals matter, how and why they were invented, and why they need to be continued. The chapters contain few prescriptions on how rituals should be performed, and, even where they do provide such prescriptions, they almost always do so as part of a larger argument. Although it is clear that the chapters are building on some of the practices of the day to make their arguments, it is also clear that these theoretical and normative discussions involved significant re-interpretations of what was actually practiced.<sup>5</sup>

Several of the chapters attribute the arguments being advanced to Confucius, and many are given in terms of dialogues between Confucius and his disciples. As we will see, the entire corpus of the *Liji* would ultimately come to be associated with Confucius.

The general view one finds in several of the chapters is of a constructionist vision of ritual. Rituals are presented as inventions of earlier human sages. Prior to these inventions, humans were selfish, supporting only themselves or at most only those members of their own immediate family, and they failed to see themselves as linked to other families or as linked to the larger cosmos. The sages, however, were able to recognize certain patterns within the cosmos and within human dispositions that could be used as models for patterning humanity in a more general way, constructing a world in which distinct families came to be linked together to create a larger community, and in which that community came to be linked to the larger cosmos.

The reasons why rituals work involve several different elements. One theme is that of refinement: through the practice of ritual, humans refine their dispositions such that they learn to respond to situations in ways that help those around them be better human beings.

A second recurring theme is one of extension. This involves taking certain patterns of behavior or particular dispositions and extending

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<sup>5</sup> Gilles Boileau and Wu Hung have both done important work in trying to connect discussions of ritual in the ritual classics with what might have existed in contemporary (Warring States and Han) ritual practice. See Gilles Boileau, "Some ritual elaborations on cooking and sacrifice in late Zhou and Western Han Texts," *Early China* 23–24 (1998–99), 89–123; and Wu Hung, "Art in a ritual context: rethinking Mawangdui," *Early China* 17 (1992), 111–44. See also Lin Suying, *Gudai jili zhong zhi zhengjiao guan: yi Liji chengshu qian wei lun* (Taipei, 1997), and Lin Suying, *Gudai shengming liyi zhong de shengsiguan: yi Liji wei zhu de xiandai quanshi* (Taipei, 1997).

them into other domains. As I have discussed elsewhere, several of the chapters dealing with sacrifice argue that rituals allow one to take feelings one has for immediate kin and extend these to strangers and aspects of the natural world. Practitioners thus come to see ghosts as ancestors and see the ruler as both father and mother, as well as the Son of Heaven. Thus, in what was once a world of competing families, in a cosmos perceived to be at best indifferent to humanity and perhaps governed by capricious spirits, rituals create a world in which humans come to think of the entire cosmos as a family.<sup>6</sup>

Given this general view of the transformative nature of sacrifice, the “Liyun” 禮運, “Jiyi” 祭義, and “Jifa” 祭法 chapters provide lengthy discussions of the ways in which the sacrifices invented by the sages helped to transform humans in their relations to other humans, to the deceased, and to the natural world.

Similar themes can be seen in several of the other chapters, including those not concerned with sacrifice. An example would be the argument in the “Zhongyong” 中庸, translated into English by James Legge as “The doctrine of the mean.” The “Zhongyong” is not concerned with sacrifice, but it has an argument in many ways comparable to the sacrifice texts.

Take the following sentences from the opening section of the text:

When happiness, anger, sorrow, and joy have not yet emerged, this is called centrality. When they have emerged, and all are centered and modulated, this is called harmony.<sup>7</sup>

The center is defined as that which precedes humans beings pulled in situations by different emotions. Once these emotions have emerged, they need to be modulated by a centering process equivalent to what existed prior to their emergence—a modulation that is then termed harmony. The implication of this argument is that the danger for humans is to be pulled by their emotions in different situations, and humans must

<sup>6</sup> Michael Puett, “The offering of food and the creation of order: the practice of sacrifice in early China,” in *Of tripod and palate: food, politics, and religion in traditional China*, ed. Roel Sterckx (New York, 2005), pp. 75–95; Puett, “Human and divine kingship in early China: comparative reflections,” in *Religion and power: divine kingship in the Ancient World and beyond*, ed. Nicole Brisch (Chicago, 2008), pp. 199–212.

<sup>7</sup> *Liji*, “Zhongyong,” Chinese University of Hong Kong, Institute of Chinese Studies, Ancient Chinese Text Concordance Series (hereafter cited as ICS), 142/32.1/23. My translations from the *Liji* here and throughout have been aided greatly by those of James Legge, *Li Ki: Book of rites* (Oxford, 1885).

endlessly attempt to center and harmonize themselves. Since there is no pre-given set of rituals to define the actions of the practitioner, the goal here is clearly one of self-cultivation: through cultivation, one becomes able, in any given situation, to be centered and harmonized.

In this sense, the argument is in some ways similar to that seen in the “Xing zi ming chu” 性自命出.<sup>8</sup> But, unlike the “Xing zi ming chu,” the “Zhongyong” takes the argument into cosmic claims as well:

Centering is the great base of all under Heaven; harmony is the achieved path of all under Heaven. With the utmost centering and harmonizing, Heaven and Earth are positioned thereby and the myriad things are nurtured thereby.<sup>9</sup>

In any given situation, the gentleman is he who creates an order by forming the center: all the disparate phenomena thus come to be ordered by the center, which unifies them around a common activity. This would be true in everyday affairs, dealing with human emotions, and equally true of the larger activities of humanity.

An example of the latter would be agriculture: without agriculture, there is rain from the heavens, there is seasonal change, there are grasses in the soil, etc. And, between the heavens and earth, there are humans, who hunt for food, and whose activities therefore have nothing to do with the rains from the heavens and the grasses in the soil. With the invention of agriculture, however, these disparate phenomena become meaningful: the rains that fall at a certain time and the plants that grow from the earth become ordered by the centering activity of the invention of agriculture.

Other examples, of course, could include the ritual systems of centering that we see developed in the sacrifice chapters of the *Liji*, in which, through the ritual extension of familial emotions, the world comes to be ordered like a genealogical family, with the ruler as the center.

