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Myriades d'Asies

All about the *Rites*

From Canonised Ritual to Ritualised Society



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All about the *Rites*

From Canonised Ritual to Ritualised Society

Autour du Traité des rites. De la canonisation du rituel à la ritualisation de la société

Anne Cheng and Stéphane Feuillas (ed.)

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ABSTRACT

This third volume of the “Myriades d’Asies” series is the result of an international conference which was held at the Collège de France in 2018, and published in book form by Hémisphères Editions in 2021, the present digital edition being a revised and improved version of the printed edition. It intends to look afresh at the way ancient China progressively evolved into a ritualistic society, that is a world in which social interactions in times of peace were to be conceived of within the category of rites. If such a category remains difficult to define univocally, it has appeared to us that one possible approach was to study the canonization in the Han period of a compendium of texts which aim at regulating conducts, be it social behaviour, body language,

speech, the relations between the living and the dead, as well as power relations and the agenda of human activities. We are talking more specifically about a cluster of three texts which soon came to acquire the status of “classics” and which are now known as the *Ceremonial and Rites* (*Yili* 儀禮), the *Rites of Zhou* (*Zhouli* 周禮), and the *Book of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記).

The first objective of the volume is to examine the articulations between these texts and more precisely to inquire about the patterns of, and motivations for, the canonization of ritual in the first century of Han rule, about the rewriting effects, and about the incorporation of very heterogeneous texts in the establishment of the canon. This primary approach to “the world of ritual” is followed by a more specific study of the most composite text of the compendium, the *Book of Rites*. How did the ancient commentaries of this text contribute to model the interpretation of rites, and in what way did the classic never cease to be an open text, going through successive phases of deconstruction, desacralisation or reconstruction that allowed for the ritual order to be constantly recomposed as dynasties went by? And how did the text relate to ancient Chinese ritual practices revealed by archeological discoveries or by different sources?

The final sections attempt to show, by contrast with other traditions and sociological approaches, how the canonization of ritual in China has shaped the sense of rites and the forms of social and political inquiry in ancient China, and how ritual still serves to underpin some modern thinking about the organization and management of men. Brought in the light of other conceptions elaborated in Asian or European societies, the ritual that has developed in China out of the Han canon thus appears to be an alternatively critical or ideological basis for a variety of discourses on the art of handling human affairs.

ANNE CHENG (ED.)

Titulaire de la Chaire d’Histoire intellectuelle de la Chine au Collège de France, Anne Cheng s’intéresse à l’histoire des idées, et plus particulièrement du confucianisme, en Chine et dans les cultures voisines.

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Avant-propos

Foreword

Anne Cheng et Stéphane Feuillas

- 1 En 2014, sous l'égide du Collège de France et du Centre de Recherche sur les Civilisations de l'Asie Orientale (CRCAO), nous lançons un programme d'étude consacré au *Traité des rites*. Cet ouvrage est l'un des trois textes ritualistes confucéens reconstruits à partir d'un présumé classique sur le rituel, détruit dès la mise en place du premier empire, la dynastie des Qin (221-206 av. J.-C.), autoritaire, anti-lettrée et éphémère à cause de son incapacité à penser la gestion des hommes autrement que par le jeu impitoyable de la loi pénale et des récompenses. Ce livre nous semblait donner lieu à des questions jusqu'alors peu envisagées dans les études chinoises et nous pensions y voir des axes relativement circonscrits et simples, ainsi que des orientations prometteuses.
- 2 Pêle-mêle, parmi les questions que nous souhaitions prioritairement poser à travers des lectures précises de chapitres et dans le cadre de séminaires annuels, figuraient celles de la datation de ce recueil intitulé en chinois *Liji* 禮記, et des quarante-neuf chapitres qui le constituent ; de la réécriture d'un classique et des exigences de la canonisation à la fin du premier siècle des Han antérieurs (206 av. J.-C. -9 apr. J.-C.) ou dans le courant des Han postérieurs (25-220) ; de la généralisation des pratiques rituelles à l'ensemble des couches de la société et non plus comme au début du premier millénaire avant notre ère à la seule aristocratie ; des décalages entre les pratiques effectives telles que les donnent à interpréter, parcellairement, les découvertes archéologiques d'une part et les textes d'autre part ; de la place de la réflexion philosophique dans ces chapitres et des tentatives de définition d'une « pensée ritualiste » ; du rapport entre la « fragmentation » des prescriptions rituelles et la systématisation qu'implique la canonisation ; du partage enfin avec les deux autres *compendia* rituels, le *Cérémonial* (*Yili* 儀禮) et le *Rituel des Zhou* (*Zhouli* 周禮), parfois appelé *Zhouguan* 周官 (L'Administration des Zhou).
- 3 Riche et passionnant programme – du moins à nos yeux de sinologues –, auquel se joignirent au cours des années de nombreux intervenants, conférenciers français et étrangers, professeurs et étudiants en master, doctorants, post-doctorants, ou encore

simples curieux bien informés. Une petite communauté se retrouvait chaque année, lisait des textes, argumentait, déchiffrait et défrichait le maquis des commentaires chinois sur la très longue durée depuis la dynastie des Han, en passant par les élaborations des Song (960-1279) et les reprises fécondes et toujours actuelles de la fin du XIX^e siècle, s'interrogeait et s'étonnait de la plasticité du rite, de l'immense variation des interprétations et des contextes d'exercice. Nous tenions une matière dense, problématique et presque infinie. Un bonheur de chercheurs presque...

- 4 Nous différions les conclusions, sachant que le travail accompli en petit comité trouverait sa place dans un colloque récapitulatif. Il se tint les 21 et 22 juin 2018 au Collège de France, principalement en anglais du fait de son caractère international. L'appel à communications que nous avons lancé comportait plusieurs volets. L'objectif était de prendre le *Traité des rites* comme centre et point de départ tout à la fois, de le « faire tourner », un peu comme une clef dans une serrure, dans la longue tradition scripturaire chinoise mais aussi dans les sociétés extrême-orientales, et ouvrir une réflexion plus ample sur certaines conceptions de la pratique rituelle. Celles-ci ne pouvaient trouver leur mesure que dans une approche comparative, par contraste avec d'autres traditions antiques, indienne, grecque ou romaine, mais aussi dans des rethématisations plus modernes telles que celle produite par un Erving Goffman au sein de l'école sociologique de Chicago.
- 5 Munis d'une telle feuille de route, nous contactions alors les meilleurs spécialistes français et internationaux. À notre grande surprise, tous les intervenants pressentis en France, en Europe, aux États-Unis, en Australie, en Chine ou à Taïwan, répondirent présents. Rien n'aurait pu se faire sans le secours financier du Collège de France et de la Fondation Hugot, du CRCAO et de l'Université de Paris Cité. Que les responsables administratifs de ces institutions soient ici remerciés pour leur soutien et leur célérité, leur efficacité et leur engagement. Notre reconnaissance va également à Joseph Ciaudo, maître de conférences à l'Université d'Orléans, qui nous a rejoints lors de la préparation de la publication et qui a mis toute son énergie et ses compétences dans le travail éditorial, ainsi qu'à Alain Jauson, directeur des éditions Hémisphères, qui a accueilli notre manuscrit avec le sérieux du professionnel et la générosité du grand seigneur.
- 6 Le présent livre est et n'est pas le fruit du colloque. Il l'est pleinement parce que ce sont bien les mêmes auteurs qui signent les articles que l'on trouvera dans le sommaire. Il ne l'est pas cependant car l'ordre des prises de parole a été presque entièrement modifié par rapport au déroulé de ces 21 et 22 juin. La raison en est simple : nous ne disposions à l'ouverture des débats dans l'amphithéâtre Guillaume Budé que des résumés, pour certains embryonnaires, et les textes définitifs ne nous sont parvenus dans leur grande majorité que bien après, parfois avec un délai de douze mois. Or il est apparu que les discussions fructueuses qui avaient eu lieu lors du colloque, et en particulier lors de la séance plénière finale, s'étaient poursuivies souterrainement, dans l'écriture même des articles. Nombreux sont les renvois, les effets d'écho ou de dissension entre les textes. Même lorsque les auteurs se tiennent à une stricte analyse dans leur champ de compétence, des correspondances ou des commutations apparaissent. Nous n'en prendrons pour l'instant qu'un exemple. En partie par conformisme et par commodité, nous avons placé lors du colloque une intervention sur le Japon dans l'ensemble trop bien constitué des cultures extrême-orientales aux côtés de la Corée et aux frontières de la Chine. Or il apparaît clairement, à la lecture de l'article très détaillé de François

Macé sur les rites de cour à l'époque d'Edo entre la fin du xvii^e siècle et le début du xviii^e, que la tradition scripturaire chinoise, et au premier chef un classique comme le *Traité des rites*, ne jouent qu'un rôle marginal et n'entrent dans les discussions entre élites lettrées et guerrières que pour être délaissées au profit de constructions protocolaires autonomes et autochtones soucieuses d'établir d'autres hiérarchies ou d'autres rapports entre les vivants et les défunts. De ce point de vue, il nous a paru plus cohérent et stimulant de placer le Japon dans une autre tectonique, aux côtés des traditions indienne et gréco-romaine.

- 7 Les recoupements ou au contraire leur absence ont ainsi guidé l'élaboration du présent ouvrage et l'un des effets attendus parmi d'autres d'une telle publication est de remettre en chantier et au travail la réflexion sur le rite, en tenant compte de la nature qu'il endosse dans des lieux spécifiques, de sa géographie comme des contextes socio-historiques déterminés.
- 8 Avant de justifier la composition du livre et d'évoquer rapidement pour chaque article les approches et les horizons qu'ils ouvrent, il n'est peut-être pas inutile de revenir sur deux questions que le travail de lecture lors des séminaires n'avait guère abordées et que les textes présentés à l'issue du colloque mettent clairement en lumière. On peut les énoncer de façon un peu abrupte ainsi : la Chine a-t-elle été dans son histoire une société fondamentalement ritualiste ? En quoi les pratiques rituelles telles qu'elles se donnent à lire dans un ouvrage aussi détaillé de casuistique cérémonielle que le *Traité des rites* s'inscrivent-elles ou non dans des théories générales du rituel comme celles qu'ont pu construire les diverses écoles de l'anthropologie moderne et contemporaine à partir de la littérature indienne, grecque ou romaine mais aussi dans les multiples enquêtes de terrain relatives aux organisations sociales des peuples dits « premiers » ?
- 9 Embarqués comme nous l'étions dans la lecture et l'examen de la vaste matière rituelle, la réflexion était en quelque sorte biaisée par l'approche textuelle qui était la nôtre. Certes elle s'élargissait à mesure que nous progressions de questionnements et de motifs théoriques comme par exemple l'importance capitale que prend dans les rituels de deuil la théâtralisation ou l'ordonnancement liturgique, le rôle du rituel dans l'expression et le contrôle de l'émotion et de la souffrance, la place qu'occupe dans le discours ritualiste la circonstance qui seule rend possible une véritable orthopraxie, ou encore l'articulation complexe de l'attitude rituelle avec le sens moral. Autant de questions que les différents chapitres du *Traité des rites* soulevaient tangentiellement mais qui d'une certaine façon nous bouchaient l'horizon.
- 10 Revenons un peu en arrière. En prenant le *Liji* comme objet d'étude, il nous semblait aller de soi que la civilisation chinoise s'était très largement rassemblée, et ce dès la dynastie des Zhou de l'Ouest (1045-771 av. J-C.), sur une organisation des relations entre le visible et l'invisible d'un côté, entre les personnes ou les groupes sociaux d'un autre côté, basée sur une assignation toujours mouvante, toujours à réactiver dans des circonstances singulières, de positions entre deux instances (par exemple les dieux et les hommes, les ancêtres et les descendants, les supérieurs et les inférieurs, les individus réglés par leur position hiérarchique) et que ce modèle dont les textes confucéens détaillent à l'envi tout le divers possible était posé comme la condition d'une harmonisation sociale à quelque niveau qu'elle s'exerce et d'une dilution des conflits. Les *Entretiens* de Confucius, à ce titre, nous servaient de viatique : malgré la teneur souvent nostalgique des propos du Maître sur l'effacement à son époque du ritualisme des Zhou, restaient chez lui, placés à l'horizon de la conduite individuelle

comme de la vie sociale un *art de la distance juste* et un *jeu de rôles* constitutifs de l'ordre idéal. Les effets d'une telle conception du monde nous paraissaient prégnants dans l'exercice réel des relations de pouvoir tout au long de l'histoire chinoise, que celles-ci s'en inspirent directement ou au contraire se mesurent à cette représentation. De plus, et pour n'en dire ici qu'un mot, la religion taoïste, à partir du moment où elle se constitue en secte dès la fin du II^e siècle de notre ère, peut être étudiée comme un ensemble de croyances presque entièrement défini par des pratiques rituelles, adaptées *mutatis mutandis* de l'idéal confucéen de performativité ritualiste ; et qui sait si le bouddhisme aurait pu s'acclimater et se réinventer si facilement en Chine au cours du premier millénaire de notre ère s'il n'avait comporté autant de prescriptions disciplinaires (le *vinaya*) régissant la vie monastique et communautaire auxquelles les sectes chinoises n'ont cessé d'apporter ajustements, modifications, ajouts, observances nouvelles au point de supplanter presque uniformément les rituels de deuil confucéens ? La Chine et le rite, le binôme nous paraissait une affaire entendue de synonymie. Et pourtant, si l'histoire ou l'archéologie venaient secouer ces certitudes, si d'autres textes, d'autres types de documents et de données ne plaçaient plus la savante et profuse littérature rituelle au cœur des réalités historiques ? Nous y reviendrons...

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- 11 La seconde interrogation majeure fait l'objet de la première partie de ce recueil. Quelle place occupent les textes ritualistes chinois dans une théorie générale du rituel ? En quoi peuvent-ils contribuer à une redéfinition et comment peuvent-ils participer à une refonte de ce que nous avons appelé le « monde rituel », comment ce dernier coexiste-t-il avec le monde dit réel ?
- 12 Il revient à Michael Puett d'avoir initié ce débat lors du colloque. L'orientation générale de son travail tend précisément à replacer les études chinoises dans des cadres historiques et comparatifs plus larges. Partant du constat que la civilisation chinoise s'est fait connaître dans les études anthropologiques et religieuses relativement à la pratique du sacrifice, et en particulier du sacrifice aux ancêtres, il remarque cependant que, malgré cette brèche qui a permis à la Chine de s'inscrire dans un champ de recherches plus vaste, peu de travaux se sont attachés à *décrire* précisément et différenciellement les spécificités de telles pratiques sacrificielles. Le texte qu'il présente se propose à titre d'essai d'évaluer, en prenant le *Traité des rites* comme levier d'Archimède, les théories les plus admises en anthropologie sur le sens du rituel et de reconstruire une approche plus générale dans lesquelles la pratique des sacrifices chinois pourrait être intégrée dans les modèles théoriques existants et les modifier. La plupart des théories du sacrifice se sont centrées depuis Walter Burkert (1931-2015) sur l'étude de la mise à mort des animaux et leur consommation, et si sa conception du sacrifice comme expiation, c'est-à-dire comme don fait aux dieux et à la nature dans le but de se faire pardonner le meurtre des animaux que les hommes sont obligés de perpétrer pour se nourrir, est désormais largement rejetée pour son réductionnisme biologique, les diverses approches anthropologiques du sacrifice partent toujours des mêmes prémisses. Jean-Pierre Vernant (1914-2007) et Marcel Detienne (1935-2019) ont pour leur part décrit le partage dans le sacrifice entre les os et le gras offerts aux dieux et la chair des victimes consommée par les hommes, en indiquant que les offrandes traduisent symboliquement l'état de désordre de celui qui fait le sacrifice : le

sacrificateur « tue » cet état de désordre en immolant la victime et en l'offrant aux divinités, et participe au pouvoir divin en consommant la viande. Sur un tel paradigme d'autres conceptions ont mis en avant la dimension de substitution à l'œuvre dans la pratique sacrificielle : l'offrande est un ersatz pour le sacrifiant qui s'identifie à la victime et cette mise à mort symbolique lui permet dans les fêtes qui résultent de ce meurtre d'incorporer la puissance divine et de revenir au monde des hommes restauré dans sa force vitale. Cette dernière approche largement inspirée des travaux de Maurice Bloch (né en 1939) permettrait de rassembler les pratiques grecques et romaines aussi bien que celles mettant l'accent sur la cannibalisation symbolique dans les sociétés polynésiennes ou d'autres contextes anthropologiques. Quoi qu'il en soit des variations apportées à ce modèle, le paradigme de l'identification du sacrifiant et de la victime est toujours premier.

- 13 La dimension sacrificielle n'est évidemment pas absente en Chine ancienne. Nous n'en voulons pour preuve qu'un court propos de Confucius consigné dans le troisième chapitre des *Entretiens* tout entier consacré à ses postures rituelles :

Zigong aurait bien voulu en finir avec cette coutume désuète de sacrifier une brebis à chaque nouvelle lune. Le Maître lui dit : Toi, mon ami, tu tiens à ta brebis ; moi je tiens au rituel¹.

- 14 Selon les commentaires anciens, Zigong est soucieux de minimiser la dépense qu'occasionnerait le sacrifice, tandis que Confucius lui s'attacherait sans la justifier à la tradition. Mais plus remarquable est dans ce passage la légère désinvolture teintée d'humour de Confucius dans sa réponse : si victime il y a, elle ne semble guère ici expiatoire.
- 15 Or dans le *Liji* le meurtre rituel n'est presque jamais un thème pris en charge par les textes ; de la même façon l'expiation et la consommation des victimes ne sont jamais évoquées comme telles. Enfin, si la question de la substitution est cruciale dans ce classique, elle n'opère pas entre le sacrifiant et sa victime. Les différents chapitres du *Traité des rites* consacrés au sacrifice qu'il analyse, et en particulier le « Liyun » (禮運, L'évolution des rites), montrent plutôt que le rituel est conçu dans un processus de domestication du monde et que le sacrifice insiste sur la connexion avec les esprits certes mais uniquement dans la mesure où il crée des lignages et des communautés claniques (*jia* 家). Il apparaît alors comme une création des sages de l'Antiquité pour remplacer et restaurer sur d'autres bases l'ordre primitif et harmonieux de la Grande Unité. En d'autres termes, le sacrifice est un artefact dont la finalité est de reconstruire une continuité perdue mais dans un monde désormais domestiqué.
- 16 Dans une telle conception, l'idée de substitution est présente mais d'une autre manière. L'offrande ou la victime sacrificielle n'est en effet jamais substitutive du sacrifiant. Elle fonctionne plutôt dans les jeux de rôle entre – et seulement entre – les participants au sacrifice. Lorsqu'un sacrifice aux ancêtres a lieu, le petit-fils incarne physiquement le grand-père et le père joue alors le rôle du fils de son propre fils. Les relations entre le père et le fils, entre le prince et le sujet, tout en restant absolues sont ainsi redéfinies temporairement dans l'espace rituel. Dans le jeu sans fin du rituel, ajoute Michael Puett, le fils est le grand-père, le Ciel devient le père, le souverain devient le Fils du Ciel et tout à la fois père et mère du peuple. Il s'agit donc de construire un espace rituel qui, en renversant les rôles des différents protagonistes, établit la cohésion d'une lignée patrilinéaire ou dans le cas du souverain une continuité entre le cosmos et la communauté tout entière.

- 17 Le monde rituel tel qu'il apparaît dans le *Liji* ne laisse donc que très peu de marge à une approche symbolique. Il apparaît de part en part comme « construit » de façon consciente comme un univers produisant une « domestication » du monde réel qui, lui, opère de manière radicalement différente.
- 18 Sur ces bases une autre approche générale du rituel peut être tentée. Le cas chinois fait apparaître que le meurtre, la consommation de la victime dans les banquets, la substitution de l'offrande et du sacrifiant et sa dimension symbolique ne jouent aucun rôle majeur dans la conception du monde rituel. Au lieu de lire le sacrifice comme le signe d'une vision du monde ou d'une croyance, les théories présentes dans le *Liji* conduisent à s'interroger sur le rapport entre le monde rituel et le monde réel. Dans les textes chinois anciens, le rapport à la croyance n'est jamais abordé. On n'effectue pas un rituel parce qu'on a foi en lui. La formule-clé du rituel chinois est plutôt « comme si » ; on fait comme si les esprits étaient présents, comme si le souverain était le Fils du Ciel. Il ne s'agit pas d'affirmer la réalité effective de ces énoncés mais plutôt de poser temporairement un ordonnancement du monde qui, sinon, serait voué au chaos et à la discontinuité, de revivifier par des jeux de substitution internes aux protagonistes une cohésion entre les mondes invisible et invisible ou entre le cosmos et le monde des hommes et d'en réaffirmer la continuité provisoirement et dans des cérémonies régulières. Michael Puett propose donc « a subjunctive understanding of ritual ». Cet adjectif, difficile à traduire en français, renvoie à l'idée que le rituel a moins affaire à des faits (que ce soient des croyances, des visions du monde, des symboles) qu'à une volonté consciente d'elle-même de doubler le monde réel d'un ordre relégitimant toujours provisoirement les hiérarchies, les lignées et les filiations.
- 19 L'essai, brillant et stimulant se conclut par une question : que ferait aux conceptions grecques du sacrifice une relecture au prisme de la conception chinoise du rituel ? Peut-être la place du meurtre et de la consommation des chairs sacrifiées, la dimension symbolique de la substitution entre victimes seraient-elles moins des paradigmes initiaux de l'analyse que des variations dans une conception plus large du rituel comme monde construit de toute pièce et assumé comme tel par les officiants et dont l'efficacité n'est pensable qu'en tension avec l'entropie du monde réel, comme tentative de remailage jamais totalement aboutie des liens communautaires.
- 20 Le texte de Michael Ing, auteur d'un ouvrage remarqué publié en 2012 et intitulé *The Dysfunction of Ritual in Early Confucianism*, entre précisément en dialogue avec les théories mentionnées ci-dessus du rituel. Il prend comme point de départ un aspect que le *Traité des rites* mentionne fréquemment sans toutefois s'y appesantir, ni le théoriser : l'échec des procédures rituelles et plus précisément encore la mise en œuvre dans les performances rituelles de désirs contradictoires. Trois cas sont particulièrement étudiés qui servent de marqueurs. Dans le « *Liyun* », la création du rituel dans la période de la « Petite prospérité » qui fait suite à l'ordre naturel et quasi primitif de la « Grande Unité » apparaît dans une tension entre le respect pour la période harmonieuse précédente où les distinctions sociales et familiales n'avaient pas cours et la nécessité d'adapter les pratiques à un monde en quête d'une plus grande prospérité et confronté à une complexité croissante. Les rites sont à ce titre fondamentalement ambivalents : ils doivent et ne peuvent être exécutés que selon les normes établies dans l'Antiquité mais ne sont performatifs que s'ils sont en relation avec le monde complexe dans lequel ils s'insèrent. D'où la naissance, selon Ing, d'une ambiguïté constitutive du rite dans lequel les protagonistes qui l'effectuent sont systématiquement conduits à

trouver un équilibre instable entre la « règle rituelle » et son adaptation au présent. Naissent dans un premier temps une anxiété dans la pratique des rites et une crainte de l'échec dans les procédures.

- 21 Cette fragilité dans l'exercice des rites est particulièrement remarquable dans les rites de deuil qui constituent près des deux tiers du *Traité des rites*. Dans le rite du rappel de l'âme du défunt qui précède l'enterrement proprement dit, à aucun moment il n'est dit que ce moment rituel ne ramène effectivement le mort à la vie, il fonctionne plutôt comme une thérapie performative visant à représenter la douleur et à nous situer dans un monde double d'espoir d'une résurrection et de peur d'une perte définitive. Or, le rite n'a pas pour but de dissoudre cette dualité contradictoire mais seulement de nous permettre d'aller au-delà, de « naviguer » entre deux pôles. Cette tension dans le *Liji*, pour être traversée, doit s'accompagner d'une rupture émotionnelle qui porte le protagoniste du rituel au bord de la folie ; elle est en quelque sorte le corollaire des rites de deuil et le gage de leur existence. Troisième exemple de la fragilité du rituel, le cas célèbre dans le chapitre « Tangong » 檀弓 de l'effondrement du tumulus qui aurait permis à Confucius de retrouver la tombe de ses parents. Cette anecdote est le signe même que l'efficacité (ici l'érection d'un tumulus) n'est pas prédiquée dans l'exercice du rituel.
- 22 Ces cas glanés dans la lecture du *Traité des rites* permettent à l'auteur de revenir dans une deuxième partie de son article, plus philosophique et programmatique, sur les théorisations du rituel. D'une certaine façon il fait fond sur l'approche « subjonctive » du monde rituel mais il tente de la modifier sur un point majeur. Dans ces conceptions du monde rituel comme monde du « comme si », il rappelle que la création rituelle vient doubler le monde réel non pas comme une illusion mais comme un monde parmi d'autres où la manière dont les choses devraient être entre dans une tension consciente avec le monde tel qu'il va. Or une telle dichotomie entre ces univers ne prend pas suffisamment en compte la fragilité des performances rituelles, leur vulnérabilité face à la réalité, qui pourtant apparaissent dans le *Liji* comme fréquemment associés à leur exercice et dont la casuistique rituelle témoigne d'une certaine façon en creux. L'ambiguïté des rites, leur fragilité et la nécessaire rupture avec les pratiques anciennes qu'ils impliquent font plutôt apparaître le monde rituel comme un *espace tragique* si l'on entend par là le lieu d'une mise en scène consciente et en même temps authentique de conflits entre aspirations contraires où l'exacerbation des émotions est requise en même temps qu'elle est orientée et contrôlée par l'enchaînement des conduites et des postures propres à chaque cérémonie.
- 23 Comme on le voit, la question des relations entre le monde rituel et le monde réel est cruciale et reste en partie à réinventer et à repenser. Elle se trouve illustrée de façon originale dans le texte de Nicolas Standaert. Jésuite, spécialiste des échanges culturels entre la Chine et le monde européen au XVII^e siècle et en particulier de la confrontation entre le confucianisme et le christianisme, il propose dans son étude des commentaires au *Liji* d'un lettré chinois chrétien Yan Mo 嚴謨 (ca 1640-apr. 1718) de revenir à cette question : les rites chinois et les sacrifices aux ancêtres étaient-ils recevables dans le catholicisme ? Comme on le sait, la querelle prit vraiment consistance lorsque les Dominicains, après l'attitude conciliante des Jésuites, entrèrent en Chine autour de 1633 et commencèrent à s'interroger sur le caractère hérétique des pratiques chinoises et sur la question de la croyance des Chinois dans ces rites. Une réponse positive à cette interrogation aurait valu condamnation par l'Église d'une large part de la tradition

chinoise. Le texte de Yan Mo, *Suite de questions du Révérend Père Li (Li shi tiaowen 李師條問)* se présente comme une suite de vingt-huit questions sur la signification de certaines pratiques concernant les rites effectués lors des éclipses lunaires pour les dieux des villes, des sacrifices accomplis dans le temple de Confucius au printemps et à l'automne, etc. Or à de telles questions, Yan Mo répond en citant très largement le *Liji* et les textes qui insistent sur le fait que les participants à ces rituels font « comme si » les ancêtres, les dieux ou les esprits étaient présents. Yan Mo s'empresse au demeurant d'ajouter, pour mettre les choses au clair, qu'une telle attitude n'implique en aucune façon que l'on croie à l'existence des esprits ou des dieux, que ne sont pas attendues de réelles bénédictions de leur part et que l'accent est mis sur l'orthopraxie sans que la raison de ces rituels ne soit explicitée. L'intérêt de la lecture d'un chrétien prosélyte tel que Yan Mo en réponse à des questionnements intimés par une religion étrangère à la tradition est en quelque sorte d'avoir prouvé « par anticipation » et dans un contexte différent certaines hypothèses émises par la théorie « subjunctive » du monde rituel. Naturellement le discours ritualiste de Yan Mo n'est pas exempt de présupposés et d'arrière-pensées : récuser la croyance des Chinois à leur rite est bien une manière d'en faire plus facilement des Chrétiens qui s'ignorent. Il montre toutefois de façon exemplaire comment la confrontation avec des modes de pensée étrangers et le déport de questionnements allogènes ont pu très tôt dans les textes canoniques chinois lever un lièvre qui aujourd'hui encore ne cesse de troubler les lecteurs modernes des discours ritualistes chinois.

- 24 Dans le dernier article de cette partie théorique consacrée au monde rituel, Céline Bonicco-Donato propose un autre pas de côté en revenant sur le travail du sociologue Erving Goffman (1922-1982), le penseur et interprète de *La Mise en scène de la vie quotidienne* et des *Rites d'interaction*. Contrairement aux articles précédents qui appuyaient leur réflexion sur les rites régissant les rapports entre le visible et l'invisible, celui-ci s'attache essentiellement à un autre champ du rituel, celui des relations interpersonnelles, caractérisé dans la tradition chinoise par les « trois mille rites circonstanciels » opposés aux rites dits canoniques davantage liés aux pratiques sacrificielles. Partant de deux prémisses, à savoir d'une part que notre comportement doit répondre à des normes sociales partagées et que d'autre part ces contraintes sociales confèrent à l'individu qui s'y soumet le statut social et non individuel de *personne*, Céline Bonicco-Donato entreprend d'interroger les caractéristiques de ce moi social. Elle le fait dans la lignée de Goffman à partir de la notion de « face » ou de *face-work*, terme qui reprend explicitement les expressions chinoises bien connues de « perdre/sauver la face » ou de « laisser/donner la face à quelqu'un ». À partir de 1959 cette notion recoupe chez Goffman celle de « rôle » que l'on joue en société. La face n'est pas superposable au moi individuel, elle ne correspond pas à la valorisation morale de l'individu, elle est de part en part sociale et répond à une demande de compétence sociale, à savoir « se comporter normalement », c'est-à-dire conformément aux attentes dans les différentes situations d'interaction. Encore faut-il préciser que ces situations d'interaction ne sont pas univoques : pris dans une interaction quelconque, je dois d'abord me conformer à mon statut professionnel, par exemple, mais sans coïncider trop étroitement avec ce rôle, je dois aussi me comporter parallèlement et en même temps en accord avec mon état familial ou encore avec ce que l'on attend de moi dans une situation donnée. La face est donc extrêmement fragile au sens où n'importe quel impair dans une interaction spécifique est susceptible de me la faire perdre. Elle peut aussi cependant se retrouver. Le plus remarquable dans l'analyse de Goffman est

sans doute le soin particulier qu'il met à distinguer ces pratiques d'interaction de la morale. En effet, puisque la face n'est pas en moi, puisque je ne la possède pas, mais qu'elle s'affirme dans la multiplicité des événements dans une interaction donnée, elle ne renvoie pas à la position surplombante d'un sujet moral et transcendant, mais à la compétence toujours renouvelée d'un sujet constitué socialement dans le jeu infini des interactions. De ce point de vue, la réflexion de Goffman rejoint certaines conceptions du rite confucéen. Les pratiques sociales sont de part en part rituelles dans la mesure où elles impliquent une adaptation à des normes elles-mêmes toujours reconfigurées en fonction de la situation d'interaction. Ce qui fait la face n'est pas le respect rigoureux et sans chair des prescriptions sociales, mais la pertinence des conduites dans un cadre normatif lui-même en mutation. Tel comportement fidèle aux prescriptions rituelles sera acceptable dans une situation donnée, mais irrecevable dans une situation légèrement différente et encourra une perte de face. Goffman note bien qu'une telle conception des rapports sociaux implique une sorte de sacralisation : « Une face ne peut se maintenir si une autre s'effondre ». L'ordre interactionnel n'existe en ce sens que si les faces ou les « rôles » sociaux coopèrent les uns avec les autres.

- 25 La perspective de Goffman, tout en résonnant discrètement avec les conceptions confucéennes du rite, en constitue cependant le miroir inversé. Alors que le ritualisme chinois pose le rite au fondement des relations sociales, le travail du sociologue vise plutôt à montrer que le social débouche nécessairement pour se maintenir sur un ordre acceptable pour ses membres dans tout un ensemble de pratiques rituelles résumé chez lui par le « travail de figuration » : le rituel est une solution induite des interactions sociales.
- 26 Les quatre articles dont nous avons essayé de donner la teneur et que nous plaçons à l'ouverture de ce volume n'ont pas l'ambition de résoudre tous les problèmes théoriques que pose une réflexion centrée sur le statut du rituel. Ils doivent plutôt être lus comme un arrière-plan de textes plus savants, plus techniques, un fond d'écran plus ou moins visible dans lesquels les lectures historiques et philologiques qui suivront peuvent s'éclairer.

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- 27 Les quatre parties suivantes, tout en étant largement refondues par rapport au programme du colloque, suivent la chronologie de la constitution et de la réception du *Traité des rites*.
- 28 La première se plonge, à travers des lectures précises de textes et d'expressions dans le *Liji*, dans une exploration du statut et de la nature du discours ritualiste assigné – au moins provisoirement – à la Chine pré-impériale. Un deuxième volet plus volumineux s'attache à évaluer la place effective du rituel à partir de la dynastie des Han et montre comment les textes canoniques et les pratiques sont loin de coïncider, soulevant ainsi la première de nos deux questions, celle remettant en cause l'équivalence entre société chinoise traditionnelle et ritualisme. Dans la troisième partie occupent le premier plan les relectures et la place du *Traité des rites* dans le néo-confucianisme de la dynastie des Song (960-1279) tout d'abord, puis dans les usages qui en furent faits en Corée sous la longue dynastie Chosŏn (1392-1910), période pendant laquelle les lettrés coréens ont largement pensé leur travail dans l'esprit de constitution d'un conservatoire orthodoxe du néo-confucianisme chinois, en particulier celui de Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200). La

dernière partie de cet ensemble, « Le Traité des rites dans la modernité » présente, à travers la relecture d'un chapitre, le « Liyun » (L'évolution des rites), comment ce classique a servi, dès la fin du XIX^e siècle et jusqu'à nos jours, à construire ce que pourrait être en Chine une société moderne entièrement ritualisée.

- 29 Une partie finale, « Les rites vus d'ailleurs » permet de faire contraste avec le ritualisme chinois : Japon, Inde, Grèce et Rome antiques apparaîtront alors dans leur étrangeté et contribueront, du moins l'espérons-nous, à dessiner les contours et les cadres nécessaires d'une théorie vraiment générale de la pensée ritualiste.

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- 30 L'un des débats cruciaux relatifs aux *Traité des rites* touche aux questions de datation des différents chapitres qui le constituent. Comme on le sait, le discours ritualiste fut en partie perdu avec la mise en place de la première dynastie chinoise, et des trois textes qui constituent le canon rituel confucéen [le *Cérémonial (Yili)*, les *Rites des Zhou (Zhouli)* et le *Traité des rites (Liji)*] aucun ne semble antérieur dans la forme qui nous est parvenue au dernier siècle avant notre ère. De nombreuses études récentes se sont toutefois attachées à réévaluer le travail qu'ont pu faire les ritualistes des Han et concluent pour un ensemble de chapitres non négligeables du *Liji* qu'ils les ont davantage édités à partir de sources anciennes qu'ils ne les auraient réécrits. C'est dans cette direction de recherche que s'inscrit dans son article Scott Cook. Ces questions de datation ne sont pas seulement formelles ; il s'agit bien en repoussant l'inscription de certains chapitres du *Traité des rites* de reconfigurer la conception du rite telle qu'elle pouvait avoir cours dans la période pré-impériale. Pour ce faire, Scott Cook propose une lecture, accompagnée de traductions nouvelles informées par les connaissances paléographiques sur les textes récemment exhumés de tombes, de deux chapitres du *Liji*, les chapitres 25 et 26 intitulés « Confucius retiré dans la vie privée » (*Zhongni yanju* 仲尼燕居) et « Confucius en son particulier » (*Kongzi xianju* 孔子閒居)² d'une part, et d'un texte extrait du *Da Dai Liji* 大戴禮記, le « Discours du souverain » (*Zhuyan* 主言). Il montre ainsi, en recourant à des preuves linguistiques et philosophiques, que ces trois textes peuvent être lus comme un ensemble relativement cohérent datable des Royaumes Combattants (454-221 av. J.-C.). Dans ces discours auxquels d'autres chapitres pourraient être ajoutés, il apparaît que le rite est moins affaire de postures, de mise en scène dans une utilisation d'objets rituels que de gouvernance au sens large et que le fondement de toute pratique est lié au respect de la parole dans les actes et à la sincérité.
- 31 Le texte de Gilles Boileau, auteur d'un ouvrage important, *Politique et rituel dans la Chine ancienne*³, se propose, quant à lui, d'étudier à partir du *Traité des rites* les liens complexes qu'entretiennent les pratiques rituelles d'une part et les textes ritualistes de l'autre. L'axe de recherche suivi, très original, consiste à scruter dans le *Liji* les expressions par lesquelles il est clairement indiqué que la conduite tenue « n'est pas conforme au rite » (*fei li* 非禮) ou « dénuée de tout sens du rituel » (*wu li* 無禮). De cette étude encore préliminaire, un effet heuristique est attendu par l'auteur. Souvent la mention d'une impropriété rituelle est le signe d'une évolution de la pratique qu'il serait autrement difficile de documenter ; parfois encore ces commentaires critiques fonctionnent pour les rédacteurs des textes ritualistes comme un outil éditorial pour affirmer l'autorité de certaines pratiques contre d'autres. C'est aussi une façon de classer des conduites, des

États dans des processus de civilisation dans la longue durée. De tels jugements de la part des ritualistes ne doivent pas être compris de manière univoque, ils fonctionnent plutôt comme des signaux qui, s'ils mettent tous l'accent sur des orientations politiques, sont cependant chaque fois à lire en contexte et dans le cadre d'une évolution générale du rituel sous les Royaumes Combattants. Ici encore c'est moins le rite comme pratique figée qui est envisagé que sa plasticité dans des situations et des politiques spécifiques qui sont l'objet de commentaires.

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- 32 Les quatre textes qui suivent posent d'une manière ou d'une autre la question de la réalité dans les pratiques historiques du discours ritualiste. Comme nous l'avons indiqué plus haut, il va presque de soi quand il est question de la Chine ancienne d'y voir une société de part en part ritualisée et dont les modes de gouvernance seraient peu ou prou fondés sur des conceptions initialement confucianistes du rite. Cette prégnance dans les discours est cependant loin d'être évidente lorsque sont confrontés les pratiques effectives, les réalités historiques et les textes canoniques. C'est ce que montrent dans un premier temps les deux articles de Marianne Bujard et d'Alain Thote. Tous deux étudient en miroir le canon rituel et les découvertes archéologiques qui fournissent de nouveaux manuscrits, des documents scripturaires inédits et traduisent des évolutions sensibles des pratiques funéraires. Les deux articles initialement conçus sous forme de binôme convergent dans leurs conclusions. Les textes canoniques et les découvertes archéologiques ne semblent se recouper que sur un aspect : la crainte du retour des défunts et les rituels de confinement nécessaires pour se prémunir de l'irruption dans le monde des vivants des souffles des morts considérés comme néfastes. Pour le reste aucun point de contact n'est assuré entre ces deux ensembles documentaires. Comme l'indique Marianne Bujard, les textes exhumés et les poteries apotropaiques retrouvés dans les tombes de sites tels que Fangmatan 放馬灘 daté de 239 avant J.-C. laissent entrevoir un univers religieux sur lesquels les textes canoniques sont totalement muets ; un monde infernal y apparaît, doté d'une bureaucratie et engageant des pratiques rituelles magiques totalement éloignées des prescriptions et des normes détaillées à l'envi dans le *Cérémonial*. Certes les tombes et les cimetières qui ont été mis au jour semblent témoigner de pratiques funéraires de couches sociales moins élevées que celles mentionnées dans le canon ritualiste, l'enracinement local a sans doute joué un rôle non négligeable dans le mobilier funéraire ; reste qu'on retrouve dans cet écart entre textes et pratiques la même dualité que dans le monde gréco-romain entre le culte officiel et public d'une part et les usages privés et magiques d'autre part. Deux groupes de pratiques semblent coexister sans jamais véritablement se superposer. Le texte d'Alain Thote présente, quant à lui, une confrontation de certains passages du *Liji* et de la réalité toute différente que donnent à lire les rapports de fouilles. Outre plusieurs détails techniques dont on laissera ici le bonheur de la découverte au lecteur, un point mérite sans doute d'être signalé : certains termes qui figurent dans les rituels anciens prennent à la lueur des découvertes archéologiques des significations nouvelles ou obligent à réinterpréter les pratiques. L'expression *hezang* 合葬, par exemple, qui évoque l'idée d'une mise en bière d'un défunt puis de son épouse (ou inversement) dans un même caveau ne saurait avoir cette signification dans les textes anciens ; en effet la structure des tombes de l'Antiquité rendait impossible l'ouverture des tombes et il faut attendre la fin des Royaumes Combattants

puis la dynastie des Han pour que cette pratique allant de pair avec une réorganisation de l'espace funéraire rende effectivement possible d'enterrer les conjoints dans le même ensemble architectural. Dans le même ordre d'idée, le canon ritualiste semble généraliser à l'ensemble de la société des pratiques qui ne sont avérées pour les périodes anciennes que pour les catégories les plus nobles. C'est le cas de la couverture des tombes par des tumuli. Selon la prudente conclusion d'Alain Thote, quelques éléments se trouvent parfois confirmés par l'archéologie mais nombre d'autres restent en partie indéchiffrables dans les textes anciens ou paraissent largement inventés. L'immense tradition commentariale des Han en particulier a produit des explications souvent inexactes et la tendance à historiciser les pratiques funéraires entre la fin des Royaumes Combattants et le début des Han a créé des distorsions, voire des simplifications. En tout état de cause, les textes rituels doivent être pris non pour des normes universellement admises mais comme le reflet de questionnements des élites lettrées qui compilaient les textes ritualistes.

- 33 Le très riche et conséquent essai proposé par Michael Nylan et Nicholas Constantino interroge de manière plus radicale encore le fossé entre la vision traditionnelle d'une Chine ritualiste et les données que livrent les histoires dynastiques. À travers une enquête sur le règne de Zhangdi 章帝 (r. 75-88) des Han postérieurs menée dans une lecture serrée du *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書, complétée par les données archéologiques et les débats qui nous sont parvenus fragmentairement sur les rites de cour, les auteurs s'interrogent sur l'existence ou non d'un système rituel sous les Han. Il serait sans doute trop long de résumer ce texte et d'en donner le détail de la démonstration. Plusieurs points cependant méritent d'être soulignés dans la mesure où ils refaçonnent notre compréhension de la place du rituel. Le premier qui ne laisse pas de surprendre : une étude minutieuse des soi-disant maîtres de rituel pendant le règne de Zhangdi montre qu'ils sont parallèlement versés dans les arts de la stratégie et assument souvent des fonctions militaires, révélant par là une étroite proximité dont l'interprétation est encore à donner. D'autre part les sites rituels majeurs sous les Han sont tous nimbés d'imprécisions, d'approximations et de doutes : ni le Palais des lumières (Mingtang 明堂) censé être le centre rituel de la puissance impériale, ni l'Académie (Taixue 太學), par exemple, n'ont de réalité indiscutable. Enfin les débats qui ont cours pendant et après le règne de Zhangdi révèlent que ni la cour ni les lettrés ne sont en mesure de se mettre d'accord sur un système rituel d'ensemble. Les discussions tournent court ou sont minées par le dissensus ; les commentaires anciens par ailleurs se révèlent en grande partie incapables d'identifier de manière stable les divinités qui pourraient soutenir la construction d'un culte impérial. Pour les deux auteurs une conclusion s'impose, valable selon eux pour les quatre siècles de la dynastie des Han : il est impossible de continuer à répéter sans plus la discuter l'existence d'un système rituel impérial (*lizhi* 禮制) ; nous n'avons en réalité qu'une collection disparate de textes liturgiques et de précédents. Depuis plus d'un siècle, des historiens aussi importants et influents que Qian Mu 錢穆 (1895-1990) ou, plus près de nous, Yu Yingshi 余英時 (né en 1930) ont constamment affirmé que le seul critère par lequel les Chinois se sont distingués dans leur histoire d'autres ethnies ou peuples était la culture rituelle, que la marque de leur *identité* résidait précisément dans la reconnaissance du rite comme puissance civilisatrice. Or, l'enquête menée par Michael Nylan et Nicholas Constantino conclut à rebours de cette affirmation que le discours ritualiste, sans être absent, s'est montré du moins sous les Han postérieurs incapable de

féderer l'empire et ses élites. Aucune tradition classique ou commentariale n'a été à même de produire un système unifié et l'idée d'une Chine ritualiste n'est peut-être qu'un miroir aux alouettes...