Finally, the “Daxue” 大學, or “Great learning,” works along comparable lines as well. Here, too, one sees an attempt to build a continuous line, starting from the person properly cultivated to the family to the larger realm and back again. Only when such a line of continuity has

<sup>8</sup> Michael Puett, “The ethics of responding properly: the notion of *qing* in early Chinese thought,” in *Love and emotions in traditional Chinese literature*, ed. Halvor Eifring (Leiden, 2004), pp. 37–68.

<sup>9</sup> *Liji*, “Zhongyong,” ICS, 142/32.1/23–24.

been created that runs from the individual to the entire realm can true order be achieved.

In all of these examples, ritual works by taking disparate phenomena, linking them together, and connecting them into chains of continuity. The position of power in these examples is always the person who stands in the center of these chains; the one who occupies the center in the “Zhongyong,” or who stands as the focal point of the constructed genealogical chains in the sacrifice chapters.

### *The Zhouli* 周禮

Unlike the concern in the *Liji* chapters with developing a theory of the invention and efficacy of ritual, the *Zhouli* purports to be a description of the political organization of the Western Zhou state. Zheng Xuan, a commentator in the Eastern Han, would later claim that the Duke of Zhou was its author. More recent studies would not support such an early date for the text; most scholars would now date the text to the Warring States period.<sup>10</sup> However, the officials listed in the text do appear on Zhou inscriptional material as well. So, even if the text itself was composed in the Warring States period, it may reflect earlier administrative practice.<sup>11</sup>

Despite its title, the text is not directly concerned with rituals.<sup>12</sup> The primary goal of the text is to present the hierarchy of officials in the Zhou and to delineate the proper duties of each official. Since some of these officials dealt with ritual, ritual does indeed appear throughout the text; but ritual is not the primary concern.

The *Zhouli* opens with the following claim:

It is the king who establishes the state, distinguishes the quarters and rectifies the positions, structures the state and aligns the fields, sets up

<sup>10</sup> Sven Broman, “Studies on the *Chou Li*,” *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 33 (1961), 1–88. For an overview of the proposed dates for the composition of the *Zhouli*, see William G. Boltz, “Chou li,” *Early Chinese texts*, pp. 25–32.

<sup>11</sup> Lothar van Falkenhausen has done some of the best work in analyzing the degree to which the idealized portrait of the Zhou kingdom portrayed in the *Zhouli* might in fact contain elements that did accord with what really existed in the Zhou dynasty. See Lothar von Falkenhausen, “Reflections on the political role of spirit mediums in early China: the *wu* officials in the *Zhou li*,” *Early China* 20 (1995), 279–300.

<sup>12</sup> For analyses of the arguments of the *Zhouli*, see Mark Edward Lewis, *Writing and authority in early China* (Albany, 1999), pp. 42–48; Jean Levi, *Les fonctionnaires divins: politique, despotisme et mystique en Chine ancienne* (Paris, 1989), pp. 229–34; Léon Vandermeersch, *Wang Dao ou la voie royale* (Paris, 1977–80), vol. 2, chapter 24.



the offices and designates the functions. He thereby serves as the pivot for the populace.<sup>13</sup>

The text then goes on to define the official positions that the king establishes. The first is the minister of the state, called the “Official for the Heavens”:

He thereupon institutes the Official for the Heavens, the minister of the state, to employ and take charge of his subordinates, and to supervise the regulation of the territories, so as to assist the king in ruling the territories and states.<sup>14</sup>

We then get a listing of every official under the minister, along with a brief recounting of the duties.

This structure is repeated for each portion of the state hierarchy. The next set of ministers is the officials, associated with the earth, for educating and training the populace:

It is the king who establishes the state, distinguishes the quarters and rectifies the positions, structures the state and aligns the fields, sets up the offices and designates the functions. He thereby serves as the pivot for the populace. He thereupon institutes the Official for the Earth, the minister of the multitude, to employ and take charge of his subordinates, and to supervise the teaching of the territories, so as to assist the king in pacifying and training the territories and states.<sup>15</sup>

After listing the duties of the officials under the minister of the multitude, the text goes on to describe the minister of cult (associated with spring) and the minister of justice (associated with autumn). The last section would have been the minister of public works (associated with winter), but, since the section is missing, it was replaced with a separate work, the “Kaogong ji” 考工記.

The text makes no normative claims as to what rituals should be performed, nor does it reveal any interest at all in the dispositions of the populace. The sole concern is simply to take any ritual specialist in the realm, clearly delineate his functions, and define his place in the hierarchy of the state. Do the rituals actually succeed in gaining the support of divine powers? Are they useful instead in terms of creating

<sup>13</sup> Zhouli, “Tianguan,” ICS, 1.0. Here and throughout, my translations have greatly benefited from the translation by Édouard Biot, *Le Tcheou-li ou Rites des Tcheou*, 3 vols (Paris, 1851).

<sup>14</sup> Zhouli, “Tianguan,” ICS, 1.0.

<sup>15</sup> Zhouli, “Diguan,” ICS, 2.0.

lineages and dispositions that support the ruler? No concern for such questions is revealed at all. The only concern is that, if rituals are practiced, there need to be administrative positions to oversee them.

### *The Yili* 儀禮

The *Yili* is the only text of the three that provides substantial, normative descriptions of how given rituals should be performed.<sup>16</sup> As we have seen, the *Liji* is mainly concerned with defining why rituals exist and what purpose they serve, and the *Zhouli* is concerned primarily with sketching a vision of how ritual and administrative practitioners were organized under an idealized bureaucratic state. Both, while making these arguments, at times provide details of ritual practice, but neither has as its goal a normative description of such practices. In contrast, the *Yili* is indeed concerned with laying out the normative ways that particular rituals should be performed.

The rituals described in the *Yili* are those intended for a *shi*, a lower officer. Several different types of ritual are presented, from a capping ceremony to an archery contest to mourning and mortuary rituals. For each of these, the text lays out precisely what one should do in each situation, and also lists possible variations for different scenarios.

### *Mourning rituals and political order in the three ritual texts*

With this general introduction to the nature and arguments of the three texts, I will turn next to a concrete example dealt with by all three texts: views of mortuary rituals and political order in the texts. This will allow us to see the differences between the texts with far more clarity, and will also put us in a position to understand, in the final section of this chapter, how the texts were later appropriated.

### *The Yili*

The section dealing with death in the *Yili* provides an excellent example of how the *Yili* makes its arguments. The text lays out a careful set

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<sup>16</sup> For an overview of and scholarship about the text, see William G. Boltz, “I li,” *Early Chinese texts*, pp. 234–43.

of ritual prescriptions, the goal of which is gradually to remove the deceased from the living, while yet at the same time helping the living to cultivate the proper feelings of respect toward the deceased and to continue the proper feelings of familial ties. The text takes the practitioners step by step through the process, as the deceased is slowly shifted from the world of the living, eventually buried in the tomb, and sacrifices are instituted at the tomb and temple. Although the section does not involve any of the political concerns that we discussed in the sacrifice chapters of the *Liji*, the overall concern of the ritual action is comparable: an attempt to utilize ritual to develop and refine the dispositions of the living.

I will give a synopsis of the description, both to provide a sense of the nature of the *Yili* and to set up the contrast with the *Liji* and *Zhouli*.

The first step that occurs after death is for the calling back (*fu* 復) of the lost souls. The caller takes a set of clothes and, facing north, calls out for the souls to return. He then returns with the clothes, which are afterwards used to clothe the corpse.

The chief mourner (*zhuren* 主人), usually the eldest son of the deceased, receives a message of condolence from the ruler. He uses the west steps, to demonstrate that the corpse is still the head of the household.

An inscription is made bearing the name of the corpse. This is hung on a stand on the west side of the house.

The corpse is then washed. The chief mourner puts rice and cowries into the mouth of the corpse, and the corpse is put into the clothing for the tomb.

A stand (*zhong* 重), made of wood, is then set up, facing north. The rice that was not placed in the corpse's mouth is boiled, put in cauldrons, and hung on either side of the stand. The inscription is also placed by the stand.

The corpse is dressed further, and a full set of offerings are given. The corpse is then placed in a coffin, and another set of offerings is provided.

Throughout, wailing occurs every morning and evening.

Divining is undertaken to determine both the site of the grave and the day of the burial.

The coffin is taken to the ancestral temple. Before leaving, the offerings are set up in two tripods exactly as in the coffining ceremony. The coffin is then carried into the ancestral temple. The stand is taken first, followed by the offerings, a torch, the body, another torch, and

the master. After the coffin is placed in the temple, the offerings are set out as they were at the coffining.

The coffin is set out in preparation of being moved to the grave. The spirit artifacts (*mingqi* 明器) are arrayed to the west of the coffin, along with millet and wines. Also arrayed are implements that the deceased used, including bows and arrows, ploughs and ploughshares. Musical implements that the deceased enjoyed can also be included, along with leisure implements. Sacrificial vessels are not included.

A final offering is given, after which the procession moves to the grave.

The interment then occurs. The coffin is laid into the grave, followed by the bright utensils, gifts, meats, and grains.

The mourning party then returns and wails.

The chief mourner wails morning and evening as he did before, but he does not set up any more offerings. He then makes three sacrifices of repose, and then stops wailing.

On the following day, they enshrine the tablet in the ancestral temple according to descent rank.

The text then describes the sacrifices of repose in detail. The liturgist (*zhu* 祝)<sup>17</sup> invites the spirit to eat (*xiang* 饗) and offers a sacrifice (*ji* 祭). This is the first time a sacrifice (*ji*) is given.

The liturgist then meets the “corpse” (*shi* 尸, hereafter translated “impersonator”), that is, the person who will henceforth represent the deceased person.

The impersonator enters the temple. The Master and liturgist bow to him. The impersonator eats millet, lungs, and the spine. The “great soup” is then brought in. The impersonator eats the grain, liver, hind leg, fish, and game.

The liturgist announces the event complete. The Master wails, and all in attendance then wail.

The chief mourner then sets the day for continued sacrifices to the deceased. Divinations are done to determine the proper day and the proper impersonator. The sacrifices are given to the impersonator, who tastes the great soup, wine, lung, spine, heart, tongue, and liver.

After the impersonator leaves, a meal occurs with the Master, the liturgist, and guests. Each is offered portions of the food that had been offered to the ancestor.

<sup>17</sup> This term is translated “invocator” elsewhere in this set (Editors’ note).

Even this detail, it must be emphasized, is a radical abbreviation of what actually appears in the *Yili*. The text itself provides precise prescriptions for every step in this process, with elaborate discussions of what to do if specific aspects of the prescribed ritual cannot be undertaken. As one sees in this abbreviation, however, there is no discussion of why any of these actions are to be taken, nor is there any elaboration of why mourning rituals in general are of significance.

### *The Liji*

The contrast with the *Liji* on both of these points is rather extreme. Let us begin with one of the larger points that is hinted at in the prescriptions of the *Yili*, namely the distinction between worship at the tomb and the temple.

As we saw in the *Yili*, the corpse, prior to burial, was still considered (if he was the father) the head of the household, and the corpse was fed specialized servings of the sorts of meals one gives to the living. It is important to note that these were not even called sacrifices. When the corpse was buried, simulacra of the objects, utensils, and foods that the deceased enjoyed during life were included with it. The corpse, therefore, was clearly associated with the deceased person, including both his station in life and his personality.

The worship at the temple was radically different. There, the worship was explicitly deemed a sacrifice, and it was a sacrifice to an ancestor; a spirit given a ranking based upon descent. This rank was marked by the ancestral tablet, which was placed according to the generational position of the deceased in the lineage.

But the *Yili*, of course, gives no explanation as to the rationale behind this distinction between the corpse to be entombed and the ancestral sacrifices at the temple. The *Liji* does.

The “*Jiyi*” chapter of the *Liji* explains the different types of offerings one gives to the different portions of the deceased through a dialogue between Confucius and his disciple Zai Wo. The dialogue begins:

Zai Wo said: “I have heard the names ‘ghosts’ and ‘spirits’, but I do not know what they mean.”

The Master said: “*Qi* is the flourishing of spirit; the earthly soul (*po*) is the flourishing of the ghost. Combining the ghost and the spirit is the highest teaching.”<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *Liji*, “*Jiyi*,” ICS, 126.25.24.