- 34 Dans le même esprit mais sans la portée iconoclaste de telles thèses, Frédéric Constant s'interroge sur les rapports entre la canonisation du rituel et la codification des lois depuis les Han jusqu'à la fin des Six Dynasties. L'étude qu'il propose ici se focalise certes sur le plus grand commentateur des Classiques confucéens de la dynastie des Han, Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127-200) et les quelques éléments strictement juridiques que l'on peut y trouver. Comme il l'indique, il est difficile d'évaluer sa contribution à l'établissement des codes de lois et l'influence qu'il a exercée sous les Six Dynasties (六朝 220-589) et les Tang 唐 (618-907) dans la rédaction de ces codes. Toutefois, et c'est le point que nous retiendrons ici, outre le travail définitionnel de certains termes juridiques présent dans les commentaires sur le canon rituel, il semble plus largement que les textes ritualistes ont servi de base à la détermination de l'application des peines. Ainsi la responsabilité de l'offenseur dans un procès est largement calculée à partir de la relation qu'il entretient avec sa victime ; or celle-ci est déterminée par les cinq degrés de deuil (*wufu* 五服) tels qu'on peut les trouver dans le *Cérémonial* ou le *Traité des rites*. L'articulation entre rite et loi est lâche en un sens, et ce d'autant plus que la littérature juridique tend à partir des Six Dynasties, puis sous les Tang et les Song, à doubler le discours ritualiste qui cependant subsiste à l'état de trace.

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- 35 Suivent trois textes qui viennent en partie combler un manque dans les études chinoises et extrême-orientales. Le néo-confucianisme a en effet été très largement étudié sous l'angle de la philosophie première, de son articulation avec la vie morale ou de la culture de soi. Peu de travaux se sont attachés à restituer l'immense réflexion produite depuis la fin du XI^e siècle sur la dimension rituelle, consubstantielle aux innovations intellectuelles de ce mouvement. Roger Darrobers dans une analyse très détaillée et dans un recours constant à des textes peu lus, montre comment Zhu Xi, l'immense penseur de la synthèse néo-confucéenne du XII^e siècle, a sa vie durant travaillé à redonner une cohérence au canon rituel. On connaît de lui les *Rites familiaux* (*Jiali* 家禮) qu'il rédigea et qui exercèrent une influence considérable dans les traditions d'Extrême-Orient ; on ignore le plus souvent qu'il s'est consacré à partir de 1186 et jusqu'à sa mort à la rédaction et à la compilation d'une vaste encyclopédie rituelle qui fut publiée après sa mort, le *Yili jingzhuàn tóngjiè* 儀禮經傳通解 (Explications générales sur le *Cérémonial*, Classique et commentaires). L'idée maîtresse qui préside à la rédaction de cet ouvrage est de refondre le canon rituel et d'en dégager la cohérence. Selon lui, le *Cérémonial* est le seul véritable classique et le *Traité des rites* doit être considéré comme un commentaire à ce texte. Comme souvent chez Zhu Xi, le travail intellectuel passe par un travail éditorial et une réorganisation de la matière textuelle ancienne. C'est le cas précisément pour le *Traité des rites* : il a désormais pour fonction de dégager les principes de la pratique rituelle dont le *Cérémonial* détaille les séquences et les thèmes (tir à l'arc, rites de mariage ou de deuil, prise du bonnet viril, etc.). Il prend cependant acte de l'impossibilité de réactiver ces rites à la période contemporaine ; ils sont en effet beaucoup trop fragmentaires et désordonnés et rendent compte de pratiques aristocratiques révolues. Le *Yili* comme le *Liji* sont

désormais des *textes* dont doivent certes s'inspirer les lettrés, mais qui ne sauraient constituer à l'époque de Zhu Xi des normes rituelles. Comme disait un disciple de Zhang Zai 張載 (1020-1078), l'un des maîtres du néo-confucianisme selon Zhu Xi, l'étude des rites anciens était aussi insipide que « la mastication de copeaux de bois » (*jiao muzha* 嚼木札).

- 36 Autant le *Liji* dans le néo-confucianisme chinois est jugé impraticable et réduit à un texte certes fondateur mais désormais historique, autant il joue à partir de la dynastie Chosŏn auprès des lettrés confucéens coréens un rôle fondamental de levier dans la réforme des mœurs et de la société. Comme le montre l'article de Martina Deuchler, les idéologues néo-confucéens, dans leur souci de lutter contre (selon eux) les errements bouddhiques de la dynastie précédente et de s'affirmer comme une civilisation rituelle sur le modèle chinois, ont eu recours aux classiques ritualistes pour imposer une réorganisation sociale largement étrangère aux traditions indigènes. Deux aspects sont en effet largement acclimatés à la nouvelle Corée : le culte aux ancêtres modelés sur les *Rites familiaux* de Zhu Xi d'une part, l'affirmation de la lignée patrilinéaire d'autre part, là où la tradition coréenne concevait la transmission du patrimoine et de la légitimité familiale dans une bilatéralité où l'épouse jouissait quasiment à part égale des mêmes droits que l'époux. Ces transformations radicales ne furent pas imposées sans heurt et les lettrés furent obligés de composer avec les anciennes pratiques.
- 37 Parallèlement à l'utilisation des classiques ritualistes chinois dans la refonte de l'État coréen, le *Traité des rites* suit le même destin que celui évoqué précédemment par Zhu Xi. Comme l'étudie Martin Gehlmann, l'ouvrage est essentiellement considéré dans les nombreuses académies (*sŏwŏn/shuyuan* 書院) qui s'implantent sur le modèle chinois à partir de 1452 comme un matériau textuel ; il fait l'objet à ce titre d'un travail éditorial constamment renouvelé, d'une course aux recensions des éditions chinoises commentées, mais n'est pas à proprement parler retravaillé par les néo-confucéens coréens. La vie à l'intérieur des académies ne se modèle pas non plus sur le canon rituel : là encore ce sont plutôt les *Rites familiaux* de Zhu Xi, plus succincts, moins ambigus, qui orientent les pratiques des maîtres et de leurs disciples. Certains règlements internes à des académies excluent même le *Traité des rites* des cursus parce que trop fragmentaire et anachronique. En définitive la présence attestée du *Liji* dans les académies semble limitée aux rayonnages des bibliothèques ; au mieux certains passages, en particulier ceux qui mettent en scène Confucius, viennent ponctuellement élucider des débats philosophiques.

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- 38 On pourrait considérer que l'affaire est entendue : les rites chinois sont devenus des textes et de l'encre ; leur impact dans la vie réelle et les pratiques quotidiennes est quasiment réduit à néant au second millénaire de notre ère. C'est sans compter sur leur plasticité et les innovations commentariales que permettent les béances des Classiques confucéens. Toute la modernité chinoise depuis la fin du XIX^e siècle a en effet pris pour assise un chapitre du *Liji* que nous avons déjà mentionné, « L'évolution du rituel » (*Liyun*). Ce texte a servi de pierre de touche pour embarquer les réformateurs chinois dans le vaisseau amiral du monde moderne, c'est-à-dire dans la construction, par imitation des valeurs occidentales et par contraste avec elles, d'une Chine nouvelle. À vrai dire, il s'agit moins dans cette reprise textuelle d'une réhabilitation des rites dans

la vie humaine et sociale que d'un prétexte pour trouver dans le fond culturel chinois les ressources possibles d'une acclimatation des idées occidentales. Il revient à Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858-1927), grand réformateur et homme politique de la fin de l'ère impériale, d'avoir isolé ce chapitre ou du moins d'y avoir identifié une césure entre deux âges de l'humanité, celui de la « Grande Unité » d'une part où n'existaient aucune distinction de rang ni de sang, pas davantage de hiérarchie sociale, ni de pouvoir constitué identifiable à un souverain, et celui de la « Petite prospérité » d'autre part, qui lui fait suite et signe la naissance du rituel pensé essentiellement par Kang Youwei comme la mise en coupe réglée de l'humanité par les différences hiérarchiques, la dislocation de l'unité primordiale et le repli sur la sphère familiale. Deux articles jettent des lueurs nouvelles sur la pensée de Kang. Celui de Béatrice L'Haridon détaille à travers une histoire commentariale son invention exégétique. Elle rappelle dans sa lecture d'un texte moins connu que le *Datong shu* 大同書 (Livre de la Grande unité) combien le « Liyun » fut minoré dans la tradition chinoise, au point même d'être sous les Song suspecté de falsification et d'être tenu par certains lettrés pour apocryphe. Il faut dire que Confucius y parle haut et clair d'une chute de l'humanité dans l'histoire avec la naissance du rituel. Kang, lui, réorganise en partie le texte, accorde pour la première fois la prééminence dans sa lecture à la « Grande Unité », suit globalement les gloses d'un commentateur comme Zheng Xuan tout en les corrigeant sur des points en apparence secondaires mais qui ouvrent le texte à des possibilités interprétatives insoupçonnées. Des changements à première vue infimes lui permettent ainsi de poser dans la période de la « Grande unité » l'égalité foncière des hommes et des femmes. Il introduit aussi dans son commentaire de nombreuses comparaisons avec d'autres civilisations (indienne, égyptienne, syrienne) censées d'une part montrer que l'État-nation ne saurait être la voie chinoise à suivre et d'autre part affirmer l'incessante variation des rites d'une époque et d'un lieu à l'autre, autre façon de dire qu'il n'y a pas de normes universellement admises auxquelles un pays – et la Chine au premier chef – devrait se cramponner.

- 39 Sean Moores élargit la perspective à l'ensemble de l'œuvre de Kang et décrit la place qu'occupent chez lui les *li* 禮, terme qu'il utilise à dessein au pluriel et qu'il se refuse à traduire parce qu'il recouvre bien plus que la notion de rite ou de conduite rituelle. Il indique tout d'abord qu'il faut resituer toute l'œuvre de Kang Youwei, comme le suggérait son disciple le plus célèbre, Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873-1929), dans le cadre confucéen de la vertu d'humanité (*ren* 仁). Les *li* renvoient alors à l'ensemble des institutions politiques, sociales et culturelles qui structurent le monde des hommes et sont à même de faire advenir le *ren*. En ce sens ils ne sont que des outils absolument nécessaires mais temporaires et soumis à des variations constantes selon les époques et les conditions de la vie sociale. Ce sont, selon la formule même de Kang « les remèdes pour faire advenir le bien commun et éliminer le mal ». L'expression même d'« évolution du rituel » (*liyun*) doit être retraduite et réinterprétée comme « mise en œuvre des *li* » et, à ce titre, Kang qui s'appuie sur les textes canoniques en « version moderne » (*jinwen* 今文) voit en Confucius, comme les commentateurs des Han, non pas seulement un homme qui aurait transmis le rituel mais bien un Saint qui aurait inventé les *li* comme outil pour promouvoir le bien commun. Cette compréhension de Confucius comme quasi prophète de l'humanité fait écho, selon Sean Moores, à la mission que s'assigne Kang lui-même : dégager les structures politiques sociales ou

culturelles qui permettront dans des contextes historiques donnés de faire advenir l'humanité des hommes.

- 40 On pourrait poursuivre le travail entamé par Kang Youwei dans sa redéfinition du rituel par d'autres lectures concernant le même chapitre du *Traité des rites*. Le néo-confucéen moderne Xiong Shili 熊十力 (1885-1968) par exemple, dans un ouvrage intitulé *Qian Kun yan* (*Expansion des hexagrammes Qian et Kun [du Classique du changement]*), donne en 1961 une réinterprétation radicale de la « Grande Unité », pointant les dénaturations auxquelles les Han et la tradition ultérieure ont soumis la pensée de Confucius, promouvant dans un contexte politique délicat une image du Maître en révolutionnaire mi anarchiste mi proto-communiste, théoricien d'une société sans classes et harmonieuse.
- 41 Yao Xinzong 姚新中, pour sa part, s'interroge dans un article programmatique et critique sur les conditions de l'avènement d'une société rituelle en Chine. Il a évidemment en ligne de mire l'utilisation depuis le début du XXI^e siècle par le pouvoir chinois de la catégorie de « Petite prospérité », usage qui s'est intensifié avec l'arrivée au pouvoir de Xi Jinping 习近平 et qui fonctionne comme une rengaine un peu usée. Celle-ci se traduit toutefois dans les faits par tout un ensemble de règlements, de normes sociales et de contraintes, de discours sur les valeurs essentielles visant à dépasser le mot d'ordre du début des réformes (« Enrichissez-vous ») dans un nouvel objectif : « Renforçons-nous ».
- 42 Quelle peut être cependant la légitimité de ces discours nouveaux sur la puissance ? Face à l'indigence du discours officiel sur les justifications de cette « nouvelle ritualisation » de la société chinoise, Yao Xinzong propose de revenir à l'essence même du rite tel qu'il s'est développé dans le discours confucéen. Il rappelle dans un premier temps que le rite dans le *Liji* trouve sa source dans l'ordre naturel, s'enracine dans la transformation naturelle et se modèle sur eux. En ce sens il ne peut être effectif que s'il se conforme à la vertu naturelle aussi bien que sociale de « compliance » (*shun* 順), laquelle n'est pas docilité mais mise en œuvre des transformations en fonction des réalités concrètes et des situations. Le deuxième point crucial dans une légitimation du rituel tient à une autre caractéristique que Yao Xinzong dégage dans le *Liji*, les *Entretiens* ou le *Zhongyong* 中庸 (La pratique ordinaire du Centre), à savoir le choix du moment judicieux de leur mise en œuvre ou le *timing*. En d'autres termes la ritualisation de la société ne se décrète pas, sous peine de se réduire à un arsenal plus ou moins coercitif de règles et de normes. Elle doit en revanche s'inscrire dans une prise en compte de la réalité sociale et suivre la pente du moment dans des institutions qui tirent leur légitimité d'une réflexion fine sur les transformations à l'œuvre dans la société. La réflexion de Yao Xinzong comme celle initiée par Kang Youwei montrent bien que la sécularisation du rituel n'est jamais à elle seule suffisante. Les rites pour être efficaces doivent être transcendés par un idéal humainement acceptable par tous et une foi partagée dans un horizon commun. En ce sens, les rites procèdent toujours d'une sacralisation de la vie sociale.

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- 43 Comment dès lors considérer les pratiques rituelles d'autres sociétés anciennes ? Peut-on espérer un effet de retour et un dévisagement fécond en regardant depuis l'Extrême-Asie continentale ? Sans répondre directement à cette question, les textes

que nous donnons à lire dans la dernière partie susciteront peut-être des pistes de réflexion. Le cas japonais qu'étudie François Macé est particulièrement éclairant. Son article se présente comme une micro-histoire des variations rituelles ou plutôt protocolaires entre la fin du xvii^e siècle et le début du suivant. Comme il le note au cours de son développement, les rites chinois dans une société dont les élites intellectuelles (noblesse impériale, militaires et lettrés) sont pourtant largement confucianisées n'ont joué qu'un rôle marginal. Le *Traité des rites* y brille par son absence et, si rites et querelles sur les rites il y a, ils s'expliquent très largement par la situation politique indigène. Pendant l'époque d'Edo (1603-1868) les réformes des rituels de cour sont le fruit d'un conflit de légitimité entre deux forces constamment présentes et en relation étroite l'une avec l'autre mais pour autant soucieuse chacune d'affirmer ses prérogatives : le shōgunat et le pouvoir des guerriers d'une part, le pouvoir impérial soutenu largement par les lettrés d'autre part. Dans ce cadre et dans cet équilibre dyarchique instable, les réformes en matière de rituel, leurs succès ou leurs échecs, qu'elles émanent de l'un ou l'autre groupe, sont soumises aux conditions effectives de la puissance qu'elles exercent et aux mutations de leur position dans la société. Ainsi lorsque la paix règne à partir de 1638 et que le statut des militaires change, le shōgun Tsunayoshi qui gouverne entre 1680 et 1709 entend rationaliser la pratique et la nature des rites au sein de l'élite guerrière en prenant acte de cette transformation. Les réformes qu'il promeut se heurtent cependant à de nombreuses résistances et font apparaître une *réalité rituelle* dont nous avons déjà évoqué l'importance : les rites et leur évolution (on a vu qu'elle était en grande partie constitutive de la pensée ritualiste) n'existent que dans un équilibre instable à trouver entre les précédents et la volonté de rationalisation.

- 44 Après le récit détaillé des querelles protocolaires japonaises, le lecteur sera guidé sous la férule érudite de Charles Malamoud dans la profuse littérature rituelle indienne. On retrouvera sans surprise dans cette intervention le rôle paradigmatique dans les pratiques rituelles du sacrifice qui oriente toutes les pratiques même lorsque l'immolation d'un animal ou d'un homme n'est pas impliquée. Jusque dans les rituels dits « domestiques », le modèle de la transformation du sacrifiant dans et par le sacrifice reste dominant. On y découvrira que la « littérature » védique ou ce que, faute de mots, nous désignons comme telle est parfaitement isomorphe à son objet : dans leur apprentissage comme dans leur usage, les Védas ne peuvent être transmis à travers un substrat textuel mais uniquement par l'intermédiaire d'un maître. Au corpus védique se sont ajoutés au fil des siècles d'autres types de texte, toute une littérature dont la visée n'est pas tant explicative qu'esthétique au sens où elle vise à rendre tel aspect de la pratique rituelle désirable ou agréable, condition sans doute aussi nécessaire à son exercice que les injonctions.
- 45 Le dernier texte du recueil signé par Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge et John Scheid devrait nous ramener sur des terres plus familières, la Grèce et la Rome antiques. Il n'en est rien. Tout d'abord parce que leurs objets d'étude font place à des corpus relativement récents ou négligés ; ensuite parce qu'ils s'interrogent plus spécifiquement sur l'existence ou non de guides pratiques pour les performances rituelles et leur rôle éventuel. On trouve bien certains textes très fragmentaires en Grèce archaïque mais ils ne se présentent pas comme explicatifs, ils ont un caractère descriptif plus que prescriptif. D'autre part, dans les sources épigraphiques, ces notations rituelles n'étant jamais expliquées semblent donner à croire qu'il y avait un fond de connaissance

partagée en matière de rituel. Peut-on en déduire qu'existait une norme commune ? Si une inscription récemment découverte en Thessalie et datable du III^e ou du II^e siècle av. J.-C. fait mention d'une « habitude ou d'une norme grecque du sacrifice », Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge, au terme d'une lecture serrée de cette source épigraphique conclut que cette expression ne doit pas être comprise dans l'absolu, elle semble désigner plutôt un moyen terme entre deux types de sacrifice.

- 46 John Scheid prend pour objet d'étude les *libri sacerdotum*. Ces textes dont l'existence est bien attestée dans la religion romaine posent très largement la question de la relation entre l'écrit et le religieux mais restent difficiles à interpréter. Deux compréhensions du même phénomène s'affrontent : s'agit-il de livres normatifs exposant les règles cultuelles ou au contraire de sortes d'agendas rendant compte des décisions en matière religieuse des différents collèges ? En conclusion d'une analyse prudente dont le lecteur découvrira les méandres et la rigueur, John Scheid propose de lire dans ces documents des archives inventoriant des pratiques, enregistrant soigneusement les fêtes et les rites effectués dans des calendriers, des sortes de documents quasi administratifs. Ces deux études entendent battre en brèche l'idée communément admise selon laquelle les prescriptions rituelles et les écrits qui s'en font les dépositaires seraient fondamentalement normatifs. Ils apparaissent plutôt dans cette double enquête comme descriptifs. Cette approche de la littérature ritualiste nous semble mériter d'être testée dans les canons ritualistes chinois. Comme on le sait, l'absence de flexion des verbes du chinois ancien laisse souvent la possibilité aux traducteurs d'ajouter avant l'infinitif l'auxiliaire verbal « devoir » introduisant de la norme et de l'obligation là où il n'y a peut-être qu'une description fine de l'orthopraxie, laquelle en retour ne trouve sa légitimité que dans le moment de la performance rituelle.

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- 47 Au terme de ce long parcours, peut-être est-il temps de justifier le titre de ce volume : *All about the rites*. Ce qui nous a guidé ne ressortit pas à un souci d'exhaustivité. La matière rituelle paraît en effet infinie. Ce sont plutôt la variété et la multiplicité des discours sur le rituel que nous avons en vue. Les articles de ce volume en donnent un aperçu. Approches savante, technique, archéologique, philologique, historique, théorique, philosophique, programmatique se mêlent et sont mobilisées pour circonscrire une réalité anthropologique dont nous espérons avoir mis en relief l'actualité et le caractère intempêtif, à quelques époques que ce soit et au premier chef dans la période contemporaine.
- 48 La question du rituel n'est pas une chose du passé. Les diverses analyses des œuvres de l'Antiquité, la survivance de textes et de pratiques, leur distorsion au cours de l'histoire, leur reprise dans d'autres contextes auront montré que la réalité sociale, si elle veut être pleinement envisagée, ne saurait se limiter à des études exclusivement sociologiques, politiques, économiques, ou religieuses. Parmi les modes de cohésion il est nécessaire de prendre en compte les dynamiques rituelles qui viennent brouiller et mettre une ombre de complexité au tableau d'ensemble.
- 49 Après tout, la forme du « colloque », celle qui a présidé à ces actes, peut certes être décrite de multiples manières, en termes de profit de la recherche, d'état des lieux dans un domaine du savoir, de rapports de force au sein d'une communauté de savants, ou de sa place dans des contextes plus larges d'élaboration du savoir. Elle constitue

néanmoins un rite particulier, avec ses règles, ses exigences dont les plus importantes sont sans doute les vertus du dialogue et de l'écoute ; elle suppose un mode d'être qui règle la conduite, la parole et la gestuelle de chacun des participants, des séquences où alternent rigueur et relâchement ; elle n'est en tout état de cause jamais réductible à un code, et lorsqu'elle est réussie comme ce fut le cas pendant les deux journées de juin 2018, une telle forme est avant tout un mouvement d'ensemble dont la temporalité s'invente et se crée dans de minutieux ajustements.

Le Maître s'écrie : « Les rites, les rites ! » Ne tiennent-ils qu'au brillant du jade et de la soie ? « La musique, la musique ! » Ne tient-elle qu'au bruit des cloches et des tambours ?⁴

50 De toute évidence, non...

NOTES DE BAS DE PAGE

1. *Lunyu*, III, 17, traduit par Anne Cheng, dans *Entretiens de Confucius*, Paris : Seuil, collection « Sagesses », 1981, 41.
2. Nous reprenons ici les traductions proposées par Séraphin Couvreur dans *Li Ki, Mémoires sur les bienséances et les cérémonies*.
3. Paru en 2013 dans la Bibliothèque de l'Institut des Hautes Études chinoises, vol. 37, Paris : Collège de France.
4. *Lunyu*, XVII, 11 ; traduit par Anne Cheng, *op. cit.*, 137.

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The world of ritual

The work of appropriation, domestication, and substitution: theories of sacrifice in the *Liji*

Michael Puett

- 1 The Classical Chinese civilisation has come to be known to a significant degree in the literature of anthropology and religious studies through the practice of sacrifice, and particularly through ancestral sacrifice. Despite its prominence as a topic of discussion, however, surprisingly little work has been done in exploring the indigenous theories concerning sacrifice that have emerged in the Chinese tradition. This paper will attempt a small piece of this larger project by discussing theories of sacrifice in the *Liji*. I will begin by turning to dominant approaches concerning sacrifice in contemporary theory, and will then turn to those found in the *Liji* itself.

Sacrifice as killing and consumption

- 2 Most theories of sacrifice that have become common in the humanities and social sciences over the past two centuries have focused on the killing of animals and the consequent consumption of meat in the sacrificial act. The study of Greek sacrifice has been the origin of many of these discussions, with various theories focusing on either killing or consumption.
- 3 In terms of killing, by far the most influential figure has been Walter Burkert. Burkert saw Greek sacrifice as a survival (based ultimately in man's genetic make-up) of rituals dating from the early hunting societies of human civilisation. His emphasis was on the notion of sacrifice as expiation, a gift to nature in order to atone for the murder which man had to make in order to eat.¹ Burkert's arguments have been widely rejected for their biological reductionism and for their reliance on a claimed Palaeolithic sense of guilt, not to mention the questionable usage of archaeological material to reconstruct Palaeolithic ritual practices.

- 4 Perhaps in part out of opposition to these concerns about Burkert's approach, subsequent scholars have tended to de-emphasise the significance of killing in Greek sacrifice. But it is important to remember that, in early Greek sacrifice, there was indeed a great deal of ritual focus on the act of killing and the necessary expiation for doing so. For example, the ritual sacrifice of an ox for Zeus –offered by most of the city-states at least once a year– included a ritual expulsion of the figure who killed the bull, as well as a ritual expulsion of the knife used to do the killing.²
- 5 By far the most influential rereading of Greek sacrificial practice since Burkert has been the one undertaken by Vernant and Detienne, who have focused instead on the patterns of consumption in sacrifice. As Vernant and Detienne note, after the bull was slain, the bones and fat of the animal were offered to the gods by burning, and the meat was then eaten by the humans. Vernant and Detienne go on to highlight the symbolic significance of the division, rooting it in stories related to Prometheus.³
- 6 In turning to a symbolic analysis of the Greek sacrifice, Vernant and Detienne were part of a much larger movement in anthropology and religious studies in general. From a larger comparative perspective, both killing and consuming are commonly emphasised in sacrificial practice throughout the world, and both are crucial parts of what has become by far the dominant paradigm in anthropology for the understanding of sacrifice from a symbolic perspective. In this formulation, the offering represents the disordered state of the one giving the sacrifice. One is thus killing that disordered state and offering it up to the divine powers. The offering is thus divinised, and, when humans consume the rest, they too partake of that divine power.
- 7 As one example among many of this reading, Valerio Valeri reads Polynesian sacrifice in this way:
- In a sacrifice, the offering –which is a substitute of the sacrificer– is eaten by the god and thus feeds him. But it also becomes part of him and thus participates in his powers. Insofar as part of the offering so transformed returns to the sacrificer to feed him, he acquires part of the divine powers. The sacrificer may be viewed as undergoing, through his substitute, symbolic cannibalisation and resuscitation: he is transformed by being eaten, incorporated by the god.⁴
- 8 The key, then, is substitution: the offering is a substitute for the one giving the sacrifice.
- 9 Another example is Maurice Bloch, who builds a general theory of sacrifice out of a variant of this notion. The sacrificer first identifies with the victim –representing, for Bloch, the purely vital element of the sacrificer. The death of the victim then represents the death of that vitality, with the sacrificer becoming identified with the transcendental powers. In the resulting feast, the sacrificer returns to the world of humanity, but now, empowered by the transcendental, as a full consumer of the world of vitality.⁵
- 10 Indeed, Bloch argues that the same theory can explain Greek sacrifices as well. In his reading, Vernant and Detienne focus on only one element of the larger process that fully includes the themes of substitution and identification: “I cannot, however, entirely follow Detienne and Vernant when they use their point about cooking as though it negated the significance of the identification of sacrificer and victim and the significance of the self-sacrifice and substitution elements...”⁶ From this perspective, the killing and consumption (as emphasised by Burkert and Vernant/Detienne respectively) that we see in early Greek sacrifice would be key components of a larger

process of transformations based in the interplay of vitality and transcendence. And the play of substitution would be the key that makes this killing and consumption in sacrifice meaningful.

- 11 Many of the studies in the anthropological literature involve working out the various permutations of this model. For example, does a given culture more strongly emphasise the issues of the sacralisation of the human sacrificer (as Valeri emphasises for Hawaiian kingship sacrifices) or a subordination of a sacrificer to divine commandments? But pervasive is the view that the offering is a substitute for the one giving the sacrifice.

Sacrificial theory in the *Liji*

- 12 But then we turn to the *Liji*: the theories of sacrifice articulated in the *Liji* sit rather uneasily with these formulations.
- 13 To begin with, sacrificial theory in the *Liji* says little about the act of killing itself. The fact that animals must be killed for the sacrifices is hardly a topic of concern, and is never presented as something for which expiation needs to be made. Moreover, although the issue of substitution is crucial in the sacrifice chapters of the *Liji*, the substitutions of interest in these chapters are not between the giver of the offering and the offering itself.
- 14 To return to Valeri, he gives the following phrases as a minimal definition of sacrifice:
- I suggest, then, that the central phenomena of sacrifice are elaborations of a basic art: the ritualised taking of some life (or the destruction/removal from the sphere of a purely human use of precious objects that stand as signs of life) to bring about some benefit.⁷
- 15 It is difficult to say that even such a minimal definition really works for theories in the *Liji* without a bit of tinkering. Chinese sacrifice, as theorised in the *Liji*, is deeply concerned with the relations between humans with the natural and divine worlds. But the focus is not on killing, destruction, or removal (even though all of these, of course, occur). Similarly, although consumption certainly occurs, it is not the focus of the theorisation –at least not in the sense of removing something from one realm and having it incorporated into another (the divine powers consuming an animal seen as representing the sacrificer, for example). The emphasis is rather on the hosting –who hosts whom and with what– and the play of identifications and substitutions that occur at this level as well –not with the offering representing the sacrificer but with an interplay of different positions of who is the host and who is being hosted. Finally, and continuing directly from the last point, sacrificial theory in the *Liji* is not based in a symbolic analysis. It therefore opens up some interesting questions when placed alongside contemporary theories.

Domestication

- 16 The most careful and extensive discussion of Chinese sacrifice has been undertaken by Gilles Boileau.⁸ He beautifully explores the degree to which Chinese sacrifice involves an interplay of uncooked and cooked foodstuffs, and how this interplay is built upon a myth concerning the origins of Chinese civilisation. My hope will elaborate upon Boileau's analysis by exploring in more detail the way in which these issues are theorised in the *Liji*.

- 17 The *Liji* is an extraordinarily heterogeneous text, including various works of ritual theory written from the fourth to the second centuries BC. But there are a set of chapters that contain a fairly consistent view of the meaning of sacrifice. The chapters, which I have simply termed the “sacrifice chapters,” include the “Tan Gong” 檀弓 (Archery-in-Santal), “Liyun” 禮運 (Ceremonial usages), “Jifa” 祭法 (Law of sacrifices), “Jiyi” 祭義 (Meaning of sacrifices), and “Jitong” 祭統 (Summary account of sacrifices). I have argued elsewhere for a general understanding of what the chapters might be arguing.⁹ Here, I will focus in particular on sacrificial theory in these chapters.
- 18 The chapters in question contain several different narratives regarding the origins of sacrifice. One of the most complex appears in the “Liyun” chapter.¹⁰ The chapter consists of a dialogue between Confucius and his disciple Yan Yan. It opens with a discussion between the two following the performance of a sacrifice. Confucius, saddened, explains to his disciple his sense of loss from the great ages of the past. His explanation involves the first of two narratives that he will give in the chapter concerning the past.
- 19 In distant antiquity, Confucius explains, the Great Way held prominence:
 大道之行也，天下為公。選賢與能，講信脩睦，故人不獨親其親，不獨子其子。
 In the practice of the Great Way, all under Heaven was public. They selected the talented and capable. They spoke sincerely and cultivated peace. Therefore, people did not only treat their own kin as kin, and did not only treat their own sons as sons.¹¹
- 20 The loss of the Great Way was marked by the division of the world into separate lineages. Kinship accordingly came to be seen as only existing within each lineage:
 今大道既隱，天下為家，各親其親，各子其子。
 Now, the Great Way has become obscure. All under Heaven is [divided into] lineages. Each treats only its own kin as kin, only their own sons as sons.¹²
- 21 The use of ritual, it turns out, was one of the causes of this breakdown. Once rituals were created, they bound people together through ritual obligations. But this binding also created the divisions that led to the loss of the Great Way:
 禮義以為紀；以正君臣，以篤父子，以睦兄弟，以和夫婦，以設制度，以立田里，以賢勇知，以功為己。故謀用是作，而兵由此起。
 Ritual and propriety are used as the binding. They are used to regulate the ruler and subject, used to build respect between the father and son, used to pacify elder and younger brothers, used to harmonise husband and wife, used to set up regulations and standards, used to establish fields and villages, used to honour the courageous and knowledgeable, taking merit as personal. Therefore, schemes manipulating this arose, and because of this, arms were taken up.
- 22 As a consequence of rituals, human society became organised into a series of lineages. As such, positions of power came under the control of lineages, instead of being given to the worthiest.
- 23 Rituals, therefore, are part of the problem. Ritual creates continuity along lineage lines, but it also breaks the larger public nature of human society, separating the social world into distinct lineage organisations.

- 24 Returning to the frame attributed to Confucius: only six figures, since this emergence, have succeeded in using the rituals effectively: Yu, Tang, Wen, Wu, Cheng, and the Duke of Zhou. What these figures accomplished is what Confucius terms the “Lesser Peace”:

禹、湯、文、武、成王、周公，由此其選也。此六君子者，未有不謹於禮者也。以著其義，以考其信，著有過，刑仁講讓，示民有常。如有不由此者，在執者去，眾以為殃，是謂小康。

Yu, Tang, Wen, Wu, Cheng, and the Duke of Zhou were selected because of this. These six rulers were always attentive to ritual, thereby making manifest their propriety, thereby examining their trustworthiness, making manifest when there were transgressions, making the punishments humane and the expositions yielding, showing constancy to the populace. If there were some who were not following this, they would be removed from their position and the populace would take them as dangerous. This was the Lesser Peace.¹³

- 25 From the way the narrative has been set up, one might assume that the argument of the chapter would be that one should return to the Great Way, and that this would also entail a rejection of ritual. In fact, however, it becomes clear that Confucius is on the contrary calling for the re-creation of the Lesser Peace. And the practice of ritual –the proper practice of ritual– is key to this. When Confucius’ disciple –understandably, given the narrative thus far– asks why then rituals are so important, Confucius explains that, when practised properly, they are crucial for upholding the way of Heaven and for regulating the dispositions of humanity:

言偃復問曰：「如此乎禮之急也？」孔子曰：「夫禮，先王以承天之道，以治人之情。」

Yan Yan asked again, “Are the rituals of such urgency?” Confucius said: “Rituals are what the former kings used to uphold the way of Heaven and regulate the dispositions (*qing*) of humans.”¹⁴

- 26 The remainder of the chapter is devoted to Confucius explaining why rituals –despite the dangers already seen– are crucial, how they could –as with the Lesser Peace– be used effectively, why the Lesser Peace is in fact preferable to the Great Way, and how they work vis-à-vis the divine and human dispositions. To do so, Confucius provides a second narrative. It too begins in distant antiquity when the Great Way was practised. But here Confucius focuses on the emergence of rituals, with a particular focus on sacrifice:

夫禮之初，始諸飲食，其燔黍捭豚，汙尊而抔飲，蕡桴而土鼓，猶若可以致其敬於鬼神。及其死也，升屋而號，告曰：『皋！某復。』然後飯腥而苴孰。故天望而地藏也，體魄則降，知氣在上，故死者北首，生者南鄉，皆從其初。

Now, when rituals were first started, they began with drinking and eating. They roasted millet and slices of pork.¹⁵ They hollowed out the ground to hold liquids and drank with their hands; they used straw drumsticks and earthen drums. Even so, they were able to direct their reverence to the ghosts and spirits. When someone died, the living would climb to the top of their abode and call out saying “Come back!” Only then would they give uncooked rice and pieces of raw meat. Thus they would look up to Heaven while burying in the earth. The body and the earthly souls descend, while the intelligent *qi* rises. Therefore the deceased have their head to the north, while the living face south. All of this is from the beginning.¹⁶

27 Rituals began with sacrificial offerings. More specifically, with drinking and eating aimed at directing reverence to the ghosts and spirits. This was done without the use of any utensils or human technologies.

28 Confucius then explains why this is the case: humans in the distant past had no technologies at all. They had no shelter, no ability to create fire, and no clothing:

昔者先王，未有宮室，冬則居營窟，夏則居橧巢。未有火化，食草木之實，鳥獸之肉，飲其血，茹其毛。未有麻絲，衣其羽皮。

In ancient times, the former kings did not yet have houses. In the winter they lived in caves, in the summer in nests. They did not yet know the transformations of fire. They ate the fruits of plants and trees, and the raw meat of birds and animals. They drank their blood and ate their feathers. They did not yet have hemp and silk, and they clothed themselves in feathers and skins.¹⁷

29 This is what life was like in the Great Way. Humans saw all humans as linked by common kinship, and they deeply revered the ghosts and spirits. But they also lived in caves and nests, relied for their food on hunting and gathering, and ate raw the flesh of any animals they caught.

30 Recognising the fact that humans could not flourish in such a situation, the sages – correctly, according to the narrative– began making a series of innovations that led to the domestication of the world. They taught humans how to work with metals, how to make shelters, and how to work with fire:

後聖有作，然後脩火之利，范金，合土，以為臺榭、宮室、牖戶，以炮以燔，以亨以炙，以為醴酪，治其麻絲，以為布帛，以養生送死，以事鬼神上帝，皆從其朔。

The later sages arose. Only then were they able to utilise the advantages of fire, the working of metals, and the pulling of clay. They thereby made towers and houses with windows and doors; they thereby baked, roasted, boiled, and broiled, and they thereby made sweet wine and gruel. They worked with hemp and silk, and they thereby made clothing. They thus nourished the living and sent off the dead, and they thus served the ghosts, spirits, and high god. All of this followed from before.¹⁸

31 With these new technologies, humans were able to flourish. And the serving of the ghosts, spirits, and high god followed as before.

32 Except, of course, that it did not. Or, rather, the serving might have been the same, but the social effects were certainly not. As it was made clear in the first narrative of the chapter, the result of these innovations was also that the world increasingly became broken up into separate lineages. And rituals played a key part in this. Increasingly, sacrifices to the deceased –the ghosts– involved only those related to the living, and this in turn helped to define people’s dispositions only to their own lineages. The same rituals that had earlier worked to connect all humans to each other and to both the deceased and the spirits helped to create a world in which humanity and the ancestral dead were connected only within lineages.

33 But going back to distant antiquity is not an option, as it would also be a world without shelter, clothing, and the use of fire. The implication of the two juxtaposed narratives is thus that the goal is to achieve what was accomplished in the Lesser Peace –where

somehow the proper use of rituals created something like, albeit lesser than the Great Way of distant antiquity– but with the innovations of the later sages still maintained.

34 The first hint of how this is to be accomplished appears immediately with a description of sacrifice as it occurred in the Lesser Peace. The sacrifice would begin by laying out raw foodstuffs: blood, feathers, and raw flesh –precisely the foods that humanity consumed before the sages invented cooking. Roasted meat would be offered next. The meat would then be cooked yet more, and the meat then dismembered and served. The ruler and his consort would give each of these offerings in turn. The sequence of the sacrifice thus recapitulates the narrative of domestication, with raw foods being brought out first, followed by progressively cooked foods. The people who made the offerings were the king and his consort, who had become the centre of the sacrificial offerings.¹⁹

35 The chapter then turns to an explication of the logic underlying the sacrifices. The rise of human civilisation was a process of domestication, guided by sages who accordingly became the centre of the web of relationships that came to define the cosmos. As the chapter states succinctly:

故聖人參於天地，並於鬼神，以治政也。

Thus, the sage forms a triad with Heaven and Earth and connects with the ghosts and spirits so as to control his rule.²⁰

36 Unlike the Great Way, the sage has now become the centre of everything, forming a triad with Heaven and Earth and connecting with the ghosts and spirits in order to rule effectively.

37 The evolution of sacrifice is thus directly connected to the larger domestication of the world. Just as agriculture involved domesticating the vital elements of the world into an organized system with humans at the centre, so does sacrifice with the dispositions of humans. Human dispositions are the field that rituals domesticate:

故聖王修義之柄、禮之序，以治人情。故人情者，聖王之田也。修禮以耕之，陳義以種之，講學以耨之，本仁以聚之，播樂以安之。故禮也者，義之實也。

Therefore, the sage kings cultivated the handles of propriety and the arrangements of the rites in order to regulate human dispositions. Thus, human dispositions are the field of the sage kings. They cultivated the rites in order to plough it, arrayed propriety in order to plant it, expounded teachings in order to hoe it; took humaneness as the basis in order to gather it; and sowed music in order to pacify it. Therefore, rites are the fruit of propriety.²¹

38 The sages used rituals to order human dispositions as they used agriculture to order the natural world.

39 Humans, then, are of the same raw stuff as the rest of the cosmos. Rituals involve domesticating this raw stuff and re-weaving it:

故人者，其天地之德，陰陽之交，鬼神之會，五行之秀氣也。
故聖人作則，必以天地為本，以陰陽為端，以四時為柄，以日星為紀，月以為量，鬼神以為徒，五行以為質，禮義以為器，人情以為田，四靈以為畜。

Humans are [a product of] the powers of Heaven and Earth, the interaction of *yin* and *yang*, the joining of the ghosts and spirits, and the subtle energies of the five phases... Thus, when the sage humans created rules, they necessarily took Heaven and Earth as the basis, took *yin* and *yang* as the level,

took the four seasons as the handle, and took the sun and stars as the marker [of time]; the moon was taken as the measure, the ghosts and spirits as the assistants, the five phases as the substance, the rites and propriety as the instruments, the dispositions of humans as the field, and the four efficacious creatures as the domesticates.²²

40 The chapter elaborates its point about the four efficacious creatures:

何謂四靈？麟鳳龜龍，謂之四靈。故龍以為畜，故魚鱗不滄；鳳以為畜，故鳥不矯；麟以為畜，故獸不狘；龜以為畜，故人情不失。

This is the reason that there was sufficient food and drink for humans. What are the four efficacious creatures? The unicorn, the phoenix, the tortoise, and the dragon –these are the four efficacious creatures. Therefore the dragon was made into a domesticate, and thus the fish did not swim away. The phoenix was made into a domesticate, and thus the birds did not fly away. The unicorn was made into a domesticate, and thus the beasts did not jump away. The tortoise was made into a domesticate, and thus the people's dispositions were not neglected.

41 The domestication of the efficacious creatures resulted in sufficient food and drink for humanity, as well as sufficient control over human dispositions.

42 The result of this domestication of human dispositions is that the sage was able to connect all of humanity into one lineage –as humanity had been during the Great Way, only now domesticated, and thus with the sage at the centre:

故聖人耐以天下為一家，以中國為一人者，非意之也，必知其情，辟於其義，明於其利，達於其患，然後能為之。

Therefore, as for the sage bearing to take all under Heaven as one lineage and take the central states as one person, it is not something done overtly. He necessarily knows their dispositions, opens up their sense of propriety, clarifies what they feel to be advantageous, and apprehends what they feel to be calamitous. Only then is he capable of enacting it.²³

43 If rituals, along with the innovations of the later sages, helped to break the unity of the Great Way and created a world divided by lineages, the six figures who used ritual properly did so to domesticate the dispositions of the populace so that all humans came to regard themselves as part of a single family –united, of course, by the ruler. All of the distinct lineages thus came to see the ruler as the centre of this single lineage.