Confucius continues by defining in more detail what he means by ghosts and spirits:

Everything that is born will die. When one dies, one returns to the ground. This was called the “ghost”. The bones and flesh wither below; hidden, they become the earth of the fields. Their *qi* is sent out above; it becomes radiant brightness. According with the essence of things, instituting the pivot of action, [the sages] clearly named “ghosts” and “spirits”, taking them as a pattern for the black-haired people. The populace was thereby awed, and the myriad people thereby submitted.<sup>19</sup>

Humans, like all other creatures, die. Their bones and flesh decompose in the soil; their *qi* ascends into the skies. The sages then named these things “ghost” and “spirit,” respectively. As the final line makes clear, the goal of this action was to awe the populace into submission.

But the sages felt this naming to be inadequate, so they went on create places of worship:

The sages took this as still insufficient, so they constructed dwellings and houses, and set up temples and ancestral halls. They thereby differentiated closer and more distant kinship, and closer and farther removed in terms of descent. [The sages] taught the people to turn to the past and look back to the beginning, no longer forgetting where they came from. The populace submitted to this and therefore obeyed with greater urgency.<sup>20</sup>

This, too, brought the populace into submission.

The sages then created rituals for each of the parts of the deceased:

When these two ends were established, they responded with two rituals. They set up the morning service, burning fat and manifesting it with the radiance of [burning] southernwood. They thereby responded to the *qi*. This taught the populace to return to the beginning. They offered millet and rice, and served liver, lungs, head, and heart, presenting them and separating them into two bowls, and supplementing them with sacrificial wine. They thereby responded to the earthly souls (*po*). This taught the people to love one another, and taught superiors and inferiors to utilize their dispositions. This was the utmost of ritual.<sup>21</sup>

The sacrifices to the *qi* are performed in order to teach the populace to focus on their ancestors—that from which they came. And the offerings to the earthly souls are undertaken to train their dispositions.

<sup>19</sup> *Liji*, “*Jiyi*,” ICS, 126/25/25–27.

<sup>20</sup> *Liji*, “*Jiyi*,” ICS, 126/25/28.

<sup>21</sup> *Liji*, “*Jiyi*,” ICS, 126/25/29.

Although the text does not specify, the sense would appear to be that the offerings to the earthly souls in the tomb are to be made to emphasize the feelings of love and familial hierarchy that one should normatively have held for the deceased, while those to the *qi* were done to inculcate a proper sense of the descent of the living from ancestors. Thus, the sages have taken the remains of deceased humans and, through rituals, have used them to instill proper dispositions among the living: what were once ghosts and spirits have now become the means by which to instill a sense of familial hierarchy and ancestral descent.

By linking themselves to the *po* and *qi* in this way through mortuary rites, human rituals designed by the sages do indeed “combine the ghost and the spirit”; the highest teaching of which Confucius spoke at the beginning of the dialogue.

This also means, of course, that the ghosts and spirits are linked by having humans in between, linked through ritual. And we see here one of the themes, mentioned earlier, that appears repeatedly in the *Liji* chapters: the ritual practitioner—in this case the sacrificer—takes the central position, linking the recipients of the sacrifice to himself.

Similar themes concerning mortuary ritual are provided in the “Tangong” 檀弓 chapter. The chapter is of particular interest to us, since the “Tangong” has a section that covers many of the same ritual acts prescribed in the *Yili*.

Like so many of the *Liji* chapters, the “Tangong” defends an affective theory of ritual, in which the concern is to train the dispositions of the practitioners:

The rites of mourning are the extreme [expression] of grief and sadness. In modulating grief, one accords with changes; this is how the gentleman remembers from where he came.<sup>22</sup>

Immediately we see affective readings of ritual brought to the forefront. Rites serve to modulate the grief of the living and help them to understand from where they came.

The text then turns to the ritual of calling for a return of the souls:

[Calling for] a return is the way of utmost love; it has the mind of praying in it. Looking for his return from the darkness is the way of seeking him among the ghosts and spirits. The reason that one faces north is that one is seeking for him in the darkness.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> *Liji*, “Tangong,” ICS, 23/4.15/11.

<sup>23</sup> *Liji*, “Tangong,” ICS, 23/4.15/11–12.

Wailing is equally discussed as a means of expressing extreme sadness—an important issue to keep in mind when we reach the point later in the chapter when the wailing is required to end:

Bowing and hitting one's head on the floor is [expressing] the extreme pain of grief and sadness. Hitting one's head on the floor is the depth of [expressing] the pain.<sup>24</sup>

Placing food and shells in the mouth of the deceased is similarly explained in terms of the emotions of the ritual practitioners, in this case the living:

Feeding with the uncooked rice and shells is because one cannot bear the emptiness; it is not in order to feed him, and this is why one uses beautiful things for it.<sup>25</sup>

As with the *Yili*, the key shift is from the mourning period to the sacrifices in the ancestral temple. During the mourning period, one is providing offerings to the corpse, who (if he is the father) is still considered the head of the household. After the burial, sacrifices are given to the tablet in the ancestral temple.

In the “Tangong” chapter, this shift is presented in terms of the dispositions of the living. Right after the burial, the survivor returns and wails at the most extreme, since this is the point at which the deceased has fully left the world of the living:

Consoling when [the descendant] returns [from the tomb] wailing is because this is the extremity of grief. He returns and there is no one there; he has lost [the deceased]. Therefore it is the most intense.<sup>26</sup>

The sacrifices then begin, since the living cannot bear one day apart from the deceased. But at this stage the wailing must end. One is now not giving offerings to the deceased corpse as if alive; one is now giving sacrifices to the spirit. The former has now been buried with the things it enjoyed while alive. The spirit, now lacking the corpse, ascends to the heavens. From here on, it will be brought down to humans by sacrifices, and it will be represented by the ancestral tablet, which gives the spirit its ranked place in the lineage:

<sup>24</sup> *Liji*, “Tangong,” ICS, 23/4.15/12–13.

<sup>25</sup> *Liji*, “Tangong,” ICS, 23/4.15/13.

<sup>26</sup> *Liji*, “Tangong,” ICS, 23/4.15/20.



He is buried to the north, with the head facing north. This was a prominent ritual from the three dynasties, because [the souls of the deceased] go to the darkness. After the internment, the officiating mourner presents gifts, and the invocator leads the impersonator for the sacrifice of repose. After he has returned and wailed, the officiating mourner and the officer inspect the victim for the sacrifice of repose. The officer sets up offerings with a bench and a mat to the left of the tomb. He then returns. At midday is the sacrifice of repose. On the day of the burial, they offer the sacrifice of repose. They cannot bear one day of separation. On this day, they replace the sacrifice of repose for the offerings. The end of wailing is called “completing the event”. On this day, auspicious sacrifices replace sacrifices of mourning. The next day, [the tablet] is enshrined with the grandfather.<sup>27</sup>

This shift from mourning the deceased as he existed while alive to sacrificing to him as an ancestor in a lineage must occur quickly. The spirit now returns not to the corpse but rather to the ancestral tablet. The living cannot bear this transition to be long, since, during the transition, the spirit would have no place to which to return:

Changing to auspicious sacrifices, and on the succeeding day to the enshrining of the tablet, must necessarily occur very close to this day. He [the survivor] cannot bear one day without a place [for the spirit] to return.<sup>28</sup>

An impersonator is then set up to receive the sacrifices. The crying is over, and the name of the deceased can be used no longer. From here on, the sacrifices are to the deceased according to his ancestral rank. One is no longer serving the deceased as if he were alive:

One performs the sacrifice of repose and sets up the impersonator. There is a bench and a mat. One brings to an end the crying and avoids [the name of the deceased]. The services for him as living are stopped and the services for the ghost begin.<sup>29</sup>

Following the burial, the chief mourner takes the place as head of the household and, if he is the son of the king, as the new ruler. (Unlike the *Yili*, several chapters of the *Liji* focus on the ruler, rather than a *shi*.) He no longer feeds his father as if he were alive but rather sacrifices to him as an ancestor.

<sup>27</sup> *Liji*, “Tangong,” ICS, 23/4.15/21–24.

<sup>28</sup> *Liji*, “Tangong,” ICS, 23/4.15/24–25.

<sup>29</sup> *Liji*, “Tangong,” ICS, 28/4.52/6.

In the “Zaji” 雜記 chapter, this shift from mourning to sacrificing is discussed in terms of a shift from grieving for the deceased to paying proper filial respect to one’s ancestor:

In sacrificing, one is called “filial son” and “filial grandson”. In mourning, one is called “grieving son” and “grieving grandson”.<sup>30</sup>

This stage—the stage of sacrifice—is the focus of a great deal of attention in several of the *Liji* chapters. The “Jitong” 祭統 for example, emphasizes that, once one reaches the stage of sacrifice, it is the chief mourner—the sacrificer—who occupies the center, feeding the ancestors above and, in a different way, feeding those below. But, in both cases, the feeding occurs in a form that defines a hierarchy in which the sacrificer is the primary figure. (And, tellingly in this regard, the example emphasized in the “Jitong” is not a *shi* but rather the ruler.) Let us begin with the offerings above.

The chapter makes a great deal of the fact that the impersonator is normally the son of the chief mourner. If the sacrificer is properly filial and approaches his own son as if that son were the sacrificer’s father, then the proper feelings of filiality are also inculcated into the sacrificer’s son, as he serves the role of impersonating the sacrificer’s father:

Now, according to the way of sacrificing, the grandson acted as the impersonator of the king’s father. He who was made to act as the impersonator was the son of he who made the sacrifice. The father faced north and served him. By means of this, he made clear the way of a son serving his father. This is the relation of father and son.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, through sacrifice, the sacrificer maintains proper feelings of filiality toward his deceased father, and he in turn helps to inculcate these feelings of filiality in his own son.

Then, when the impersonator rises, the ruler and his main ministers eat the leftovers. (It is important to note here that the impersonator only tastes the food, so the leftovers are in fact almost the entire meal given by the ruler.) After the rulers and his ministers eat the food that was initially given to the ancestors, the ruler leaves as well:

Therefore, when the impersonator rises, the ruler together with the four ministers eat the leftovers. The ruler rises, and the six great nobles eat; the ministers eat the leftovers of the ruler. The great nobles rise, and the

<sup>30</sup> *Liji*, “Za ji,” ICS, 107/20.12/6.

<sup>31</sup> *Liji*, “Jitong,” ICS, 131.26.14.

eight officers eat. The officers eat the leftovers of the nobles. The officers rise, and each takes his portion and goes out; the [leftovers] are arrayed below the hall. The hundred officials enter and remove it. The inferiors eat the leftovers of the superiors. In general, the way of disposing [of the leftovers] is that with each shift there are more people; one thereby distinguishes the ranks of noble and mean. Thus arises the representations of bestowing and graciousness. Therefore, using these four millet vessels, one sees cultivation within the temple. Within the temple is a representation of the entire realm. Sacrifice is the height of grace.<sup>32</sup>

The ruler thus feeds the ancestors and the populace. Through the former, he inculcates proper feelings of filiality in his son; through the latter, he creates a world in which the populace is fed by the ruler. In both cases, a clear hierarchy is created in which the son gains filial feelings toward his father (now the head of the household), and the remainder of the realm—from his ministers down to the populace—are ranked in hierarchical order according to their distance from the ruler. The ruler's sacrifices to the deceased thus establish his own hierarchical position: the ruler occupies the center of these relationships, serving as the chief mourner of his deceased father and creating a hierarchy below. And, as the text states, the temple is but a representation of the larger realm: symbolically, the entire realm is fed by the ruler.

Thus, if the ruler sacrifices properly, it affects the dispositions of the entire realm: through the reverence of sacrifice, his son will come to obey him and, since he is feeding them as well, the populace will come to think of him as their father and mother:

Therefore, if his power is flourishing, his intent will be deep. If his intent is deep, his propriety will be displayed. If his propriety is displayed, his sacrifices will be reverent. If his sacrifices are reverent, then none of the sons and grandsons within the borders will dare be irreverent... If his power is slight and his intent light, if he has doubts about his propriety, then, when seeking to sacrifice, he will not be able to be reverent when it is necessary to be so. If he is not reverent when sacrificing, how can he be taken as the father and mother of the people?<sup>33</sup>

The hierarchy of the realm is thus defined by sacrifice. As I have argued elsewhere, these sacrifices given by the ruler to Heaven as well are what allow the ruler to be thought of as the "Son of Heaven."<sup>34</sup> Thus, the ruler

<sup>32</sup> *Liji*, "Jitong," ICS, 131/26.9/7–10.