44 The sacrificial system was organised accordingly:

故先王患禮之不達於下也，故祭帝於郊，所以定天位也；祀社於國，所以列地利也；祖廟所以本仁也，山川所以償鬼神也，五祀所以本事也。故宗祝在廟，三公在朝，三老在學。王，前巫而後史，卜筮瞽侑皆在左右，王中。

The former kings were worried that the rites would not reach those below. They therefore sacrificed to Di in the suburban sacrifice as a means by which to determine the place of Heaven. They made offerings to the Earth altar in the kingdoms as a means by which to array the benefits of the earth. They offered ancestral sacrifices at the shrines as a means to provide a basis for humaneness. They offered at the mountains and the streams as a means by which to host the ghosts and spirits. They gave the five offerings as a means by which to provide a basis for activities. Therefore, there were ancestral invocators at the shrines, the three dukes at the court, and the three elders at the schools. In front of the king were the ritual specialists and behind were the astronomers; the diviners by crack making, the diviners by stalks,

drummers, and assistants all stood to the right and left. The king was at the centre.²⁴

- 45 The ruler would thus reorganise the world, weaving it back together with himself as the fulcrum:

心無為也，以守至正。故禮行於郊，而百神受職焉，禮行於社，而百貨可極焉，禮行於祖廟而孝慈服焉，禮行於五祀而正法則焉。故自郊社、祖廟、山川、五祀，義之修而禮之藏也。是故夫禮，必本於大一，分而為天地，轉而為陰陽，變而為四時，列而為鬼神。

His mind was without activity, so as to hold fast to the utmost correctness. Thus, the rites were practised in the suburbs, and the myriad spirits received offices through them. The rites were practised at the earth god's altar, and the hundred goods could be fully appropriated through them. The rites were practised in the ancestral shrines, and filiality and kindness were submitted through them. The rites were practised with the five sacrifices, and the correct standards were taken as models through them. Therefore, from the suburban sacrifice, earth god altar, ancestral shrine, mountains and rivers, five sacrifices, propriety was cultivated and the rites were embodied. It is for this reason that the rites are necessarily based in the Great One, which separated and became Heaven and Earth, revolved and became yin and yang, alternated and became the four seasons, were arrayed and became the ghosts and spirits.²⁵

- 46 The world is again linked, but with the ruler at the centre.
- 47 In short, from a continuity of equality, the world fell into discontinuity –a fall brought about in part through rituals that bound humans into distinct lineages. Those few sages whom Confucius reveres, however, were able to use ritual to re-create continuity –but now a graded, hierarchical continuity in which the cosmos is fully linked, but linked in a way that places the ruler in a position of hierarchical centrality.
- 48 The practice of sacrifice, done properly, enacts this vision. It begins with the raw foods eaten by humanity in distant antiquity, and then moves to cooked foods. The ruler is the one hosting all of the spirits and ghosts, and doing so on behalf of all of humanity – and thus fully linking the divine and human realms. Something reminiscent of the Great Way is achieved, but now in a domesticated world with the ruler at the centre.

Substitutions

- 49 The “Liyun” is offering a vision of sacrifice based upon the workings of human dispositions. But what, then, are the mechanisms for such dispositions of familial unity to be developed? This is explored in several of the sacrifice chapters of the *Liji*, but here I would like to focus on the “Jitong.” As we might have expected from much of the recent theoretical literature on sacrifice, there is a great deal of concern with substitutions in the “Jitong.” At no point, however, is the offering presented as a substitution for the sacrificer. On the contrary, the concern in the play of substitutions is entirely with the participants –including the divine powers.
- 50 To begin with, royal sacrifices involved a series of role reversals within the patriline. The grandson would serve as the impersonator –literally “corpse” (*shi* 尸)– of his deceased grandfather. The father would then play the role of the son to his own son, giving offerings to his deceased father as played by his son:

夫祭之道，孫為王父尸。所使為尸者，於祭者子行也；父北面而事之，所以明子事父之道也。此父子之倫也。

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.²⁶

- 51 The roles of ruler and subject, father and son, are absolute. But the occupiers of each of these positions are defined entirely by the ritual space. Outside the temple, the impersonator was the son of his father, the grandson of the deceased, and the subject to his ruler. Inside, he was the father and he was the ruler. Outside the temple, the father was the ruler; inside, he was the son and the subject.

君迎牲而不迎尸，別嫌也。尸在廟門外，則疑於臣，在廟中則全於君；君在廟門外則疑於君，入廟門則全於臣、全於子。是故，不出者，明君臣之義也。

The ruler met the victim but did not meet the impersonator. This avoided impropriety. When the impersonator was outside the gates of the temple, then he was seen as a subject; when he was inside the temple, then he was fully the ruler. When the ruler was outside the gates of the temple, he was seen as the ruler; when he entered the gates of the temple, he was fully the son. Therefore by not going outside, he made clear the propriety of ruler and subject.²⁷

- 52 The deceased grandfather, as performed by the grandson, would thus be hosted by the ruler, who in the ritual is the son and the subject of his own son.
- 53 After the impersonator ate the offerings given to him by his son within the ritual, the impersonator would stand. The ruler, together with his ministers, would then eat the leftovers. They too would stand, and the next ranks of aristocrats would eat the leftovers. The same process would continue down the entire normative hierarchy:

是故尸饗，君與卿四人饗。君起，大夫六人饗；臣饗君之餘也。大夫起，士八人饗；賤饗貴之餘也。士起，各執其具以出，陳于堂下，百官進，徹之，下饗上之餘也。凡饗之道，每變以眾，所以別貴賤之等，而興施惠之象也。是故以四簋黍見其修於廟中也。廟中者竟內之象也。祭者澤之大者也。

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 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 image of bestowing and graciousness. Therefore, using these four millet vessels, one sees cultivation within the temple. Within the temple is an image of the entire realm. Sacrifice is the greatest of grace.²⁸

- 54 Within the temple, therefore, the deceased (played by the grandson) is served by the father. The remainders are eaten in a descending order of perfect hierarchy. The king thus hosts his deceased father, and the rest of society eats the leftovers of that offering.
- 55 Since they are eating the leftovers of the filial offerings of the son to the deceased father, the hierarchies of the populace accordingly develop the filial dispositions

toward the ruler that he is embodying through his hosting of the father (as played by the son). The hierarchies below him consequently become like the sons and grandsons for the ruler, and the ruler becomes like the father and mother of the people:

是故其德盛者，其志厚；其志厚者，其義章。其義章者，其祭也敬。祭敬則竟內之子孫莫敢不敬矣。其德薄者，其志輕，疑於其義，而求祭；使之必敬也，弗可得已。祭而不敬，何以為民父母矣？

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, his intent light, and 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?²⁹

- 56 Within the temple, therefore, the entire world is arrayed in a single patriline, with the entire populace defined as sons and grandsons of the ruler, who is himself the father and mother of the people.
- 57 This same logic works with the ruler's sacrifices to the High God. Just as the filial son (the ruler) sacrifices to the impersonator with full filiality, so does he sacrifice to the High God:

唯聖人為能饗帝，孝子為能饗親。饗者，鄉也。鄉之，然後能饗焉。是故孝子臨尸而不忤。

Only the sage is able to sacrifice to the High God, and only the filial son is able to sacrifice to his parents. "Sacrifice" (*xiang* 饗) is to face toward (*xiang* 鄉). One faces toward it, and only then can one sacrifice to it. Therefore, the filial son approaches the impersonator and does not blush.³⁰

- 58 As such, the ruler becomes the "Son of Heaven":

故天子祭天地，諸侯祭社稷。

Therefore the Son of Heaven sacrifices to Heaven and Earth, the lords of the states sacrifice to the altars of the land and grain.³¹

- 59 All of the lineages of the realm are united under the ruler, who is thus also the father and mother of the people. And the ruler is also the Son of Heaven. As a result, the ruler is located at the centre, linking all of the different lineages together through his own role as father and mother of the people, and also linking them to the larger cosmos through his role as Son of Heaven. The entire cosmos becomes as such a perfect patriline, with the ruler as the fulcrum.
- 60 We now arrive at the world envisioned in the "Liyun." The entire cosmos has become, through the dispositions instilled in sacrifice, a single family, connected through the ruler. In this world of constructed patterns, sons have only filial dispositions toward their parents, the parents have only filial dispositions toward their ruler, and the living have only filial feelings to the dead.
- 61 The vision of sacrifice that underlies the practice is based upon the endless interplay of substitutions: the son becomes the grandfather, Heaven becomes the father, the ruler becomes the son of Heaven and the father and mother of the people, etc. The father-son patriarchal relationship becomes the basis on which, through the series of role

reversals and altered relationships, the entire realm is made into one single, patrilineal family. The grandson acts as the corpse of the deceased father, but then in the ritual role of the deceased as an ancestor. The ruler plays the role of the filial son to his own son, as well as the filial son to Heaven. The ranked orders of the court play the role of filial sons and grandsons to the ruler, who also plays the role of father and mother of the people. The play of substitutions is crucial here, but the concern is not to have the victim substitute for the disordered state of the sacrificer. The play of substitutions is rather with different members involved in the sacrifice playing different roles in the processes of hosting and being hosted.

- 62 As in most forms of sacrifice, the sacrificer is the one empowered by the sacrificial act. But there is no claim here that he is offering himself in his disordered state. The substitutions are instead about constructing a new set of the relationships surrounding the ruler, with himself as the hosting figure connecting the ghosts, spirits, and living populace.

A Constructed World

- 63 To work through the implications of this view, let us return to the “Liyun.” Just as the Lesser Peace builds upon the vitality of the Great Way and reorganises it, the same is true of the sacrificial order building upon the world of reproduction. It is not reproductive in itself: the ruler is not really born of Heaven, the ruler is not really the father and mother of the people, and he certainly did not really give birth to them. The sacrifices involve constructing an order that not only cannot reproduce the Great Way but in fact cannot reproduce at all.
- 64 To go back to the efficacious creatures mentioned in the “Liyun.” The domestication assumes the efficacy that exists in the larger cosmos. The domestication itself is not efficacious: the domestication simply appropriates that efficacy for humanity. And sacrifice operates the same way. Sacrifice, when utilised properly, creates a perfect patrilineal system in which the entire cosmos operates along a lineage in which females are either excluded or, as in the case of the ruler, appropriated into the ruler’s position of being both father and mother of the people. The resulting patriarchal order assumes an efficacy and vitality that exist outside the ritual, an efficacy and vitality that it appropriates and domesticates but that it cannot replicate.
- 65 The cosmos, thus, does become a single lineage, with the ruler at the centre. But this is not a lineage in a procreative sense. On the contrary, the lineage of sacrifice exists in an uneasy tension with the world of vitality, fertility, and reproduction.
- 66 One of Maurice Bloch’s arguments was that sacrifice operates in a tension between vitality and transcendence. The point certainly holds for the theories in the *Liji* as well, but in the *Liji* the tension is played out not via the identification of the victim with the vitality of the sacrificer but rather in terms of the construct of sacrifice itself.

Symbols and the subjunctive

- 67 As mentioned above, perhaps the dominant paradigm in anthropology for the understanding of sacrifice is to read the victim as being a substitute for the sacrificer in his disordered state. The victim, therefore, is a symbol. But what about rituals that do not work according to symbols, and that therefore are being misread when interpreted

through a schema of symbolism? This point has been made in terms of theories that focus on the performative aspects of ritual. But we see in the *Liji* something different. The sacrificial world is a construct that is certainly meaningful, but it is one self-consciously created as a domestication of, and in tension with, a world that operates radically differently. Within the world of sacrifice, the cosmos is a continuous and harmonious patriarchal system in which the ruler, as Son of Heaven, connects all people and the entire cosmos. That construct operates in tension with, and yet fully requires, the world of vitality that the sacrificial construct denies.

- 68 This is a vision that opens up some interesting questions *vis-à-vis* existing theories of sacrifice. When, for example, Geertz undertakes a beautiful interpretation of a sacrificial ritual to explore the complex beliefs of the participants concerning cyclical time, the model assumes that the ritual is socialising the participants into a certain way of thinking.³² Accordingly, a statement in a ritual that the world is cyclical is taken to be an assumed belief among the participants. But what if it is not a belief? What if, following the theories of the *Liji*, the work of the sacrifice is operating in tension with the world outside? What if a Balinese ritual involving cyclical time was thought of not as a system of belief but instead as a ritual construct? Instead of reading a given sacrificial ritual as indicative of a worldview, the theories in the *Liji* would have us ask about the work the subjunctive space is doing with the world outside of the ritual.
- 69 The concern, in other words, is not that symbols do not play a role in ritual –they clearly can and often do. It is that the attempt to read a ritual as providing a symbolic world that the participants are being socialised into believing is what should be questioned. This certainly can occur. But, as we see being theorised in the *Liji*, the concern in ritual can also be to develop particular dispositions by transforming the relationships among the participants.
- 70 Reading the symbolism of a ritual space as indicative of a larger worldview has been critiqued by a number of scholars as well. Maurice Bloch has explicitly criticised Geertz’s attempt to read claims concerning cyclical time in Balinese rituals as being examples of a larger set of cultural assumptions.³³ Such a critique is indeed part of Maurice Bloch’s larger argument concerning sacrifice. Bloch’s claim is that ritual serves to take a contingent social order and make it appear natural, enduring, and backed by transcendental sanctions.³⁴ As we have seen above, sacrifice for Bloch is the process by which this happens.
- 71 Nancy Jay has argued along similar lines:
- Sacrifice is an extraordinarily efficient method for control of the production of religious meaning, especially effective in centralising and making exclusive the means of communication with the transcendent powers that legitimate the social order.³⁵
- 72 More particularly, Jay argues that sacrifice works to legitimate a patriarchal social order. For example, Jay critiques Valeri’s reading of Hawaiian sacrifice, arguing that Valeri accepts too much of the order presented in sacrifice as a given. In contrast, she argues that sacrifice in Hawaii should be seen as legitimating male domination:
- Hawaiian royal sacrifice can be seen as a historically contingent practice for production of a political ideology in which the perspective of male nobles is elaborated as transcendent divine truth, legitimating one particular historical form of male domination by making it appear universal and eternal.³⁶

- 73 Bloch and Jay are assuming much the same framework. Both assume a stable divine and natural order that humanity is either taking from (in the case of the natural order) or gaining legitimacy or support through (in the case of the divine order). In terms of the latter: the divine order is seen as transcendent, and contingent hierarchies in the human realm are legitimated by making them appear transcendent and divinely based. For the two of them, sacrifice is the mechanism for making this occur. And in continuity with a long tradition of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, both consider that the social scientist is able to uncover and unmask this mechanism by which religion legitimates and gives transcendental sanctions to what would otherwise be a contingent social order.
- 74 In other words, despite their critiques, Bloch and Jay share a great deal with figures like Geertz and Valeri. All of them see ritual as instilling a belief structure. And one could expand the point. In the dialectic in Western theory over the past century, concerning whether to see the ritual space as indicative of a larger worldview or as a legitimation of an otherwise contingent social formation, both sides still focus on belief –on ritual as socialising participants to believe in the vision provided in the ritual context.
- 75 But in the *Liji* we see a theory predicated on the idea that the work of sacrifice, like the work of ritual more broadly, is an act of domestication, in which the natural and divine orders are being transformed. And the sacrificial space in which this occurs is explicitly being presented as a construct, in a self-conscious disjunction both to the world outside and to the world that putatively existed before the domestication process began. There is no belief being instilled that the ancestors really are benevolent, that the world is harmonious, that the ruler is a Son of Heaven, etc. And there is certainly nothing to unmask.³⁷ The ritual is rather explicitly presented as a temporary ordering of a world that is otherwise prone to discontinuity. As the *Liji* puts it beautifully:

子曰：「牲醴禮樂齊盛，是以無害乎鬼神，無怨乎百姓。」

The Master said, “As for the sacrificial victims, ritual, and music being properly arranged and flourishing, this is the means by which there is no harm from the ghosts and spirits and no resentment from the hundred families.”³⁸

- 76 For brief periods (during the ritual and occasionally –six times, according to the “Liyun”– for entire reigns) it works, and the ghosts and spirits above and the people below are connected and supportive. But, of course, it never works for very long and it never works fully.
- 77 Some colleagues and I, building upon these theories of ritual from classical China, have argued that they portray a subjunctive understanding of ritual: the creation of a ritual construct that operates in self-conscious tension with the non-ritual world:

These arguments imply that ritual always operates in a world that is fragmented and fractured. Moreover, the subjunctive world created by ritual is always doomed ultimately to fail –the ordered world of flawless repetition can never fully replace the broken world of experience. This is why the tension between the two is inherent and, ultimately, unbridgeable. Indeed, this tension is the driving force behind the performance of ritual: the endless work of ritual is necessary precisely because the ordered world of ritual is inevitably only temporary.... If the world is always fractured, and if ritual always operates in tension with such a world, then we need to think of ritual in terms of such an endlessly doomed dynamic. Ritual should be seen as operating in, to again quote Robert Orsi, “the register of the tragic.” Although the claims of ritual may be of an ordered, flawless system, the

workings of ritual are always in the realm of the limited and the ultimately doomed.

39

- 78 The *Liji* portrays sacrifice in precisely this way.
- 79 Let us return to ancient Greece. If we were to apply the approach of the *Liji* to early Greek sacrifice, it would lead us to ask what are the perceived tensions in dealing with the natural and divine worlds, and what is the work that sacrificial ritual does with these tensions. Interesting comparative questions would then emerge from there. For example, why is killing such a concern in Greek sacrificial ritual, unlike in Chinese sacrificial ritual? What relations with the animal world and the divine world are being played upon in sacrifice? This is where Burkert's reliance on a reconstruction of Palaeolithic practices as a template to explicate Greek sacrifice is most dangerous – Greek sacrifice, as Vernant and Detienne emphasise, was exclusively concerned with domestic animals.
- 80 In other words, instead of taking for granted that sacrifice involves a focus on killing or consumption, on a symbolic killing of the sacrificer, or even on the instilling of a particular worldview at all, such emphases rather become interesting permutations that themselves need to be understood and explicated. In short, taking the sacrificial theories from the *Liji* seriously as theory opens up a host of possibilities –not just for the Chinese sacrifice but for our understanding of sacrifice in general.

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FOOTNOTES

1. Burkert 1983.
2. Durand 1986.
3. Detienne & Vernant 1989.
4. Valeri 1989, 224. The "sacrifier" refers to the person on whose behalf the sacrifice is being made, while "sacrificer" refers to the person who actually performs the sacrifice.
5. Bloch 1992.
6. Bloch 1992, 30.
7. Valeri 1994, 104.
8. Boileau 1998-1999. See also Boileau's contribution to the present volume.
9. Puett 2005; Puett 2008; and Puett 2009.
10. Puett 2005 and Puett 2010c, 132–135.
11. Liji, "Liyun," Chinese University of Hong Kong, Institute of Chinese Studies, Ancient Chinese Text Concordance Series (hereafter cited as ICS), 59/9.1:24.
12. *Ibid.*, 59/9.1:27–28.
13. *Ibid.*, 59/9.1:28–32.
14. *Ibid.*, 60/9.2:1.
15. Presumably from natural fires, since, as we will see shortly, the domesticated use of fire had yet to be invented.
16. Liji, "Liyun," ICS, 60/9.4:10–13.
17. *Ibid.*, 60/9.5:14–15.
18. *Ibid.*, 60/9.6:16–17.
19. *Ibid.*, 60/9.7:20–22.

20. *Ibid.*, 61/9.18:26.
21. *Ibid.*, 63/9.35:25–26.
22. *Ibid.*, 62/9.26:15, 22–24.
23. *Ibid.*, 62/9.22:5–6.
24. *Ibid.*, 63/9.28–9.29:4–8.
25. *Ibid.*, 63/9.31:8–14.
26. *Liji*, “Jitong,” ICS, 131/26.14:29–30.
27. *Ibid.*, 131/26.13:26–27.
28. *Liji*, “Jitong,” ICS, 131/26.9:7–10.
29. *Ibid.*, 133/26.22:2–6.
30. *Liji*, “Jiyi,” ICS, 126/25.6:7.
31. *Liji*, “Liyun,” ICS, 61/9.10:2–3.
32. Geertz 1977, 360–411.
33. Bloch 1989, 1–18.
34. Bloch 1989, 44–45.
35. Jay 1994, 149.
36. Jay 1994, 146.
37. Puett 2013.
38. *Liji*, “Biaoji,” ICS, 151/33.27:28–29.
39. Seligman *et al.* 2008, 30.

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The *Liji* and a tragic theory of ritual

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- 1 This article will draw from three parts of the *Liji* 《禮記》 in an attempt to construct an early Confucian theory of ritual. This theory, in short, depicts a tragic consciousness experienced in ritual performance where ritual agents cope with vulnerability, ambiguity, and rupture with the past. In constructing this theory, I will refer to and build on a larger project that I published as a book entitled *The Dysfunction of Ritual in Early Confucianism*.¹ My purpose in this article is to demonstrate that ritual often involves the coordinated enactment of conflicting moral desires such that ritual is in part a performance of ambivalence. Ritual performers reaffirm their desire to model the past, but recognise the demands of the present. They also mobilise the resources of vulnerability to care for others and to turn ritual performance into an embodied confession of their hopes and limitations in confronting a threatening world.
- 2 The latter half of this article will situate this tragic theory of ritual in the broader discourses of ritual studies and contrast this theory with non-tragic portrayals of Confucianism. This essay is more creative than historical; meaning that it aims to tease out the normative (and more often functional) claims of ritual performance as articulated in the *Liji*. It does not attempt to provide a historical account of specific ritual performances; neither is it exegetical in the sense of situating my claims within the complex of issues associated with interpreting early Chinese texts.² In other words, this essay elaborates on the exegetical work done in *The Dysfunction of Ritual* and offers a constructive interpretation of the *Liji* for the purpose of bringing it into dialogue with contemporary theories of ritual.

The “Liyun” 禮運

- 3 In the opening scene of the “Liyun” chapter, Confucius, after witnessing a ceremony performed in his home state, lets out a sigh. His disciple Ziyou 子游, hearing him sigh, asks what went wrong. Confucius responds with a lengthy description of two utopian periods in early human history; both of which, he explains, were preceded by a pre-civilised era when human beings lived in caves and ate the raw flesh of animals.

Confucius laments that he hoped that the world might again attain the greatness of these two utopian periods, yet, as evident from the poor performance of the ritual just witnessed, such a desire will not be realised.³

- 4 This opening scene, in general terms, provides a narrative for a tragic reading of early Confucian ritual. Confucius explains that in the earliest period of human history, humanity lived in uncivilised conditions. In this period, human beings did not know how to construct homes, cook food, or make clothing; and as such, human beings lived in caves, ate the raw flesh of animals, and wore the feathers of birds. Fortunately, profound people, or “sages”, appeared on the scene and taught people to build simple homes, to use fire in preparing food, and to spin hemp and silk. The sages also organised simple human relationships such as parents in relation to children. This act of civilisation, the “Liyun” explains, marked the beginning of the ritual tradition. Society –meaning interpersonal relationships, material implements and structures, and institutions such as government– is built by means of ritual practices. The “Liyun” also goes on to report that as society became more complex so did the ritual practices that supported it.
- 5 Sometime after this period of savage conditions, the “Liyun” contends, a fundamental shift occurred in the development of human civilisation. While human beings originally lived in caves and drank the blood of animals, they came to live as one unit –treating everyone as family, living in simple homes, and cooking their food. In this era, which Confucius calls Grand Unity (*datong* 大同), human civilisation lived in accordance with the Great Way (*dadao* 大道). The text explains:

大道之行也，天下為公。選賢與能，講信脩睦。故人不獨親其親，不獨子其子，使老有所終，壯有所用，幼有所長，矜寡孤獨廢疾者，皆有所養。男有分，女有歸。貨惡其棄於地也，不必藏於己；力惡其不出於身也，不必為己。是故謀閉而不興，盜竊亂賊而不作，故外戶而不閉，是謂大同。

The Great Way moved [throughout the world]; and everything under the heavens was commonly shared. Those in positions of authority were chosen because of their abilities. Trust was emphasised, and solidarity was cultivated. As such, people did not only treat their parents as parents, nor only their children as children. The old were allowed to live their lives to the fullest. The able-bodied were employed, and the young were raised into adulthood. The widowed, the orphaned, the childless, and the sick were all cared for. Men had proper allotments of work, and women were married into good families. When crafting goods, people disdained not putting them to their full use; yet they did not need to store up [goods] for themselves. When working, people disdained not exerting themselves to the fullest; yet they did not [work] simply for themselves. As such, deceitful plans were curbed so that they did not arise; and thieves, robbers, and malcontents did not come about. Because of this, [people] did not [even] shut the outer gate to their homes. This is what is called Grand Unity.⁴

- 6 In the era of Grand Unity, humanity thrived in simple conditions. Later, however, in the era Confucius calls Modest Prosperity (*xiaokang* 小康), human beings concerned themselves with more distinctions, such as distinctions between one’s parents and the parents of other people, as well as distinctions between the people of one’s hometown and the people from other towns. The world, due to these distinctions, was no longer seen as one family, but the virtuous leaders of the time cultivated these distinctions in the form of a ritual tradition so that society continued in accordance with the Great Way. In conjunction with these social distinctions, the “Liyun” explains, people in

society were able to create more complex physical structures such as moats and city walls, as well as more complex institutions that fostered the distinction between rulers and ministers, among others. In this age, human civilisation thrived, and attained a level of sophistication and prosperity that could not be attained to in the previous age. Yet, in my reading of these passages, humanity also lost several things in this transition.

- 7 For one, in the era of Grand Unity, ritual was simple and unadorned. It provided for basic needs such as food and shelter, and it fostered a minimal number of social relationships. It could not, however, bring about a prosperous world. Creating the conditions of prosperity entailed building on, and in some regards, deviating from, the foundational acts of the sages. Because of this, ritual performers in later times have been torn between a desire to maintain a strong connection with an ordered past and a desire to render ritual meaningful in a more complex present. This ambivalence, rooted in an awareness of the necessity of enacting ritual and the necessity of varying from earlier tradition, is a key component of the tragic consciousness associated with ritual.
- 8 Secondly, the growing complexity of the world entailed an ever-growing and interdependent infrastructure to manage the process of development. In the time before the era of Modest Prosperity, rituals worked, but the social world they created was also a simple world. In later times, a more complex social world required more complex rituals. However, this growing complexity led to an increase in the number of participants required to successfully perform ritual. Each participant relied on the proper performance of the other. If anyone failed to properly perform his role, the ritual could fail. Ritual success, in this light, became complicated in the etymological sense of the term “complicate” –the agencies involved in the event are “entangled” or are “folded together.”⁵ The growing complexity of the social world, as such, led to more interdependent rituals where successful ritual performance was contingent upon a growing number of agencies; thereby obfuscating causality in ritual success and failure.
- 9 Lastly, the formation of a ritual tradition also created ritual agents who saw themselves in more distinctive ways. People in the age of Modest Prosperity, according to the “Liyun,” became self-interested and became capable of constructing alternative traditions that could compete with the ritual tradition. The “Liyun” explains that with the emergence of more social distinctions came an awareness of those within one’s social group (such as a city) and those beyond one’s social group (those from another city). Defence fortifications arose in this early period, and weapons emerged in an attempt to overtake those from other social worlds. Ritual, as such, is always vulnerable to those agencies that affect the situation –be it competing state institutions or co-performers of the ritual. Because of this, ritual performances are anxious performances. The ritual agent is concerned with his performance of ritual, and anxious over the fact that agencies other than him can determine the success of his performance.
- 10 What this reveals is the contingent nature of the ritual world. Ritual success, in other words, is vulnerable to incompetent ritual performers, people from other social worlds wielding military or other kinds of power, as well as natural disasters and death. These dysfunctional forces impinge themselves on the ritual world with a kind of brute force. In short, the world ritual is meant to construct is set against the backdrop of a dysfunctional world. Ritual performers project their hope onto the dysfunctional world while recognising that their hope will sometimes be in vain.

- 11 Thus, the “Liyun” chapter discusses at least three aspects of what I am calling a tragic consciousness of ritual performance. The first is the realisation among ritual performers that ritual cannot be done as it was done in antiquity; despite the fact that it worked in antiquity. The second is the ambiguity associated with interdependent rituals performed in a more complex world. And the third is the fragility of the ritual world in relation to the dysfunctional world. Summarised another way, the rituals of antiquity do not always work in the present, so living in an era of prosperity requires transforming the efficacious rituals of the past. Yet altering the rituals of antiquity does not guarantee ritual success. Ritual agents, in this light, perform “experiments in paradigmity” where their best efforts in altering ritual work in most cases; however, in this vulnerable and interdependent world, their alterations are never guaranteed to work.⁶ Part of the tragic nature of this narrative is the possibility that humanity might actually be able to return to the kind of world that existed in the era of Grand Unity; but rather than returning we choose to live in a prosperous, yet also a vulnerable, world.
- 12 The “Liyun” presents us with a view where ritual minimises dysfunction and projects a hope of order onto the dysfunctional world; yet ritual does not prevent all dysfunction. The work of ritual is to build an ordered world; and ritual performers enact ritual over and over again to construct this world, but they never fully eliminate the threat of failure. Ritual performance understood as world construction is therefore taken in a tensive sense. Said another way, the ritual world never fully becomes the only world human beings experience; rather, dysfunction continues to linger on the edges of society. Indeed, it seems that one of the messages that the “Liyun” teaches its readers is that we, human beings, inhabit a world occasioned by both order and anomy.⁷

The mourning rites

- 13 The *Liji* contains many discussions of mourning rites. These rites, covered in nearly two thirds of the chapters in the *Liji*, also highlight the tragic consciousness associated with ritual performance. Some of these rites include the calling back ceremony (*fu* 復) where shortly after someone has died, a mourner climbs up to the roof to call the deceased’s spirit back to the body; as well as the practice of putting objects into the tomb of the deceased that do not quite work –zithers, for instance, are placed in the grave but their strings are not properly tuned; and this, the *Liji* tell its readers, is because the dead are no longer alive, yet, in its view, neither are they fully gone.⁸ The portion of the rites I would like to focus on begins after the calling back ceremony and before the burial. In this section of the rites, we might call the funeral procession, mourners follow the carriage carrying the body of the deceased to the grave. The *Liji* explains that mourners should do this as if the deceased were still alive. The chapter entitled “Asking about Mourning” (“Wen sang” 問喪) describes this as follows:

其往送也，望望然、汲汲然、如有追而弗及也。其反哭也，皇皇然若有求而弗得也。故其往送也如慕，其反也如疑。求而無所得之也，入門而弗見也，上堂又弗見也，入室又弗見也。亡矣！喪矣！不可復見矣！故哭泣辟踊，盡哀而止矣。心悵焉、愴焉、愴焉、愴焉，心絕志悲而已矣。

In following [the funeral procession to the grave], mourners were expectant and anxious as if they sought to follow [the deceased] but could not quite catch up to him. When returning, they wailed; and were hesitant and uneasy as if they sought after [the deceased], but did not find him. As such, when

mourners follow [the funeral procession to the grave] it is as if they long to see [the deceased]; and when they return, it is as if they are bewildered [in not being able to find him]. Regardless of where they sought him, he could not be found. They entered the door to his home, but did not find him there. They ascended into the main hall, but did not find him there. They entered his personal quarters, but did not find him there. Alas, he was gone; only to be mourned, and never to be seen again! This is why mourners wail, shed tears, beat their chests, and falter. They stop doing these things only after they fully exhaust their sorrow. Their hearts are despondent, morose, perplexed, and aggrieved to the point that they lose their focus and there is nothing but sorrow.⁹

- 14 This portion of the *Liji* maintains that mourners should follow the funeral procession to the grave as if they were travelling to catch up to a person who was still alive; and after not finding him, they are to return to his home and call for him, hoping to find him there. When failing to find him at home, mourners “exhaust their sorrow” by wailing and shedding tears. The sorrow of losing a loved one reaches a heightened pitch as mourners fully confront the absence of the person. They are despondent to the point that “they lose their focus and there is nothing but sorrow.” What is interesting here is that the *Liji* does not make the argument that these rites are effective in bringing the dead back to life; rather, the mourners should not fully expect the rite to alter the course of death.
- 15 In the mourning rites, mourners come to recognise the vulnerability of their hoped-for world to forces beyond their control. Indeed, what we see in the mourning rites are a series of practices meant to confront this vulnerability. Mourners project their hope on to the dysfunctional world, knowing that it might not change things. They perform the rites to demonstrate their awareness of the fragility of their social world. The mourning rites, as such, become a means of navigating the tension between the desired world and the dysfunctional world. They become a kind of performative therapy for dealing with dissonance. Following this view, ritual is done to display one’s understanding that one’s best efforts are often frustrated by the dysfunctional world – that people do in fact die, but if it were up to us, they would remain.
- 16 The mourning rites are particularly apt for demonstrating this point. The death of others presents a kind of ambivalence for many human beings.¹⁰ Our desire to accept the finality of death conflicts with our hope for continuing a meaningful relationship with the deceased. Mourning rites, as such, become an important means of coping with ambivalence –they allow us to live in a world of hope *and* fear. The intrusion of the dysfunctional world into the social world becomes an occasion for the creation and performance of ritual. Yet ritual does not dissolve the tension between these worlds; instead it provides a way of navigating the tension.
- 17 Part of what makes the world created by ritual meaningful is the possibility of intrusion. The dysfunctional world is dangerous. It kills indiscriminately. It is savage. The vulnerability of the ritual world to dysfunction means that everyone living in the world of ritual lives with risk. Yet this risk itself partially renders life in the ritual world worthwhile. If relationships lasted forever, there are fewer reasons to cultivate relationships now. If ritual completely ordered the dysfunctional world, there are fewer reasons to transcend parochialism and the narrow confines of traditionalism. The threat of loss can lead to morbidity and depression, but it can also inspire the virtuous treatment of others.¹¹ The possibility of impingement can lead to

retrenchment and fundamentalism, but it can also prompt a healthy reappraisal of tradition. The uncertainty of the ritual world, in this sense, “mobilizes [the] energies” necessary for the appropriate treatment of others and for a reflective engagement with tradition.¹²

- 18 Said more generally, the ritual world as a vulnerable world is a kind of evanescent domain where fragility serves as a motivating factor in the ongoing construction of society and as grounds for the seriousness with which human beings might live their lives and reflect on themselves as well as their relations with others. Zhu Xi famously substituted the character *xin* 新 (renewing) for *qin* 親 (drawing near) in the opening passage of the “Great Learning” (“Daxue” 大學). In a reversal of sorts, we might blur the distinction between *qin* 親 and *xin* 新 in a later passage of the “Great Learning” for the purpose of highlighting the role of reflecting on relationships in an evanescent world. The passage in question reads, “If one day [you] renew [it], renew [it] day after day; indeed, renew [it] daily” 苟日新，日日新，又日新.¹³ By substituting *qin* 親 for *xin* 新 we get, “If one day [you] draw near to [someone], draw near to [them] day after day; indeed, draw near to [them] daily” 苟日親，日日親，又日親. While this passage of the “Great Learning” does not require such a rereading, blurring the notions of *qin* 親 and *xin* 新 highlights the role of repetition and attachment in the context of renewal. Through repetition we fulfil our existing relationships, and through attachment in the context of renewal we confront the loss of current relationships as we form new ones. The ritual world, in this view, is built through the repetition of rites that foster closeness and cope with loss among human beings. Since relationships will not always endure, we are compelled to render them meaningful now. Relationships require not only daily renewal through repetition, but also total renewal through reattachment as one person is lost and a new relationship is formed. This process of closeness, loss, renewal, and reattachment seems central to many aspects of human experience ranging from games that infants play to rituals such as those described in the *Liji*.¹⁴ It does not seem too implausible to suggest that such a process is a central part of the Confucian notion of the continual generative and regenerative process of the world (*sheng sheng bu xi* 生生不息 or *sheng sheng zhi wei yi* 生生之謂易).
- 19 In the mourning rites discussed throughout the *Liji*, the failure of the ritual world to fully transform the dysfunctional world such that death does not occur, is integral to the success of the mourning rites themselves. Proper performance is a vulnerable performance where the more genuine one’s hope of finding the deceased still alive when searching their home, the more genuine one’s sorrow when confronting their absence.
- 20 These rituals, as mentioned in other portions of the *Liji*, must push the performer to the brink of madness. The “Jiyi” 祭義 chapter speaks of this in the context of sacrifices made for the deceased.

孝子將祭，慮事不可以不豫；比時，具物不可以不備；虛中以治之。宮室既修，墻屋既設，百物既備，夫婦齊戒沐浴，盛服奉承而進之。洞洞乎，屬屬乎，如弗勝，如將失之。其孝敬之心至也與！薦其薦俎，序其禮樂，備其百官，奉承而進之。於是諭其志意，以其恍惚以與神明交，庶或饗之。庶或饗之，孝子之志也。

Before a filial son offers up sacrifices [to his deceased parents], he is concerned with preparing all the affairs [of the sacrifice]. If the time [for sacrifice] arrives, and all the implements are arrayed and everything is prepared, [he is able to] empty his heart and mind; and in the proper order, [he] performs the rite.¹⁵ Once the temple chamber is clean, the walls and roof

are repainted, and all the ritual implements are ready, the son and his wife – having fasted and washed themselves– enter the chamber wearing the sacrificial attire and carrying the sacrifices. So engrossed and sincere, they move as if unable to bear [the weight of the sacrifices], and as if they are on the brink of dropping them. [As such], are their hearts not completely full of reverence and filial piety? The filial son displays his focus by ordering the sacrificial vessels, by arranging the rite and its accompanying music, by training the ritual participants, and by [appropriately] entering the chamber carrying the sacrifices. Because of his lost abstraction of mind [*huanghu* 恍惚] [when entering the chamber] he communes with the spirits, hoping that they might partake of the sacrifices. The aim of the filial son is to express his hope that the spirits partake of the sacrifices.

- 21 The filial son is at first concerned with preparing for the sacrifice. He ensures that all the necessary implements are available and that the area where the sacrifice is to take place is clean. When the ritual is performed, however, this concern is replaced by an attitude of *huanghu* 恍惚, translated above as “lost abstraction of mind.”¹⁶ The passage describes this attitude as “engrossed” and “sincere.” It seems that when the ritual agent is in a lost abstraction of mind he is pushed to the brink of failure –the participant brings in the sacrifices as if he cannot bear their weight and moves as if he is on the verge of dropping them. The ritual agent, this passage explains, must be in a lost abstraction of mind in order to commune with the spirits (*shen* 神).
- 22 Another, more pedestrian, way of understanding the notion of *huanghu* 恍惚 is by translating it as “crazy.” The ritual agent, in this scenario, is so focused on the loss of his father that he goes crazy in the multifaceted sense of the term –he is both bewildered by the circumstances of the loss and deeply dedicated to his father.¹⁷
- 23 The notion of *huanghu* 恍惚 can be understood in terms of vulnerability –the death of someone meaningful is what precipitates the ritual agent to reach this state; and the ritual agent must focus on this person, and their relationship, during the rite to ensure its success. The ritual agent, as such, takes upon himself the risk of going beyond the brink. This kind of flirtation with failure enables the success of the rites. In performing the mourning rites, a state of vulnerability is preferred over a state of invulnerability. Stated more broadly, human beings, in this view, should not render themselves invulnerable to relationships that are contingent on the erratic nature of the dysfunctional world. These relationships, at least partially, constitute a meaningful life. As Amy Olberding suggests with regard to the *Analects*, “The ethical potency of grief resides... in the willingness to lead a life that *courts* certain species of pain in order to achieve higher order values, and these values reside in our relations with others.”¹⁸ The real possibility of the dysfunctional world impinging itself on the ritual world opens up opportunities for deep engagement with other human beings. It provides motivation to care for others, allows one to fully experience human sentiment (*qing* 情), and creates space for continued reflection on the question of what constitutes a meaningful life.

The “mubeng” 墓崩 passage

- 24 The sixth passage in the “Tan gong, shang” 檀弓上 chapter describes Confucius’ performance of the burial rites for his parents, as well as the collapse of his parents’ grave during the rites.¹⁹ I believe that this passage is particularly apt for demonstrating

the tragic consciousness of ritual performance and in tying together the themes of the previous passages mentioned above. It reads:

孔子既得合葬於防，曰：「吾聞之：古也墓而不墳；今丘也，東西南北人也，不可以弗識也。」

Upon completing the joint burial [of his parents] in Fang, Confucius remarked, "I have heard it said that the ancients built graves but not burial mounds. But now there is me –one who [travels to] the north, south, east, and west. [And I] cannot afford to not recognise [the grave]."

於是封之，崇四尺。孔子先反，門人後，雨甚；至，孔子問焉曰：「爾來何遲也？」

Thereupon [Confucius] built a mound four feet high. Confucius then left [Fang], with his disciples to eventually follow. Heavy rains fell. [When his disciples] finally caught up, Confucius asked, "Why did you arrive so late?"

曰：「防墓崩。」

They replied, "The grave at Fang collapsed."

孔子不應。三，孔子泫然流涕曰：「吾聞之：古不修墓。」²⁰

Confucius did not respond. [They repeated this] three times. Tears welled up and fell freely [from Confucius' eyes]. He [finally] responded, "I have heard that the ancients did not fix their graves."

- 25 There are several things worth noting in this passage. For one, Confucius, in contrast to the practices of antiquity, constructs a mound on the grave of his parents. He does this because he lives in a time different from antiquity. His age is perhaps more complex – requiring him to travel around the kingdom and to employ others (*i.e.*, his disciples) in completing the mourning rites for his parents. He needs the mound to help him remember the grave. Confucius, we see in this passage, is spatially and temporally displaced from the past –he cannot remain in the location of his parents, nor does he live in the same conditions as the ancients. The mound, as such, serves to bridge the displacement. The complexity of building a mound also requires him to employ his disciples in maintaining the grave. Varying from the rites of antiquity, it turns out, increases the vulnerability of the rite. Rains fall, the mound gets saturated, and the grave collapses. It is not clear who is at fault for the collapse. It may be the fault of the heavens for causing it to rain, the fault of Confucius for deviating from antiquity, or the fault of his disciples for incompetently maintaining the grave.
- 26 For its readers, this passage serves to evoke their tragic sensibilities by presenting them with issues of ambiguity, rupture with the past, and vulnerability. Confucius is depicted as being concerned with the proper burial of his parents, and the text presumes that its readers are also concerned with the proper treatment of their parents. Confucius was concerned with deviating from tradition, and the presumed readers of the *Liji* are likewise concerned with deviating from tradition. Confucius sometimes confronted situations where the dysfunctional world overpowered the ritual world, and so do the readers of the text. Passages such as these connect the world of the text with the world of its readers. Confucius is shown as living in a world where one's hope of what ritual might accomplish does not always cohere with the experience of ritual performance. The readers of the text inhabit the same world. As such, readers feel *along with* Confucius and he feels *for* us. At the same time, in texts such as the *Liji*, Confucius serves as more than a stand-in for what *might* happen to its readers.

Additionally, the text sets out to establish a kind of commiserating community where we feel for others because we care for them.²¹ Passages such as these serve as reminders and comforts that the readers of the text are intimately connected with figures such as Confucius. Stated more broadly, once we, the readers, accept the proposition that our hope for what ritual might accomplish and our experience with what ritual actually brings about are not always reconcilable, we then find the world we live in a more frightening, but also a more familiar, place.

- 27 To draw a few larger conclusions, what we see in these parts of the *Liji* is that the kind of justification that ritual provides for its performance need not be about the eventual triumph of the ritual world. Rather it can sometimes justify itself by providing a kind of honesty about the world.²² It reframes the world such that we learn to accept that there are things we do not know, and powers that we cannot control. Ritual, as such, can be seen as an embodied confession of our own limitations. It is a way of enacting our vulnerability and coming to terms with uncertainty. Depicting the failure of paradigmatic figures such as Confucius to adequately construct an ordered world allows readers of the *Liji* to establish a peculiar continuity with the past. While Confucius' failure is set in the context of breaking with the past, the readers of the text are connected with the past by means of Confucius' rupture with antiquity. His vulnerability and his difficulty in navigating his ambiguous world serve as a model for those seeking to cope with similar circumstances.

Correspondence and subjunctive theories of ritual

- 28 In the next portion of this article, I will briefly situate this tragic theory of ritual with two alternative theories that some contemporary scholars of religion use to conceptualise ritual. The first theory is cast in terms of 'correspondence.'²³ Ritual, in this view, is meant to shape reality to correspond with a preexisting ideal. This ideal is often represented in a complex system of symbols (as argued by Clifford Geertz, for instance), or in myths of an "eternal return" to conditions of paradise (as argued by Mircea Eliade). Ritual, as such, is meant to create an 'as is' world. In other words, ritual acts on the world, to change the world into a new and better place. Paraphrasing Eliade, *as was done by the gods, so is done by human beings in the performance of ritual; and as is done in ritual, so will be done in the world.*²⁴ Interestingly, after mentioning this idea, which he takes from a Vedic text, Eliade then notes, "This Indian adage summarizes all the theory underlying rituals in all countries."
- 29 While more recent scholars have become increasingly sensitive to universal claims about ritual, many continue to advocate various correspondence theories of ritual and couple them with the assertion that ritual performers do not believe that their rituals change. Axel Michaels, a scholar of South Asian religions, for instance, explains, "[I]f people identify themselves in rituals with invariability and timelessness... they resist the uncertainty of past and future, life and death. In rituals they become 'eternal,' related to something that has always been there, never changed and detached from everyday life and profanity. Thus rituals are staged productions of timelessness, the effort to oppose change, which implies finality (and, ultimately, death)".²⁵
- 30 When bound together, theories of correspondence and theories of change-lessness lead to a significant problem for ritual performers, especially when they are compelled to explain situations where their rituals do not function as claimed. These ritual

performers must attribute failure to either their own incompetence, or to the impotence of their rites and ceremonies. Where ritual does not transform the world – creating an ‘as is’ world– there necessarily arises a crisis of meaning for the performers of ritual. In short, if they did things correctly, there can be no simple, or perhaps satisfying, answer as to why their rituals were ineffective.