<sup>33</sup> *Liji*, "Jitong," ICS, 133.26.22.

<sup>34</sup> Michael Puett, "The offering of food and the creation of order."

becomes head of the household, the father and mother of the people, and the Son of Heaven; all positions defined by the dispositions inculcated through the acts of sacrifice. As the “Jiyi” argued:

Only the sage is able to sacrifice to Di, and only the filial son is able to sacrifice to his parents. “Sacrifice” (*xiang*) is to face toward (*xiang*). One faces toward it, and only then can one sacrifice to it. Therefore, the filial son approaches the impersonator and does not blush.<sup>35</sup>

If one is truly filial to one’s deceased father, and can approach one’s son as if he were that deceased father, then one can truly sacrifice. And if the ruler can approach Di as one’s father, then the ruler can truly sacrifice to Di as well.

In short, sacrifice, if done properly, affects the dispositions such that practitioners unite with the remains of the dead (combining the ghost and spirit, as the “Jiyi” states), inculcate filiality in the younger generation, and come to think of the ruler as both the father and mother of the people and the Son of Heaven. As the “Jitong” argues:

Of all the ways of ordering humans, none are more urgent than the rites. The rites have five constants; none are more important than sacrifice. Sacrifice is not something that comes from outside; it emerges from inside, and is born in the heart. The heart is moved, and one expresses it with rites. Therefore, only the worthy is able to exhaust the meaning of sacrifice. The sacrifices of the worthy necessarily receive blessings. But this is not what the world means by blessings. Blessing means completeness. Completeness is the name of the myriad accordings. When there is nothing not accorded with, this is called completeness. This is to say that internally one exhausts oneself and externally one accords with the way. The loyal subject thereby serves his ruler; the filial son thereby serves his parents. Their basis is one. Above one accords with ghosts and spirits; externally one accords with rulers and elders; internally one is thereby filial to one’s parents. As such, it is called completeness. It is only the worthy who is able to be complete. Only after one is able to be complete is one able to sacrifice. Therefore, the sacrifices of the worthy bring about his sincere good faith and his loyal reverence. He expresses these with offerings, puts them in practice with the rites, settles them with music, arranges them at the right time, and brightly offers them. And that is all. He does not seek for himself. This is the heart of a filial son.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> *Liji*, “Jiyi,” ICS, 126/25.6/7.

<sup>36</sup> *Liji*, “Jitong,” ICS, 129/26.1/25–130/26.2/1.

In short, with sacrifice, the sacrificer becomes the center, linking both ancestors and descendants. And, if he is the ruler, he links, by the exact same processes, both Heaven and the populace.

### *The Zhouli*

In contrast to the detailed prescriptions of the *Yili*, and the theories of ritual found in the *Liji*, the sole concern of the *Zhouli* is to define state control over specialists, including ritual specialists. The section that is of interest to these issues is that of the official of the spring, who is put in charge of cults. The section opens with a characteristic claim about the king establishing the state:

It is the king who establishes the state, distinguishes the quarters and rectifies the positions, structures the state and aligns the fields, sets up the offices and designates the functions. He thereby serves as the pivot for the populace. He thereupon institutes the official for spring, the minister of cult, to employ and take charge of his subordinates, and to supervise the rituals of the territories, so as to assist the king in bringing harmony to the territories and states.<sup>37</sup>

The text elaborates:

The function of the main minister of cult is to supervise the rituals of the heavenly spirits, human ghosts, and the earthly shrines so as to assist the king in establishing and protecting the territories and states.<sup>38</sup>

The text then lists the officials who are under the jurisdiction of the minister of cult.

No interest is shown concerning the proper behavior of the practitioners, or in providing a theory as to why ritual should be performed and how it would lead to order in the political realm. The only concern for political order is through the creation, by the ruler, of a proper hierarchy of officials. If mortuary rituals are to be performed, the sole concern of the authors of the *Zhouli* is that the functions of the officials involved be properly delineated and properly defined within the hierarchy.

Despite this difference, however, there is a similarity between the *Zhouli* and the *Liji*: both are concerned, at the level of the ruler, with the process of centering, of defining everything in terms of how it

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<sup>37</sup> *Zhouli*, "Chunguan," ICS, 3.0.

<sup>38</sup> *Zhouli*, "Chunguan," ICS, 3.0.

relates to the ruler at the center. In the case of the *Zhouli*, the concern is with the ruler defining himself as the pivot by organizing a hierarchical order around him, whereas in the case of the *Liji* chapters under consideration, the concern is with the ruler defining himself as the center by means of the dispositions instilled through ritual action. But a somewhat counter-intuitive similarity holds as well.

### *Appropriations of the ritual classics*

These features of the texts allow us to see the very different ways each came to be appropriated later, as well as some of the ways they could at times be combined.

One of earliest significant utilizations of the *Liji* at court came about during the extraordinary court debates in the 30s BC. At issue was the imperial ritual system that had been instituted by the First Emperor of Qin and systematized during the reign of Han Wudi. In this system, the ruler would take direct control of ritual sites by personally circulating through the empire and performing sacrifices to the local spirits. It would culminate in the performance of the *feng* and *shan* sacrifices. With Wudi, the final result of the ritual system would be his own ascension to the heavens as an immortal. The system, not surprisingly, came to epitomize the extreme imperial centralization that characterized Han Wudi's reign, in which the ruler would (hopefully) maintain direct control over all land.

In these debates, figures such as Kuang Heng and Zhang Tan called for a repeal of the Wudi ritual system and a return to the practices of the Zhou. More explicitly, they called for a return to the system of ancestor worship of the Zhou as well as a return to the Zhou practices of sacrificing to Heaven and Earth on the southern and northern axes of the capital, instead of having the ruler personally circulating throughout the realm performing local sacrifices. The implication of such a ritual system is that the ruler would thus remain in the capital, and the state would not attempt to control the local cults. In other words, the imperial system in which the empire would directly control all land would be dissolved, and the state would return to the more restricted form of statecraft associated with the Zhou.

These arguments were drawn from texts like the *Shangshu* and the *Liji*. An example is the following memorial, which begins with a reference from the "Jifa" chapter of the *Liji*:

“Burning victims on the great circular altar is to sacrifice to Heaven; burying victims at the square altar is to sacrifice to Earth.” An offering in the southern suburb is the means of determining the position of Heaven. Sacrificing to Earth on the square altar, situated in the northern suburb, fixes the position of *yin*. The position for each of the suburban sacrifices is located to the south and north of where the sage king resides.<sup>39</sup>

The call was for the court to return to the Zhou system and to reject the imperial model of Wudi. And the model given was one concerned with centering, with the ruler establishing a center at the capital and thereby determining the position of everything else, as opposed to an imperial model whereby the ruler takes direct control over (and therefore physically travels to) all of the land within the realm.

The court went back and forth, but finally, in 31 BC, the ritual system of Wudi was abolished, and a new system, based upon a reading of *Liji* and *Shangshu*, was put in its place.<sup>40</sup>

The extensive proposals put forth during these debates give us a powerful snapshot of the very different ways that the *Liji* was being appropriated and utilized. It is clear that, by the end of the Western Han, the *Liji* had already become a significant text. As Timothy Baker has argued:

Thus it appears highly likely that the term *lijì* 禮記 had current usage by the latter part of the Western Han to indicate a text that corresponded, to some greater or lesser extent, with the received text of the *Liji*. That all of these instances in the *Hanshu* occur late in the dynasty, together with the observation that this term does not appear in the *Shiji*, indicates that it probably evolved in the late Western Han, subsequent to the editorial activities of Liu Xiang and Liu Xin. That all of the quoted text corresponds, generally quite closely, with the transmitted *Liji*, and all three of the chapter titles mentioned correspond to ones in the transmitted version, with the text following two of them corresponding to the current version, indicates that by this point in the Western Han the version(s) of the *Liji* that existed had a reasonable correspondence with the one which we

<sup>39</sup> *Hanshu* “Jiaosi zhi,” 25B.1254.

<sup>40</sup> For the late Western Han ritual reform, see Michael Loewe, *Crisis and conflict in Han China: 104 BC to AD 9* (London, 1974); Martin Kern, “Ritual, text, and the formation of the canon: historical transitions of *wen* in early China,” *Toung Pao* 87.1–3 (2001), 43–91; Wang Baoxuan, *Xihan jingxue yuanliu* (Taipei, 1994); Marianne Bujard, *Le sacrifice au Ciel dans la Chine ancienne: théorie et pratique sous les Han occidentaux* (Paris, 2000); Timothy Baker, “The imperial ancestral temple in China’s Western Han dynasty: institutional tradition and personal belief” (PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 2006). I have also discussed the debates in chapter eight of Puett, *To become a god: cosmology, sacrifice, and self-divinization in early China* (Cambridge, 2002).

now have. While it may not have had all of the chapters contained in the transmitted version, there is no indication that it had other material that the current version does not. Furthermore, the frequency with which the passages from the *Liji* are quoted in support of an argument, rather than simply mentioning the text to indicate a line of scholarship, is striking—especially in contrast with the other two ritual classics. Although their titles appear, and we know that they were studied and posts created for their transmission, they are infrequently used in court debates.<sup>41</sup>

The *Yili* also appears (usually referred to as the *Lijing* 禮經) by the end of the Western Han, although not nearly as prominently as the *Liji*.<sup>42</sup> One of the reasons for this is presumably that the *Yili* did not deal with state rituals, and thus was not a helpful text for those concerned with altering the nature of the Han state.

The *Zhouli*, in contrast, did come into prominence in these court debates, but only in the next generation, with the rise of Wang Mang.<sup>43</sup> Following the usurpation of Wang Mang and his declaration of a new dynasty, Wang Mang sought to once again strengthen state authority. However, a return to the imperial system of Wudi was clearly not an option: by far the dominant position in the court culture was to reject the grandiose imperial systems of the Qin and Han Wudi and instead return to the Zhou. Part of the appeal of the *Zhouli* therefore probably came from the fact that it allowed Wang Mang to re-establish strong centralized authority while calling for a return to the Zhou. Thus, Wang Mang based his state offices and taxes on the *Zhouli*.<sup>44</sup> What was before a very minor text, rarely referred to, became a major work at the court of Wang Mang. To quote again from Timothy Baker's study:

The large number of references to this text under the term *Zhouguan*, together with the quotations corresponding to the transmitted version and lack of non-corresponding quotations, clearly confirm that a text similar to the current version was in active circulation by the end of the Western Han. That these references to the *Zhouli* almost all occur very late in the dynasty, in the Wang Mang period or the two decades preceding that,

<sup>41</sup> Baker, "Imperial ancestral temple," pp. 164–65.

<sup>42</sup> Baker, "Imperial ancestral temple," pp. 163–68, 276–79.

<sup>43</sup> Peng Lin, *Zhouli zhuti sixiang yu chengshu niandai yanjiu* (Beijing, 1991); Jin Chunfeng *Zhouguan zhi chengshu ji qi fanying de wenhua yu shidai xin kao* (Taipei, 1993), pp. 238–44; Loewe, *Crisis and Conflict*; Baker, "Imperial ancestral temple," pp. 163, 280–84.

<sup>44</sup> *Hanshu*, pp. 4136, 1180.



and essentially all by or related to Liu Xin or Wang Mang clearly show that its popularity lay in that political camp.<sup>45</sup>

In short, both the *Liji* and *Zhouli* came into (relative) prominence at the end of the Western Han dynasty, with a shift in court culture aimed at restoring the ritual system of the Zhou dynasty. Both texts in question became associated, albeit in different ways, with that restoration.

It is, however, clear from these court debates that the texts could be read to argue in favor of quite different proposals as to precisely what rituals should be standardized at the court and how the realm should be organized. This is hardly surprising, considering the disparate nature of the texts and the fact that few actual ritual prescriptions are contained in any of the texts but the *Yili*, which is also the one text not concerned with state ritual.