- 31 To briefly compare this theory of ritual with what I have described as a tragic theory of ritual, we see that in line with correspondence theories, this tragic theory does make an ‘as is’ claim –ritual performers hope to order the dysfunctional world. On the other hand, this tragic theory of ritual recognises that hope is not always reconcilable with experience and that the ritual world is still a vulnerable world. Ritual, instead of simply attempting to create an ‘as is’ world, also creates a kind of ‘as if’ space where performers enact a therapy of honesty in confronting a bewildering world.²⁶
- 32 In perhaps sharper contrast with notions of changelessness, we see that this tragic theory of ritual does not argue that ritual should not change. Rather, early Confucians believed that even an idealised antiquity was insufficient for creating a prosperous present. Ritual performers build on, but also deviate from, the foundational acts of the sages. Ritual change, in this view, must occur but it is always done ambivalently –with one eye on the past.
- 33 The second theory of ritual that is worthy of attention comes from scholars such as J.Z. Smith and Adam Seligman. Both Smith and Seligman provide alternative accounts of ritual efficacy –Smith highlights the awareness among ritual performers of the disjuncture between the world of ritual and the ordinary world; Seligman explains how ritual creates a “subjunctive” reality.
- 34 In his 1980 article, “The Bare Facts of Ritual,” Smith explains that “ritual represents the creation of a controlled environment where the variables (*i.e.*, the accidents) of ordinary life have been displaced precisely because they are felt to be so overwhelmingly present and powerful. Ritual is a means of performing the way things ought to be in conscious tension to the way things are in such a way that this ritualized perfection is recollected in the ordinary, uncontrolled, course of things.”²⁷ In Smith’s view, ritual is not meant to act *on* ordinary life; rather, ritual acts *in opposition to* ordinary life. Ritual agents perform ritual to demonstrate that they know “what ought to have been done.”²⁸ The ritual agent, in other words, recognises that ordinary life will not necessarily be influenced by the performance of ritual. Indeed, one of the reasons, according to Smith, the ritual agent performs ritual is to demonstrate this very fact. The “gnostic” element of ritual performance is significant for Smith.²⁹ In contrast to scholars whose theories lead to the crisis described previously, Smith posits that ritual performers are aware of the disconnection between a ritual performance and “ordinary life.” He explains, for instance, that dramatising the kill of the hunt in Siberian pre-hunting ceremonies is done to show that “the hunter knows full well what ought to transpire if he were in control; the fact that the ceremony is held is eloquent testimony that the hunter knows full well that it will not transpire, that he is not in control.”³⁰ In Smith’s view, the ritual performer is aware of the tenuous relationship between the ritualised hunt and the ordinary hunt, and is able to explain why he performs the ritual despite the rupture. Ritual, in short, does not manipulate the world; rather, it “express[es] a realistic assessment of the fact that the world *cannot* be compelled”.³¹
- 35 The strength of Smith’s account is that it provides a non-correspondence theory of ritual efficacy from an emic perspective. Instead of depicting primitive actors unaware

of the constraints of changing the ordinary world, the performers are depicted as rational agents acting out because of the constraints of changing the ordinary world. In Smith's view, ritual is done to demonstrate an awareness of these constraints and to serve as a "focusing lens" with which to view the ordinary world.³²

- 36 Adam Seligman, Robert Weller, Michael Puett, and Bennett Simon, in their book entitled *Ritual and its Consequences*, also put forth a similar theory of ritual efficacy. In their view, ritual creates an "as if" or a "could be" world rather than an "as is" world as argued for in correspondence theories of ritual.³³ According to this group of scholars, ritual works to build a subjunctive social world instead of what they call a "sincere" world where "authentic" or "real" aspects of the self are sought and manifest in ritual.³⁴ In other words, ritual creates a kind of illusory world where performers live "as if" they were living in a world of order, as opposed to actually creating a world rooted in some notion of an authentic self or an original tradition. Ritual, as such, frames the world for ritual performers so that the illusory world becomes a kind of reality, but the reality lasts only as long as performers adhere to the illusion.³⁵
- 37 Similar to Smith, Seligman highlights the awareness that ritual performers have about the disjuncture between the subjunctive world and the "real world."³⁶ The subjunctive world, in the view of ritual performers, is the preferred world. It does not seek to transform the real world; rather it often functions in opposition to the real world.
- 38 In line with Seligman and Smith, this Confucian theory of ritual I have described can cast ritual in a subjunctive sense. But unlike Seligman and Smith, the world ritual creates is not understood in terms of an "as if" world in opposition to the "real" world. Instead, the ritual world is contextualised among other competing worlds (perhaps all dysfunctional from the perspective of ritual performers), each impinging on the other.³⁷ In other words, the ritual world is not taken as an illusionary world distinct from the real world; instead it is taken as one of many *real* worlds competing to define the human experience. Indeed, if we cast the ritual world as a kind of 'as if' space, it is because the business of ritual can be a risky business, where the odds are often in favour of the dysfunctional world. However, dysfunction, as such, is not understood as the true or genuine condition of the world. While early Confucians saw themselves frequently living in a dysfunctional world, they did not see dysfunction as any more authentic to human experience than the ritual world.
- 39 Said somewhat differently, where Smith and Seligman employ the language of illusion rather than fragility in describing the ritual world, they mask the ambivalent nature of ritual performance. Ritual, at least in an early Confucian sense, is about an apprehensive hope. Ritual performers anticipate the transformative power of ritual, while realising that ritual is a trepidatious act. Put most directly, the performance of ritual is often the very performance of ambivalence.

Tragedy and ritual

- 40 The purpose of comparing and contrasting the tragic theory of ritual portrayed in the *Liji* with correspondence and subjunctive theories is to show how this tragic theory of ritual might contribute to broader discussions of ritual studies.³⁸ The theory of Confucian ritual portrayed here highlights themes of ambiguity, vulnerability, and rupture with the past. While these tragic elements might not reach to the level of George Steiner's tragedy as "ontological homelessness" or Arthur Schopenhauer's

tragedy as “guilt of existence,” they do challenge popular perceptions about the non-tragic nature of Chinese thought.³⁹ Karl Jaspers, for instance, famously remarked with regard to China, “[Tragedy cannot occur] wherever man succeeds both in achieving a harmonious interpretation of the universe and in actually living in accord with it.”⁴⁰ Scholars of China such as James Robert Hightower, and more recently, David Keightley, have reinforced the notion that China “lacks any concept of tragedy.”⁴¹ Scholars of religious studies, such as John Morreall, and scholars of literature, such as Richard Seawall, repeat these claims –with the latter authoring an entry in *Encyclopedia Britannica* entitled “Absence of Tragedy in Oriental Drama.”⁴² While other scholars of China such as Heiner Roetz, Alexander Huang, and Franklin Perkins argue for notions of tragedy in pre-modern China, their views are far from dominant.⁴³

- 41 In contrast to the claims that China lacks any concept of tragedy, the *Liji* often portrays a tragic world. Antiquity serves as a beacon for those in the present, but the demands of the present sometimes conflict with staying the course of antiquity. Rupture with the past is tragic in the sense that creating a prosperous present cannot be done without questioning the normativity of antiquity. Continually transforming the ritual tradition entails ambivalence: on the one hand, ritual performers desire to perpetuate the way of the ancients, but, on the other hand, they recognise the insufficiencies of antiquity in creating a flourishing present. The *Liji*, as such, reveals a conflict between the security of a simple past and the chance of a prosperous, but precarious, present.
- 42 The complexity of the present complicates the agencies involved in ritual success and failure –seeming to blur a distinction between agency and fate.⁴⁴ Ritual performances are susceptible to forces that at least seem to be beyond the control of the ritual performers. In this context, the *Liji* portrays the ritual world as a vulnerable world, and human society as partially founded on a shared recognition of vulnerability. In the era of Modest Prosperity, people banded together to form cities so they could protect themselves from the threat of war; and in the mourning rites people band together to confront the gloom of death.
- 43 The ambivalence of living in a vulnerable world at odds with the past and rife with ambiguity serves to highlight the tragic consciousness associated with ritual performance. This consciousness also recognises the value of ritual: as a trepidatious hope, it acts as an open window into which we question the things that count.⁴⁵ Ritual is also an open window into the lives of human beings. It reveals that we are conflicted beings –we hope for constancy and happiness but we also realise the inevitability of suffering and failure. Ritual, as such, is an open window into the irreconcilable nature of happiness and failure. It is an aperture on the ambivalence of life.
- 44 Ritual provides a means of coping with ambivalences that arise when two or more moral desires conflict with each other. In many situations we are able to reconcile these desires, fulfilling them all and leaving no remainder. Other situations, however, pose a much more lasting conflict. These situations are tragic in the sense of a permanent contradiction. Choosing one desire over the others leaves behind feelings of grief or even regret. In these situations, ritual can serve to work through the grief or regret associated with unfulfilled desires. In other cases, ritual provides a means of performing the ambivalence associated with tragic conflicts.⁴⁶ In this sense, ritual is therapeutic in that it provides an embodied opportunity for enacting conflicting desires –an opportunity to cope with (rather than resolve) dissonance.

- 45 In the mourning rites, a desire to accept finality conflicts with a desire to continue a meaningful relationship with the deceased. To perform these desires mourners put implements into the grave that do not quite work, and they pretend that the person is still alive during the funeral procession. The wailing and tears shed at the deceased's home are at least partially an expression of ambivalence; they are emblematic of the desire to accept a new and different world, but also emblematic of the desire to continue a relationship with the deceased. Later, when offerings are made, the living enter into a lost abstraction of mind that enables a kind of altered continuation of the relationship –the sacrificers encounter the spirits of the deceased, yet they encounter them in a state where things are not quite the same.
- 46 The nature of ambivalence renders platitudes of comfort and joy largely ineffective in explaining death and grief. In consoling those in mourning (*diao* 弔), for instance, the *Liji* does not advocate that we comfort them with assurances of better times, but rather that we should comfort them by sharing in their sorrow. We demonstrate that the pain of loss, which feels so personal, might actually extend beyond the private seclusion of the self (*du* 獨) and into a kind of commiserating community. Ritual, in this sense, enables a shared hope in the possibilities of human beings to construct a desirable world, but it also enables a shared suffering in confronting the vulnerabilities of such a world. In visits of condolence, the sorrow of the condoler demonstrates that the loss is real, that the deceased is irreplaceable, and that we, the living, want the mourner to remain among us as long as he or she can.
- 47 The fact of vulnerability means that pain is inevitable. Living life, as such, is not a matter of eliminating pain, and it is less a matter of reducing pain as much as it is a matter of coming to appreciate pain as an indication of the recognition of value. When a loss hurts, it means that something was valued; and if that thing (or person) was worthy of being valued, then pain is not only a fitting sign of proper recognition, but a sign that one has lived one's life in such a way as to bring into relation those things that are worthy of value.⁴⁷ Mourning, as such, can become an expression of a life full of meaning, or even a life rightly lived. The rites (*li* 禮), to a certain degree, are about people being upright (*zheng* 正). They not only produce ethical persons, but they enable an aesthetic expression of ethical commitments. The performance of ritual reflects the accumulated efforts of the agent in cultivating these commitments.
- 48 The presence of the deceased's body during the mourning rites (usually coffined but not buried before visits of condolence) captures a kind of embodied ambivalence.⁴⁸ A mother, a father, a brother, a sister, a child, or a friend is there in the casket, but they are not *there*. The person we knew is no longer present. The body of the deceased becomes something that we simultaneously want to draw near to but also something that we want to push away. Mourning rites, in this sense, become a means of coping with the ambivalent feelings associated with the deceased; and the body of the deceased becomes a focal point for attending to these feelings.⁴⁹
- 49 Ritual entails vulnerability, ambiguity, and rupture with the past –elements that are both disturbing and empowering. The hope and trepidation associated with ritual, give way to an attitude of ambivalence. Ritual is the performance of ambivalence inasmuch as it allows for the coordinated enactment of conflicted feelings. In realising that ambivalence must be coped with, not eliminated, ritual agents gain a tragic consciousness of ritual performance.

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FOOTNOTES

1. This essay is an expansion of the "Concluding Reflections" in Ing 2012b, 204-218. For an explanation of what I mean by "early Confucianism" see pages 16-17. For background on the *Liji*

see pages 4–7 and 219–223. Throughout this article I discuss figures like Confucius as literary rather than historical figures.

2. I would like to thank Colin Klein for encouraging me to clarify this.
3. For a more in-depth look at the “Liyun”, see pages 105–128 in Ing 2012b.
4. Lau 1992, 9.1. All translations are my own, unless noted.
5. *Oxford English Dictionary*, online entry “complicate.”
6. I borrow the term “experiments in paradigmity” from Antonio Cua who uses it to describe the ways in which an ideal moral agent may break from rules in living a life of “moral creativity.” See Cua 1978, 18. For a more detailed explanation of the terms “ritual success” and “ritual failure” see Ing 2012b, 18–78.
7. For more on anomy in the context of religious studies see Berger 1990, 23, 26, 49–50, and 90.
8. Lau 1992, 3.69.
9. Lau 1992, 36.1.
10. Parts of this were inspired by Cole 1985. On page 9 she comments: “Tragedy is an imaginative model of the paradoxical demands made on human consciousness when confronted by death.”
11. For more on the relationship between ethics and vulnerability see Schofer 2010, 183–190.
12. Schofer 2010, 183.
13. Lau 1992, 43.1.
14. Jennifer Wallace elaborates on this in the context of tragedy and Sigmund Freud’s theory of child development in Wallace 2007, 176.
15. Lau 1992, 25.9–11.
16. I translated *huanghu* 恍惚 as “lost abstraction of mind” following Legge 1885, Part IV, 214.
17. Being deeply dedicated to his father employs “crazy” in the sense of “being crazy about something.”
18. Olberding 2011, 160.
19. For a more in-depth discussion of this vignette see Ing 2012b, 152–174 and Ing 2012a.
20. Lau 1992, 3.6.
21. I developed the idea of a commiserating community in reference to David Hall and Roger Ames’ interpretation of John Dewey’s “communicating community.” Discussed in Hall and Ames 2003, 139–147. See also Jürgen Habermas’ notion of “an unlimited communication community” in Habermas 1986–1989, Volume 1, 85 and 227.
22. I borrowed the notion of “honesty” from Wu 1991, 252.
23. For the purposes of this article, I use single quotation marks to designate technical terms, and I use double quotation marks in their standard grammatical sense –to designate the words or terms of others.
24. Eliade 1954, 21.
25. Michaels 2008, 260–261.
26. Regarding ‘as if’ space, see Nicolas Standaert’s contribution in this volume.
27. Smith 1980, 124–125. Italics removed. He also makes a similar argument in Smith 1987, 109–110.
28. Smith 1980, 125.
29. *Idem*.
30. Smith 1980, 127.
31. *Idem*.
32. Smith 1980, 127. Smith restates this point in Smith 1987, 109. According to Smith ritual “provides an occasion for reflection on and rationalization of the fact that what ought to have been done was not, what ought to have taken place did not.” Smith, unfortunately, does not elaborate more. He does not explain “reflection” and “rationalisation,” nor how they contribute to (or comprise) ritual efficacy.
33. Seligman 2008, 7.

34. The clearest explanation of sincerity comes from Seligman 2008, 103: “The alternatives that [sincerity] often suggests are categories that grow out of individual soul-searching rather than the acceptance of social conventions. Sincerity thus grows out of abstract and generalized categories generated within individual consciousness. The sincere mode of behavior seeks to replace the ‘mere convention’ of ritual with a genuine and thoughtful state of internal conviction. Rather than becoming what we do in action through ritual, we do according to what we have become through self-examination.”

35. Seligman 2008, 22.

36. Seligman 2008, 27.

37. For more on the rise of these various competing worlds see Ing 2012b, 105–128.

38. All of this is not to say that tragedy is the only way to understand ritual. Rather, this is to challenge other perceptions of ritual that do not more fully take into account the nature of ambivalence. Seligman, for instance, stresses the performers’ desire to pretend, and Michaels stresses the performers’ desire to change the world. My point is that ritual can be about the performance of multiple (and even conflicting) desires.

39. Steiner 2008, 30; Schopenhauer 1969, 254. Regarding China, Steiner states, “Tragedy as a form of drama is not universal. Oriental art knows violence, grief and the stroke of natural or contrived disaster; the Japanese theatre is full of ferocity and ceremonial death. But that representation of personal suffering and heroism which we call tragic drama is distinctive of the Western tradition” (Steiner 1961, 3). In many regards, tragedy is seen as an essential characteristic of modern societies; although this view itself is a recent development. For a history of its development see Billings, 2014. Schopenhauer’s notion of tragedy becomes important in early 20th century discussions of tragedy in China. Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877–1927), in particular, argues that the *Dream of the Red Chamber* (*Hongloumeng* 紅樓夢) is a Schopenhauerian tragedy. See He 2013.

40. As quoted in Huang 2003, 58.

41. Hightower 1953, 120. Keightley has argued for instance, “The Chinese narratives, when compared with the Greek, are remarkable for the lack of dramatic complexity. They generally provide the essence of the action; they are parables, sermons, lacking the kind of existential irony and ambiguity that flows through critical scenes, such as the slaughter of the suitors in Book 22 of the *Odyssey*” (Keightley 2002, 141). See also Keightley 1990, 44: “Greek epics derive much of their complexity and dramatic tension from the frank recognition that unresolvable conflicts exist in the world, that choices are frequently made not between good and evil but between two goods. By contrast, no early Chinese writing –with, as is so frequently the case, the possible exception of the *Zhuangzi*– take a similarly detached and complex view of the human condition.”

42. Morrell 1999, 63, for instance, states, “Like all cultures, the Chinese face mistakes, sickness, hunger, and death; but that does not prompt them to ask whether Heaven owes them something better. Without a philosophy of suffering, tragedy just does not get started in Chinese religions.” See also page 62: “In Chinese thought, too, the universe is a harmonious unity in which each part reproduces the whole. The human body is a microcosm of the universe –we know that our blood circulates, for example, because we know that rivers flow. The Chinese acknowledge that life has it[s] moments of need and pain, but those are just part of the harmonious whole, rather than something to be questioned, or, as in tragedy, something to be protested.” A more recent and nuanced account, which acknowledges the possibility of a cross-cultural category of tragedy but also repeats some of the same stereotypes, appears in Wallace 2013.

43. See Perkins 2011; Huang 2003; Roetz 1993, 93–100. For others advocating tragedy in China see Luk 1986, 24. Perkins, in short, argues that tragedy as a concept can be found in China in the sense of affirming a tension between human hopes about the world and human experience in the world. Perkins stresses the following difference: “If tragedy is absent in classical China, it is not

due to a lack of pessimism but rather this missing valorization of the will, the celebration of... ‘the titanically striving individual’” (92). Huang develops a similar account of tragedy in pre-modern Chinese dramas, adding that what distinguishes Chinese tragedy is “isolation of the tragic character” in combination with “the necessity and tyranny of Time” (61).

44. The language of blurring a distinction between agency and fate comes from Felski 2008, 6.

45. The notion of an open window was inspired by Wu 1991, 252.

46. On the prevalent nature of these conflicts (in the context of a contingent world) I agree with Martha Nussbaum: “[T]hat much that I did not make goes toward making me whatever I shall be praised or blamed for being; that I must constantly choose among competing and apparently incommensurable goods and that circumstances may force me to a position in which I cannot help being false to something or doing some wrong; that an event that simply happens to me may, without my consent, alter my life; that is equally problematic to entrust one’s good to friends, lovers, or country and to try to have a good life without them –all these I take to be not just the material of tragedy, but everyday facts of lived practical reason.” As quoted in Felski 2008, 12.

47. Olberding makes a similar point in 2008, 147: “However, where restorative therapy primarily is engineered to alleviate immediate suffering, the aim of this more formidable version of mourning is to discover in the pain of loss a richly aesthetic vision of life.”

48. This is building off of Cole’s notion of “embodied absence” in Cole 1985, 9.

49. A more contemporary (and non-Chinese) example that stresses the notion of vulnerability would be a wedding. The bride and groom, one would imagine, have desires to protect themselves from emotional harm and at the same time have desires to care for each other. It might often be possible to fulfil both desires, but these desires can and do conflict (especially since death is likely to leave one person coping with the loss of the other, and we rarely know when and to whom death will occur at the moment of entering into the relationship). A wedding ritual creates the space for enacting both desires. In making the commitment of marriage, the bride and groom simultaneously promise to care for one another (a recognition of vulnerability and the desire to care) and to protect themselves emotionally (hence the contractual nature of the promise made in the ceremony). In this sense, ritual becomes an opportunity to perform ambivalent feelings; and a chance to construct a world that allows for simultaneous (yet conflicting) desires.

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Coping with ambiguity: seventeenth-century intercultural interpretations of “as if” rituals in the *Liji*

Nicolas Standaert

- 1 When Chinese offer sacrifices to their ancestors, are the spirits of these ancestors really present at the sacrifice and do they consume the food offerings? Based on the fear of performing idolatrous rituals, this was a major question with which the European missionaries were confronted in the 17th century. The answer to this question was of primary importance to determine their attitude towards these rites. If indeed the ancestors were present, consumed the offerings and even granted blessings, these rituals should be considered idolatry and rejected; if not, they could be tolerated. In order to solve these questions, the missionaries had recourse to Chinese scholars who led them to Chinese texts, among which the *Liji* 禮記 (Book of Rites). The question of whether the spirit of the ancestors were really present at the sacrifices, however, was not the main focus of discussions in the *Liji*, nor in later texts, and throughout Chinese textual tradition such questions were not discussed as extensively as similar topics in Europe (such as theological discussions about the transubstantiation or the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist).
- 2 This paper focuses on the interpretation of the *Liji* by the late 17th century Chinese Christian scholar Yan Mo 嚴謨 (c. 1640s–after 1718). His interpretations are meaningful in two regards. First, they were produced in an intercultural context, as a result of an encounter with scholars belonging to another culture than his own. Thus, his interpretation of the *Liji* may shed some light on how Chinese scholars reread their own classical texts from the perspective of new questions raised through such encounters. Second, scholars such as Yan Mo were not high-level officials but low-level literati. Their interpretations thus provide some insight into the acquaintance of these literati with the *Liji*.

- 3 Moreover, in this paper, Yan Mo's interpretation of the *Liji* will be linked to recent interpretations of ritual, more precisely those that consider rituals as creation of a shared "as if" world. This involves questions such as: are the ancestral rituals in the *Liji* and the way in which they were put in practice in the 17th century rituals that create an "as if" world? And is this "as if" world contrasted with the "real" world? Does the *Liji* describe the ancestors "as if" they were present, or does it consider them really present, or is its description of this topic ambiguous? And if so, how to cope with such ambiguity?

Background and context of the texts by Yan Mo

- 4 In the first hundred years of the Christian mission in China since the late 16th century, missionaries did not pay particular attention to the *Liji*. The first published translation of Confucian classics admittedly contained a translation of the *Zhongyong* 中庸 (Doctrine of the Mean) and *Daxue* 大學 (Great Learning) chapters, but they were translated as part of the *Four Books*, not of the *Liji*.¹ In fact, except for some selected translated quotations in manuscript texts from the late 17th century (see below) and some descriptions and selected translations in printed texts from the 18th century,² one has to wait for the late 19th century for the first full translation of the *Liji* in European languages. Yet, the interest in the *Liji* had already changed with the development of the rites controversy in the late 17th century, the 1680s and 1690s: the Jesuit missionaries were searching for proofs for their argument that the sacrifices offered to the ancestors were not superstitious or idolatrous but merely political or civil rites.³ In this search, they could benefit from the help of Chinese scholars who pointed them at passages in the classics, and especially the *Liji*, which could support their claim.

The background

- 5 Before contextualising the texts from the 1680s and 1690s that are analysed in this paper, it is helpful to move back eighty to a hundred years earlier in order to understand the initial question concerning the ancestors that would lead to the rites controversy. Since their arrival in China, the Jesuit missionaries were confronted with the ancestral sacrifices. Although Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) himself did not give much systematic evaluation of the Chinese ancestral or funeral rites, his few insights played a major role in the policies that would be adopted later. In one key passage of his chapter on the Chinese sects in his *Christian Expedition to China*, he described the offering of food, incense, and silk or paper to the dead ancestors and, quoting the "Zhongyong" 中庸 chapter from the *Liji*, went on to explain:

The reason they give for this observance on behalf of their ancestors is this, "to serve the dead as if they were living" (*servirgli morti come se fossero vivi*). Nor do they think that the dead come to eat these things, or have need of them; but they say they do it because they know of no other way of showing the love and gratitude they have for them. Some say that this ceremony was instituted more for the living than the dead, that is to teach children and the ignorant to know and serve their parents while alive by showing them that important people perform for [their parents] after their death the services they were accustomed to perform when [their parents] were alive. And since they neither recognise any divinity in these

dead, nor ask anything of them, nor hope for anything for them, the practice is completely free from any idolatry (*idolatria*), and perhaps could even be said to involve no superstition (*superstitione*). Nevertheless, it would be better to replace this custom with giving alms to the poor for the souls of these dead, when they become Christians.⁴

- 6 Ricci thus adopted the view that in these rituals the Chinese serve the dead “as if” they were living and concluded that the Chinese did not believe that the dead are actually present, or that they are divine. The practice was certainly not idolatrous, a label used for offerings to wrong deities who, to the missionaries, were mere creatures, and they were perhaps not superstitious, which usually meant the improper worship of the true God.⁵ But because of the danger of superstition, it would be better to aim at eventually replacing such customs. Actually, the missionaries only gradually accepted certain Chinese funeral rites. They were mainly those embedded in the Confucian tradition of the *Jiali* 家禮 (Family Rituals) and referred to as “Chinese custom” (*ex more sinico, conforme ao costume da China*).⁶ They were regarded as “civil” and “political” rites and were thus acceptable for the Church.
- 7 In fact, during the first fifty years of their stay in China, Jesuits had expressed among themselves very different opinions about the rites.⁷ The beginning of the controversy outside the circle of China Jesuits is usually associated with the initiatives taken by the arrival of the first Dominicans in China in 1633 and the subsequent submission to Rome of questions attacking the Jesuit approach to the Chinese rites. In 1645, a first papal decree prohibiting the practices was issued. It was then followed by a more favourable one in 1656. After the exile of the missionaries to Canton (1666–1669), they returned to the inland and the controversy gradually resumed in the 1680s and 1690s. For instance, the Dominican Francisco Varo (Wan Jiguo 萬濟國, 1627–1687) wrote a text entitled *Bianji* 辯祭 [Arguments against Sacrifices]. In reaction to it, the Jesuit Simão Rodrigues (Li Ximan 李西滿, 1645–1704) invited several Chinese to write a criticism of the ideas expressed in it. Another very active Jesuit at that time was Francesco Saverio Filippucci (1632–1692). He not only accumulated the texts compiled by these Chinese scholars, but also acquired the primary sources they used, including annotated versions of the *Liji* such as Chen Hao’s 陳澹 (1261–1341) *Liji jishuo* 禮記集說 [Compiled Statements about the *Liji*]. He provided his own analysis of them in order to show that the ancestral rites were “political” rites. As such, he was probably the first missionary to have ever seriously studied the *Liji*. However most of his texts remained manuscripts.⁸
- 8 The conflict between the two visions intensified when Charles Maigrot M. E. P. (1652–1730), Vicar Apostolic of Fujian, framed an indictment of the rites in his Mandate of 26 March 1693, a document that stirred up reactions from Chinese scholars. The text by Maigrot, which mainly relied on Varo’s explanations, contains seven articles, one of which is worth quoting in order to better understand the context in which the texts under investigation below were produced:
- “Art.4. On no account are missionaries to allow Christians to preside at, to serve, or to be present at the solemn sacrifices or oblations that they are in the habit of offering to Confucius and their ancestors several times a year. We say these offerings are tainted with superstition.”⁹
- 9 From that time on, the Holy See became involved in a juridical process of extraordinary complexity. Two Jesuits, François Noël (1651–1729) and Kasper Castner (1665–1709), were sent to Rome to defend the Jesuit position. To do so, they took with them a significant number of sources originating from Canton-Macao, especially a collection of

books and texts acquired by Filippucci.¹⁰ This explains why these texts, among which one finds the *Liji* and the texts by Yan Mo, are now preserved in Rome.¹¹ Moreover, Noël and Castner used them in defence of their position, as they are referred to in the documents prepared for the papal commission. As a result quotations from Chinese (Christians), among whom Yan Mo, and quotations from the *Liji* were translated into Latin and printed in *Summarium Nouorum Autenticorum Testimoniorum Europæorum, quam Sinensium nouissimè è China allatorum* (Summary of new authentic testimonies, both of Europeans and Chinese, very recently brought from China) (Rome, 1703).¹² The deliberations of a commission of cardinals in Rome, however, resulted in the decree *Cum Deus optimus* of 20 November 1704. Among other items, it forbade Christians to take part in sacrifices to the ancestors and proscribed ancestral tablets that displayed the characters “throne” [(*ling*)*zuo* (靈)座] or “seat of the spirit” (*shenwei* 神位) referring to the deceased. Tablets bearing merely the name of the dead were nevertheless allowed.

The author

- 10 One scholar who specialised in accumulating and commenting quotations from the *Liji* and whose commentaries are analysed in this paper is Yan Mo 嚴謨 (*zi*: Dingyou 定猷; Christian name: Paulus 保球 or 保祿) (possibly born in the mid-1640s, died after 1718). Very few elements are known about Yan Mo’s life.¹³ He was a native of Zhangzhou 漳州 in the Fujian province. The only reference in official Chinese sources relates to his becoming a Tribute Student (*gongsheng* 貢生, *sui* 歲) in 1709 (Kangxi 48).¹⁴ From his Christian texts, we know that he was the son of Yan Zanhua 嚴贊化 (*zi*: Sican 思參; Christian name Ambrosius 盎博削).¹⁵ Yan Zanhua, himself a Tribute Student by Grace of the year 1651 (*gongsheng*, *fuxue’en* 府學恩)¹⁶ was a fervent Christian who belonged to the Fujian community. He was a disciple and collaborator of Giulio Aleni S. J. (Ai Rulüe 艾儒略, 1582–1649). He participated in the correction (*dingzheng* 訂正) of the *Kouduo richao* 口鐸日抄 [Daily Record of Oral Preaching] (1630–1640) and the *Lixiu yijian* 勵脩一鑑 [Mirror for Encouragement of Cultivation] (1639), two of the most important texts describing Aleni’s activities and the Fujian Christian community at the end of the Ming. By the end of the 17th century, however, the organisation of this community had changed quite drastically. The Fujian province had become the centre of the Dominican missions in China, while the Jesuits had considerably reduced their activities there. It seems that the Yan family belonged to the lower literati class, that is, the class of humble bachelors, school teachers, and clerks. As Erik Zürcher pointed out, these scholars were not *jinshi* 進士 degree holders closely linked to the court who had to deal with the centre of power, but low-level literati deeply rooted in Chinese society. They formed, especially in the Fujian province, the basis of the Christian community in the 17th century.¹⁷

The texts

- 11 Around 17 texts are known to be authored by Yan Mo. They are all manuscripts, some preserved in several copies.¹⁸ This paper focuses on two of them related to the *Liji*. They were most probably written in the 1680s or early 1690s: the *Jizukao* 祭祖考 [Investigation into Ancestral Worship]¹⁹ and the *Lishi tiaowen* 李師條問 [Successive

Questions of Father Li] also known as *Tiaowen jida* 條問集答 [Collected Answers to the Successive Questions].²⁰

- 12 *Jizukao* is a relatively short text (12 fols.) that provides a research into the ancestral worship: with quotation from original texts, it treats subsequently the original meaning of the offerings, the ritual during the period of the Three Dynasties, the *Family Rituals* of the Song Confucians, the invocation texts of later generations and the heterodoxy of ordinary offerings. All these elements are then followed by a discussion by Yan Mo. The *Lishi tiaowen* is a much longer text (50 fols.) which answers some 28 questions. For each question, Yan Mo first quotes the related classical texts and then gives his commentary. The two texts are interconnected since *Jizukao* is almost completely and literally integrated under the corresponding questions of *Lishi tiaowen*. Therefore, this paper will mostly refer to the *Lishi tiaowen*.
- 13 Though undated, both texts were most probably written on the occasion of the conflict related to rites mentioned above. It is known that Yan Mo's *Bianji* 辨祭 [Discerning Sacrifices] was a reaction to Varo's *Bianji* 辯祭 [Arguments against Sacrifices]. Yan Mo wrote his text at the request of Rodrigues, possibly in the early 1680s. *Jizukao* together with *Muzhukao* 木主考 [Investigation into the Ancestral Tablet]²¹ and probably also the *Kaoyi* 考疑 [Investigation into Doubts]²² most probably date from the same period. *Lishi tiaowen* may also belong to the same period because Father Li to which the text is addressed may well be Simão Rodrigues. Yet it may also date from the early 1690s, and thus reuse the material originally produced for the *Jizukao*. There exist several letters written by Yan Mo and others on the occasion of the decree by Maigrot. One of them is dated from 1695.²³ Another of these letters has attached corrections to the *Lishi tiaowen*, which is mentioned as being written "the previous year" (*qian nian* 前年).²⁴ It seems that as a result of Maigrot's edict, Jesuits had resumed asking for additional reference material from the Chinese Christians. The *Lishi tiaowen*, which is based on the questions raised earlier by Rodrigues, may have been the result of it.
- 14 In fact, there are four other texts dealing with nearly all the same 28 questions as those discussed in *Lishi tiaowen*:
- Lisu mingbian* 禮俗明辨 [Distinguishing Clearly between Rituals and Ordinary Customs]²⁵ by Li Jiugong 李九功 (?-1681; also from Fujian province)
- Chu yan* 芻言 [My Opinions]²⁶ by He xiangong [He, the catechist] 何相公 (probably He Ruling 何如答 [Juren 1663] also from Fujian)
- [*Liyi dawen* 禮儀答問] [Questions and Answers on Rituals]²⁷ by Xia Dachang (Mathias) 夏大常 (from Ganzhou 贛州 (Jiangxi))²⁸
- [*Liyi wenda* 禮儀問答] [Answers to Questions on Rituals],²⁹ anonymous text (probably by a scholar from Shaanxi)³⁰
- 15 Since Li Jiugong died in 1681, his text may have been written shortly after receiving the questions by Rodrigues. The others may date from the same period (between 1680 and 1683) or several years later (between 1689 and 1692) because a note on these texts mentioned that they were given to the vice-provincial Giandomenico Gabiani (1623-1694), who was vice-provincial twice (1680-1683 and 1689-1692). Given the reference in the letter to Monteiro, Yan Mo's answers possibly date from this later period.
- 16 There are around 28 questions in total, though not each text answers all of them or in the same order.³¹ This wide variety of questions reflects the anxiety of the missionaries regarding the Chinese rites. These questions mainly concern the meaning and not the actual performance of the rituals. For instance:

“What about the rituals performed at the occasion of solar or lunar eclipse?”

(日蝕月蝕行禮何如?)

“What about the libation of liquor on the ground at the funeral rites?”

(喪禮奠酒於地何如?)

“What is the meaning of choosing a [burial] place?”

(擇地何義?)

“What is the meaning of the local official paying respects to the city god?”

(官長敬城隍何義?)

“What is the meaning of the spring and autumn sacrifices in the Confucius temple?”

(孔子廟中春秋二祭何義?)

“What is the meaning of kowtowing to Heaven and Earth at the wedding ritual?”

(婚禮拜天地何義?)

- 17 There are two questions in answer to which the *Liji* is significantly more abundantly quoted:

“What is the meaning in the Chinese sacrificial rites of the nine offerings by the Son of Heaven, the seven offerings by the lords and the three offerings by the high officials?”

(來問中國祭禮天子九獻諸侯七獻大夫士三獻其義何歟)³²

“In the sacrifices for the ancestors, does one seek blessings or not?”

(來問祭祖宗求福不求福)³³

- 18 While most authors usually give short answers in their own words, Yan Mo proceeds in a systematic way: he starts by quoting classical texts, in the case of the last two questions, mainly from the *Liji*. This is why the answers from the *Lishi tiaowen* (partly copied from *Jizukao*) will be analysed here.

Discussion of the *Liji* in the *Lishi tiaowen*³⁴

- 19 At the beginning of the *Lishi tiaowen*,³⁵ Yan Mo gives a list and description of the texts that he consulted: the *Shangshu* 尚書 (Book of Documents), the *Shijing* 詩經 (Book of Odes), the *Liji* 禮記, the *Chunqiu* 春秋 (Spring and Autumn Annals), the *Zhouli* 周禮 (Rites of Zhou), the *Yili* 儀禮 (Etiquette and Rites), the *Lunyu* 論語 (Analects), the *Zhongyong* 中庸, the *Baihutong* 白虎通 (White Tiger Discussions), the *Kaiyuan li* 開元禮 (Rituals of the Kaiyuan era [of the Great Tang Dynasty], with reference to Du You’s 杜佑 *Tong dian* 通典 (Comprehensive Institutions) (801)), Ma Duanlin’s 馬端臨 (ca. 1250-1325) *Wenxian tongkao* 文獻通考 (Comprehensive Examination of Documents) (including various historical commentaries), Zhu Xi’s 朱熹 *Jiali* 家禮, and the *Da Ming jili* 大明集禮 (Collected Rituals of the Great Ming). He also adds a list of the mainly pre-Song commentators. The *Liji* is presented as “the canonical rituals from Yu and the Xia, Shang and Zhou, collected and compiled by various scholars from the Qin and Han dynasties, one of the six classics.”³⁶ Subsequently Yan Mo gives a list of the chapters that are quoted³⁷ and the references to the two main commentaries that he used: the Han and Tang commentaries collected in the [*Shisanjing*] *zhushu* [十三經] 註疏 [Commentaries and Sub-Commentaries to the Thirteen Classics] and the widely used Yuan commentary *Liji jishuo* 禮記集說 [Compiled Statements about the *Liji*] (1322) by Chen Hao 陳澧 (1261-1341), also called *Liji jizhu* 禮記集註 [Compiled Annotations to the *Liji*] or *Liji daquan* 禮記大全 [Complete Collection of the *Liji*].³⁸
- 20 The way Yan Mo proceeds is the following: immediately after the question under discussion he lists a number of quotations; he clearly indicates their origin (i.e. book

and/or chapter), and sometimes adds interlinear notes, that usually reproduce elements from the official commentaries. At the end of the citation, he gives his own commentary (*yu an* 愚按). Thus, the paragraph on “What is the meaning in the Chinese sacrificial rites of the nine offerings by the Son of Heaven, the seven offerings by the lords and the three offerings by the high officials?” (來問：中國祭禮天子九獻，諸侯七獻，大夫士三獻，其義何歟?) starts with the following quotation³⁹:

《禮記》〈祭義〉曰：唯聖人為能饗帝上帝，孝子為能饗親。饗者，鄉也。鄉之，然後能饗焉。是故孝子臨尸註：尸主也。古人祭必於孫行中取一人，代祖宗居位飲食，謂之尸。自漢以後至今不用。⁴⁰ 而不作，君牽牲，夫人奠盞酒也，君獻尸，夫人薦豆木器，卿大夫相君，命婦相夫人。齊齊乎其敬也！愉愉乎其忠也！勿勿諸其欲其饗之也！（“Jiyi”, 25.6)⁴¹

The “Jiyi” (Meaning of the Sacrifices) chapter of the *Liji* says: It is only the sage who can sacrifice to God, and the filial son who can sacrifice to his parents. Sacrificing means directing one’s self to; only when he directs himself [to his parents], he is sacrificing. Hence the filial son approaches the personator of the departed without having occasion to blush; the ruler leads the victim forward, while his wife puts down the bowls; the ruler presents the offerings to the personator, while his wife sets forth the various dishes; his ministers and great officers assist the ruler, while their acknowledged wives assist his wife. How well sustained was their reverence! How complete was the expression of their loyal devotion! How earnest was their wish that the departed should enjoy the service!⁴²

Annotation: The personator of the deceased is the principal mourner. When ancient people sacrificed, they had to select among the grandchildren one person to take the place of the ancestor and to eat and drink, and he was called “personator.” It has not been used since the Han.

〈檀弓〉曰：祭祀之禮，主人自盡焉耳。⁴³ 豈知神之所饗，亦以主人有齊敬之心也。註：主人之自盡，亦豈知神之所饗，必在於此。且以表其心而已矣。⁴⁴
 (“Xiagong xia”, 4.15)

The “Tangong” chapter says: In the sacrifices [subsequent to the interment] the principal mourner simply does his utmost. Does he know what the spirit enjoys? He is guided only by his pure and reverent heart.⁴⁵

Annotation: The principal mourner doing his utmost, does he know that what the spirit enjoys is necessarily located in this [ritual]? Herewith he only expresses his heart, and nothing more.

〈祭統〉曰：孝子之事親也，有三道焉。生則養，沒則喪，喪畢則祭。養則觀其順也，喪則觀其哀也，祭則觀其敬而時也。盡此三道者，孝子之行也。（“Jitong”, 26.3)

The “Jitong” (Summary Account of the Sacrifices) chapter says: Therefore in three ways is a filial son’s service of his parents shown –while they are alive, by nourishing them; when they are dead, by mourning; and when the mourning is over by sacrificing to them. In his nourishing them, we see his obedience; in his funeral rites, we see his sorrow; in his sacrifices we see his reverence and observance of the [proper] seasons. Fully implementing these three ways is the behaviour of a filial son.⁴⁶

21 These quotations are taken from three different chapters of *Liji*.⁴⁷ Just like most that follow, they are rather descriptive in nature. At first sight, they do not seem to be related to the rites controversy nor do they reveal a lot about Yan Mo’s position. The explanations, including *di* 帝 being interpreted as *Shangdi* 上帝 in the first quotation,

are taken from conventional commentaries. This is for instance the case for the *Liji jishuo daquan* 禮記集說大全 [Complete Collection of Compiled Statements about the *Liji*] edited by Hu Guang 胡廣 and others, which quotes Shilin Ye shi 石林葉氏, i.e. Ye Mengde 葉夢得 (1077–1148)⁴⁸. The second quotation taken from the “Tangong” chapter is not devoid of uncertainty or ambiguity: by stating that the principal mourner does not know whether the spirit enjoys the offerings, it mostly puts stress on the intention of his heart. This ambiguity cannot be resolved unless we know Yan Mo’s opinion. The third quotation mainly puts emphasis on the practice or behaviour (*xing* 行) of the filial son.

- 22 In the following commentaries to these quotations, Yan Mo clearly expresses his view.⁴⁹

Firstly, he explains why the sacrifices were instituted by the ancient kings:

故古先王因人心，制為祭祀之禮，建之廟以貌之，立之主用木題名其上謂之木主以象之，設其裳衣，陳其時食以思之，始死朝夕奠哭，既葬四時獻享。此皆欲藉有形以寓無形，使之如有所憑依，長如在目前。

Therefore, taking into consideration the human heart, the ancient kings instituted the sacrificial rites, built temples to make them appear, put up tablets in wood, with their names on it, called “wooden master,” to make them manifest, inaugurated ceremonial clothing and displayed seasonal dishes to commemorate them; when someone just died, they offer and wail every morning and evening, and after the burial they make offerings every season. In all these cases, they rely on material things in order to provide home to the immaterial, making them such as if they have something to rely on and be enduring as if they are right before us.

- 23 By providing an interpretation in which the material (which is shaped) provides home for the immaterial (which is shapeless), Yan Mo seems to adopt a peculiar view on ritual action: he considers that the true essence of the referent of meaning resides beyond the ritual itself. He does so by pointing twice at the “as if” situations created by the material elements of the ritual. Such a conception of ritual converges with recent scholarship that regard rituals as means to create an “as if” world – a point that will be discussed later on in this paper. Yet, for now, it is worth noting that Yan Mo immediately and explicitly develops his statement by explaining these rituals with three core “as if” sentences taken from the classics.⁵⁰

《論語》所謂祭如在，〈祭義〉所謂如將見之，〈中庸〉所謂事死如事生事亡如事存，孝之至也。

This is what the *Lunyu* calls “to offer as if they were present,” what the “*Jiyi*” chapter [of the *Liji*] calls: “as if he were seeing the departed” and what the *Zhongyong* calls: “to serve the dead as if they were living, to serve the deceased as if they were present – the perfection of filial piety.”