Ban Gu makes much the same point in one of his own summaries of the debates. I will quote from Timothy Baker's translation:

The *situyuan*, Ban Biao, says: "The Han followed upon the interruption of learning at the fall of the Qin, and the ancestral system was established in conformance with that time. Beginning with the (emperors) Yuan and Cheng, scholars were very numerous; Gong Yu (proposed) abolishing ancestral temples, Kuang Heng changed the rituals of the *jiao* sacrifices, He Wu established the *san gong*, and afterwards the number (of proposals) redoubled, (they were) multifarious and with no established (point of view). Why was this? The ritual texts were fragmentary, the systems of antiquity and the current times differed, (so) each (scholar) had his own school of interpretation, and it was not easy to decide for any one side. As one reviews the opinions of those Confucians, Liu Xin was (the most) widely read and sincere."<sup>46</sup>

After the restoration of the Han dynasty, the notion of returning to the Zhou continued to occupy a prominent place at court. The Eastern Han court was extremely weak, and returning to the imperial forms of governance associated with the Qin and Han Wudi was not a serious option. In this context, the ritual compendia continued to be utilized in court debates, as figures exploited the complexities of the visions of ritual and statecraft in these texts to construct their arguments. As a result, the ritual compendia, and particularly the *Liji* (now recognized as one of the five classics) became increasingly important at the court.

<sup>45</sup> Baker, "Imperial ancestral temple," p. 163.

<sup>46</sup> Translation by Baker, "Imperial ancestral temple," pp. 272–73. The quotation is from *Hanshu*, "Wei Xian zhuan," 43.3130–31.

Accordingly, commentaries to the three ritual texts also proliferated during the Eastern Han. One of the most audacious, and ultimately the most influential, of these commentators was Zheng Xuan, who argued that the three ritual compendia were all accurate and were in fact describing a single ritual system that existed in antiquity. It is important to remember that at the time this was hardly an accepted view.

Zheng Xuan's operating assumption was that ritual practice in antiquity was unified. Thus any seeming contradiction in the surviving fragments is simply a result of poor transmission or inadequate knowledge on the part of the latter-born. A proper hermeneutic thus involved collating the ritual compendia and seeking an underlying unity.

Both the *Liji* and *Yili* also came to be appropriated over the course of the Eastern Han by elite families. Miranda Brown has demonstrated the extremely varied ways in which the texts were appropriated in the Eastern Han for mortuary ritual.<sup>47</sup> And Patricia Ebrey has done excellent work in tracing the different ways in which the ritual texts were utilized in organizing families from the Eastern Han onward.<sup>48</sup>

These debates over the nature, reliability, and unity (or lack thereof) of the ritual compendia continued after the Eastern Han, and would continue to play a significant role in the debates over the nature of the state and the proper ordering of society. Keith Knapp, for example, has provided a very helpful study of the employment of notions of filiality in the post-Han period, notions that figure prominently in the *Liji*.<sup>49</sup>

For late imperial China, Angela Zito has done an excellent analysis of the uses of the sacrifice chapters of the *Liji* at the Qing court, and Thomas Wilson has reconstructed aspects of late imperial sacrificial practice.<sup>50</sup>

The *Zhouli* would also continue to play a major role in later Chinese history, most notably by Wang Anshi.<sup>51</sup> For the Southern Song, Jaeyoon

<sup>47</sup> Miranda Brown, *The politics of mourning in early China* (Albany, 2007).

<sup>48</sup> Patricia Ebrey, *The aristocratic families in early imperial China: a case study of the Po-Ling Ts'ui family* (Cambridge, 1978) and Patricia Ebrey, *Confucianism and family rituals in imperial China: a social history of writing about rites* (Princeton, 1991). See also David Johnson, *Medieval Chinese oligarchy* (Boulder, 1977).

<sup>49</sup> Keith Knapp, *Selfless offspring: filial children and social order in medieval China* (Honolulu, 2005).

<sup>50</sup> Angela Zito, *Of body and brush: grand sacrifice as text/performance in eighteenth-century China* (Chicago, 1997); Thomas Wilson, "Sacrifice and the imperial cult of Confucius," *History of Religions* 41.3 (2002), 251–87.

<sup>51</sup> For a study of the uses of the *Zhouli*, see Jin Chunfeng *Zhouguan zhi chengshu ji qi fanying de wenhua yu shidai xin kao* (Taipei, 1993).

Song has explored the ways that constitutional issues were debated through, among other things, the *Zhouli*.<sup>52</sup>

Although a full history of these debates and utilizations of the ritual compendia is beyond the bounds of the present essay, one final appropriation that should be mentioned is the Neo-Confucian utilization of the “Zhongyong” and “Daxue.” Here the disparate nature of the *Liji* is not denied but rather embraced. Both texts were taken out of their position in the *Liji* and read separately as constituting the line of thought of Zisi, and were placed with the *Analects* and *Mencius* as the four books.

#### *Future directions for scholarship*

The increased work that has been done using archaeological materials to reconstruct early ritual practice should not lead to a neglect of the arguments of the ritual texts. On the contrary, the more we learn about the background against which these texts were written, the more we can understand the significance and implications of the arguments developed in the texts.

Much more work should also be done with the later appropriation of these materials: how and why the texts were read and utilized in different periods of Chinese history. More work therefore also needs to be devoted to the commentarial traditions, explaining how and why various commentators read the texts as they did and explaining how and why particular commentaries became significant at court.

Finally, it should be pointed out that China is one of the traditions in the world, like South Asia and the West, which has a long history of theoretical writings on ritual. On top of the historical work of tracing out how and why these theories have been utilized in Chinese history, more work should also be done in taking this body of theory seriously as theory, exploring how the material could be brought to bear on contemporary debates on theory, and exploring comparisons between theories that emerged in China with those that emerged in South Asia and the West.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Jaeyoon Song, “Tensions and balance: changes of constitutional schemes in Southern Song (1127–1279) discourse on government” (PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 2007).

<sup>53</sup> For a preliminary attempt to take early Chinese ritual theory seriously as theory, see Michael Puett, “Innovation as ritualization: the fractured cosmology of early China,”

In short, the ritual compendia are a tremendously rich repository of material for historical, theoretical, and comparative work. We have only begun to explore them.

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*Cardozo Law Review* 28.1 (October 2006), 23–36; and Robert Weller, Adam Seligman, Michael Puett and Bennett Simon, *Ritual and its consequences: an essay on the limits of sincerity* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 17–42 and 179–82.