- 24 *Ji ru zai* 祭如在: “He sacrificed [to the dead], as if they were present” is quoted from *Lunyu* 3.12, where it is also followed by the sentence 祭神如神在 “He sacrificed to the spirits, as if the spirits were present.”⁵¹ The second passage comes from the “*Jiyi*” 祭義 chapter of the *Liji*, which explains the meaning of filial piety (*xiao* 孝) and reverence (*jing* 敬) as expressed through the performance of sacrifices. This passage comes from an explanation where it is stated that sacrifices should not be too frequent nor infrequent, ideally only in spring and autumn: “In spring, when [the superior man] treads on the ground, wet with the rains and dews that have fallen heavily, he cannot avoid being moved by a feeling as if he were seeing the departed.”⁵² The large quotation

from *Zhongyong* 19 (*Liji*, 32.13)⁵³ appears in Yan Mo's response to the question, "In the sacrifices for the ancestors, does one seek blessings or not?" (來問祭祖宗求福不求福). It is a sentence often quoted in texts debating the rites controversy. It was already present in Matteo Ricci's comment evoked at the beginning of this paper, when he stated that food offerings to the dead were made "as if" they were alive.⁵⁴ A similar sentence from "Jiyi" is quoted by Yan Mo under the same subsequent question on the blessings:⁵⁵

文王之祭也：事死者如事生，思死者如不欲生，忌日必哀，稱諱如見親。祀之忠也，如見親之所愛，如欲色然；其文王與？（“Jiyi”，25.7）

King Wen, in sacrificing, served the dead as if he were serving the living. He thought of the dead as if he did not wish to live [any longer himself]. On the recurrence of their death day, he inevitably was sad; in calling his father by the name elsewhere forbidden, he looked as if he saw him. So sincere was he in sacrificing that he looked as if he saw the things which his father loved, and the pleased expression of his face: —such was King Wen!⁵⁶

- 25 In fact, due to the conciseness and the polysemy of the words used, these sentences can be interpreted in different ways.⁵⁷ The *Zhongyong* quotation, for instance, can be comprehend as a comparison between serving the dead and the living: "To serve the dead as one serves the living, to serve the departed just as one serves those still in this world."⁵⁸ One finds this comparative use in other sentences from the *Liji* related to "serving": "Therefore a son of all-comprehensive virtue serves his parents as he serves Heaven, and serves Heaven as he serves his parents."⁵⁹ "(Sons') wives should serve their parents-in-law as they served their own."⁶⁰ But 如事生 and 如事存 can also be interpreted as a supposition (subjunctive): "To serve the dead as if they were living, to serve the deceased as if they were present."⁶¹ Even with such a translation there can be several interpretations. The sentence could mean that one presumes the dead are still living (even if one does not know it for sure), thus maintaining a space of ambiguity regarding the question of whether they are there or not. But the supposition could also be counterfactual, that means based on the fact that they are certainly no longer there. It is this last interpretation that Yan Mo adheres to. Further in his commentary he comes explicitly to this conclusion: "When the *Lunyu* says: 'Offer as if they were present,' as a general principle, if one considers it 'as if they were present', then one can know that they were not present."⁶² As such, for Yan Mo, these rituals were *only* "as if" subjunctive rituals. In other words, one should not believe that the deceased are present.
- 26 Yan Mo develops this "as if" aspect in several subtopics related to sacrifices: the spirits do not really eat or drink the sacrifices; their spirit is not present in the tablet; and one does not see or hear the spirits when one offers sacrifices, this is only a product of human mind; finally, one does not seek blessings from them. These statements are argued on the basis of the *Liji* and its commentaries, as well as other classics and commentaries or historical sources.
- 27 Concerning the "wrong statement" of those who say that the ghosts and spirits necessarily should drink and eat [the sacrifices] "as the Buddhist teachings claim,"⁶³ Yan Mo points out that "they do not know that the whole search for it in the six classics, [reveals that] the ancient people who instituted the sacrificial rites, never said that the ghosts and spirits necessarily need to drink and eat it."⁶⁴ Hereto he refers to a passage of "Tangong, xia" which is also fully quoted under the next question about the

blessings:⁶⁵ “The “Tangong” chapter clearly says that [the dead] have never been seen to partake of these things;’ it only expresses the mind and heart of a filial son and nothing else.”⁶⁶ Yan Mo adds to this a rhetorical question: if one says that sacrifices have been installed for the spirits to eat and drink them, then “are the ancestors not almost at the point of dying from hunger?”⁶⁷ since in one year there are only four sacrifices, and the Son of Heaven only sacrifices until the seventh generation, and the common people only during one generation? Even the expression *shang xiang* 尚饗 (I beg you to partake of this sacrifice) in the invocation means: “‘May you almost be directed towards partaking;’ this is not a statement to oblige them [to do so], but a statement [expressing] that one cares for them and expects them.”⁶⁸

- 28 A second issue related to the ancestral sacrifices is that some people “wrongly recognise that the spirit is in the tablet in the temple, and they do not know that although ancient people built temples and put up tablets, they never said that the spirit was there.”⁶⁹ Yan Mo uses two quotations from *Shijing* with their commentaries to emphasise that “it is clearly said that the tablet is in the temple and that the spirit is in Heaven.”⁷⁰

《詩經·文王》篇曰：文王在上於昭于天，文王陟降在帝左右，註曰：文王既歿而神在上，昭明于天，一升一降，無時不在上帝之左右。

The “Wen Wang Ode” in the *Shijing* says: “King Wen is on high. Oh! bright is he in Heaven. [...] King Wen ascends and descends, he is on the left and the right of the Lord.”⁷¹ The note [by Zhu Xi] says: “When King Wen had died, his spirit was on high, and was bright in Heaven, in his movements of ascending and descending it never happened that he was not on the left and the right of the high Lord.”⁷²

〈清廟〉篇祭文王詩曰：對越在天，駿奔走在廟，註曰：既對越其在天之神而又駿奔走其在廟之主。豐城朱氏曰：文王之神雖在天而文王之主則在廟。對越其在天之神，即所以事其在廟之主也。駿奔走其在廟之主，即所以事其在天之神也。

And the “Qingmiao Ode” (on the sacrifice to Wen Wang) says: “In response to him in Heaven, grandly they hurried about in the temple.”⁷³ The note [by Zhu Xi] says: “Since they were responding to the spirit in Heaven, they grandly hurried to the tablet in the temple.”⁷⁴ [The commentary of] Mr. Zhu [Shan 善] from Fengcheng⁷⁵ says: “Although the spirit of King Wen was in Heaven, the tablet of King Wen was in the temple. To respond to the spirit in Heaven: this was precisely the way by which they were serving to the tablet in the temple. And to hurry to the tablet in the temple: this was precisely the way by which they were serving the spirit in Heaven.”

- 29 These citations are concluded by the above-mentioned explanation of the *Lunyu* sentence: “When the *Lunyu* says: ‘Offer as if they were present,’ as a general principle, if one considers it ‘as if they were present’ then one can know that they were not present.”
- 30 Regarding the third issue –concerning the fact that seeing or hearing spirits is but a creation of our thoughts– Yan Mo starts with a quotation from the *Shijing*, which is explained with the help of two passages from the “Jiyi” chapter in the *Liji*:⁷⁶

詩〈商頌·那〉祭湯之詩之篇曰：湯孫奏假奏樂而格于祖考綏我思成。鄭氏註曰：安我以所思而成之，人謂神明來格也。此即禮記所謂：齊之日：思其居處，【思其】笑語，【思其】所欲所嗜，至如見所為齊者。⁷⁷ 及祭之日，儼然如見，肅然如聞，至愾然如聞歎息之聲。⁷⁸ 此之謂思成。蘓氏曰：其所見聞，本非有也，生於思耳。朱子曰：齊而思之，祭而如有見聞，則成此人矣。觀此言，則古

人間有云：來格來享者皆成於思有耳，非謂真也。惟為其無在，是以故意立一二着實字目以維擊之，而其無在之意，嘗不已明明說出也。

The “Na Ode” from the “Eulogies of Shang” in the *Shijing* (an ode on the sacrifice to Tang), says: “The descendant of Tang invites him with this music (he plays music and goes to the ancestor), that he may soothe us with the realisation of our thoughts.”⁷⁹ The note by Mr. Zheng⁸⁰ says: “[Regarding the phrase] ‘that he soothes us with what we think and realise them,’ people say that the spirit clearly has come.” This is precisely what is said in [the “Jiyi” chapter of] the *Liji*: “During the days of such vigil, the mourner thinks of his departed, how and where they sat, how they smiled and spoke, what they delighted in, and what things they desired and enjoyed. [On the third day of such exercise] he sees those for whom it is employed.”⁸¹ “On the day of sacrifice, [when he enters the apartment [of the temple]], he seems to see [the deceased] in the place [where his spirit tablet is]. [After he has moved about [and performed his operations], and is leaving at the door,] he seems to be arrested by hearing the sound of his movements, and sighs as he seems to hear the sound of his sighing.”⁸² This is what is called “the thoughts are realised.” Mr. Su⁸³ [Zhe 蘇轍, 1039-1112] says: “What he sees and hears is fundamentally not there, it is what comes forth from thoughts.” Master Zhu says: “Thinking about him during the vigil and offering as if one sees and hears makes him to become this person.”⁸⁴ As seen from these statements, some among the ancient people said that those [spirits of the ancestors] coming to and enjoying [the sacrifices] were only created in thoughts and it is not that one can call it true. Only to make that “they are not there,” therefore one purposely added one or two full words to hold it together and have the meaning of “not being there.” Why endlessly having to express this so clearly?

- 31 The second quotation from the “Jiyi” chapter in the *Liji* also appears with other previously mentioned and additional quotations in the subsequent section on seeking blessing from the ancestors. It adds additional arguments to the “as if” interpretation.⁸⁵
- 32 The fourth and final subtopic arguing for an “as if” interpretation concerns the question of whether one seeks blessings from the ancestors when conducting sacrifices. As this is the subject of a separate question, it starts, as in the other cases, with a number of quotations from the *Liji*. Most of these excerpts were already adduced in the previous subtopics.⁸⁶ Among the new ones, some stress the importance of the heart (*xin* 心) of the filial son. They provide an interpretation of blessings that insist on the fact that they are not sought for:

賢者之祭也，必受其福。非世所謂福也。福者，備也；備者，百順之名也。無所不順者，謂之備。言：內盡於己，而外順於道也。忠臣以事其君，孝子以事其親，其本一也。上則順於鬼神，外則順於君長，內則以孝於親。如此之謂備。唯賢者能備，能備然後能祭。是故，賢者之祭也：致其誠信與其忠敬，奉之以物，道之以禮，安之以樂，參之以時。明薦之而已矣。不求其為。此孝子之心也。
 (“Jitong”, 26.2)⁸⁷

The sacrifices of worthies must have their own blessing; –not indeed what the world calls blessing. Blessing here means perfection; –it is the name given to the complete and natural discharge of all duties. When nothing is left incomplete or improperly discharged; –this is what we call perfection, implying the doing everything that should be done in one’s internal self, and externally the performance of everything according to the proper method. There is a fundamental agreement between a loyal subject in his service of his ruler and a filial son in his service of his parents. In the supernal sphere there is a compliance with [what is due to] the repose and expansion of the

energies of nature; in the external sphere, a compliance with [what is due] to rulers and elders; in the internal sphere, the filial service of parents; –all this constitutes what is called perfection. It is only the able and virtuous man who can attain to this perfection; and can sacrifice when he has attained to it. Hence in the sacrifices of such a man he brings into exercise all sincerity and good faith, with all right-heartedness and reverence; he offers the [proper] things; accompanies them with the [proper] rites; employs the soothing of music; does everything suitably to the season. Thus intelligently does he offer his sacrifices, without seeking that they will do anything for them: –such is the heart and mind of a filial son.⁸⁸

33 Next comes Yan Mo's own interpretation of these quotations:⁸⁹

禮祭祖宗止是思念死者之意，非有求福也，禮經明據可考。後代祝文現在，自唐迄今，上至天子，下至士庶之家，祝文一然，並未嘗有一毫涉求福之詞。

The ritual of sacrificing to the ancestors only has the meaning of remembering the dead, and it is not that there is any seeking of blessings; the ritual scriptures are very clear and reliable in this regard. Moreover, the invocations of later generations still exist today, the texts of the invocation from the Tang till now, and from the Son of Heaven to the common families are all uniform: they never had the slightest word that involves the seeking of blessings.

34 Subsequently, he quotes a passage from the *Yili* 儀禮, in the “Shaolao” 少牢 chapter (16) –a passage which could indicate the contrary. The quotation addresses the topic of an exchange of wine and a toast between the principal mourner and the personator of the departed.

唯《儀禮》〈少牢〉有曰：主人酹尸，尸酹主人，佐食，取黍授尸，尸執以命祝，祝受嘏主人曰：皇尸命工祝，承致多福於汝孝孫，來汝孝孫，使汝受祿於天，宜稼於田，眉壽永年，勿替引之，之語。⁹⁰

Only the “Shaolao” chapter of the *Yili* says: “The principal mourner toasts wine to the personator of the departed, and the personator of the departed toasts to the principal mourner; the servant at the meal takes millet and gives it to the personator of the departed who, while holding it in his hands, addresses the invocator; the invocator having received [his words] transmits the words of prosperity to the principal mourner, saying: ‘The august personator of the departed commands to [me] the invocator officer to transmit and deliver multiple blessings to you filial grandchildren. Come along filial grandchildren, so that he allows you to receive prosperity from Heaven, prosperous harvests in the fields, an old age and ten thousand years, and guide you without interruption.’”⁹¹

35 Yan Mo concludes from it: “The ignorant will on the basis of this probably suspect that it is a matter of talking about blessings, but in fact this is not the case.”⁹² In order to underscore that these words are only an “as if” ritual, he compares them to the ritual of people greeting each other or toasting to each other. In these daily enactments of civility and politeness the persons involved do not seek blessings.⁹³

蓋古人每相見，或飲酒不論尊卑平等皆互相祝願曰：萬壽無疆，眉壽永年云云今於祭時，主人獻尸，尸酹主人，互相稱願，於禮猶然，非有求福也。且其詞曰：受祿於天，【既以祿天。】⁹⁴ 何嘗敢言祖宗福之也。

In fact, people in the past, when they met each other or while drinking wine, no matter which status they were would mutually exchange toasts and wishes saying: “Wish you ten thousand years and a long life,” etc. In a

sacrifice when the principal mourner and personator of the deceased exchange toasts they also mutually exchange wishes, it is still part of the ritual, it is not that they seek blessings. And regarding the words “receive prosperity from Heaven,” [since one does lead the blessings back to Heaven] how does one dare to say that the ancestors would grant them blessings?

- 36 In Yan Mo’s eyes, there are still some ignorant men and women who mutter some personal invocations at the moment of the sacrifices, just like they do in their prayers for the Buddha. Yet, “all those who have a bit of understanding, all jeer at this lack of ritual.”⁹⁵ In the *Jizukao* Yan Mo concludes:⁹⁶

總之：祭祀者止是沿習古禮，敬思親之心耳，非有魔鬼之說。行之，無碍於 聖教信德之事；不行之，人未解更有 聖教深微之禮，但見其外面，必相誣以不認祖先，大不道，非人類矣。

In conclusion: offering sacrifices only means following the custom of ancient rites, it is nothing more than an attitude of revering and remembering one’s parents, it cannot be explained by the existence of ghosts and spirits. If one practises it, it will not harm the virtue of belief of the Holy Teaching; if one does not practise it, people will not necessarily be able to explain that there are more profound rituals in the Holy Teaching, but seen from the outside, one necessarily will be accused that by not recognising one’s ancestors one stands in great opposition to the Way and does not belong to humankind at all.

- 37 With this conclusion Yan Mo balances what does not harm the Christian belief and what could be in opposition to the Way. He thus succinctly points at what Erik Zürcher has called the “cultural imperative,”⁹⁷ *i.e.*, the obligation to conform to what was considered *zheng* 正 in the religious, ritual, social and political senses. This imperative also finds its original expression in the *Liji*.

Coping with “as if” rituals

- 38 The reading of the *Liji* texts by Yan Mo sheds new light not only on the way in which the participants in the rites controversy dealt with the rituals but also on the way in which the *Liji* could be read by Chinese scholars from the low-literati class. This (re)reading was the result of an intercultural interaction with European missionaries, who had raised questions about the Chinese ancestral rites in such a manner that it motivated scholars such as Yan Mo to take under consideration rarely raised interrogations. It led to a somewhat new reading that did not violate the classical tradition. Canonical Chinese texts indeed rarely explain the meaning of rituals, while archetypal commentaries often fail to provide the reason for the rituals. Thus they hardly ever discuss in detail ritual questions such as whether the spirit of the ancestors is really present at the moment of the sacrifice or not. As several modern authors have pointed out, the stress is put on *doing* and on the correct performance (orthopraxis),⁹⁸ not on the reason behind the performance.
- 39 As could be seen in the quotations by Yan Mo, the *Liji* itself is rather discrete on the topic of the presence of the ancestors. It merely uses some expressions that can be interpreted as subjunctive “as if” sentences. Such “as if” sentences occur rather frequently in *Liji*. Here are some additional examples related to descriptions of sacrifices and other rituals:

始死，充充如有窮；既殯，瞿瞿如有求而弗得；既葬，皇皇如有望而弗至。練而慨然，祥而廓然。

(“Tangong, shang” 檀弓上, 3.19)

When [a father] has just died, [the son] should appear quite overcome, and **as if** he were at his wits' end; when the corpse has been put into the coffin, he should cast quick and sorrowful glances around, **as if** he were seeking for something and could not find it; when the interment has taken place, he should look alarmed and restless, **as if** he were looking for someone who does not arrive; at the end of the first year's mourning, he should look sad and disappointed; and at the end of the second year, he should have a vague and unreliable look.⁹⁹

凡祭，容貌顏色，如見所祭者。

(“Yuzao” 玉藻, 13.32)

In general at sacrifices, the bearing and appearance [of the worshippers] made it appear **as if** they saw those to whom they were sacrificing.¹⁰⁰

盛服奉承而進之，洞洞乎，屬屬乎，如弗勝，如將失之，其孝敬之心至也與！

(“Jiyi,” 25.10)

In coming in with the things which they carry, how grave and still are they! How absorbed in what they do! **As if** they were not able to sustain their weight, **as if** they would let them fall: —is not theirs the highest filial reverence?¹⁰¹

孝子之祭也，盡其敬而敬焉，盡其信而信焉，盡其敬而敬焉，盡其禮而不過失焉。進退必敬，如親聽命，則或使之也。

(“Jiyi,” 25.12)

The filial son, in sacrificing, is never able to exhaust his earnest purpose, his sincerity, and reverence. He observes every rule, without transgression or shortcoming. His reverence appears in his movements of advancing and retiring, **as if** he were hearing the orders [of his parents], or **as if** they were perhaps directing him.¹⁰²

孝子如執玉，如奉盈，洞洞屬屬然，如弗勝，如將失之。（“Jiyi,” 25.14）

A filial son moves **as if** he were carrying a jade symbol, or bearing a full vessel. Still and grave, absorbed in what he is doing, he seems **as if** he were unable to sustain the burden, and in danger of letting it fall.¹⁰³

及祭之日，顏色必溫，行必恐，如懼不及愛然。其奠之也，容貌必溫，身必誦，如語焉而未之然。宿者皆出，其立卑靜以正，如將弗見然。及祭之後，陶陶遂遂，如將復入然。

(“Jiyi,” 25.47)

When the day of sacrifice arrived, the rule was that his countenance should be mild, and his movements show an anxious dread, **as if** he feared his love were not sufficient. When he put down his offerings, it was required that his demeanour should be mild, and his body bent, **as if** [his parents] would speak [to him] and had not yet done so; when the officers assisting had all gone out, he stood lowly and still, though correct and straight, **as if** he were about to lose the sight [of his parents]. After the sacrifice, he looked pleased and expectant, **as if** they would again enter.¹⁰⁴

孔子在衛，有送葬者，而夫子觀之，曰：「善哉為喪乎！足以為法矣，小子識之。」子貢曰：「夫子何善爾也？」曰：「其往也如慕，其反也如疑。」子貢曰：「豈若速反而虞乎？」子曰：「小子識之，我未之能行也。」

(“Tangong, shang” 檀弓上, 3.19)

When Confucius was in Wei, there was [a son] following his [father's] coffin to the grave. After Confucius had looked at him, he said, "How admirably did he manage this mourning rite! He is fit to be a pattern. Remember it, my little children." Zigong said, "What did you, Master, see in him so admirable?" "He went," was the reply, "**as if** he were full of eager affection. He came back [looking] **as if** he were in doubt." "Would it not have been better, if he had come back hastily, to present the offering of repose?" The Master said, "Remember it, my children. I have not been able to perform it."¹⁰⁵

其往送也，望望然、汲汲然如有追而弗及也；其反哭也，皇皇然若有求而弗得也。故其往送也如慕，其反也如疑。求而無所得之也，入門而弗見也，上堂又弗見也，入室又弗見也。亡矣喪矣！不可復見矣！筆哭泣辟踊，盡哀而止矣。心悵焉愴焉、惚焉愴焉，心絕志悲而已矣。

(“Wen sang” 問喪, 36)

When [the mourners] went, accompanying the coffin [to the grave], they looked forward, with an expression of eagerness, **as if** they were following someone, and unable to get up to him. When returning to wail, they looked disconcerted, **as if** they were seeking someone whom they could not find. Hence, when escorting [the coffin], they appeared full of affectionate desire; when returning, they appeared full of perplexity. They had sought the [deceased], and could not find him; they entered the gate, and did not see him; they went up to the hall, and still did not see him; they entered his chamber, and still did not see him; he was gone; he was dead; they should see him again nevermore. Therefore they wailed, wept, beat their breasts, and leapt, giving full vent to their sorrow, before they ceased. Their minds were disappointed, pained, fluttered, and indignant. They could do nothing more with their wills; they could do nothing but continue sad.¹⁰⁶

- 40 These “as if” pertain to the emotions (such as affection and doubt) and the gestures (when carrying objects, searching, following) used by the mourners, but also in general to their relationship to the presence of the deceased (as if hearing them; as if seeing those to whom they were sacrificing). They seem to confirm that in China all rituals associated with death are performed “as if” there were a continued relationship between the living and the dead, as pointed out by James Watson. It is irrelevant whether or not participants actually believe that the spirit survives or that the presentation of the offerings has an effect on the deceased. What matters is that the rites are performed according to the accepted procedure.¹⁰⁷
- 41 These “as if” sentences can also be connected to the recent interpretation of ritual in general as presented by Adam B. Seligman, Robert P. Weller, Michael J. Puett and Bennett Simon. These authors argue that ritual creates a subjunctive, an “as if” or “could be” universe. It is this very creative act that makes our shared social world possible. Creating a shared subjunctive, they argue, recognises the inherent ambiguity built into social life and its relationships –including our relations with the natural world. They contrast the ritual views with what they call the “sincere” views on the world. The latter are not focused on an “as if,” but on an “as is” vision of what often becomes a totalistic, unambiguous vision of reality “as it really is.” The tropes of sincerity are present in our overwhelming concern with “authenticity,” with individual choice, with the belief that we can get at the unalterable heart of what we “really” feel and think. Sincerity seems by its very definition to exclude ambiguity.¹⁰⁸

- 42 As pointed out before, the “as if” sentences quoted from the *Liji* by Yan Mo leave open a certain ambiguity. In no case is it explicitly mentioned that ancestors are not present at the sacrifice or that they actually drink and eat the offerings, or to the contrary that they do not do so.¹⁰⁹ The commentaries sometimes give some hindsight. They are more explicit and sometimes question their presence. But they do not so in a systematic way, and they most often leave open a space of ambiguity. Even the more explicit phrase of the “Tangong” chapter, “[the dead] have never been seen to partake of these things” (未有見其饗之), which seems to deny their partaking, is not conclusive. The most critical readings are those by Song scholars such as Su Zhe and Zhu Xi who claimed that what the performer sees and hears is the creation of this own thought.¹¹⁰ Thus the *Liji*, “as a text about ritual theory”¹¹¹ seems to confirm that these rituals create an “as if” or shared subjunctive world, where performers temporarily live and act “as if” there were living in a world of order, facing a moment of chaos and disruption created by the death of a person. Yet one of the questions, already pointed out by Michael Ing, is whether this ritual world is understood as an illusionary world distinct from the real world, or rather as the real world in the sense that the ritual performers aspire for the dysfunctional and chaotic world to be ordered by ritual.¹¹²
- 43 There are indeed different ways in which Yan Mo deals with the ambiguity related to the “as if” world. In the first place, his anxiety is not related to the correct performance of the ritual, on the doing, as it is often the primary concern of Chinese ritual texts as the *Liji*. He pays attention to the correct belief associated to the ritual. The underlying assumption is that if there is a wrong belief –namely that the spirits of the ancestors are in the tablet, that they eat and grant blessings–, this would not only be wrong (*wu* 誤, *miu* 謬)¹¹³ but even heterodox (*xie* 邪).¹¹⁴ To Yan, it is clearly the case with (the Buddhist practice of) burning money, which is contrary to the correct rituals (*zheng li* 正禮).¹¹⁵ How to cope with this anxiety? Yan Mo’s endeavour consists in taking away the inherent ambiguity present in the *Liji* texts. His interpretation, sustained by classical authors, strongly affirms that the spirits do not eat or drink the offerings, that they are not in the tablets, and that they do not grant blessings. He affirms through several means: by strong statements (*e.g.* 不在可知矣 “one can know that they were not present”), by strong negations (*e.g.* 非有求福也 “it is not that there is any seeking of blessing”; 其實非也 “[the matter of talking about blessings] in fact is not the case”) or by claiming that such assertions were never expressed or were never heard (*e.g.* 未嘗有說鬼神須飲食者 “[ancient people] never said that the ghosts and spirits necessarily need to drink and eat it”; 未嘗謂神在是 “they never said that the spirit was there”: 未嘗有一毫涉求福之詞 “they never had the slightest word that involved the seeking of blessings”). Yan Mo’s own position leaves little room for ambiguity in interpretation. He comes to this conclusion by evoking traditional or less traditional commentaries (by Chen Hao, Zhu Xi, Su Zhe and Zhu Shan), by using other classical texts and their commentaries (cf. King Wen being in Heaven from the *Shijing*), by mentioning other texts (such as the invocation texts from the Tang to his own time) and by speaking about everyday rituals (such as greeting or toasting).
- 44 With his statements Yan Mo does not put the sincerity of the rituals into question nor does he adopt an antiritualistic attitude. He rather takes away the ambiguity by insisting on these rituals being merely done “as if.” Yan thus inserts a new sincerity into the ritual, namely by proposing what according to him “really” happens at the ritual. In his eyes, the performers are rational agents who know that the ancestors are

not in the tablet. In order to save rituals as rituals, the alternative being the complete rejection of ancestral rites as heterodox rites, he takes the “as if” as the “real.” He resolves the ambiguity to forge a pure individual consciousness, by insisting that it is merely an “as if” situation. This “authentic” belief makes it for him permissible to continue performing the ritual as a rite that expresses filial piety. It is not opposed to the “virtue of belief” extolled by Christianity. In fact, to him, it is because of this pure belief that the ritual really works.

- 45 In this way, Yan Mo, on the one hand, puts himself into the “as if” tradition. But, on the other hand, he also gives a novel interpretation to it. For Yan Mo, “family members,” as pointed out by Michael Puett, “needed to make the sacrifices because acting as if the ancestors were there brought about change within themselves.”¹¹⁶ In this regard, Yan Mo followed the tradition. However, Puett has also noted that in this tradition: “The concern is not with belief but rather with creating a ritual space wherein one can act as if a certain situation were the case. But, and this is the key point, the ritual itself serves to underline this ‘as if’ quality. The ritual operates precisely by emphasising the disjunction between the world being created by the ritual space and the world that exists outside that of the ritual space.”¹¹⁷ Yan Mo gives a different interpretation: the concern is with belief; because affirming that the ancestors are not there creates the ritual space. It is only because one believes that the ancestors are not there, and that one *only* acts as if they were there that they are allowed to be practised and can bring about (the correct) change within themselves. Thus, as suggested by Michael Ing, the ritual is not opposed to the real world but is the real world as it acts on ordinary life.¹¹⁸ Just like quotidian enactments of civility and politeness enable the maintenance of the shared social world without anyone believing that blessings are exchanged, sacrifices for the ancestors are allowed to be performed for the shared world with the ancestors, without believing that they grant any blessings.
- 46 In order to underscore the characteristic of Yan Mo’s approach, one may compare it to his likely attitude towards the Eucharist. One may assume that Chinese Christians, such as Yan Mo, did not consider the Eucharist (which being called *Sheng ji* 聖祭 is also a *ji* 祭) an “as if” ritual, but believed that Christ was “really” present in the host; at the same time, Yan Mo believed that the ancestors were certainly not present in the ancestral tablet, and thus considered these sacrifices as merely “as if” rituals. But in both cases the rituals were to be performed. As such he showed that for him there was no opposition between the ritual and real world. Interestingly enough, his vision underlines that it is not necessary to “believe” in a ritual in order to perform it, but that the inner state of belief will determine whether one is allowed to perform it. In the case of the Eucharist the authentic belief of the real (and not just an “as if”) presence of Christ is the reason to perform it or to participate in it. In the case of ancestral sacrifices, the belief in the mere “as if” presence of the spirit of the ancestors allows them to be performed; the contrary would not be permissible.
- 47 To conclude, Yan Mo read the *Liji* from a new perspective. The questions he raised to the *Liji* were inspired by interrogations formulated by the European missionaries. His understanding is certainly not the only reading one can have of the *Liji*, but it hopefully sheds some new light on the “as if” characteristic of this text and how to cope with its ambiguity.

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APPENDIX

Abbreviations

ARSI, Jap. Sin.: *Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu, Japonica-Sinica Collection*, 2002. Rome.

See also: Albert Chan, *Chinese Books and Documents in the Jesuit Archives in Rome: A Descriptive Catalogue: Japonica-Sinica I-IV*. New York: M. E. Sharpe.

BAV: *Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana*, 1995. Rome. See also: Paul Pelliot, *Inventaire sommaire des manuscrits et imprimés chinois de la Bibliothèque Vaticane*, revised and edited by Takata Tokio. Kyoto: Istituto Italiano di Cultura.

BNC.VE: *Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale Vittorio Emanuele II*. National Library, Rome.

CCT ARSI: *Yesuhui Luoma dang'anguan Ming Qing tianzhujiao wenxian* 耶穌會羅馬檔案館明清天主教文獻 (*Chinese Christian Texts from the Roman Archives of the Society of Jesus*), 2002, 12 vols., edited by Nicolas Standaert (鐘鳴旦) and Ad Dudink (杜鼎克). Taipei: Ricci Institute.

HCC: *Handbook of Christianity in China: Volume One (635-1800)*, 2001, edited by Nicolas Standaert. Leiden: Brill.

SKQS: (*Wenyuange*) *Siku quanshu* (文淵閣) 四庫全書 (Complete Books in the Four Treasuries (Wenyuan Pavilion Edition)), 1500 vols, 1983–1986. Taipei: Commercial Press (see also electronic version).

FOOTNOTES

1. The author thanks Carine Defoort for her suggestions on the earlier version of this paper, and Anne Cheng, Michael Ing and Michael Puett for the suggestions made at the *Liji* Conference, Paris, June 2018. Michele Ruggieri (1543–1607) was the first (in 1593) to publish a translation of a Confucian classic into a European language, but this was a very fragmentary treatment of the shortest classic (*Daxue*), published in Antonio Possevino's (1559–1611) *Bibliotheca selecta*. He also made a manuscript translation into Spanish of the *Daxue*, the *Zhonggyong*, and parts of the *Lunyu* 論語 in 1590, but this text was only published in Spain in 1921. Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) is said to have translated the *Daxue*, the *Zhonggyong*, and the *Lunyu*, but this text has not been found yet and was never published. In 1662, the Jesuits published in *Sapientia Sinica* a full Latin translation of the *Daxue* (in Jianchang, Jiangxi). The Jesuit translation of the *Zhonggyong* was entitled *Sinarum scientia politico-moralis*; the first part was printed in Canton in 1667; the remainder in Goa in 1669. *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus, sive Scientia sinensis latine exposita*, was published in Paris (D. Horthemels), 1686–1687. For references and modern translations, see CCT-Database under Mungello (1982), Lümann (2003), Meynard (2011), Lo Sardo (2016) and Meynard & Villasante (2018).
2. There is a short anonymous description entitled “Le Li ki, cinquième Livre Canonique du premier Ordre” in Du Halde 1735, vol. 2, 318–319; & Du Halde 1736, 381–382. Referring to Chinese commentators it contains a relatively negative appreciation of the *Liji*: the text is regarded as corrupted; it contains customs that are no longer practised; it should therefore be read with much circumspection. Volume 2 of *Mémoires concernant... les Chinois* (1777) is entirely devoted to “L'Antiquité des Chinois prouvée par les monuments” by Joseph-Marie Amiot, S. J. (1718–1793): it contains a “Table chronologique des auteurs qui ont écrit sur le Li-ki,” with a description of 43 commentators on the *Liji* (210–219). Volume 4 of *Mémoires concernant... les Chinois* (1779) contains a long article on “Doctrines ancienne et nouvelle des Chinois sur la piété filiale” (1–298) by Pierre-Martial Cibot, S. J. (1727–1780): it includes a translation of selected passages on filial piety from the *Liji*: “Extraits du Li-Ki sur la piété filiale” (6–28).
3. Similar questions were raised regarding the sacrifice to Confucius, but will not be discussed here since they are not directly the object of the *Liji*.
4. Ricci 1942–1949, vol. 1, 117–118; translation Rule 1986, 49 (slightly adapted).
5. For a larger discussion of these terms, as well as the terms “civil” and “political,” and this quotation, see Standaert 2008, 88–90.
6. *Ex more (sinico)*: Ricci 1942–1949, vol. 2, 565, 628; *conforme ao costume da China*: vol. 2, 499.
7. For this background, see among others, Standaert 1995, chap. 1; and Standaert 2000.

8. E.g. “Explicação de 37 Textos Sinicos, e reposta aos Apontamentos feitos sobre elles, com os quaes se pretende provar, que os Chinas ex vide suas Doutrinas e Ritos antigos, pedem merces à seus defuntos esperao nelles e crem que decem as Taboinas e seus miao ou Aulas destinadas pera seu culto” [Explanation of 37 Chinese Texts, and response to the points made on them, with which some pretend to prove, that the Chinese as can be seen from their Doctrines and ancient Rites, ask favours from their deceased ones, putting hope in for them and they believe that they descend in the tablets, and their miao [=temples] or halls destined for the cult of them] (BNC.VE, Ges. 1248/1; 1250/1 (in Latin), 1383/11 (in Latin)). It discusses direct Chinese quotations from *Liji* (and others) with the annotations. See also his “Tractatus P. is Francisci Philippucci de Ritibus Sinicis quem in suo praeludio promittit” (BVE Ges. 1248/3), which among others includes an extensive discussion of *ji* 祭, with many quotes from the *Liji*. Filippucci also redacted a short text “Notae super Lyky (BNC.VE, Ges. 1249/9, cc.497r-510r). See Battaglini 1996, 38–40.
9. See Noll 1992, 9.
10. See Standaert 2012, 23, 47ff.
11. The ARSI collection has four ancient editions of the *Liji*: (*Minjia sanding*) *Liji jishuo* (閔家三訂) 禮記集說 (1630) (Jap. Sin. II, 103–104) and a revised edition of the same (1633) (Jap. Sin. II, 111–112); *Liji zhushu* 禮記註疏 (1639) (Jap. Sin II, 105–108), and *Zhang hanlin jiaozheng Liji daquan* 張翰林校正禮記大全 (n.d.) (Jap. Sin. II, 109–110); see Chan 2002, 414 – 418. Chen Hao 陳澍 *Liji jishuo* 禮記集說 (1633) (ARSI, Jap. Sin. II, 111–112; Chan 2002, 418) has on the cover the handwriting of François Noël; several texts by Yan Mo (e.g. *Tiaowen jida* 條問集答 ARSI, Jap. Sin. I (38/42) 40/2; Chan 2002, 45) have the (classification) notes by Kasper Castner.
12. For an overview of these quotes, see Standaert 2012, 69ff. The quotes from Yan Mo can be found in *Summarium Nouorum Autenticorum Testimoniorum*, 66–69; the *Liji* quote from *Liji jishuo* in *Summarium Nouorum Autenticorum Testimoniorum*, 73 – 74 (see Standaert 2012, 63–64).
13. On his life and publications, see Standaert 1995, chap. 1.
14. *Longxi xianzhi* 龍溪縣志 [1762 (Qianlong 27), 1879 (Guangxu 5)], (*Zhongguo fangzhi congshu* 中國方志叢書 90), 174 (juan 14, 28b); also in *Chongzuan Fujian tongzhi* 重纂福建通志, juan 166: see Lin Jinshui 1993, 25 n. 4.
15. Yan Mo, *Lishi tiaowen*: first line: 閩漳嚴保璋謨定猷氏集答, 父嚴崑博削贊化思參氏鑿訂.
16. *Longxi xianzhi* (1762 (Qianlong 27), 1879 (Guangxu 5)), (*Zhongguo fangzhi congshu* 90), 173 (juan 14, 25b).
17. Zürcher 2007, 13, 62.
18. See CCT-Database.
19. ARSI, Jap. Sin. I [38/42] 41/1a; CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 5–28. See CCT-Database and Chan 2002, 62–63.
20. ARSI, Jap. Sin. I (38/42) 40/2; CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 115–216. See CCT-Database and Chan 2002, 45–46. See also BAV, Borgia Cinese 316.10; The two versions have the same contents, but there is a different arrangement of the questions.
21. In ARSI, Jap. Sin. I [38/42] 41/1; CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 1–46: these two works are bound together with *Bianji* 辨祭. The cover, written by K. Castner, bears an inscription in Latin: “Libellus de examine/oblationis rite orationes illarum/quae colen fieri in oblatio/nibus, item tabulae quae defunctis/ponitur rite discursus de litera çi/contra Pe. Varro ordinis Praedica/factus a Jen Paulo litterato Christ./a FuKien.” At the end of the other version of *Bianji* (Jap. Sin. I [38/42] 40/6a; CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 59) reference is made to *Muzhukao*.
22. Mentioned at the end of both versions of the *Bianji* (CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 46, 59) it was written prior to *Bianji*.
23. A collective letter seeking José Monteiro S. J. (Mu Ruose 穆若瑟, 1646–1720)’s help by six Christians, including Yan Mo, dates from this period. See *Caogao* 草稿 [A Rough Draft]: ARSI, Jap. Sin. I [38/42] 41/2a, CCT ARSI, vol. 63–65. To this letter is added the *Bianji houzhi* 辨祭後誌 [Postscriptum to the *Arguments against Sacrifices*], which is dated autumn 1695. See Jap.Sin.I [38/42] 41/2b, CCT ARSI, vol. 67–72. There was also a further letter to Monteiro and a letter to a certain

Father Li (probably S. Rodrigues), in which it said that the Christians were refused confession for one year. These most probably date from the same period. See *Caogao (chaobai)* 草稿 (抄白) [A Rough Draft (copy)] ARSI, Jap. Sin. I [38/42] 41/4; CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 91-92, 97. Attached to it is a table of contents of the *Lishi tiaowen* (93-95) and a revised version of two chapters of the same work (99-113). See also Chan 2002, 64-67.

24. *Caogao (chaobai)* 草稿 (抄白); CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 97.

25. ARSI, Jap. Sin. I (38/42) 42/2; CCT ARSI, vol. 9, 21-50; on all these texts, see CCT database and Chan2002.

26. ARSI, Jap. Sin. I (38/42) 40/9.b; CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 257-268.

27. ARSI, Jap. Sin. I (38/42) 40/7.b; CCT ARSI, vol. 10, 115-144.

28. Xia Dachang 夏大常 (Mathias) is the compiler of several other texts which accumulate *Liji* quotes and the corresponding commentaries, e.g. *Liji jili paozhi* 禮記祭禮泡製 (ARSI, Jap. Sin. I, 39.4; CCT ARSI, vol. 10, 79-104) or *Liji jizhi cuoyan* 禮記祭制撮言 (1688) (ARSI, Jap. Sin. I, 39.4; CCT ARSI, vol. 10, 105-114).

29. ARSI, Jap. Sin. I (38/42); CCT ARSI, vol. 10, 459-478.

30. These and other texts by Chinese Christians on the ancestral rites, 28 in total originating from the ARSI, Jap. Sin. I collection, are also discussed in Chen 2017.

31. For a good overview of these different orders, see Wang 2018, 98-99. There is also a difference in the order of the questions between the two versions of *Lishi tiaowen*: ARSI, Jap. Sin. I (38/42) 40/2; CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 115-216 and BAV, Borgia Cinese 316.10, and also with the table of contents included in *Caogao (chaobai)* 草稿 (抄白), CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 93-95.

32. CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 129-139.

33. CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 141-147.

34. The text is not punctuated; we mainly follow the punctuation as it was adopted in the *Scripta sinica* database for *Jizukao* (which is punctuated).

35. CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 117-119.

36. CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 117: 秦漢諸儒集錄虞夏商周典禮，六經之一。

37. 祭義，檀弓，祭統，禮器，郊特牲，曲禮，文王世子，玉藻，鄉飲酒義，月令。

38. Chen Hao's commentary was widely used because it was concise and easy to understand for students. The third revised edition appeared in 1633 (ARSI, Jap. Sin. II, 111). Chan 2002, 414-415. The work served as basis for the *Liji* commentary included in the Ming textbook for the preparation of the state examinations, *Wujing daquan* 五經大全 [Complete Collection of the Five Classics] (1413), edited by Hu Guang 胡廣 (1369-1418).

39. CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 129-132; compare with *Jizukao*, CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 7ff.

40. It is not clear to what extent Yan Mo adopts a classical interpretation and adds his own commentary in this annotation. The explanation of 尸，主也 can be found in several annotations of Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 to *Liji* and *Yili*. In Liang Yi 梁益 (Yuan), *Shizhuan pangtong* 詩傳旁通 [Extensive Knowledge of the Comments on the Odes], *juan* 6, 11a-b, SKQS, vol. 76, 860 one finds the following similar explanation: 古者祭祀必有尸，尸主也。筮擇一人使坐以象神，謂之尸。

41. In this paper the numbers of the chapters and paragraphs of the *Liji* have been adopted from *Liji zhuzi suoyin* (1993).

42. Legge 1885, vol. 28, 212; C-text, No. 5. In this paper the translation by Legge is adopted, sometimes with slight changes.

43. *Liji* has 爾 instead of 耳.

44. *Liji jishuo daquan*, *juan* 22, 19b; the original text has a question mark: 主人之自盡，亦豈知神之所饗，必在於此[乎]。且以表其心而已矣。Compare also with *Jizukao*: 註。主人自盡。亦豈知神之所饗必在於此。亦以表其心而已矣。(CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 7).

45. Legge 1885, vol. 27, 169; C-text, No. 141.

46. Legge 1885, vol. 28, 237-238; C-text No. 3.

47. Furthermore there are two additional quotes from “Jitong” [“Jitong”, 26.6 (Legge 1885, vol. 28, 240-241; C-text no. 8); “Jitong”, 26.15 (Legge 1885, vol. 28, 246; C-text no. 19)] and one from “Liqi” 禮器 [“Liqi”, 10.33 (Legge 1885, vol. 27, 412; C-text no. 31)]. 一獻質，三獻文，五獻察，七獻神。Compare also with the versions (with annotations) in *Jizukao*, CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 7ff.
48. *Liji jishuo daquan*, juan 22, 19b: 主人之自盡，亦豈知神之所饗，必在於此[乎]。且以表其心而已矣。In *Jizukao*: 註。主人自盡。亦豈知神之所饗必在於此。亦以表其心而已矣。(CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 7).
49. CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 132-139. For a partial Latin translation of his commentaries, based on *Jizukao* (CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 21-28) see *Summarium Nouorum Autenticorum Testimoniorum*, 67-68.
50. CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 132; cf. *Jizukao*, CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 21.
51. 祭如在，祭神如神在。子曰：「吾不與祭，如不祭。」 Translation: Legge 1991, vol. 1, 159. Compare with Ames & Rosemont 1998, 99: “The expression ‘sacrifice as though present’ is taken to mean ‘sacrifice to the spirits as though the spirits are present.’ But the Master said: ‘If I myself do not participate in the sacrifice, it is as though I have not sacrificed at all.’” D. C. Lau 1979, 69: “‘Sacrifice as if present’ is taken to mean ‘sacrifice to the gods as if the gods were present.’ The Master, however, said, ‘Unless I take part in a sacrifice, it is as if I did not sacrifice.’”
52. 春，雨露既濡，君子履之，必有怵惕之心，如將見之。(“Jiyi”, 25.1); Legge 1885, vol. 28, 210; C-text. No. 1
53. It is also quoted in the chapter on rituals (“Lilun” 禮論) in *Xunzi* 荀子 19.
54. For other examples, see e.g. Standaert 2008, 144; and the many examples in letters from Chinese (Christians) sent to Rome, see Standaert 2012, 233, n. 43. The quotation is also analysed in Filippucci, “Explicação de 37 Textos Sinicos”, fols. 9v-11r (Texto 19).
55. CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 142-143; see also *Jizukao*, CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 11.
56. Legge 1885, vol. 28, 212-213; C-text, No. 6
57. For a more detailed discussion, see Standaert 2008, 89-90.
58. Plaks 2003, 37: “To serve the dead as one serves the living, to serve the departed just as one serves those still in this world: this is the perfect fulfilment of one’s filial obligations.”
59. 是故，仁人之事親也如事天，事天如事親。(“Aigong wen” 哀公問, 28.7); Legge 1885, vol. 28, 269; C-text, No. 13. This quotation is also analysed in Filippucci, “Explicação de 37 Textos Sinicos”, fols. 7r-v (Texto 15) (as quoted from [Kongzi] *jiayu-Dahun jie* [孔子] 家語-大婚解.; also quoted in Li Jiugong 李九功, *Zhengli chuyi* 證禮菑議 (抄本) : 仁人事天如事親 ARSI, Jap. Sin. I, 42.2c, 13b; CCT ARSI, vol. 9, 88.
60. 婦事舅姑，如事父母。(“Neize” 內則, 12.3); Legge 1885, vol. 27, 450; C-text, No. 3
61. Compare with the translation by Legge 1991, vol. 1, 403: “Thus they served the dead as they would have served them alive; they served the departed as they would have served them had they been continued among them –the height of filial piety”.
62. CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 135: 論語：祭如在，夫以為如在，則不在可知矣。 cf. *Jizukao*, CCT ARSI, vol., 11, 23.
63. CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 133-134: 以為【誤謂】鬼神亦須飲食如佛教所云者; cf. *Jizukao*, CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 22.
64. 不知徧考之六經中，古人之制祭禮，未嘗有說鬼神須飲食者。
65. CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 141. And also as the first quote in *Jizukao*: CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 7 (with the explanation by Chen Hao).
66. CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 134: 檀弓明說未有見其饗之者，(= “Tangong, xia”, 4.27) 表孝子之心而已矣; Legge 1885, vol. 27, 177; C-text, No. 164. CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 22. This sentence was the subject of a discussion involving F. S. Filippucci concerning its inclusion in a Chinese Christian funerary guideline. See Standaert 2008, 170ff.
67. 使謂祭為神飲食而設則一年止得四祭天子止祭七代庶民止祭一代祖宗不幾於盡餓斃乎。

68. CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 134: 庶幾其饗鄉之，非必之之詞也，愛而期之之詞也; cf. *Jizukao*, CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 22.
69. CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 134-135: 人遂誤認謂神在廟在主，不知古人雖立廟設主未嘗謂神在是; cf. *Jizukao*, CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 22-23.
70. CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 135: 明明說主在廟，神在天; cf. *Jizukao*, CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 23.
71. Ode 235; Legge 1991, vol. 4, 427-428.
72. *Shijizhuan* 詩集傳 *juan* 6; *Shijizhuan* (2011), 233-234. The quotation and annotation are also analysed in Filippucci, “Explicação de 37 Textos Sinicos”, fols. 2r-v (Texto 2º).
73. Ode 266; Legge 1991, vol. 4, 569.
74. *Shijizhuan*, *juan* 8; *Shijizhuan* (2011), 298.
75. Zhu Shan 朱善 *Shi jie yi* 詩解頤, *juan* 4, 1b, SKQS, vol. 78, 289.
76. CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 136; see also *Jizukao*, CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 12, 24.
77. The full sentence reads: 齊之日：思其居處，思其笑語，思其志意，思其所樂，思其所嗜。齊三日，乃見其所為齊者。 See “*Jiyi*” 25.2.
78. The full sentence reads: 祭之日：入室，儼然必有見乎其位，周還出戶，肅然必有聞乎其容聲，出戶而聽，愾然必有聞乎其嘆息之聲。 See “*Jiyi*”, 25.3. It is fully quoted under the next question about the blessings.
79. Ode 301; Legge 1991, vol. 4, 631.
80. It is unclear whether this is Zheng Xuan or another scholar.
81. Legge 1885, vol. 28, 211; C-text, no. 2.
82. Legge 1885, vol. 28, 211; C-text, no. 3.
83. See Su Zhe 蘇轍, *Shijizhuan* 詩集傳, *juan* 19, 17a, SKQS, vol. 70, 529: 此皆非有也而生於其思。
84. The whole preceding section including the commentary by Zheng, the *Liji* quote (under a slightly different form), the commentary by Su and the final commentary by Zhu Xi belong to *Shijizhuan*, *juan* 8; *Shijizhuan* (2011), 324-325.
85. CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 142; see also *Jizukao*, CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 10.
86. There are three more quotes from “*Jiyi*” and two more from “*Jitong*”: “*Jiyi*”, 25.10 (Legge 1885, vol. 28, 214; C-text no. 8); “*Jiyi*”, 25.4 (Legge 1885, vol. 28, 211; C-text no. 4); “*Jiyi*”, 25.5 (Legge 1885, vol. 28, 214; C-text no. 4); “*Jitong*”, 26.11 (Legge 1885, vol. 28, 236; C-text no. 1); “*Jitong*”, 25.2 (Legge 1885, vol. 28, 237; C-text no. 3).
87. This quotation is also analysed in Filippucci, “Explicação de 37 Textos Sinicos”, fols. 6r-v (Texto 12).
88. Legge 1885, vol. 28, 236-237; C-text No. 2.
89. CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 146-147; cf. *Jizukao*, CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 25-26.
90. Selection from: *Yili*, “*Shaolao*”, 16. Yan Mo does not quote the text literally.
91. Cf. Couvreur 1928, 603-604.
92. CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 146: 不知者因此或疑祭有言福之事，其實非也; cf. *Jizukao*, CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 27.
93. CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 146-147.
94. Cf. *Jizukao*, CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 27 (there is still an extra passage before it, giving classical examples of similar expressions).
95. CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 147: 稍有識者無不鄙笑其非禮。
96. *Jizukao*, CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 27-28.
97. Zürcher 1994, 40ff.
98. Berling 1987; Watson 1988, 10; Bell 1997, 191-197; Seligman *et al.* 2008, 4.
99. Legge 1885, vol. 27, 129; C-text No. 19.
100. Legge 1885, vol. 28, 26; C-text No. 54.
101. Legge 1885, vol. 28, 214; C-text No. 8. This passage is also quoted by Yan Mo under the question regarding blessings.

102. Legge 1885, vol. 28, 214–215; C-text No. 9.
103. Legge 1885, vol. 28, 216; C-text No. 11.
104. Legge 1885, vol. 28, 234; C-text No. 41.
105. Legge 1885, vol. 27, 136–137; C-text No. 46.
106. Legge 1885, vol. 28, 376; C-text No. 3.
107. Watson 1988, 9–10.
108. Seligman et al. 2008, 8, 11, 20, 117, etc.
109. Compare with Michael Puett’s interpretation of *Lunyu* 3.12: 祭神如神在 “He sacrificed to the spirits, as if the spirits were present”, which leaves open a space of ambiguity: “In the *Analects*, Confucius is asked about ancestor worship. He says that the ritual is absolutely necessary but that it makes no difference whether the spirits are participating or not: ‘We sacrifice to them,’ he said, ‘as if they are there.’ What matters is participating in the ritual fully: ‘If I do not participate in the sacrifice, it is as if I did not sacrifice.’” (Puett & Gross-Loh 2016, 31). See also Puett 2015, 547–548: “But whether the spirits are actually present or not is irrelevant. The ritual rather serves as a space within which one acts ‘as if’ they are present.” Notice that some commentators, such as in the Kangxi teaching records on the same passage, clearly deny the presence of the spirits: 夫鬼神無形無聲，非真有在 “Now, the spirits have no form or voice, it is not so that they really exist or are present.” This is a quote from *Sishu rijiāng* 四書日講 [Daily Instructions on the Four Books] (also entitled *Fengzhi banxing rijiāng sishu jiyi* 奉旨頒行日講四書解義 (1677); ARSI, Jap. Sin. I, 13, *juan* 4, fol. 49b; it was used in *Summarium Nouorum Autenticorum Testimoniorum*, 71 (see Standaert 2012, 61).
110. For very few scattered references of denial in other classical texts, selected by François Noël, and printed in *Summarium Nouorum Autenticorum Testimoniorum*, see Standaert 2012, 58ff.
111. Ing 2012, 209.
112. Ing 2012, 209.
113. *E.g.* CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 133, 134. See other examples: 168, 170, 176, 181, 182, 191, 198, 201.
114. *E.g.* the last sentence of the section on the sacrifices: CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 139. Other examples: 149, 170, 176, 181, 182, 201.
115. *E.g.* the last sentence of the section on the sacrifices: CCT ARSI, vol. 11, 139. Other examples of *zheng*: 201.
116. Puett & Gross-Loh 2016, 32.
117. Puett 2013, 98.
118. Ing 2012, 206–209.

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Les rites d'interaction : l'héritage de la conception chinoise de la face dans la sociologie d'Erving Goffman

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- 1 Sociologue des miettes de la vie quotidienne, Erving Goffman a inlassablement exploré, depuis sa thèse de doctorat soutenue en 1953¹ jusqu'à sa dernière allocution écrite en 1981², les relations intersubjectives que nous nouons dans notre vie quotidienne. Il s'est notamment intéressé à celles qui se déroulent entre inconnus dans les espaces publics ou semi-publics des villes contemporaines, qu'il s'agisse de l'achat de sa baguette de pain dans une boulangerie, d'une conversation dans un transport en commun ou tout simplement du côtoiement d'un autre piéton sur un trottoir. En les nommant interactions et en insistant sur leur caractère ordonné, il a voulu mettre l'accent sur leur caractère social : loin d'être à la discrétion des individus, elles sont normées et répondent à un certain nombre de contraintes spécifiques, collectivement partagées, qui pèsent sur leur déroulement. S'il n'a jamais cessé d'étudier le même objet, Goffman a cependant déployé tout au long de son œuvre différents paradigmes pour l'appréhender, depuis le monde de la scène et du théâtre dans *La présentation de soi* en 1959 jusqu'à la métaphore cinématographique dans *Les cadres de l'expérience* en 1974.
- 2 La compréhension spécifique de l'ordre de l'interaction comme ordre rituel intervient en 1967 dans *Les rites d'interaction* dont le premier chapitre s'intitule « Sur le Face-work. Analyse des éléments rituels inhérents aux interactions sociales ». Goffman élabore sa notion de rite à la croisée de deux traditions : celle de l'éthologie animale théorisée par Julian Huxley et celle de l'anthropologie religieuse développée par Émile Durkheim et Alfred Radcliffe-Brown. Dans la première, le rite se définit comme un comportement formalisé sous la pression de la sélection naturelle³. Dans la seconde, le rite désigne une pratique symbolique manifestant du respect envers une entité sacrée⁴ et contribuant à maintenir l'ordre social.⁵ Hybridant ces deux perspectives, sa propre notion de rite joue un rôle charnière dans son œuvre. Elle lui permet d'une part de mettre en évidence le caractère régulier et conventionnel de nos comportements (selon la perspective de l'éthologie qu'il déplace, en insistant moins sur l'adaptation et l'évolution que sur le

caractère social des pratiques), d'autre part de dégager les raisons pour lesquelles nous nous sentons tenus de souscrire à leur caractère obligatoire (selon la perspective de l'anthropologie religieuse). Sous sa plume, le rituel se voit envisagé comme « un acte formel et conventionnalisé par lequel un individu manifeste son respect et sa considération envers un objet de valeur absolue, à cet objet ou son représentant⁶ ». Ainsi Goffman se donne-t-il les moyens d'aborder les deux dimensions de la régularité du comportement social : non seulement son caractère répétitif, mais aussi réglé, fût-ce de manière cérémonielle et non substantielle⁷, la deuxième caractéristique rendant compte de la première.

- 3 L'imbrication de ces deux traditions, éthologique et religieuse, s'avère décisive pour ne pas réduire son analyse à une simple sécularisation de la notion de rite, qui transposerait dans notre société profane une notion religieuse vidée de son contenu, simple coquille formelle, conventionnelle et figée. En effet, selon la définition même de l'anthropologue Radcliffe-Brown que Goffman prend soin de rappeler dans *Les rites d'interaction*, « il existe une relation rituelle, dès lors qu'une société impose à ses membres une certaine attitude envers un objet, attitude qui implique un certain degré de respect exprimé par un mode de comportement traditionnel référé à cet objet »⁸. Autrement dit, Goffman choisit de manière consciente le terme de rite pour envisager nos comportements, en raison même de sa charge religieuse et de son lien avec le sacré.
- 4 En ce sens, la notion goffmanienne gagne à être mise en perspective avec les rites confucéens tels qu'ils sont analysés par Herbert Fingarette. Selon ce dernier, en effet, les rites confucéens sacralisent le profane en perdant leur référence religieuse immédiate pour investir l'ensemble des relations humaines d'une puissance dramatique : ils les réélaborent « d'une manière emphatique, intensifiée et rigoureusement élaborée » comme « rapports humains quotidiens civilisés⁹ ». De même, les rites d'interaction goffmaniens transforment les relations intersubjectives en cérémonies de la vie quotidienne : ils visent un certain objet possédant une valeur supérieure à l'individu, qui exige par là même sa considération. Or, cet air de famille, loin d'être le fruit du hasard, tient à la nature de l'entité en jeu dans l'interaction.
- 5 Il s'agit, en effet, de la face, c'est-à-dire de « la valeur sociale positive qu'une personne revendique effectivement à travers la ligne d'action que les autres supposent qu'elle a adoptée au cours d'un contact particulier », ou encore de « l'image du *self* dessinée selon certains attributs sociaux approuvés¹⁰ ». Toutes nos interactions sont conditionnées par ce culte à lui rendre : « garder la face est une condition de l'interaction et non son but. Mais les buts, qui sont par exemple de se trouver une face, d'exprimer ses opinions, de déprécier les autres ou de résoudre des problèmes et d'accomplir les tâches, sont généralement poursuivis de façon à ne pas contredire cette préservation¹¹ ». Reprenant la distinction durkheimienne entre individualité et personnalité¹², Goffman considère que c'est la valorisation des interactants comme objets sacrés, c'est-à-dire comme personnes, qui les oblige dans toutes leurs interactions à honorer cette face, qu'il s'agisse de la leur ou de celle d'autrui. Puisque la personne est revêtue d'une espèce de sacralité dans notre monde urbain et séculier, ne pas lui rendre un culte revient à la profaner et à apparaître comme un individu sacrilège. « Il est surprenant et plus durkheimien qu'il ne devrait, qu'aujourd'hui, à une époque où l'individu peut se décharger de presque tout le reste, il garde sur le dos la croix du caractère personnel, croix légère il est vrai, qu'il porte en présence des autres¹³ ». Ainsi, le caractère normé des interactions et l'emprise du social sur l'individu

ne se comprennent qu'en raison de ce processus de sacralisation de l'individu, qui fait écrire à Goffman que « ce monde profane n'est pas aussi irrégulier qu'il y paraît » et que si « bien des dieux ont été mis au rancart », « l'individu demeure obstinément déité d'une importance considérable¹⁴ ». Il faut satisfaire les attentes sur la manière d'accomplir les interactions, dans la mesure où elles s'adressent à une entité supérieure à l'agent, qui le contraint. « Les règles sont efficaces (pour autant qu'elles le sont) parce que ceux auxquels elles s'appliquent croient en leur justesse et en viennent à se concevoir en fonction de ce que la conformité leur permet d'être et en fonction de l'état auquel une déviation implique qu'ils sont réduits¹⁵ ».

- 6 Fort bien, nous dira-t-on, mais en quoi cette notion de face permet-elle de comprendre les affinités entre le rite goffmanien et le *li* confucéen ? De manière tout à fait remarquable, après l'avoir définie, Goffman se réclame, dans une note de bas de page, de la conception chinoise de cette notion, telle qu'elle est étudiée dans différents travaux d'anthropologie s'échelonnant de la fin du XIX^e siècle à la première moitié du XX^e¹⁶. Cette brève référence ne peut manquer d'interpeller le lecteur : qu'apporte ce détour par l'Extrême-Orient à l'analyse durkheimienne du caractère sacré de la personnalité ? Quel éclairage sur le rite goffmanien peut apporter l'imbrication confucéenne entre moralité et socialité ? Comment comprendre l'importance que Goffman accorde à ce concept de face, se proposant dans *Les rites d'interaction* d'aborder l'ensemble de la régulation sociale comme un *face-work* (« travail de figuration »), où nos relations intersubjectives se voient appréhendées comme un processus d'élaboration conjoint de la face, valeur sociale circulant entre les individus ? Envisager la manière dont l'analyse goffmanienne hérite de la conception chinoise, mais aussi la renouvelle, permettra de dégager la logique spécifique de régulation à l'œuvre dans la strate interactionnelle du monde social, ainsi que l'originalité de cette perspective au sein de la constellation des différents courants sociologiques.

De la conception chinoise de la face au *face-work* goffmanien

- 7 Si le terme de face est défini de manière explicite dans *Les rites d'interaction* en 1967, on le trouve sous la plume de Goffman dès 1953, dans sa thèse, lorsqu'il considère que seuls les jeunes gens de « Dixon » (nom fictif de son terrain d'enquête dans les îles Shetland) peuvent être critiqués, dans la mesure où ils n'ont pas de face à perdre : « C'est seulement les jeunes gens qui ne sont pas encore des personnes sociales, qui peuvent être ouvertement sanctionnés pour une offense interactionnelle. Les jeunes n'ont pas de face sociale à perdre, c'est pourquoi ils peuvent être ouvertement critiqués sans que cela produise la scène embarrassante de quelqu'un qui perd la face¹⁷ ». Différentes formulations, dans les œuvres postérieures au doctorat, préfigurent la définition de 1967. Ainsi dans *La présentation de soi* en 1959, il souligne l'obligation d'agir d'une façon socialement acceptable¹⁸, et dans *Asiles*, en 1961, il se propose d'élaborer une théorie sociologique de la structure du soi qui ne soit pas « la propriété de la personne à qui il est attribué, mais relève plutôt du type de contrôle exercé sur l'individu par lui-même et ceux qui l'entourent¹⁹ ». Il scelle ainsi le partage entre deux strates de l'identité : une identité individuelle liée au caractère singulier et une identité sociale résultant de la capacité à satisfaire des normes collectives. *Stigmaté*, en 1963, se comprend, pour sa part, comme l'analyse des comportements des individus incapables

de soutenir une apparence normale, c'est-à-dire de sauver leur face, en raison d'un attribut les empêchant de satisfaire les normes de la situation dans laquelle ils se trouvent.

- 8 En 1967, Goffman se trouve donc fort de deux convictions : d'une part, le fait que notre comportement doive répondre à des normes sociales partagées au niveau collectif sous forme d'attentes, d'autre part, le fait que ces attentes contraignantes confèrent à l'individu qui y souscrit un *self* de nature sociale et non individuelle. Mais l'articulation de ces deux thèses ne lui permet nullement de comprendre l'emprise du social sur l'individu. En 1967, il doit donc répondre à une question fondamentale : quelle est la nature de ce *self* conféré à l'individu lorsqu'il répond aux normes sociales, à même de rendre compte de leur caractère obligatoire et coercitif ? Que possède-t-il de si enviable pour que l'on se sente tenu d'obéir à ce qui le confère ?
- 9 C'est dans les travaux d'anthropologie sur la conception chinoise de la face, inséparable du confucianisme, que Goffman trouve des éléments de réponse, en universalisant leur perspective. Selon lui, tout individu qui répond aux attentes collectives sur le déroulement normal d'une interaction se voit rétribué, en retour, par l'octroi d'une dimension qui excède son individualité. La face ainsi conférée sacralise sa personne comme acteur social compétent. En raison de son caractère social, irréductible et transcendant à l'individualité des agents, la face constitue un bien infiniment précieux, aussi désirable que contraignant.
- 10 Elle est désirable, dans la mesure où elle les valorise et les transforme en êtres respectables, mais contraignante dans la mesure où elle ne peut être obtenue sans répondre aux attentes des autres. « Par les attributs qui lui sont accordés et la face qu'ils lui font porter, tout homme devient son propre geôlier. C'est là une contrainte sociale fondamentale, même s'il est vrai que chacun peut aimer sa cellule²⁰ ». Mais si la réponse aux attentes des autres revient à honorer des exigences sociales, il faut alors dire que la mise en œuvre du comportement normal attendu dans la situation est une manière de célébrer l'autre interagissant appréhendé comme dépositaire d'une normativité sociale. Il s'agit donc d'une manière de sauver sa face. Ainsi, l'obéissance aux normes sociales se comprend par le biais d'un intérêt fondamental qui lie les différentes faces des agents : on ne peut pas sauver sa face sans sauver celle de l'autre, ce que Goffman nomme le *face-work* ou travail de figuration, pour autant que la face soit une construction sociale et impersonnelle, pesant sur le déroulement des relations intersubjectives. « Désirant sauver la face d'autrui, on doit éviter de perdre la sienne, et, cherchant à sauver la face, on doit se garder de la faire perdre aux autres²¹ ».

Le mien-tzu 面子 (en transcription *pinyin*, *mianzi*) et le lien 臉 (*lian*)²²

- 11 Comment les analyses anthropologiques sur la conception chinoise de la face et son arrière-plan confucéen ont-elles nourri ces développements ? Il convient tout d'abord de souligner que le terme de « face » est attesté dans la langue anglaise dès la fin du XIX^e par l'entremise de la communauté parlant cette langue et vivant en Chine²³. Le missionnaire Arthur H. Smith, dans un texte de 1894 auquel se réfère Goffman, fait de cette notion la clé pour comprendre ce qu'il appelle l'« esprit chinois²⁴ ». Si les différents auteurs cités par Goffman rapportent un certain nombre d'anecdotes dans la veine des prémisses de l'anthropologie de la fin du XIX^e-début XX^e siècle et de son occidentalocentrisme, il paraît opportun de se pencher plus spécifiquement sur le

premier article qu'il cite, celui de Hu Xianjin 胡先縉 (n.d.), ou Hu Hsien-chin dans la romanisation Wade-Giles employée à l'époque, « The Chinese concept of "face" », publié en 1944, dans la mesure où l'étude sémantique extrêmement précise à laquelle se livre l'auteure, anthropologue à Columbia, permet de mieux mesurer la dette du sociologue à son égard.

- 12 Hu distingue deux notions traduites uniformément en anglais par « face », puisqu'elles désignent l'une et l'autre, dans leur sens concret, le visage : le *mien-tzu* (*mianzi* 面子) et le *lien* (*lian* 臉). Le premier terme, d'origine plus ancienne, attesté, selon elle, dès le IV^e siècle avant Jésus-Christ²⁵, signifie la réputation obtenue par la réussite sociale se manifestant à travers différents signes extérieurs de richesse. Il s'agit donc d'une valorisation liée au statut social et à la manière dont les autres le perçoivent, d'une forme de prestige relative. On peut avoir plus ou moins de *mien-tzu* en fonction de la fluctuation de sa place dans la société et des trajectoires ascendantes ou descendantes que l'on connaît²⁶.
- 13 Le deuxième terme, le *lien*, dont l'origine plus récente remonterait à la dynastie Yuan (1277-1367) selon le Dictionnaire de Kangxi, signifie « la confiance de la société dans l'intégrité du caractère moral de l'*ego*, dont la perte empêcherait d'agir correctement dans la communauté²⁷ ». Rétribution sociale pour l'application des normes morales intériorisées par l'agent, le *lien* n'est pas un bien que l'on peut détenir à des degrés variables, à la différence du *mien-tzu*. Soit on le possède, soit on le perd tout entier, sa disparition pouvant alors conduire au suicide. La privation du *lien* se présente donc comme une sanction sociale jetant l'opprobre sur la personnalité de l'individu qui a transgressé le code moral de la communauté. Il apparaît plus fondamental que le premier, comme l'atteste la réaction beaucoup plus forte de la personne qui s'entend dire qu'elle a ruiné tout son *lien*. L'auteur montre ainsi que si l'on peut détenir du *lien* sans *mien-tzu*, l'inverse est tout simplement impossible. Le *lien* constitue une entité indivisible expérimentée comme telle par l'*ego*. Il se rapporte donc à une valorisation sociale globale de la personne comme agent digne de confiance, dans la mesure où il obéit aux règles morales fondamentales de la communauté. Son extinction dévaste l'individu puisqu'elle compromet la structure entière de sa personnalité, en le privant de toute reconnaissance. Mis au ban de la société, l'individu voit alors l'intégrité de sa personne menacée. En ce sens, la perte du *lien* se présente comme une sanction sociale interne particulièrement puissante.

Du *lien* à la face goffmanienne : continuités et écarts

- 14 Que retient Goffman de cette analyse et quelles inflexions lui apporte-t-il ? Son concept de face se révèle bien plus proche du *lien* que du *mien-tzu*, et ce, pour au moins trois raisons.
- 15 La première tient au caractère principal du *lien* pour la structure de la personnalité, que l'on retrouve dans la présentation goffmanienne de la face comme « contrainte sociale fondamentale²⁸ » : la face est indépendante des différents statuts sociaux, puisque l'ordre de l'interaction est un ordre social microsociologique mettant en coprésence des agents indépendamment, en grande partie, de leur position dans la hiérarchie sociale²⁹. La face renvoie ainsi à une compétence sociale générale, essentielle et constitutive : celle de pouvoir se comporter « normalement » dans les différentes situations d'interaction.

- 16 La deuxième raison est la conséquence de la première. De même que le *lien* n'admet pas de degrés et se donne comme un tout, on ne possède pas, dans la perspective de Goffman, plus ou moins de face : soit on la sauve, soit on la perd. L'alternative se donne comme radicale, même s'il est possible, comme nous le verrons, de regagner une face.
- 17 Enfin, la dernière raison tient au fait que le concept de *lien* permet de penser l'efficiencia proprement sociale à l'œuvre dans ce processus de valorisation. Même l'individu le plus bas dans la hiérarchie sociale peut être valorisé s'il suit les normes collectives. Ainsi le social a-t-il une puissance de transformation ontologique : il métamorphose l'individu en personne, indépendamment de son statut. De même, dans la perspective goffmanienne, la face me valorise non comme un individu occupant une place particulière dans la société, mais comme une personne dépositaire d'une énergie fondamentalement sociale, dotée d'une efficacité spécifique, faisant communier mon individualité modifiée de l'intérieur avec le collectif : « Il est donc important de bien voir que le *self* est en partie un objet cérémoniel et sacré, qu'il convient de traiter avec le soin rituel qui s'impose et que l'on doit présenter aux autres sous un jour convenable³⁰ ».
- 18 Ainsi l'article de Hu Hsien-chin permet-il à Goffman de complexifier la distinction durkheimienne entre individualité et personnalité et de préciser la valorisation de cette dernière comme construction sociale. Il éclaire les raisons pour lesquelles l'individu y tient. L'individu est attaché à son *lien* ou à sa face, parce que ce sont eux qui garantissent son intégration dans la communauté. Ils sont la condition de sa reconnaissance comme une personne avec laquelle on peut continuer à agir.
- 19 Cependant, sa notion de face n'est pas entièrement superposable à la notion de *lien* : d'une part, il minore fortement sa dimension morale, d'autre part, il la contextualise, s'écartant ainsi d'un confucianisme orthodoxe. En effet, le *lien* se rapporte à un ordre social plus essentiel que celui des statuts sociaux. Hu le comprend avant tout comme un *ordre moral* que l'individu doit respecter, en manifestant certaines qualités collectivement reconnues : honneur, décence, modestie, etc.³¹ Au contraire, Goffman analyse l'ordre interactionnel en dehors de toute référence à des vertus consacrées : il s'agit d'un ordre social fondamental, au sens où il régule la coprésence des individus indépendamment des questions de préséance et de places. Même si ces dernières peuvent s'articuler à lui, il ne renvoie pas à un code moral, mais à un ensemble de normes principielles ordonnant les situations sociales en fonction de leur type (salutations, remerciements, excuses, etc.) et de leur cadre matériel (espaces publics ou privés dont l'aménagement même est porteur de normes d'usage : on ne s'assied pas de la même manière à côté d'un inconnu dans un bus, un parc ou une salle de cinéma). « Je soutiens que toute définition de la situation est construite selon des principes d'organisation qui structurent les événements – du moins ceux qui ont un caractère social – et notre propre engagement subjectif³² ». Ainsi la face goffmanienne n'est pas une valorisation morale de l'individu socialement sanctionnée, mais une valorisation de part en part sociale, où la société se voit dotée d'une telle puissance de transformation que la simple reconnaissance comme agent socialement compétent entraîne une plus-value, indépendamment même de toute considération sur ses mœurs. Il est tout à fait remarquable que Hu Hsien-chin définisse d'emblée le *lien* comme « le respect du groupe pour l'homme ayant une bonne réputation morale » ou encore comme « la confiance de la société dans l'intégrité du caractère moral de l'*ego*³³ », alors que Goffman spécifie simplement la face comme « une valeur sociale positive » ou encore comme « une

image du *self* dessinée selon certains attributs sociaux approuvés³⁴ ». De fait, son analyse sur les manières de sauver ou de perdre la face se situe dans un cadre résolument non psychologique qui invalide la question de la subjectivité de la personne et de ses intentions. Seule compte la conformité ou non de sa ligne d'action avec les normes situationnelles. Dans cette perspective, la face goffmanienne est beaucoup plus extérieure à l'individualité que le *lien*. Elle se construit dans l'entre-deux de l'interaction : « il est (...) évident que la face n'est pas logée à l'intérieur ou à la surface de son possesseur, mais qu'elle est diffuse dans le flux des événements de la rencontre³⁵ ».

- 20 En outre, elle varie suivant les situations et leurs normes spécifiques, si bien qu'un individu reçoit différentes faces de manière non seulement diachronique, mais aussi synchronique. Puisque la face à mettre en œuvre dépend des normes interactionnelles propres à chaque situation, l'individu amené au cours de sa journée à suivre différentes règles selon les lieux qu'il fréquente et les moments qu'il vit, recevra des faces différentes. L'on comprend dès lors pourquoi la notion de rôle élaborée dans son texte de 1959, *La présentation de soi*³⁶, recoupe celle de face. Mais il faut ajouter que l'individu est le plus souvent multi-situé³⁷ comme le montre le comportement d'un chirurgien dans un bloc opératoire : il n'est pas seulement le professionnel en possession du savoir, mais également le « gestionnaire de l'anxiété ambiante » qui doit savoir se distancier de son rôle, avec humour, pour détendre son équipe et lui donner confiance, un homme marié qui ne peut pas se permettre trop de familiarité avec les infirmières, etc. Ainsi dans cette activité, l'individu doit parvenir à sauver différentes faces, dans la mesure où le même moment est en réalité modalisé par plusieurs cadres sociaux porteurs de normes variées qui se chevauchent³⁸.
- 21 Pour ces deux raisons, la face apparaît comme un bien extrêmement volatil et en ce sens beaucoup plus vulnérable que le *lien*. On peut la perdre à tout instant, non parce que l'on aurait commis une action immorale, mais parce que l'on échoue momentanément à projeter l'image de soi pertinente, étant donné les exigences de la situation interactionnelle, en commettant un impair, une bourde ou encore une offense. Cependant à l'inverse du *lien* qui ne se retrouve pas une fois perdu, il est tout à fait possible de regagner sinon la face disparue, du moins une face acceptable pour continuer à interagir. Pour cela, il faut faire amende honorable et montrer que la profanation des règles n'était qu'une erreur ponctuelle et non une profanation délibérée. « Lorsque ceux qui participent à une entreprise ou à une rencontre ne parviennent pas à prévenir un événement qui, par ce qu'il exprime, est incompatible avec les valeurs sociales défendues, et sur lequel il est difficile de fermer les yeux, le plus fréquent est qu'ils reconnaissent cet événement en tant qu'incident – en tant que danger qui mérite une attention directe et officielle – et s'efforcent d'en réparer les effets. À ce moment, un ou plusieurs participants se trouvent ouvertement en déséquilibre, en disgrâce, et il leur faut essayer de rétablir entre eux un état rituel satisfaisant³⁹ ».

De la ritualisation des interactions à leur régulation : l'originalité de la sociologie goffmanienne

- 22 Considérant le comportement individuel comme un rite envers sa propre face et la face d'autrui, puisqu'il s'agit d'un acte de respect envers une entité sacrée pour autant

qu'elle incarne des normes sociales, prenant la forme d'un acte conventionnel et routinier inscrit dans un répertoire institué, Goffman en vient à dégager une forme de régulation inédite dans le champ de la sociologie. La cohérence et la stabilité du monde social goffmanien ne reposent ni sur une contrainte extérieure aux individus à laquelle ils obéiraient de manière automatique sous peine de châtement, ni sur un calcul rationnel où ils choisiraient de manière stratégique le comportement le plus pertinent. Elles tiennent à la nature cérémonielle des relations intersubjectives.

Un social transcendant, mais non surplombant

- 23 Si la compréhension goffmanienne des normes sociales offre un certain nombre de points communs assumés avec les perspectives d'Émile Durkheim et de Talcott Parsons, notamment sur l'idée d'une transcendance du social à l'égard de l'individu⁴⁰ et d'une production symbolique et non matérielle de la fin visée quand on lui obéit⁴¹, elle s'écarte cependant d'un holisme strict. En effet, alors que les sociologies de Durkheim et de Parsons tendent toutes deux à se focaliser sur l'extériorité du social ou du système sur les acteurs, même si certaines analyses compliquent leurs positions, la sociologie goffmanienne montre sans cesse, et jamais seulement de manière marginale, que les normes interactionnelles n'existent pas en dehors des attentes individuelles. Si la face, valorisation sociale de l'individu, ne dépend pas de la moralité de l'individu, elle s'identifie néanmoins à l'image que l'individu a de lui-même. Puisque « l'individu qui s'attache à maintenir une règle a tendance à s'attacher en même temps à une certaine image de lui-même » et qu'il « devient pour lui-même et pour les autres, la personne qui suit telle règle, la personne dont on attend naturellement qu'elle agisse ainsi⁴² », il faut dire que l'extériorité de la face vient investir la représentation intime que le sujet se fait de lui-même.
- 24 Autrement dit, la mise en évidence de la dimension rituelle des interactions conduit Goffman à penser de manière fine que la transcendance du social est certes de nature ontologique (la réalité du social dépasse celle de l'individu) et axiologique (la valeur du social excède celle de l'individu), mais qu'elle n'existe pas indépendamment des individus. Si extérieure soit-elle, tant du point de vue de la transcendance que de la valeur, elle est immanente à leur manière de se rapporter à la situation par la mobilisation d'un cadre de compréhension normatif et collectivement partagé, et à leur personnalité. Ainsi la sociologie goffmanienne peut-elle se focaliser exclusivement sur l'infiniment petit et la banalité de l'ordinaire qui forment la trame de nos existences, sans faire pour autant de la psychologie. Goffman élargit de la sorte considérablement l'extension du champ des cérémonies sociales envisagées par Durkheim : elles ne se cantonnent plus aux manifestations de la foule effervescente, mais structurent les relations quotidiennes interindividuelles. Ce faisant, il réactive la compréhension confucéenne du rite comme forme normative des rapports humains⁴³. L'ordre interactionnel est un ordre cérémoniel de part en part, alors même qu'il ne comporte aucune dimension solennelle⁴⁴. Le *mana* collectif ne se donne pas seulement à éprouver dans des trances collectives où l'individu est transporté hors de lui-même, mais également dans les interactions les plus froides et les plus anodines, en raison de leur normativité sociale.
- 25 Mais par là, Goffman est également conduit à proposer une vision moins systémique ou du moins plus complexe de l'ordre social que celle de Talcott Parsons auquel il

emprunte pourtant cette expression⁴⁵ : en raison de son immanence dans les attentes et le *self* des interactants, le social apparaît extrêmement vulnérable. L'ordre de l'interaction, ordre des menues choses sociales, n'est pas celui d'une contrainte se déployant de manière autoritaire et mécanique, mais de normes multiples et complexes, qui font l'objet d'interprétations et de mises en œuvre toujours précaires, soit que l'acteur se trompe sur la définition de la situation en ne mobilisant pas les bonnes attentes, soit que son corps le trahisse, l'empêchant de les satisfaire. Ainsi la sociologie goffmanienne met-elle sans cesse en lumière les diverses profanations auxquelles sont soumises les faces des acteurs malgré eux et leur bonne volonté, au point qu'un commentateur, Yves Winkin, a pu rapprocher ces analyses de la psychopathologie de la vie quotidienne de Sigmund Freud⁴⁶.

La solidarité rituelle des faces comme condition de la régulation interactionnelle

- 26 La régulation à l'œuvre dans l'ordre interactionnel ne résulte donc nullement de l'obéissance automatique à une structure extérieure s'incarnant dans des institutions surplombantes, comme le droit, la famille, l'école, *etc.*, mais relève d'une forme d'accommodement entre les agents pour sauver réciproquement leur face. Ce qui revient à sauver l'ordre social. Loin de s'imposer unilatéralement, ce dernier demande un travail de coopération entre les agents, pour se réaliser de manière symbolique dans ces cérémonies en miniature que sont les interactions. Goffman dégage ainsi une régulation immanente à l'ordre de l'interaction : les rites envers la face des autres et ceux envers ma propre face sont en réalité solidaires, comme le montrent les rites de réparation⁴⁷.
- 27 Les rites envers la face des autres sont analysés dans *Les rites d'interaction* comme une forme de déférence envers un objet sacré. Il s'agit d'« un composant de l'activité humaine qui fonctionne comme un moyen symbolique de transmettre dans les règles à un bénéficiaire l'appréciation portée sur lui ou sur quelque chose dont il est le symbole, l'extension ou l'agent⁴⁸ ». Ils se déclinent en rites d'évitement (*avoidance ritual*) et de respect des territoires du *self* d'un côté (il faut éviter de toucher physiquement et moralement une personne, donc s'abstenir de toute intrusion dans les lieux où la face émanant de son corps physique vient se loger : espace personnel, espace utile, place, tour, domaines réservés de la conversation, *etc.*⁴⁹), et de l'autre en rites confirmatifs (*supportive rituals*) ou rites de présentation (*presentational rituals*), qui manifestent de manière positive la reconnaissance accordée à sa valeur (salutations, adieux, compliments, conversations sur la pluie et le beau temps, intérêt pour sa santé, *etc.*). Ce partage en rites d'évitement et rites confirmatifs recoupe la disjonction durkheimienne entre rites négatifs et rites positifs, en la subsumant sous une catégorie générale, et renvoie à la bivalence du sacré, à la fois interdit (on ne peut s'en approcher sans le contaminer) et désirable (on aspire à communier avec lui pour se voir, à son tour, auréolé de son éclat).
- 28 Les rites envers sa propre face sont envisagés dans *Les rites d'interaction* comme tout ce qui relève de la tenue (*demeanor*). Pour ne pas perdre la face, l'interactant doit honorer, en toute occasion, l'étincelle sacrée déposée en lui par la société, assurant sa personnalité, et doit donc se comporter de manière socialement convenable. Ainsi la tenue se présente-t-elle comme cet élément du comportement cérémoniel « qui se

révèle typiquement à travers le maintien, le vêtement et l'allure, et qui sert à exprimer à l'entourage que l'on est une personne douée de certaines qualités⁵⁰ », mais se manifeste également à travers différents attributs, tels que la discrétion, la sincérité, la modestie, et des caractéristiques moins morales que comportementales, comme le contrôle de ses paroles et de ses gestes.

- 29 De manière remarquable, les rites envers la face des autres et ceux envers ma propre face s'articulent dans ce que Goffman nomme, dans le chapitre IV des *Relations en public*, les rites de réparation (*remedial rituals*). Après avoir commis une offense à l'égard de la face de l'autre, le fautif voit le doute jeté sur ses propres compétences sociales, lui faisant courir le risque d'être discrédité. Son activité consiste alors à montrer qu'il avait, sinon en réalité du moins en intention⁵¹, une juste relation aux règles et qu'il s'agit d'un regrettable malentendu dans le premier cas et d'une erreur déplorable dans le second. Dans cette perspective, il déploie un rite réparateur dont le spectre court des justifications aux excuses : il permet de rétablir le flux de la communication, en raccommoiant la relation intersubjective déchirée. Le rite réparateur vise ainsi à dépeindre « les rapports usuels de l'offenseur virtuel aux règles que ces actions paraissent avoir enfreintes et aux personnes dont ces règles auraient dû protéger les territoires⁵² ».
- 30 S'ils sont initialement tournés vers la face de celui qui les déploie, visant à la restaurer, et relèvent à ce titre d'une motivation personnelle, les rites réparateurs possèdent également des effets cérémoniels sur la face de l'autre : alors qu'elle avait été profanée par l'acte initial, elle se voit symboliquement réparée et confirmée par l'activité rituelle déployée par le fautif. Ainsi Goffman parvient-il à dégager une modalité du contrôle social rarement analysée en sociologie, et ce en faisant l'économie de toute notion de châtement. L'ordre interactionnel se rétablit en l'absence de punition, dans la mesure où les offenses se corrigent par un amendement spontané du fautif. Une face ne pouvant se maintenir si l'autre s'effondre, la régulation sociale en passe nécessairement par l'accommodement et la coopération entre les agents et non par l'obéissance mécanique ou l'imposition d'une peine par une institution extérieure. La possibilité même du rite de réparation est conditionnée par la réciprocité des faces, résultant de la puissance propre aux normes situationnelles : sitôt qu'un individu met en danger la face d'autrui en n'honorant pas ses attentes sur le comportement normal à déployer dans la situation, sa propre face pâtit, puisque seule leur satisfaction permet de projeter une image de soi satisfaisante.
- 31 Cette réciprocité confirme les analyses précédentes sur le caractère non individuel de la face : il s'agit d'une construction sociale ne pouvant se maintenir que dans la circulation. Elle permet, en outre, de préciser l'ordre rituel de l'interaction comme système d'échange. À condition cependant de préciser que la valeur échangée n'est pas marchande, mais sociale, et que chaque protagoniste s'avère dans le même temps et prêtre et fidèle. Ainsi les cérémonies envers la face doivent-elles se comprendre comme un culte rendu au social à son niveau le plus élémentaire.

Une perspective irréductible à l'individualisme méthodologique

- 32 Mais cette compréhension des mécanismes de stabilité de l'ordre interactionnel ne doit en aucune manière être rapportée à une forme de calcul rationnel qui inscrirait la pensée de Goffman dans une perspective individualiste⁵³. En effet, la notion de rite

empêche de réduire le comportement des agents à une forme de cynisme ou d'hypocrisie. L'ordre interactionnel ne repose pas sur la recherche d'un gain individuel, mais sur la solidarité des faces, puisque la face, loin d'être une propriété individuelle, apparaît comme une élaboration sociale ne pouvant se maintenir que dans l'échange, grâce à un travail collaboratif. Les agents ne se plient pas aux règles interactionnelles pour donner le change par intérêt égoïste, mais parce que la dimension cérémonielle consubstantielle à la régulation de l'ordre interactionnel s'impose à eux, en raison de la force de sa valeur sacrée. Irréductible à toute valeur mercantile, elle transcende le calcul en transformant les individus en personnes respectables. Ainsi existe-t-il bien une puissance contraignante, immanente à l'ordre interactionnel, à laquelle les individus adhèrent en raison de sa qualité supérieure. Si l'on veut sauver sa face et celle de l'autre, ce n'est pas pour se mettre en avant, mais parce que l'on « est jaloux de son culte⁵⁴ », c'est-à-dire frappé de respect devant sa puissance à métamorphoser les agents. L'efficiencia de la face se trouve confirmée de manière négative et tragique par les différentes analyses que Goffman consacre aux fous internés dans les institutions psychiatriques américaines des années 1960 : méthodiquement privés de face par les différents règlements qui les empêchent de participer à l'ordre de l'interaction, considérés comme des non-personnes, ils sont menacés de mort morale⁵⁵.

Conclusion

- 33 Ainsi l'importance accordée par Erving Goffman à la notion de rite pour envisager les interactions de la vie quotidienne, même les plus banales, comme des cérémonies en miniature, ne peut se comprendre sans son concept de face élaboré à partir des travaux d'anthropologie sur le *lien* chinois et la perspective confucéenne qui le sous-tend. Si les relations intersubjectives manifestent une forme de respect envers soi-même et autrui, c'est dans la mesure où les individus obéissant aux normes sociales se voient sacrés, en raison de la nature transcendante de ces dernières, par l'octroi d'une face. Sans la mise en évidence de cette valorisation de l'individu, il est tout simplement impossible de comprendre pourquoi les interactions constituent un ordre auquel les agents se sentent tenus de souscrire. Cet héritage permet de souligner la double originalité de la sociologie de Goffman. D'une part, elle déploie une perspective beaucoup plus extensive et moins effervescente du rite que celle de l'anthropologie durkheimienne. Loin de se cantonner à une mise en rapport entre l'humain et le surnaturel dans la sphère religieuse, le rite goffmanien, à l'instar du *li* 禮 confucéen, se voit érigé en schème d'analyse des rapports intersubjectifs les plus anodins, dans la mesure où ceux-ci comportent une dimension sacrée. La dimension formelle des interactions, ce que Goffman nomme parfois l'étiquette⁵⁶, ne se réduit en aucun cas à une attitude conventionnelle purement extérieure : si elle est de façade, c'est bien parce que cette dernière s'avère une construction sociale particulièrement contraignante, en raison de sa dimension transcendante. Ainsi les miettes de la vie quotidienne se voient-elles érigées en objets sociologiques dignes de ce nom. D'autre part, cet héritage permet à Goffman d'envisager un mécanisme de régulation sociale inédit dans le champ de la sociologie, faisant l'économie de toute coercition extérieure s'exerçant par le biais de châtements, comme de tout calcul rationnel et cynique des agents. Les interactions se déploient de manière réglée grâce à la solidarité des faces : les cérémonies ne doivent pas être interrompues, sinon c'est la face du fautif qui se voit profanée. Par-là, Goffman radicalise l'analyse de Hu Hsien-chin sur la notion de *lien* : il ne faut pas tant parler

d'une socialisation de la morale, où la mise en œuvre des vertus traditionnelles serait socialement gratifiée, que d'une moralisation du social, où le respect des normes sociales valorise l'individu comme personne respectable. Dans cette perspective, l'appréhension des interactions comme rites ne relève nullement d'une sécularisation du religieux, mais d'une sacralisation des agents.

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NOTES DE BAS DE PAGE

1. Goffman 1953.
2. Goffman 1988, 186-230.
3. Voir Huxley 1971, 9, cité par Goffman qui met en relation ses travaux avec un certain nombre d'autres également issus de l'éthologie animale, dans Goffman 1973b, 73, note 1.
4. Voir Durkheim 1990, 50.
5. Voir Radcliffe-Brown 1968, 220 et 228.
6. Goffman 1973b, 73.
7. Voir Goffman 1974, 48 : « Une règle cérémonielle est une règle qui guide la conduite quant aux affaires que l'on estime peu ou pas du tout importantes par elles-mêmes, mais qui valent avant tout – officiellement du moins – comme moyens de communication conventionnels grâce auxquels l'individu exprime son personnage ou porte une appréciation sur les autres ».
8. Goffman 1974, 51, note 9, citant un passage de Radcliffe-Brown 1952, 123.
9. Fingarette 1972, 11. Voir aussi Cheng 1997, 70 : « Confucius opère au sujet de *li* un "glissement sémantique", passant du sens sacrificiel et religieux à l'idée d'une attitude intériorisée de chacun, qui est conscience et respect d'autrui, et qui garantit l'harmonie des relations humaines, qu'elles soient sociales ou politiques. Le champ d'action des rites se déplace des relations entre l'humain et le surnaturel vers celles qui existent entre les humains eux-mêmes. Mais malgré ce glissement, le caractère sacré du *li* est préservé dans toute sa puissance et son efficace : il y a en fait déplacement du sacré du domaine proprement religieux vers la sphère de l'humain ».
10. Goffman 1974, 9.
11. Goffman 1974, 15.
12. Voir Durkheim 1924, 68, cité par Goffman 1973a, 70.
13. Goffman 1973b, 180.
14. Goffman 1974, 84.
15. Goffman 1973b, 103.
16. Hu 1944 ; Yang 1945, 167-172 ; Macgowan 1912, 301-312 ; Smith 1894, 16-18.
17. Voir Goffman 1953, 153.
18. Voir Goffman 1973a, 15.
19. Goffman 1968, 224.
20. Goffman 1974, 13.
21. Goffman 1974, 17.
22. Afin de rester au plus près de l'article cité par Goffman, nous reprenons la transcription des termes chinois utilisée par l'auteur d'après le système Wade-Giles. Cf. Hu 1944, 45.
23. Voir l'article « Face » dans l'*Oxford English Dictionary*.
24. Smith 1894, 16.
25. Voir Hu 1944, 45.
26. Voir Hu 1944, 61.
27. Hu 1944, 45.
28. Goffman 1974, 13.
29. Selon l'héritage simmélien de la sociabilité comme type de relation sociale se déployant entre inconnus dans la grande ville, qui inspire les travaux de l'École de Chicago, notamment de

Robert Ezra Park dont Goffman se réclame à de nombreuses reprises. Voir Simmel 1981, 124-125 et Goffman 2013, 16. Pour la filiation entre Simmel, Park et Goffman, voir le chapitre II de Bonicco-Donato 2016, 92 *sq.*

30. Goffman 1974, 81, traduction modifiée.

31. On ne trouve pas moins de 33 occurrences des termes « moral » et « immoral » dans la présentation qu'elle fait du *lien* et des manières de le perdre.

32. Goffman 1991, 19.

33. Hu 1944, 45.

34. Goffman 1974, 9.

35. Goffman 1974, 10.

36. Voir Goffman 1973a, 82.

37. Voir Goffman 1961, 132 et 148.

38. Goffman 1961, 115-132.

39. Goffman 1974, 21.

40. Voir Durkheim 1937, xvi. Ainsi la nature rituelle des interactions exprime-t-elle cette emprise du social sur l'individu : sacralisant l'individu qui en suit les normes par l'octroi d'une face consistante, le rituel apparaît comme un moyen de mobiliser les agents pour en faire des participants de rencontres autocontrôlés. Il permet à la société de se maintenir comme telle (voir Goffman 1974, 41).

41. Voir Parsons 1937, 430-433 et Goffman 1974, 48-49. Cette production symbolique de la fin visée se trouve également dans la compréhension confucéenne du rite que Herbert Fingarette (Fingarette 1972, 11) rapproche de l'acte linguistique performatif décrit par John L. Austin. Voir Austin 1970, 35 *sq.* : les énoncés performatifs sont des actes de parole qui réalisent l'acte dont ils parlent, à l'exemple de « je promets ».

42. Goffman 1974, 46.

43. Voir Fingarette 1972, 16, et Vandermeersch 1994, 143.

44. Goffman 1974, 49.

45. Voir Goffman 1953, 33, note 1, se référant à Parsons 1951.

46. Winkin 1988, 87.

47. Pour une analyse plus détaillée de cette typologie, voir Bonicco-Donato 2016, 132-142.

48. Goffman 1974, 50-51, traduction modifiée.

49. Goffman 1973b, 43 *sq.*

50. Goffman 1974, 68-69, traduction modifiée.

51. Goffman 1973b, 113 *sq.*

52. Goffman 1973b, 119.

53. Voir Bonicco-Donato 2012.

54. Goffman 1974, 84.

55. Goffman 1968, 56.

56. Goffman 1974, 49.

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The pre-imperial *Book of Rites*

Confucius after hours: an analysis of the “master at leisure” dialogues in the *Liji*

Scott Cook

- 1 As perhaps the leading authority on ritual matters of his time and the man who, possessing the knowledge, wisdom, and charisma necessary to attract large numbers of disciples to his gates, effectively established the dominant tone for all discourse on ritual from his time forward, the figure of Confucius (Kong Zi 孔子)¹ –not to mention his disciples– understandably looms large in both the *Liji* 禮記 (*Book of Ritual*) and *Da Dai Liji* 大戴禮記 (*Elder Dai Book of Ritual*). Outside of the *Lunyu* 論語 (*Analects of Confucius*), which is devoted exclusively to utterances and conversations of Confucius and his disciples, these two works are among our most valuable sources for understanding the thought of both Confucius himself and those who, in the subsequent few centuries, laid claim to his mantle. Needless to say, the Confucius of all these works is at once both an historical and literary figure. As an historical figure, he was that man of Lu 魯 who at times probably achieved administrative and advisory positions of some prominence but at others remained largely beyond the political fray and devoted most of his time to the instruction of his disciples; as a literary figure, he was the subject of countless imaginative recreations that, consciously or not, may have served somewhat different ends or philosophical positions that differed in subtle ways from those of the historical Confucius –texts produced by way of a literary license that was nonetheless bound, I would stress, by the limits of credulity established by historical memory of the living Confucius (itself, to be sure, constantly evolving over time).²
- 2 Given the inherent difficulties of dating texts from the Warring States (and into the early Han), the task of seeking out some sort of order amongst the maze of Confucius dialogues found in such early sources is an unimaginably difficult one. Nonetheless, the effort to do so remains a worthwhile and intellectually stimulating task –particularly with the discovery of unearthed bamboo manuscripts that help to further flesh out the picture we aim to reconstruct– as novel insights can always be gleaned from the careful reading of texts that may point us in new and unexpected directions. The present paper

endeavours to contribute to such a quest by examining three texts that are placed within a specific type of literary context: dialogues portraying the “Master at leisure” (*xianju* 閒居 or *yanju* 燕居) and in conversation with disciples in an after-hours setting, namely, “Zhongni Rested at Ease” 仲尼燕居 and “Kong Zi Rested at Leisure” 孔子閒居 from the *Liji*, and “Discourse of the Sovereign” 主言 from the *Da Dai Liji*.

- 3 According to (Han) Zheng Xuan 鄭玄, “To dwell at ease after leaving court is called ‘*yanju*’” 退朝而處日燕居, and “To avoid other people after leaving a banquet is called ‘*xianju*’” 退燕避人日閒居.³ While he thus differentiates the two terms somewhat, the emphasis in both is on an informal and relatively private setting after the conclusion of all the day’s official, ceremonial, and diplomatic duties; the wording of the terms themselves, which I respectively translate as “rest at ease” and “rest at leisure,” implies just such a sense of ease and informality.⁴ These definitions aside, our best means of getting a handle on just what sort of situations the terms were meant to describe and the types of conversations they were imagined to facilitate undoubtedly lies in the texts themselves, to which we shall now turn.

“Zhongni rested at ease” 仲尼燕居

- 4 This text begins with explicit mention of Confucius taking advantage of the informal, after-hours setting to “speak freely” (*zong yan* 縱言) with a group of disciples about certain matters. Though the matters in question here might at first glance appear barely indistinguishable from those of his teachings more generally, the manner in which the narrative frames them suggests something unique in the way of at least scope, if not content. In this instance the topic in question is, broadly, ritual:

仲尼燕居，子張、子貢、言游侍，縱言至於禮。子曰：「居！女三人者，吾語女禮，使女以禮周流，無不遍也。」⁵

Zhongni rested at ease, with Zizhang, Zigong, and Yan You (a.k.a. Ziyou 子游) in attendance, and in the course of speaking freely they came to the matter of ritual. The Master said: “Sit, you three, and I shall tell you about ritual, so that you may smoothly make your rounds in accordance with ritual and lack nothing in the way of breadth.”

- 5 Zigong takes the initiative to ask the first question, and does so in a manner that, unsurprisingly, demonstrates his basic grasp of ritual decorum –by moving over to the other side of his mat to ask it:⁶

子貢越席而對曰：「敢問何如？」子曰：「敬而不中禮，謂之野；恭而不中禮，謂之給；勇而不中禮，謂之逆。」子曰：「給奪慈仁。」子曰：「師！爾過，而商也不及。子產猶眾人之母也，能食之，不能教也。」

Zigong came over from across his mat and replied: “May I venture to ask how this is to be done?”

The Master said: “To be reverent yet fail to hit the mark in ritual we call being ‘wild’; to be humble yet fail to hit the mark in ritual we call being ‘ingratiating’; and to be courageous yet fail to hit the mark in ritual we call being ‘defiant.’” The Master [further] said: “To be ingratiating is to rob from [true] affection and humanity.” The Master [finally] added: “Shi (i.e., Zizhang), you go too far, whereas Shang (i.e., Zixia 子夏) does not go far enough. Zichan [on the other hand] was like a mother to the masses: he was able to feed them, but unable to instruct them.”

- 6 It is unclear in exactly which, if not all, of the three aspects of virtue Zizhang and Zixia overreach or underachieve, respectively, but Zizhang, for one, was known for his courageous but (much like Zilu 子路) somewhat impetuous temperament. The Zheng 鄭 statesman Zichan, on the other hand, is given as an example of someone who failed to hit the mark in a somewhat different way, fully satisfying the material needs of his people with the charitable and benevolent impulses of a mother, but failing to properly instruct them with the stern but affectionate “tough love” of a father –perhaps this, too, was a form of “ingratiating.” In any case, it seems curious, and perhaps even a bit unfair, that Zizhang gets singled out for criticism among the three disciples when he was not even the one who asked the question, and that Zixia, entirely absent from the scene, gets criticised behind his back –one almost suspects that the second “Master” 子 here is an error of partial omission for “Zizhang” 子張. But assuming that the text is not corrupt,⁷ the twice repetition of “The Master said” would appear to indicate pregnant pauses between each of his separate utterances, giving Zigong more than enough time to have either sat back down or returned to his initial standing place before once again springing into action:

子貢越席而對曰：「敢問將何以為此中者也？」

Zigong [again] arose from (/came over from across) his mat and replied: “May I venture to ask by what means one may be able to achieve this hitting of the mark?”

- 7 While this appears to be something of a dumb question, it is only designed to set up Confucius’ emphatic reiteration by way of conclusion:

子曰：「禮乎禮！夫禮，所以制中也。」

The Master said: “Ritual! Ritual! It is ritual by which the central mark is fashioned.”

- 8 This is the summarising thought which brings the first section of text to an end, after which it is the second disciple’s turn to come to the fore:

子貢退，言游進曰：「敢問禮也者，領惡而全好者與？」子曰：「然。」「然則何如？」子曰：「郊社之義，所以仁鬼神也。嘗禘之禮，所以仁昭穆也。饋奠之禮，所以仁死喪也。射鄉之禮，所以仁鄉黨也。食饗之禮，所以仁賓客也。」

Zigong withdrew, and Yan You came forward, asking: “May I venture to ask whether ritual is that which takes charge of what is flawed and completes what is fine?”

The Master replied: “It is so.”

“In what manner, then, is this the case?”

The Master said: “The proprieties of the suburban sacrifices at the altars of Heaven and Earth are those by which the ghosts and spirits are shown humanity.⁸ The rituals of the autumnal sacrifice and grand ancestral sacrifice are those by which the ancestral orderings of left and right are shown humanity.⁹ The rituals of sacrificial offerings at the side of the newly departed are those by which mourning for the deceased is shown humanity. The rituals of the archery and drinking ceremonies in honour of local worthies are those by which the towns and villages are shown humanity.¹⁰ The rituals of banquet feasts are those by which honoured guests are shown humanity.

- 9 Ziyou asks what is clearly a leading question, one designed to elicit the master’s approbation before seeking further elucidation by way of a follow-up question.

Confucius' response, however, does not address the matters of what is "flawed" and "fine" directly, but it does speak to the idea of "taking charge" (*ling* 領) and "completing" (*quan* 全) in the sense of focusing on grand state rituals in which the ruler plays the leading role. The function of these rituals is to "humanise" or "show humanity" (*ren* 仁)¹¹ to both the spirits of the departed and all those among the living who may be brought under ritual's sway. The result of such attention to ritual at the highest levels is a ritual modelling that so thoroughly pervades all aspects of social and political life below that everything naturally finds its appropriate measure, as Confucius goes on to elucidate after what is perhaps a further intentional pause:

子曰：「明乎郊社之義，嘗禘之禮，治國其如指諸掌而已乎！是故以之居處有禮，故長幼辨也。以之闔門之內有禮，故三族和也。以之朝廷有禮，故官爵序也。以之田獵有禮，故戎事閑也。以之軍旅有禮，故武功成也。是故宮室得其度，量鼎得其象，味得其時，樂得其節，車得其式，鬼神得其饗，喪紀得其哀，辨說得其黨，官得其體，政事得其施。加於身而錯於前，凡眾之動得其宜。」

The Master continued: "If one were to clearly understand and bring to light the proprieties (/significance) of the suburban sacrifices at the altars of Heaven and Earth, the rituals of the autumnal sacrifice and grand ancestral sacrifice, [and so on,] bringing order to the state would surely be [as easy] as simply pointing it out on the palm of one's hand! And so on this basis, there would be ritual decorum at home, and thus distinction between elder and younger; there would be ritual decorum within the women's quarters, and thus harmony among all three family clans;¹² there would be ritual decorum at court, and thus order among the ranks of officers; there would be ritual decorum on hunting expeditions, and thus discipline in martial matters; and there would be ritual decorum within army battalions, and thus success in military endeavours. And so houses and dwellings would obtain their proper dimensions, measuring vessels and tripods would obtain their proper insignia, flavours would obtain their proper seasons, music would obtain its proper rhythms, carriages would obtain their proper models, ghosts and spirits would obtain their proper offerings, mourning norms would obtain their proper expressions of grief, discussions and deliberations would obtain their proper allies, offices would obtain their proper structures, and administrative tasks would obtain their proper deployments. [With the ruler thus] placing [the ritual foundations] upon [his] self and laying them out in front [as the model], the movements of the masses¹³ will all obtain their appropriate [expressions]."¹⁴

- 10 Thus not only does ritual intrinsically entail hierarchy, there is also a hierarchy among rituals themselves, such that those performed at the top radiate down to those below and their efficacy is echoed at all levels. Having fleshed out this point, Confucius is not quite done in his response to Ziyou, as he now goes on to pose his own question about the very nature of ritual:¹⁵

子曰：「禮者何也？即事之治也。君子有其事，必有其治。治國而無禮，譬猶瞽之無相與，佞佞乎其何之？譬如終夜有求於幽室之中，非燭何見？若無禮，則手足無所錯，耳目無所加，進退揖讓無所制。是故以之居處，長幼失其別，闔門三族失其和，朝廷官爵失其序，田獵戎事失其策，軍旅武功失其制，宮室失其度，量鼎失其象，味失其時，樂失其節，車失其式，鬼神失其饗，喪紀失其哀，辨說失其黨，官失其體，政事失其施。加於身而錯於前，凡眾之動失其宜。如此則無以祖洽於眾也。」

The Master continued: "What is ritual? It is none other than the ordering of undertakings. The noble man has his undertakings, and these undertakings must have their orderings. To order (/govern) a state without the use of

ritual may be compared to a blind person having no one to guide him – aimless and bewildered, where is he headed?¹⁶ It may be compared to seeking for something all night in a dark room –without a candle, what could one see? If one lacks ritual, he will have nowhere to place his hands and feet, nothing to apply his eyes and ears to, and nothing by which to tailor his advances, retreats, and expressions of deference. And so on this basis, elder and younger will lose their distinctions at home, the three family clans will lose their harmony within the women’s quarters, the ranks of officers will lose their order at court, martial undertakings will lose their direction on hunting expeditions, army battalions will lose their control in military endeavours, houses and dwellings will lose their proper dimensions, measuring vessels and tripods will lose their proper insignia, flavours will lose their proper seasons, music will lose its proper rhythms, carriages will lose their proper models, ghosts and spirits will lose their proper offerings, mourning norms will lose their proper expressions of grief, discussions and deliberations will lose their proper allies, offices will lose their proper structures, and administrative tasks will lose their proper deployments. [With the ruler thus] placing [such lack of ritual] upon [his] self and laying it out in front [as the model], the movements of the masses will all lose their appropriate [expressions]. If things are thus, there will be nothing by which to initiate an immersive (/harmonious) influence upon the masses.”

- 11 There are features of this passage that would seem to suggest at a mid-to-late Warring States composition for the text, namely the employment of critical analogies of a type strongly reminiscent of both the core chapters of the *Mozi* and, especially, the *Xunzi*’s response to Mohist ideas, as well as the nearly verbatim reformulation of a lengthy passage in the negative to re-emphasise the importance of some point by spelling out the consequences that would entail from failing to heed it, a tactic also frequently employed in chapters of both of those works. In any case, the Master’s response to Ziyou here has now come to a close, and he then proceeds with a further interlude addressed to all three of the disciples present:

子曰：「慎聽之！女三人者。吾語女：禮猶有九焉，大饗有四焉。苟知此矣，雖在畎畝之中，事之，聖人已。兩君相見，揖讓而入門，入門而縣興，揖讓而升堂，升堂而樂闋，下管《象》、《武》，《夏》籥序興，陳其薦俎，序其禮樂，備其百官，如此而后，君子知仁焉。行中規，還中矩，和鸞中《采齊》，客出以《雍》，徹以《振羽》。是故君子無物而不在禮矣。入門而金作，示情也。升歌《清廟》，示德也。下而管《象》，示事也。是故古之君子不必親相與言也，以禮樂相示而已。」

The Master went on: “Listen carefully, you three! I will tell you how there are yet nine further [aspects] of ritual, four of which occur within the Grand Banquet.¹⁷ Should one understand these, then even though he may reside in the midst of farm fields, he will become a sage if he [is able to] make them his task.¹⁸ When two rulers meet with each other, they enter the door following deferential bows of yielding; suspended instruments (bells and drums)¹⁹ are performed upon their entry; they ascend to the hall following deferential bows of yielding; the music ceases upon ascent to the hall;²⁰ [the martial dances of] Xiang and Wu²¹ are performed to the accompaniment of bamboo flutes below the hall; [the civil dance of] Xia is then performed, in succession, to the accompaniment of panpipes; the sacrificial trays of offerings are laid out; [various] rituals and music are [performed] in proper succession; and the hundred officials are all completely [arrayed]. Only once all is like this does the noble man realise how humanity is shown therein. The movements forward [of all the participants] hit the mark of the compass, and their returns hit the mark of the carpenter’s square; the jingle bells of carriages

[receiving the guests] sing in tune with [a performance] of ‘Cai qi’; the guests take their leave to [the accompaniment of] ‘Yong’; and the offerings are cleared to [the accompaniment of] ‘Zhen yu.’²² There is thus nothing of [which] the nobleman [partakes] that does not lie in [accord with] ritual. That the bronze [bells] are played upon entering the door is in order to exhibit true affection [for the guests]. That the Ode ‘Qing miao’ (extolling King Wen’s virtue) is sung upon ascent [to the hall] is in order to exhibit charismatic virtue.²³ That the Xiang dance is performed to reed-instrument [accompaniment] below [the hall] is in order to exhibit service to undertakings. Thus the noble men of antiquity did not [even] need to talk with each other in person, as they [were able to] simply reveal themselves to each other through ritual and music.”

- 12 This unusual interlude, focusing as it does on the ceremonial details of the Grand Banquet, gives us a level of specificity we have not seen elsewhere in this text. Yet it does so in the service of driving home an understanding of the ultimate functions of ritual, which include the “realisation” (*zhi* 知) of “humanity” (*ren* 仁) and the “exhibition” (*shi* 示) of “true affection” (*qing* 情), “charismatic virtue” (*de* 德), and “service to undertakings” (*shi* 事). Ritual is thus primarily concerned, at one level, with display and exhibition: it is the vehicle of conveyance of sentiments that need not, and indeed largely cannot, be expressed in words alone. In this aspect, the efficacy of ritual can only be fully realised through the assistance of its twin sister, music, as Confucius goes on to spell out in further terms:

子曰：「禮也者，理也。樂也者，節也。君子無理不動，無節不作。不能詩，於禮繆；不能樂，於禮素；薄於德，於禮虛。」子曰：「制度在禮，文為在禮，行之其在人乎！」

子貢越席而對曰：「敢問變其窮與？」

子曰：「古之人與！古之人也。達於禮而不達於樂，謂之素；達於樂而不達於禮，謂之偏。夫變達於樂而不達於禮，是以傳於此名也，古之人也。」

The Master continued: “Ritual is ordered pattern; music is rhythmic regularity. The noble man does not move without order and does not act without regularity. To be incapable of poetic expression is to be hamstrung in regard to ritual; to be incapable of musical expression is to be lacklustre in regard to ritual; to be meager in virtue is to be vacuous in regard to ritual.” The Master added: “Regulations and standards reside in ritual, and refined actions reside in ritual –but to implement them, does this not reside in the person?!”²⁴

Zigong arose from his mat and responded: “Might I dare to ask whether [the ancient music master] Kui was impoverished [in this regard]?”

The Master said: “Was he not a man of antiquity? Yes, a man of antiquity he was. To be accomplished in ritual but not in music, we call being ‘lacklustre.’ To be accomplished in music but not in ritual, we call being ‘one-sided.’ For Kui was accomplished in music but not in ritual, and thus he was passed down to us with this [particular] name.²⁵ A man of antiquity he was.”

- 13 With this, we have briefly moved back to the issue of balance with which the entire discussion opened, except that it is no longer simply a matter that ritual must serve as the guide by which to allow virtuous impulses to “hit the mark,” but that ritual itself must be balanced with musical (and poetic) expression and infused with inner virtue in order for the ritual to hold any genuine meaning.
- 14 Finally, Zizhang takes his turn, though in this case we have no mention of his getting up from his mat to ask his question, or even a direct quotation of the exact words by

which he asked it. At the same time, he also appears to want to shift towards a separate topic, though in fact his subject of inquiry turns out to be not so distinct after all:

子張問政。

子曰「師乎，前！吾語女乎！君子明於禮樂，舉而錯之而已。」

子張復問。

子曰：「師，爾以為必鋪几筵，升降，酌、獻、酬、酢，然後謂之禮乎？爾以為必行綴兆，興羽籥，作鍾鼓，然後謂之樂乎？言而履之，禮也。行而樂之，樂也。君子力此二者，以南面而立。夫是以天下大平也，諸侯朝，萬物服體，而百官莫敢不承事矣。禮之所興，眾之所治也。禮之所廢，眾之所亂也。目巧之室，則有奧阼，席則有上下，車則有左右，行則有隨，立則有序，古之義也。室而無奧阼，則亂於堂室也。席而無上下，則亂於席上也。車而無左右，則亂於車也。行而無隨，則亂於塗也。立而無序，則亂於位也。昔聖帝、明王、諸侯，辨貴賤、長幼、遠近、男女、外內，莫敢相踰越，皆由此塗出也。」

三子者既得聞此言也於夫子，昭然若發矇矣。

Zizhang asked about governance.²⁶

The Master replied: “Shi!²⁷ Come forward and I shall tell you!²⁸ The noble man has a clear understanding of ritual and music and simply raises them up and puts them into place.”

Zizhang asked again.

The Master said: “Shi, do you think that one must lay forth tables and mats, ascend and descend staircases, and pour libations and offer rounds of toasts before it can be called ritual? Do you think that one must move along choreographed positions, raise up feathers and panpipes, and strike up bells and drums before it can be called music? To speak and put one’s words into practice is ritual. To act and find contentment in it is music. The noble man exerts his efforts in these two things, and thereby establishes himself when facing south [in the position of a ruler]. For by means of these, the world will be brought to great peace, the regional lords will pay court, the myriad creatures will all submit, and none of the hundred officers will dare to fail to accept his tasks. Wherever ritual prospers is where the masses are well ordered. Wherever ritual is abandoned is where the masses are in chaos.

“[Even] a room crafted only by sight will have its southwest corner [for the honoured] and eastern staircase [for the host]; seating mats will have their [placements at] upper and lower positions; carriages will have their [seating positions of] left and right; marching lines will have their ordered followings; and standing positions will have their orders of precedence –such was the propriety of the ancients. If rooms lack southwest corners and eastern staircases, chaos will prevail in the halls and rooms; if seating mats lack their [placements] of upper and lower, chaos will prevail atop the mats; if carriages lack [seating positions of] left and right, chaos will prevail in the carriages; if marching lines lack their ordered followings, chaos will prevail on the roads; and if standing positions lack their orders of precedence, chaos will prevail amongst the positions. The sagely sovereigns, enlightened kings, and regional lords of former times distinguished noble from base, elder from younger, distant from near, male from female, and external from internal, [such that] none dared to transgress each other’s boundaries –this was because they all set forth from such a path [of ritual order].”

Upon hearing these words from the Master, the three disciples [suddenly saw things] in a bright light, as if their blindness had been lifted.

- 15 In short, ritual effectively is governance: the key to achieving social order and avoiding chaos lies not in legal institutions, economic policies, or any other such unspoken aspects of rulership that Zizhang had clearly expected in asking the question, but in the practice and implementation of ritual (and music), the guiding matrix of self-control

and social existence that Zhongni had been stressing all along. Though this was surely not the first time these disciples had heard such ideas, so central as they are to Confucius' philosophy, the narrative nonetheless does its best to make it seem so, ending most dramatically with a description of how their minds have been utterly blown away by these notions. This is no doubt the effect the author of this text wished it to have on its contemporary readers as well.

- 16 Structurally, “Zhongni yanju” might be seen as comprising four main parts, punctuated mainly by the introduction of new questions posed by alternating disciples.²⁹ The first question, by Zigong, leads to the notion of “hitting the mark” in such virtues as reverence, humility, and courage, with Confucius stressing the importance of doing everything in appropriate measure, as excesses of “virtues” are just as bad as their failings and thus no longer virtues at all, and revealing how the core function of ritual is to train humans to act appropriately in accord with the spirit of humanity and true affections. With Ziyou’s question, Confucius becomes somewhat more explicit in describing the ways in which ritual is used to humanise society, the main idea being how the leader sets the model for the rest of the populace to follow. We thus have the grand rituals of state, in which everyone from the ghosts and spirits and the royal ancestors on down to the village worthies and guests of state are “shown humanity” (*ren* 仁), and the key to which lies in the sense of “order” (*zhi* 治) that they encapsulate; once they have properly set the model, the rest of society simply follows in lockstep – from the home and extended family down to hunts and military exhibitions, all proceed smoothly on the basis of their ritually ordered operations– whereas failure to set the proper model, conversely, results in disorder throughout the realm. Following Ziyou’s question, we have an interlude in which all three disciples are addressed, wherein Confucius alludes to “nine” further aspects of ritual, of which “four” are manifested in the Grand Banquet, and it is here that we are given a level of ritual specificity that is otherwise largely absent from this text. The four aspects in question would appear to be the ways in which this ritual exhibits the virtues of “humanity,” “true affection,” “charismatic virtue,” and “service to undertakings” –things ritual cannot fully achieve alone, but which require the assistance of its complementary institution: music. This forms the bridge to the final question, Zizhang’s inquiry on governance, to which Confucius patiently responds by explaining how successful governance is simply a matter of implementing ritual and music, no more and no less. The essence of this lies not so much in the details, but in how the rituals embody the core notions they were designed to express: “To speak and put one’s words into practice is ritual; to act and find contentment in it is music.” Attention to this is all that is needed: the masses will follow once the tone is set, and order or disorder in the world will ensue according to whether ritual (and music), derived from such a basis, prospers or not. To an extent, Confucius ends here by largely reiterating points he had already made to Ziyou, but the fact that Zizhang had to ask the question twice is indicative of the fact that these were ideas that were not always met with immediate acceptance.
- 17 With that, let us now turn to the second of our texts, in which Confucius appears at leisure with only one disciple.

“Kong Zi rested at leisure” 孔子閒居

孔子閒居，子夏侍。子夏日：「敢問詩云『凱弟君子，民之父母』，何如斯可謂民之父母矣？」孔子曰：「夫民之父母乎！必達於禮樂之原，以致五至而行三無，以橫於天下。四方有敗，必先知之，此之謂民之父母矣。」³⁰

Kong Zi (Master Kong) rested at leisure, with Zixia in attendance.³¹ Zixia said: “An ode states: ‘Harmonious and genial is the noble man, parent of the people’³² –may I ask what one must be like in order to be called ‘parent of the people?’”

Kong Zi replied: “A parent of the people! He must comprehend the source(s) of ritual and music, so as to achieve the five attainments and practise the three absences, and thereby transfuse the world.³³ Should there be any [impending] calamities within the four quarters, he must recognise them in advance. Such [a man] may be called ‘parent of the people.’”³⁴

- 18 In contrast with “Zhongni Rested at Ease,” this text begins not with Confucius bringing up a topic he suddenly has the inspiration to discuss in the casual presence of three disciples, but rather with a single disciple, Zixia, posing the question that will lead to a profound and wide-ranging discourse, utilising a vehicle of conversation that is both a hallmark of Confucius’ instruction and an area of inquiry in which Zixia himself was particularly well versed: the interpretation of a line from the *Odes*. This fact will quickly become relevant to what follows, as Kong Zi is prodded –as usual– for elaboration upon his initially somewhat opaque answer, which in this case defines the notion of “parent of the people” in such vague terms as “five attainments” and “three absences.”

子夏日：「民之父母，既得而聞之矣，敢問何謂五至？」孔子曰：「志之所至，詩亦至焉；詩之所至，禮亦至焉；禮之所至，樂亦至焉；樂之所至，哀亦至焉。哀樂相生，是故正。 {} ³⁵此之謂五至。」

Zixia said: “Now that I have been able to hear about the ‘parent of the people,’ might I ask to what the ‘five attainments’ refer?”

Kong Zi replied: “Wherever one’s intent reaches, poetry also attains;³⁶ wherever poetry reaches, ritual also attains; wherever ritual reaches, musical expression also attains; and wherever musical expression (/ happiness) reaches, sorrow also attains.³⁷ Sorrow and happiness give rise to each other, and [the noble man] rectifies [himself] thereby.³⁸ This is what is meant by the ‘five attainments.’”

- 19 Whether this enumerated chain of causation really clarifies things so much is debatable, but Zixia is at least given the referents for the “five attainments” that he is seeking. The statement is abstractly worded, but it would appear to suggest a typical Confucian program in which ritual and music serve to guide human affections in their inevitable reactions to things and events, keeping them in balance so as not to let the pendulum of emotions swing too far in either direction while still providing a proper outlet for natural human sentiments. In some ways, the unearthed version of this text gives us a seemingly more logical series of “five attainments” than our *Liji* version; there, in place of “intent” and “poetry,” we find “things” and “intent,” respectively: “things” impel our “intent” in different directions, but training in ritual and guidance in musical expression are always there to keep things from leading our intent too far astray. However, the *Liji* version –whether the outcome of editorial alteration (purposeful or otherwise) or in fact a truer reflection of the original statement– presents an arguably more satisfying result from the standpoint of the dialogue as a

whole. Not only does the movement from poetry, to ritual, to musical expression precisely parallel the program of self-cultivation expressed by the Master in *Lunyu* VIII. 8 –“Arise through the *Odes*, become established through Ritual, and achieve completion through Music” 興於詩，立於禮，成於樂³⁹– but it even suggests something in the way of approbation or justification for the manner in which Zixia initiated the dialogue: by citing one of the *Odes*.

- 20 Zixia then continues to inquire about the “three absences,” once more seeking the aid of lines from the *Odes* in the process:

子夏日：「五至既得而聞之矣，敢問何謂三無？」

孔子曰：「無聲之樂，無體之禮，無服之喪。{明目而視之，不可得而見也；傾耳而聽之，不可得而聞也；志氣塞乎天地，} ⁴⁰此之謂三無。」

子夏日：「三無既得略而聞之矣，敢問何詩近之？」

孔子曰：「『夙夜其命宥密』，無聲之樂也。『威儀逮逮，不可選也』，無體之禮也。『凡民有喪，匍匐救之』，無服之喪也。」

Zixia said: “Now that I have been able to hear about the ‘five attainments,’ might I ask to what the ‘three absences’ refer?”

Kong Zi replied: “The music of no sounds, the ritual of no bodily deportment, and the mourning of no apparel. {Viewing these clearly with eyes wide open, one is [still] unable to see them, and listening to them attentively with cocked ears, one is [still] unable to hear them, [and yet the virtuous] energy of their intentions fills [the expanse between] Heaven and Earth.} ⁴¹ This is what is meant by the ‘three absences.’”

Zixia said: “Now that I have been able to hear about the ‘three absences’ in broad outline, might I ask which [lines from the] *Odes* come close to [expressing] them?” ⁴²

Kong Zi replied: “‘Day and night he upholds the mandate, broadly and tranquilly’ –such is the ‘music of no sounds.’ ⁴³ ‘Elegant all around is his imposing demeanour; nothing [therein] may be singled out’ –such is the ritual of no bodily deportment. ‘Whenever the people have cause for mourning, on hands and knees he comes to their rescue’ –such is the ‘mourning of no apparel.’”

- 21 Despite their arcane language, the lines from these *Odes* really do give one a more direct sense of what the immensely abstract “three absences” actually entail: a tireless spirit of striving toward social harmony that must ultimately precede any music composed to encapsulate and extol it; an embodied elegance that captures at once the entirety of what each individual rule of bodily deportment was designed to achieve yet manages to draw attention to none of them; and a compassion of sharing with the people their sense of grave loss that manifests itself not in the proscribed mourning apparel that one might wear for one’s own kin, but is rather a determination to assist that reveals itself in action. In all of these, it is that spirit that infuses music, ritual, and mourning practices and yet at once precedes, surpasses, and suffuses all of those practices in their totality, the foundation upon which those practices rest and which gives them their meaning. This vaguely echoes a sentiment seen in the *Lunyu*: “The Master said: ‘Ritual, ritual –is it merely jades and silks? Music, music –is it merely bells and drums?’” 子曰：「禮云禮云，玉帛云乎哉？樂云樂云，鐘鼓云乎哉？」 ⁴⁴ –not to mention an idea already seen in “Zhongni yanju” above. And the notion that none of this can be either seen or heard also points to that kind of quasi-miraculous state wherein the “noble man” has embodied the essence of these three practices so thoroughly that their effects “fill the expanse of Heaven and Earth” without any discernible means of conveyance –an idea often seen in Confucian texts of the period,

such as in the opening passage of the “Biaoji” 表記 chapter of the *Liji*, wherein Confucius describes the noble man as one who “is solemn without airs, awesome without severity, and trusted without speaking” 矜而莊，厲而威，言而信。⁴⁵

- 22 Yet while the Ode citations have helped him to see all this, Zixia is still left wanting more:

子夏日：「言則大矣，美矣，盛矣！言盡於此而已乎？」

孔子曰：「何為其然也？君子之服之也，猶有五起焉。」

子夏日：「何如？」

孔子曰：

「無聲之樂，氣志不違；無體之禮，威儀遲遲；無服之喪，內怨孔悲。

無聲之樂，氣志既得；無體之禮，威儀翼翼；無服之喪，施及四國。

無聲之樂，氣志既從；無體之禮，上下和同；無服之喪，以畜萬邦。

無聲之樂，日聞四方；無體之禮，日就月將；無服之喪，純德孔明。

無聲之樂，氣志既起；無體之禮，施及四海；無服之喪，施于孫子。」

Zixia said: “These lines are indeed great, fine, and magnificent! But is that all there is to say about them?”

Kong Zi said: “How could that be the case? In devoting himself to them, the noble man yet has ‘five arisings’ therefrom.”

Zixia said: “How so?”

Kong Zi said:

“With the music of no sounds, one’s essential intent⁴⁶ does not go astray; with the ritual of no bodily deportment, one’s imposing demeanour is relaxed and leisurely; with the mourning of no apparel, one’s internal sense of sympathy is truly sorrowful.

With the music of no sounds, one’s essential intent has been captured; with the ritual of no bodily deportment, one’s imposing demeanour is solemn and august; with the mourning of no apparel, one’s graces reach the four realms.

With the music of no sounds, one’s essential intent has gained a following; with the ritual of no bodily deportment, superiors and subordinates are in harmonious accord; with the mourning of no apparel, the myriad states are thereby reared.

With the music of no sounds, one’s renown grows daily throughout the four quarters; with the ritual of no bodily deportment, there are daily accomplishments and monthly progressions; with the mourning of no apparel, pure virtue is truly radiant.

With the music of no sounds, one’s essential intent has arisen; with the ritual of no bodily deportment, one’s graces reach the four seas; with the mourning of no apparel, one’s graces fall upon one’s descendants.”

- 23 It is hardly surprising that the ultimate import of such an abstract concept as the “three absences” could be described in anything less arcane than such a series of rhymed triplets, which derive their strength as much from the coherence of the prosody as they do from the content inscribed therein. But there appears to be a progression here, and as much as the description as seen in the Chinese text above coheres line by line “horizontally,” it is no doubt meant to be read “vertically” as well, though the precise nature of the advancement from one line to the next still leaves ample room for the imagination.
- 24 In this regard, it is interesting to note that in the unearthed version of this text, “Min zhi fumu” 民之父母, the ordering of these parallel lines is different: what are here lines four and five come right after line one, such that the order is 1-4-5-2-3, with some variations in wording within each line as well.⁴⁷ Most of these variations are minor, but

a few are more significant; here, I will cite as an example only the parallel to line five – line three in the unearthed text– which contains the greatest number of variants:

亡（無）聖（聲）之樂，它（施）（及）孫=（孫子）；亡（無）（體）之豐
（禮），塞于四海；亡（無）備（服）之（喪），為民父母。

With the music of no sounds, one's graces reach one's descendants; with the ritual of no bodily deportment, [they] fill out the space within the four seas; with the mourning of no apparel, one serves as parent to the people.

25 The rhyme, however, remains consistent. Given that these lines are twenty-four characters in length (counting any graphic repetition or combination marks), and that the assumed average number of characters per strip of the *Liji* source manuscript was around twenty-seven to twenty-eight characters (see note 35 above), one could imagine that the scribe of that source manuscript (or even one from which “Min zhi fumu” was itself copied) could have just decided to write each of the lines describing the “five arisings” on separate bamboo strips. The variations in order among the five may thus have simply resulted from a failed attempt at restoring the original order among five strips that had become jumbled from the breaking of their tying strings.⁴⁸ However, the “columnar” order in “Min zhi fumu” (actually horizontal “rows” on the bamboo strips) is arguably even less satisfying than that of the received, and variations of order *within* lines such as those just given point to a scenario that defies such a simple explanation. A more likely origin for the variations lies in the nature of the passage as a rhymed text: it was probably composed in a manner to be orally memorised and recited, and, as such recitations were passed along, it was only natural that variations and confusions in order would be introduced at the same time that the rhymes within each line were themselves always preserved. When we combine this with the fact that “Kongzi xianju” contains elsewhere displaced lines that clearly did result from a misplaced bamboo strip on a written source manuscript, it is hard to come to any conclusion other than that both oral and written forms of transmission were involved at different stages in the development and transmission of this text.

26 Even more significantly, the text of “Min zhi fumu” clearly ends at this point –following Kong Zi’s rhymed description with a text-end marker and loads of blank space on what is certainly the final strip– and contains none of the subsequent paragraphs of text.⁴⁹ Two basic scenarios immediately present themselves: either the scribe of “Min zhi fumu” simply copied down, purposes uncertain, what he or his patron considered the “core” portion of an originally lengthier text, or else it in fact closely resembles an originally shorter text upon which the author(s) of “Kongzi xianju” attempted, for one reason or another, to expand. But if the latter is true, then he (/they) went about such expansion with great care indeed, as what follows adheres closely to the style of what precedes. Zixia’s next question indeed tightly mirrors the wording of his first –and in response to it the Master gives only a brief answer, compelling Zixia to once again request elaboration:

子夏日：「三王之德，參於天地，敢問何如斯可謂參於天地矣？」

孔子日：「奉三無私以勞天下。」

子夏日：「敢問何謂三無私？」

孔子日：「天無私覆，地無私載，日月無私照。奉斯三者以勞天下，此之謂三無私。其在詩日：『帝命不違，至于湯齊。湯降不遲，聖敬日齊。昭假遲遲，上帝是祗。帝命式于九圍。』是湯之德也。」

Zixia said: “The virtues of the three kings formed a triad with Heaven and Earth.⁵⁰ May I venture to ask what [such virtue] must be like in order to be called ‘forming a triad with Heaven and Earth?’”

Kong Zi replied: “[It must] uphold the ‘three absences of partiality’ so as to bring comfort and relief to the world.”

Zixia said: “Might I ask to what the ‘three absences of partiality’ refer?”

Kong Zi replied: “Heaven provides no partial cover, Earth provides no partial support, and the sun and moon provide no partial illumination. Upholding these three [models] so as to bring comfort and relief to the world is what is meant by the ‘three absences of partiality.’ Its expression in the *Odes* is this: ‘[The Shang] did not depart from the Sovereign[-on-high]’s mandate, and equalled up to it when it came to [King] Tang.⁵¹

Tang did not delay in handing down [this mandate to the world], his sagacity and reverence rising by the day.⁵²

His radiance reached down slowly and soothingly,

and he showed his respect to the Sovereign-on-high;⁵³

the Sovereign[-on-high] commanded him to take charge of [the land throughout] the nine peripheries.⁵⁴

- 27 As Zixia has now opened up a whole new line of questioning, it is easy to see how this and the following passages could have been treated as more or less a separate text altogether: the passages preceding this having all arisen from the question about the “parent of the people,” these now turn to the separate (though not unrelated) issue of “forming a triad with Heaven and Earth.” As with his initial answer to the previous question, Kong Zi gives his brief preliminary response here in the form of an enumerated concept, the “three absences of partiality,” and, following the requisite elaboration, he goes on, once again, to finally provide poetic substantiation for this notion in the lines of the *Odes*, this time without Zixia’s prompting. As Zheng Xuan sums the lines up, they express how “Tang upheld the impartial virtue of Heaven” (是湯奉天無私之德也). Tang is, in fact, implicitly compared directly to a heavenly body, the sun, as his radiance reaches down “slowly and gently” (*chichi* 遲遲), a reduplicative binome that appears elsewhere in the *Odes* to describe the soothing caress of a springtime sun.⁵⁵ Just like that springtime sun, Tang’s virtue shone soothingly upon all throughout the world, causing the mandate of Heaven to finally be given over to the Shang.

- 28 Without any further need for Zixia’s interlocution, Kong Zi goes on to elaborate:

「天有四時，春秋冬夏，風雨霜露，無非教也。地載神氣 [風霆]，神氣 {風霆} 風霆流形，庶物露生，無非教也。」

“Heaven has four seasons: spring, autumn, winter, summer, [sending] winds, rains, frost, and dew [down under] –it is all nothing but instruction.

Earth supports a spiritual energy and tempest storms, all of which flow into forms,⁵⁶ [so that] the many creatures are revealed and born –it is all nothing but instruction.

- 29 In their life-giving and life-nurturing operations –perhaps themselves forms of “instruction” on the metaphoric level– Heaven and Earth also serve as instructional models for the human sovereign below. Kong Zi then elaborates further:

「清明在躬，氣志如神。嗜欲將至，有開必先。天降時雨，山川出雲。其在詩曰：『嵩高惟嶽，峻極于天。惟嶽降神，生甫及申。惟申及甫，惟周之翰。四國于蕃，四方于宣。』此文武之德也。」

“Clarity and brilliance reside within his person,
and his essential intent is spirit-like.
When the object of his desires (i.e., the mandate) is about to arrive,
an opening will invariably present itself in advance.⁵⁷
[As when] Heaven pours down its timely rains,
the mountains and rivers [first] send forth clouds.
Its expression in the *Odes* is this:
‘High and lofty are the mountain peaks,
their steep expanse culminating in Heaven.
These peaks sent down their spirits,
giving rise to [the Marquis of] Fu and [the Earl] of Shen.⁵⁸
This Shen and this Fu
were the pillars of the Zhou.
Over the four regions did they guard,
And throughout the four quarters did they promulgate [the Zhou’s virtue].⁵⁹
Such was the virtue of [Kings] Wen and Wu.

- 30 Not only does Kong Zi continue to cite the *Odes* for Zixia, but he also precedes the citation here with some more poetry of his own. As such, we have an ode within an ode, and a concrete historical example embedded within a poetic expression of the more general principle. Kong Zi finally concludes his mini-lecture as follows:

「三代之王也，必先其令聞。詩云『明明天子，令聞不已』，三代之德也。『弛其文德，協此四國』，大王之德也。」
子夏蹶然而起，負牆而立，曰：「弟子敢不承乎！」

“In coming to rule the kingdom, the [sages of the] Three Dynasties invariably first [accomplished] a fine reputation.⁶⁰ As the ode has it, ‘Brilliant, oh brilliant, is the Son of Heaven, his glorious reputation never ceasing’ –[such] were the virtues of the Three Dynasties; and ‘He promulgates his refined virtue, and harmonises the four regions’ –[such] were the virtues of the great kings.”⁶¹

Zixia arose abruptly, stood with his back against the wall,⁶² and said: “Would I, your disciple, dare not to receive and undertake [such instruction]!?”

- 31 Having earlier cited an ode extolling the virtue of King Tang of Shang, Kong Zi has thus moved on to cite a further ode in praise, ostensibly, of Zhou Kings Wen and Wu, before finally concluding with further poetic examples lauding the “great kings” of the Three Dynasties more generally.⁶³
- 32 While centred around two main questions, “Kongzi xianju” nonetheless presents itself as an integrally unified piece with a relatively consistent style of exposition and logically developing structure. Nonetheless, the fact that both the unearthed manuscript “Min zhi fumu” and the “Lun li” 論禮 chapter of the *Kongzi jiyu* present the text in “abbreviated” form, the question naturally arises as to whether the text as we have it in the *Liji* accurately reflects the text as first conceived, or is it, in fact, the result of a gradual (or perhaps sudden) process of accretion? Given that “Min zhi fumu” lacks the narrative frame of “Kong Zi resting at leisure” that we find in the *Liji* text, Matthias Richter, among others, argues for a scenario in which “Min zhi fumu” represents the earliest stage of the text (among the three we have, that is), that the narrative frame of “Kongzi xianju” was added to it only after the text came to be placed immediately after “Zhongni yanju” in the *Liji* collection, “as a means of creating greater coherence between these two subsequent chapters,” and that a “similar coherence is achieved by concluding both scenes with the narrator’s voice describing the students as

impressed with the words of their master.” “Lun li,” in turn, intentionally makes these narrative features less conspicuous in order to merge these two originally separate texts more seamlessly into a single text focused on a discussion of ritual.⁶⁴ Such a scenario is entirely plausible and may indeed turn out to be the correct one, but we cannot yet rule out the possibility that the unearthed text was in fact abridged from a larger text (something like the received *Liji* text) in which that narrative frame was already present, simplifying the introduction in order to focus more exclusively on the content of the extracted passage. It could also be the case that “Kongzi xianju” was placed together with “Zhongni yanju” in the *Liji* collection precisely because it already –by that point, anyway– shared the same type of narrative frame, or perhaps even because it was seen as closely akin to it both stylistically and philosophically. With this possibility in mind, what can a comparison of these two *Liji* chapters reveal that might lend credence to the prospect that they were in fact both conceived as integral wholes?

- 33 Before we get to this, however, let us briefly examine our third chapter with a similar narrative frame.

“Discourse of the sovereign” 主言

- 34 From the outset, the “Zhu yan” 主言 (“Discourse of the Sovereign”) chapter of the *Da Dai Liji* proves to be even more self-consciously deliberate with the crafting of its narrative frame than either of the two texts just discussed. Its opening lines are as follows:

孔子閒居，曾子侍。孔子曰：「參，今之君子，惟士與大夫之言之聞也，其至於君子之言者甚希矣。於乎！吾主言其不出而死乎？哀哉！」⁶⁵

Kong Zi rested at leisure, with Zeng Zi in attendance. Kong Zi said: “Shen,⁶⁶ regarding noble men of today, we only hear about⁶⁷ the discourses of men of service and the great officers, but almost nothing when it comes to the discourse of men of royalty.⁶⁸ Alas! Will I die before my discourse of the sovereign sees the light of day? How sad!”

- 35 How sad indeed! Kong Zi clearly has something he wants to get off his chest, as his lament appears to be completely unprompted by anything Zeng Zi might possibly have said. Tragically, Kong Zi seems destined to go to the grave before his doctrine on this matter, the “discourse of the sovereign,” might ever be passed down. There would appear to be an easy solution to this, but Kong Zi has his reasons for not immediately divulging his precious discourse to the disciple directly, and can only suggest elliptically the great urgency for such a revelation. Zeng Zi takes the bait:

曾子起，曰：「敢問：何謂『主言』？」孔子不應。曾子懼，肅然區衣下席，曰：「弟子知其不孫也，得夫子之閒也難，是以敢問也。」

Zeng Zi arose and said: “Dare I ask to what the ‘discourse of the sovereign’ refers?”

Kong Zi did not respond. Zeng Zi grew fearful and, alighting from his mat while reverently holding up the lapels of his garment, said: “Your disciple is aware of his lack of humility. I only dared to ask because it is not easy to find such a moment of leisure with you, my master.”

- 36 At this, Kong Zi *still* remains silent, terrifying poor Zeng Zi even further:

孔子不應，曾子懼，退負序而立。孔子曰：「參！女可語明主之道與？」

Kong Zi did not respond. Zeng Zi grew [ever more] fearful and receded to stand with his back against the wall. Kong Zi [finally] said: “Shen, are you really worthy of being told of the way of an enlightened ruler?”

- 37 It is only with his disciple’s gesture of great humility that Kong Zi finally speaks, clearly wishing to unburden himself of his weighty doctrine yet nonetheless rebuking his disciple in the process. In response Zeng Zi professes, of course, that he would never dare to be so audacious, but he once again reiterates his fundamental impetus for such boldness:

曾子曰：「不敢以為足也，得夫子之閒也難，是以敢問。」

Zeng Zi said: “I dare not consider myself sufficient. I only dared to ask because it is not easy to find such a moment of leisure with you, my master.”

- 38 The narrative frame has thus clearly established the expectation of a discourse that is at once urgent, esoteric, and extraordinary, and having now achieved that purpose, it has Kong Zi finally relent in his didactic posturing:

孔子曰：「吾語女：道者，所以明德也；德者，所以尊道也。」

Kong Zi said: “I will tell you. ‘The [proper] way’ is that by which one manifests [charismatic] virtue, and ‘[charismatic] virtue’ is that by which one honours the [proper] way...”

- 39 Space here will not allow for a full exposition of the contents of this discourse and the details of the ensuing discussion, but a basic synopsis is as follows. The gist of Kong Zi’s doctrine –the way of the ancient kings, of course– lay in “cultivating the seven teachings within, and implementing the three attainments without” (內脩七教，外行三至), which prove, in turn, to be the means by which to hold firm guard over the realm without toiling oneself, on the one hand, and to militarily punish recalcitrant enemies without expending any resources, on the other. This naturally leads to a “dumb question” by Zeng Zi: “Dare I ask: can one be considered enlightened without either expending or toiling?” (敢問：不費、不勞，可以為明乎). And this naturally leads to Kong Zi frowning, raising his eyebrows, and responding to this foolish query with the by-now familiar, “Did you really think...?” question: “Did you really think that an enlightened ruler toils himself?” (女以明主為勞乎).⁶⁹ Kong Zi then gives the sage king Shun 舜 as an example of an ancient ruler who employed the right associates and, as a result, “The world was put in order without his ever getting off his mat” (不下席而天下治).⁷⁰ He then, in a manner seen both in the *Mengzi* 孟子 and certain chapters of the *Guanzi* 管子, discusses in more detail an economic model in which there is limited taxation, restricted customs duties, prohibitions without levies, and the like, as the concrete means by which the enlightened ruler gathers resources without any need for extravagant expenditures. Then, much as in “Kongzi xianju,” Zeng Zi proceeds to ask for elaboration on the specifics of the enumerated terms: first, “Dare I ask to what the seven teachings refer?” (敢問，何謂七教). In this case, it is all about teaching through example, such that “when those above are respectful towards elders, then those below will be increasingly filial; when those above act in accord with seniority, then those below will be increasingly brotherly” (上敬老則下益孝，上順齒則下益悌), and so on, with the result that “the leader will not be toiled” (正不勞矣). In sum:

「七教者，治民之本也，教定是正矣。上者，民之表也。表正，則何物不正？是故君先立於仁，則大夫忠，而士信、民敦、工璞、商慤、女懂、婦空空。七者，

教之志也。七者布諸天下而不究，內諸尋常之室而不塞。是故聖人等之以禮，立之以義，行之以順，而民棄惡也如灌。」⁷¹

“The ‘seven teachings’ are the foundations of governance –this (governance) is rectified once the teachings are established. The ‘superior’ is the standard for the people –once the standard is correct, what will not be correct? Thus, when the ruler stands firmly in humanity (*ren* 仁) before them, the great officers will be loyal, men of service will be trustworthy, the people will be earnest, craftsmen will be genuine, merchants will be scrupulous, women will be unassuming, and wives will be self-effacing. These seven are the aims of teaching. When the seven [teachings] are promulgated throughout the world, they will not fail to pervade, and entered into common households, they will meet with no obstruction. Thus, when the sage ranks the people through ritual, establishes them through propriety, and conducts them through compliant order, the people will ditch depravity as easily as if bathing themselves.”

40 Kong Zi having thus laid forth the basics of the seven teachings, Zeng Zi is then compelled to interject that, “Your disciple is inadequate, but as for the doctrine, it is the ultimate” (弟子則不足，道則至矣) –to which Kong Zi responds: “But wait, there is more!” (姑止！又有焉). And at this point, he follows up with the details of territorial administration, which proves basically to be the method of dividing up the land into nested administrative units, such that at the local level everyone is entrusted to take care of their elderly and disadvantaged and identify worthies for promotion, whereas at the higher levels, resources are moderately taxed and not taken to fill official coffers. As they are thus provided with an adequate social safety net, the people come to naturally trust their superiors at the same time that they hold them in awe.

41 With Kong Zi having fleshed all this out, Zeng Zi now comes around to asking about what the “three attainments” (*san zhi* 三至) might refer to, and here Kong Zi gives a response that sounds alarmingly like the description of the “three absences” we heard of in the “Kongzi xianju” text:

「至禮不讓而天下治，至賞不費而天下之士說，至樂無聲而天下之民和。明主篤行三至，故天下之君可得而知也，天下之士可得而臣也，天下之民可得而用也。」⁷²

“The ultimate attainment in ritual is such that, without any gestures of yielding, the world is put in order; the ultimate attainment in rewarding is such that, without any expenditures, the world’s men of talent are pleased; the ultimate attainment in musical expression is such that, without any sounds, the people of the world are in harmony. Because the enlightened sovereign earnestly practises these three attainments, all the rulers of the world can be brought to realisation, the men of service in the world can be brought to serve as ministers, and the people of the world can be brought to employment.”

42 This, of course, leads Zeng Zi to ask for clarification: “Dare I ask what this [all] means?” (敢問何謂), and this leads to Kong Zi’s final elaboration in the text, which first points to a kind of honouring and rewarding of worthy men in some sort of decentralised fashion that is only vaguely conceptualised, wherein the sovereign simply “relies on ranks and salaries of the world” (因天下之爵祿) to do so, upon which the people will also naturally come to respect those worthies and respond harmoniously to their leadership, and this, in turn, will ultimately result in the sovereign’s ability to carry out punitive expeditions abroad. As these sorts of punitive expeditions are conceived as

inherently justified –“Wherever the enlightened sovereign campaigns against is invariably where the proper way has been abandoned (明主之所征，必道之所廢者也)– they are said to lead, in rather Mengzian fashion, to the subjects of the vanquished welcoming their conquerors with open arms, “as if they were timely rain” (猶時雨).⁷³ It is this, Kong Zi concludes, that is referred to as “recalling the army back home from atop one’s mat” (衽席之上乎還師).

- 43 There are, to be certain, some manifest differences between “Zhu yan” and the other two texts under consideration. Perhaps the most obvious one is the unique attention it pays to the matter of military expeditions and the fact that it goes into great detail concerning administrative and economic methods while having little to say about the specific ceremonial procedures of ritual. Its economic descriptions in fact resonate more with what we see in certain passages of the *Mengzi* and *Guanzi*, and, perhaps more strikingly, its emphasis on the sovereign “not toiling” and “not expending” in a kind of acting-to-no-purpose framework wherein the onus is placed upon officials when just commands fail to be implemented, would appear to betray the influence of a growing body of “Legalist” discourse. Given that the likely (though uncertain) temporal provenance of the Shanghai Museum Manuscripts, and thus the high probability that at least the “Min zhi fumu” portion of “Kongzi xianju” was written by no later than the end of the 4th Century BCE, these facts suggest that “Zhu yan” was most probably conceived somewhat later than “Kongzi xianju” and quite possibly “Zhongni yanju” as well –a likelihood not inconsistent with its more consciously elaborate narrative introduction. Nonetheless, there are a number of factors that strongly suggest that it may have been written under the direct influence of those texts, including exceptionally close resonances not only in form, but in philosophical outlook and linguistic usage as well, as we shall now discuss further.

Comparative analysis

- 44 Whether Zheng Xuan’s distinction between the terms *yanju* 燕居 and *xianju* 閒居 has any substantial basis or not, his definition of the latter as “to avoid other people after leaving a banquet” (退燕避人日閒居) is nonetheless noteworthy, as it points to the notion of privacy, or a situation that allows for both deeper reflection and the discussion of things that might not normally be conversed upon in more public settings. The idea of privacy is reinforced by the usage of the term *xianju* in such texts as the “Daxue” 大學 chapter of the *Liji*: “The petty person, when dwelling [alone] at leisure, will stop at no point in committing bad deeds” (小人閒居為不善，無所不至); or the “Jie bi” 解蔽 chapter of the *Xunzi*, in its description of the man who went to live in a cave in order to shun all noises and temptations so that he could “rest at leisure and contemplate in tranquillity” (閑居靜思).⁷⁴ The term *yanju*, while perhaps not directly connoting the sense of privacy quite as strongly, is nonetheless likewise associated with the idea of speaking more frankly on matters in avoidance of a public setting.⁷⁵ Given this, we should expect that the discussions framed within such a narrative context would reveal unique features not found in those whose context is either not explicit or set in other terms. The foregoing analysis suggests that this was indeed the case. Before taking such a conclusion any further, however, we need to first examine more closely whether the texts as we have them can in fact be reliably read as coherent units in the first place and, moreover, assess whether there are other ways,

beyond their common narrative frames, in which these texts might be seen to bear an especially close relationship to one another.

Philosophical evidence

- 45 Turning to the second of these questions first, we should initially take notice of the fact that the three texts in question all share an undeniably close philosophical viewpoint. In “Zhongni yanju,” for instance, in his answer to Ziyou’s question about ritual, Confucius emphasises how ritual modelling at the highest ranks so naturally works its way down to all levels of society so effortlessly that everything falls into its proper place and order is achieved almost automatically. Later, in his discussion of the Grand Banquet, he stresses how ritual and music in antiquity served to allow noble men to communicate effectively to one another without the need for any exchange of words, and how what they served to reveal were in each case aspects of virtue that lay deep beneath the surface of the ritual and musical gestures themselves. And finally, in his answer to Zizhang’s question, he comes around to the central point that ritual and music are not at all about the “tables and mats” or “bells and drums,” but rather simply the notion of sincerely putting one’s words into practice and finding contentment in one’s actions, by means of which “great peace” will be brought to the entire world and “the myriad creatures will all submit.” This is precisely the idea behind the “music of no sounds” and “ritual of no bodily deportment” that, when practised by the “parent of the people,” “fill the expanse between Heaven and Earth” that we see in “Kongzi xianju,” save for the fact that the latter text expresses such ideas directly in abstract generalities, whereas the former draws them out more gradually from the description of relatively concrete ceremonial institutions –the core notions, however, are one and the same. And while “Zhu yan” does indeed delve into detailed administrative matters which do not concern the other two texts, it too resonates closely when it comes to its core philosophical notions. Save for replacing the “mourning of no apparel” with the “rewarding” of “no expenditures” and changing the description of ultimate “ritual” from one of “no bodily deportment” to one “without any gestures of yielding,” its “three attainments” are otherwise practically identical with the “three absences” of “Kongzi xianju” and likewise, upon being “earnestly practised” by the enlightened sovereign, form the basis of social and political harmony and efficacy throughout the world. And the effects it achieves through the standards established among its “seven teachings” are nothing short of a thorough permeation of such instruction down through each and every level of society, from the ranks of the great officers to the confines of the women’s quarters, as seen in a description that closely echoes that found in the example of ritual modelling delineated in the opening dialogue of “Zhongni yanju.”
- 46 One could, of course, always make the argument that much the same could be said about any number of Confucian texts, or even that such notions lie at the very heart of Confucian thought more generally. To be sure, the general notion of rulership through charismatic virtue is a defining feature of Confucian thought as we know it not only from the *Lunyu*, but from practically every early text that ascribes itself to or associates itself with the Master. And while far fewer texts describe the ruler’s ultimate influence in the kind of quasi-miraculous terms we see in these texts, wherein the message is conveyed throughout the world prior to even the appearance of the medium, such examples are nonetheless clearly to be found elsewhere, as in the “Biao ji” and a few

other early texts. Given all this, any attempt to demonstrate a substantially closer connection among the three texts in question beyond that of common intellectual affiliation would require more in the way of direct linguistic correspondences or other such forms of evidence. As it turns out, there is plenty in this regard to corroborate that connection.

Linguistic evidence

- 47 We might start with the most obvious example, noted just above, of the close correspondence between the “three absences” (*san wu* 三無) of “Kongzi xianju” with the “three attainments” (*san zhi* 三至) of “Zhu yan,” and further take note of the latter’s linguistic similarity to the “five attainments” (*wu zhi* 五至) of the former work. Why the author(s) of “Zhu yan” chose to switch the referent of *zhi* 至 to the notion formerly expressed by *wu* 無 is an interesting question that need not overly concern us here, but the likelihood of direct influence of the one text upon the other is hard to deny, especially when we consider that there is *not a single other instance* in other early texts wherein a term in the form of “number + *zhi* 至” (or *zhi* 致) appears as a philosophical concept.⁷⁶ The opening lines of Kong Zi’s statement in “Kongzi jiayu” also show unique resonances with Zhongni’s utterances in “Zhongni yanju,” insofar as they both contain distinctive lines about “comprehending ritual” and “comprehending music” (達於禮樂) or the sources thereof:

〈孔子閒居〉：「必達於禮樂之原，以致五至而行三無，以橫於天下。」

He must comprehend the source(s) of ritual and music, so as to achieve the five attainments and practise the three absences, and thereby transfuse the world.

〈仲尼燕居〉：「達於禮而不達於樂，謂之素；達於樂而不達於禮，謂之偏。」

“To comprehend (/be accomplished in) ritual but not (in) music, we call being ‘lacklustre.’ To comprehend (/be accomplished in) music but not (in) ritual, we call being ‘one-sided.’”

- 48 Aside from the *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策, these are the only two places in early Chinese texts where the combination of *da yu li* 達於禮 or *da yu yue* 達於樂 occurs.⁷⁷
- 49 The texts are also uncannily similar in terms of the specific (if seemingly mundane) expressions chosen to advance the dialogues on a narrative level. Let us first look at the way Confucius questions his disciples in both “Zhongni yanju” and “Zhu yan,” the first coming on the heels of Zizhang’s obstinately repeating his question about “governance” (*zheng* 政), and the second following Zeng Zi’s questioning of the Master’s assertion that the enlightened ruler “neither toils nor expends” (不勞、不費):

〈仲尼燕居〉：「師，爾以為必鋪几筵，升降，酌、獻、酬、酢，然後謂之禮乎？爾以為必行綴兆，興羽籥，作鍾鼓，然後謂之樂乎？」

“Shi, do you [really] think that one must lay forth tables and mats, ascend and descend staircases, and pour libations and offer rounds of toasts before it can be called ritual? Do you [really] think that one must move along choreographed positions, raise up feathers and panpipes, and strike up bells and drums before it can be called music?”

〈主言〉：「參！女以明主為勞乎？昔者舜左禹而右皋陶，不下席而天下治。」

“Shen, do you [really] think that an enlightened ruler toils himself? In former times, Shun was closely assisted by Yu and Gao Yao, and the world was put in order without his ever leaving his mat...”

- 50 The dismissive tone is strikingly close, and while one might think that such forms of questioning disciples’ assumptions would be commonly seen in early Confucian dialogue texts, the evidence in fact corroborates the relative uniqueness of such utterances.⁷⁸ We may further note that the seemingly innocuous phrase “Dare I ask in what manner...?” (敢問 [...]何如...) occurs in both “Kongzi xianju” and “Zhongni yanju,” and the similar phrase “Dare I ask to what the (...) refers?” (敢問何謂...), which appears several times in “Kongzi xianju,” is also found expressed from Zeng Zi’s mouth multiple times in “Zhu yan.” While these two phrases are by no means unheard of in early Chinese texts, the number of such texts still does not exceed what one can count with one’s hands. Kong Zi’s phrase “I will tell you (...)” (吾語女...), which appears three different times in “Zhongni yanju,” is also to be found in “Zhu yan.”⁷⁹ While this phrase may be somewhat more common, it is nonetheless found in only three other texts within the entire *Liji* and *Da Dai Liji* collections.⁸⁰ Finally, we may take note of the similarities in wording of the following three utterances:

孔子曰：「何為其然也？君子之服之也，猶有五起焉。」

Kong Zi said: “How could that be the case? In devoting himself to them, the noble man yet has ‘five arisings’ therefrom.” (“Kongzi xianju”)

子曰：「慎聽之！女三人者。吾語女：禮猶有九焉，大饗有四焉。」

The Master went on: “Listen carefully, you three! I will tell you how there are yet nine further [aspects] of ritual, four of which occur within the Grand Banquet.” (“Zhongni yanju”)

孔子曰：參！姑止！又有焉。 . . .」

Kong Zi said: “Shen, but wait, there is more!” (“Zhu yan”)

- 51 To be sure, there are other examples of such phrases as “猶有 (...) 焉” and “又有 (...) 焉” in a few other early texts, but aside from these three distinct “rested at leisure texts,” there is not a single one in which the phrase occurs in a context wherein Kong Zi expresses it in the interest of further elucidating some principle in a direct address to his disciples, as they all, in signature fashion, do here.⁸¹
- 52 A final point to be emphasised here is that both “敢問 [...]何如...” and “敢問何謂...” occur in *both halves* of “Kong Zi xianju” –a strong indication that, save for the possibility of editorial manipulation to make two distinct texts seamlessly conform, the two halves were in fact originally part of the same integral text, or at least two texts which were, from the beginning, closely affiliated through either common authorship or conscious imitation. It is also noteworthy that in “Zhongni yanju,” one of the three “吾語女” phrases of that text is found duplicated in the “Wen yu” 問玉 rather than “Lun li” chapter of the *Kongzi jiayu*, and its lone “爾以為” phrase also appears in that same portion. Finally, it is particularly worth noting that the term (or term-pair) *qizhi* 氣志 (“essential intent”), which plays such a central role in the description of the “five arisings” 五起 at the end of the “Min zhi fumu” portion of “Kongzi xianju,” appears once more in the second half of the latter, yet *nowhere else* among all pre-imperial texts that can even arguably be described as Confucian. Such phenomena go a long way toward answering in the affirmative the first of the two questions we posed earlier in

this section: on whether the received texts as we have them can in fact be reliably read as coherent units in spite of the alternate configurations presented in both unearthed and received counterparts.

Table 1.

Term	禮記	大戴禮記	Other early texts (excluding 孔子家語 / 孔叢子)
# + 至(/致) (as abstract philosophical concept) 「達於禮」、「達於樂」 or 「達於禮樂」	《孔子閒居》 (「五至」)	《主言》 (「三至」)	(無)
「敢問何如……？」	《仲尼燕居》 《孔子閒居》	(無)	《戰國策》 (only 「達於禮」)
「敢問何謂……？」	《仲尼燕居》 《孔子閒居》 《樂記》	《哀公問五義》 (五次)	《荀子》(《哀公問》) 《孟子》 《韓詩外傳》
「爾/女/汝以(為)……？」 (as rhetorical question)	《仲尼燕居》 《檀弓下》	《主言》(四次) 《哀公問於孔子》(四次)	《孟子》、《說苑》(《修文》)、 《韓詩外傳》、《管子》、 《左傳》(三次)、《莊子》 (兩次)(《列子》)
「吾語女/汝」	《仲尼燕居》(三次) 《樂記》	《主言》 《曾子天圓》 《衛將軍文子》	Numerous examples, including 《論語》、「賜也，女以予為多學而 識之者與？」)、《荀子》 (《宥坐》)
「猶有(……)焉」 or 「又有 (……)焉」(following direct address to disciples)	《仲尼燕居》 《孔子閒居》	《主言》	(無)
A之所B, C之所D也	《仲尼燕居》 (禮之所興，眾之所治也) (禮之所廢，眾之所亂也) 《哀公問》 (君之所為，百姓之所從也)	《哀公問於孔子》 (君之所為，百姓之所從也)	

Shared language between “Kongzi xianju,” “Zhongni yanju,” “Zhu yan,” and other early texts

- 53 The relative uniqueness of all these phrases, particularly as they are clustered within these three texts, can be seen at a glance from Table 1. From this, it is readily apparent that there is an unusually close connection between our three texts in terms of shared signature phrases which prove relatively distinctive when compared with the rest of the *Liji* and *Da Dai Liji* corpuses. Moreover, if we broaden our focus to include the “Ai Gong wen” 哀公問, “Ai Gong wen yu Kongzi” 哀公問於孔子, and “Ai Gong wen wuyi” 哀公問五義 texts, along with portions of the “Yue ji” 樂記, we see the emergence of a particular cluster of texts that would appear to bear an uncommonly intimate and practically unique relationship within the two corpuses – suggesting that the various “Ai Gong asked” texts might prove a fruitful area for further research both as a group and in relation to the various “Confucius rested at leisure” texts. And beyond the two *Liji* collections, it is also noteworthy that a great percentage of the passages sharing these assorted phrases would appear to have been consciously derivative in nature – such as the playfully imitative Confucius dialogues that we find at certain points in the *Zhuangzi*. This further suggests the likelihood that texts like “Kongzi xianju” and “Zhongni yanju” were well known and widely studied by scholars and philosophers of the late Warring States.⁸²

Conclusion

- 54 From the foregoing discussion, it is readily evident that the “Kongzi xianju” and “Zhongni yanju” chapters of the *Liji* are closely connected in terms of philosophical orientation, and that the “Zhu yan” chapter of the *Da Dai Liji* also reveals some manifest similarities in this regard. An analysis of their shared language, moreover, evidences a remarkable degree of overlap in the use of certain terms which prove to be either

exclusively or relatively idiosyncratic when compared to both other texts within those two collections and among early Chinese texts more generally. While the evidence may not yet be firmly conclusive, it at least suggests the likelihood that the three texts in question, if not derived from the same authorship, at least originated from the same textual community or were written in close textual imitation of one another. That they all begin with a narrative-frame opening of “Kong Zi rested at leisure” or “Zhongni rested at ease” can hardly be seen as either a coincidence or the haphazard result of an editor who added the phrase to the one just to make it formally conform to the other because of their ostensibly random placement together in the *Liji* collection. A much more likely scenario is in fact that they were placed together within that collection precisely because of their manifest similarities, including their common narrative frame –for otherwise, it would indeed be difficult to account for the preponderance of other evidence linking them together.

55 Against this, we have only the evidence of the unearthed manuscript “Min zhi fumu” and the “Lun li” chapter of the *Kongzi jiyu*. As detailed above, the latter can be shown to have clearly derived from a somewhat careless reconfiguration of certain portions of both “Zhongni yanju” and “Kongzi xianju,” and it in fact tells us almost nothing about the state of the text prior to its inclusion in the *Liji*.⁸³ More worthy of our consideration is “Min zhi fumu” –the oldest physical witness we have to the text– which lacks both the narrative frame and, moreover, the entire second half of the text as we find it in “Kongzi xianju.” However, given the fact that, as shown above, the two halves of “Kongzi xianju” are so seamlessly interwoven and in fact also share some of the same common language described earlier, it is difficult to imagine that “Kongzi xianju” is just a simple amalgamation of two originally distinct passages.⁸⁴ Given this, the simplest and most direct explanation of all evidence is this: “Min zhi fumu” is in fact an abridgement of, or should we say extracted excerpt from, a larger text –excised for purposes that are not altogether clear, but may well have simply involved the pedagogical desire to give greater focus to one of the two main philosophical points espoused within that larger text. This would surely not be the first time that excerpted texts appeared in tombs,⁸⁵ and it is not methodologically sound to assume that an unearthed manuscript must necessarily represent the closest thing we have to the original form of a text merely because it is our oldest physical witness and in other ways does not include certain corruptions that have found their way into the received text over its long course of transmission. In fact, the mere existence of the unearthed manuscript in Chu script serves to attest to the fact that by the mid-to-late Warring States, this was most likely a text of great importance and widespread transmission, and as we argued just above from evidence in other received texts, both “Kongzi xianju” and “Zhongni yanju” appear to have been greatly studied and consciously imitated as standard Confucius dialogue texts in the late Warring States.

56 In short, a careful reading of all the evidence suggests that we just might yet be well justified to speak in terms of *authorial* intent when it comes to the narrative frame of such a text as “Kongzi xianju,” rather than in terms of merely editorial intent. In light of this, it follows that there is a need to take the “Confucius at leisure” texts more seriously as a kind of self-conscious genre, one in which the narrative strategy aimed to subtly impart the sense that the philosophy expressed within these texts was in fact something rare, profound, and truly extraordinary.

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FOOTNOTES

1. Given that the texts to be discussed in this paper refer to Confucius variously as “Master Kong” 孔子 and Zhongni 仲尼, I will reserve the use of those Chinese appellations mainly to refer to the figure of Kong Zi as he appears specifically in those texts, and use the Latinisation of “Confucius” when referring to him as a literary and historical figure more generally.
2. For some intriguing recent scholarship on Confucius as a literary figure and the examination of compositional features and editorial strategies that marked or informed the texts centred on

that figure, see Weingarten 2009; and Hunter 2017 (or 2012). For my own discussion on how such recreations nevertheless remained bound by the limits of historical believability, see Cook 2015.

3. These definitions come from surviving citations of Zheng Xuan's entries on "Zhongni yanju" and "Kongzi xianju," respectively, in his long-lost work *Sanli mulu* 三禮目錄 (*Record of the Contents of the Three Classics of Ritual*). See *Liji zhengyi* 2008, v. 1, 1939.

4. James Legge gets somewhat more specific in his own introduction of the contents of each chapter, stating in regard to "Zhongni yanju" that "Confucius has returned from his attendance at the court of Lû, and is at home in his own house. Three of his disciples are sitting by him and his conversation flows on till it has reached the subject of ceremonial usages... he discourses on it at length... in a familiar and practical manner"; and in regard to "Kongzi xianju," he similarly suggests, Confucius "was at home and at leisure." He further avers that "[f]rom their internal analogies in form and sentiment, I suppose that the two Books were made by the same writer." See Legge 1885, Part III, 40-41.

5. The text of this chapter as given here is cited from (Qing) Sun Xidan 孫希旦 (1736-1784), *Liji jijie* 1989, 1267-74, with reference also to (Qing) Zhu Bin 朱彬 (1753-1834), *Liji xunzuan* 1996, 745-50. The entire text (including the ending lines), minus the final exchange with Zizhang, also constitutes (with a few variations) the bulk of the "Lun li" 論禮 chapter of the *Kongzi jiayu* 孔子家語, which also appends to the end of it an abridged version of "Kongzi xianju"; "Lun li," however, does not open with the phrase "Zhongni yanju," but rather with "Kongzi xianju," and would appear to be a conscious amalgamation of the two chapters (more on this below). The concluding exchange with Zizhang is found separately as the final dialogue of the "Wen yu" 問玉 chapter of the *Kongzi jiayu*. As Wang E notes, the disciples in "Zhongni yanju" ask their questions in order of age, as would be ritually appropriate, but Zizhang is listed first in the narrative opening. This leads Wang to speculate that "Zhongni yanju" was edited by either Zizhang or his disciples, though he believes that it in fact represents an authentic dialogue that took place near the end of Confucius' life (by Qian Mu's 錢穆 dating, Zigong would have only been around twenty-four years old when Confucius died), the same period in which he believes the "Ai Gong wen" 哀公問 chapter to have been written. See Wang 2006, 8.

6. The term *yue xi* 越席 has traditionally been understood as simply "arise from one's mat" or "come away from one's mat." Compare the "Quli, shang" 曲禮上 chapter of the *Liji*: "One should arise when inquiring about a subject of learning, and arise when requesting elaboration" 請業則起, 請益則起; and again, referring to a slightly different situation: "When a noble man inquires about a new topic, one should arise when responding" 君子問更端, 則起而對. Legge interprets the phrase here somewhat differently: "Zigong crossed over (Zizhang's) mat," and he sees this as "substantially a violation" of the injunction in "Quli, shang" (par. 26 by his numbering) to (in his translation) "not stride across the mat" 毋踏席. See Legge 1885, Part IV, 270 (I have changed all romanisation to standard *pinyin*, here and below). But *yue xi* 越席 is in fact clearly a ritually appropriate act, as evidenced in the "Yuzao" 玉藻 chapter of the *Liji*: "If the ruler bestows a rank upon him, he is to leave (/come over to the other side of) his mat (*yue xi*), bow twice, and receive it touching his head to the ground" 君若賜之爵, 則越席再拜稽首受. Given that the disciples must have been standing when the Master asked them to sit, my assumption is that Zigong then crossed over to the front of his mat, closer to the Master, to ask his question, which would have been functionally equivalent to his arising from his mat had he already been sitting.

7. Some have suspected that at least the last sentence, regarding Zichan, does not even belong in this text. As Legge has mentioned (Legge 1885, Part IV, 271), the (Qing) editors of the *Qinding Liji yishu* 欽定禮記義疏 (of the *Qinding Siku quanshu* 欽定四庫全書) note that an extended version of this remark on Zichan appears in the "Zhenglun jie" 正論解 chapter of the *Kongzi jiayu*, and they aver that the lines appear here as the result of a misplaced strip. For this to be true, however, one would have to assume an unusually short source manuscript of around fifteen characters per strip and which just happened to contain exactly one complete and self-sufficient sentence.

Nonetheless, it remains true that the sentence does feel somewhat out of place here. As Wang E points out, both this and the previous line about Zizhang and Zixia are absent from the “Lun li” version of the text; Wang thus also argues they are extraneous here. See Wang 2006, 7. This would indeed increase the number of characters to twenty-five, a plausible number for a misplaced strip, though the other aforementioned coincidences would remain, and it is just as likely that the “Lun li” editor consciously chose to omit these lines from his version of the dialogue

8. The *jiao* 郊 and 社 were each (according to at least some early texts and commentaries) annual sacrifices held at altars on the southern and northern peripheries of the city, respectively: the former, to Heaven and the celestial deities, held at the winter solstice (to welcome in the gradual arrival of longer days), and the latter, to Earth and the terrestrial deities, at the summer solstice.

9. The *chang* 嘗, or autumnal sacrifice, was a sacrifice for heralding in the autumn season, held (at least by the Zhou calendar) in the first month of fall (*mengqiu* 孟秋). There are a number of explanations for what the *di* 禘 sacrifice refers to, depending on context, one of them being a seasonal sacrifice held in the summer, another, more salient here, a great sacrifice held in the ancestral temple in which all the ancestors are sacrificed to collectively. The *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 defines 禘 with the sound gloss of 諦, “carefully examine,” and (Qing) Duan Yucai 段玉裁 interprets this to mean a sacrifice in which the lineage orderings of *zhao* 昭 and *mu* 穆 are examined and manifested. In the Zhou ritual system (as described, at least, in such sources as the “Wang zhi” 王制 chapter of the *Liji*), the number of ancestors sacrificed to in the ancestral temple varied by status, with the sacrificial tablet for each ancestor taking its place on the left or right in alternation. The grand ancestral temple of the Son of Heaven, for instance, was said to hold the tablets of seven ancestors, with the progenitor (Wang Ji 王季) in the middle, his son (Wen Wang 文王) to his left (*zhao* 昭), his grandson (Wu Wang 武王) to his right (*mu* 穆), and so on in alternation through the seventh generation. For more on the *chang* and *di* sacrifices, see also the notes in Yang 1990, 107 & 321.

10. Upon graduation from the three-year curriculum of local schools, worthy candidates were presented by ministers to the ruler, after which a banquet ceremony was held (*xiang yinjiu li* 鄉飲酒禮), followed by an archery contest (*xiang she li* 鄉射禮).

11. Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 glosses *ren* 仁 as a near-equivalent to *cun* 存, “preserve,” but there appears to be no good reason not to read *ren* at face value here, as it was likely to be chosen deliberately to emphasise precisely the humanising aspect of rituals that are performed with sincere intent.

12. In this case, *san zu* 三族 may refer to the separate clans of the father, the mother, and the wife, though Zheng Xuan enumerates them here as the families of father, son, and grandson.

13. (Tang) Kong Yingda 孔穎達 instead glosses *zhong* 眾 here as “myriad tasks” (*wan shi* 萬事).

14. Cf. Legge, who has a very different interpretation of these final lines: “(The duty) laid on (each) person being discharged in the matter before him (according to these rules), all his movements, and every movement, will be what they ought to be.” Legge 1885, Part IV, 272.

15. Significantly, in the “Lun li” version of this passage, the following is posed as a separate question by Zizhang following a return of Zigong to his place, rather than a self-addressed question by the Master. Let us recall that in the “Lun li” version, however, the final exchange with Zizhang later on is not included, thus necessitating a role for him here. Conversely, we could also imagine –though to my mind far less likely– that the later Zizhang exchange was not in the original text and thus it was the “Zhongni yanju” version that introduced a change here in order to avoid the two separate questions by Zizhang that would have resulted from that addition. Wang E simply avers that “Zhongni yanju” might have missing text here; but if that were the case, a certain “correction” would have to have been made subsequently in order for the opening of the section to now have the form of a self-addressed question (Wang 2006, 7).

16. Cf. the second stanza of the “Cheng xiang” 成相 chapter of the *Xunzi*: “To serve as sovereign of the people without the use of worthies is like a blind person having no guide –how aimless and bewildered is he!” 人主無賢，如瞽無相，何佹佹！

17. According to Zheng Xuan, the grand banquet, or *da xiang* 大饗, was “a banquet/feast offered to the regional lords who pay court” 饗諸侯來朝者; Kong Yingda interprets this here as referring to “a meeting between neighbouring states” 鄰國相會, and Sun Xidan similarly explains it as a “banquet held by regional lords for each other” 諸侯相饗. Though various attempts at identification have been made, it is unclear exactly to what the “nine” and “four” refer, though Sun is surely correct in not taking them as mutually exclusive lists, but rather seeing the “four” of the “Grand Banquet” as four of those nine. As there are precisely nine sequential actions from “捐讓而入門” to “備其百官,” Lu Zhi 盧植 (d. 192 CE; cited in *Liji xunzuan* 1996) takes these to be the “nine” in question, but as these would all appear to be descriptive of the Grand Banquet itself, this interpretation is problematic. Interpretations of the “four” are equally problematic, all involving arbitrary additions or subtractions of some kind. For instance, Sun Xidan may be on the right track in identifying the first three of these as the three moments of musical performance that “exhibit,” respectively, “true affections,” “virtue,” and “service to undertakings” (*qing* 情, *de* 德, *shi* 事), but his addition of the “successive performance of Wu and Xia with panpipes” (according to his punctuation and reading) as the fourth is arbitrary, in the sense that the text does not explicitly associate this performance with the revelation of anything deeper. It may perhaps make more sense to instead group the three revealed aspects in question together with the “humanity” (*ren* 仁) that the noble man “realizes” in the middle of the paragraph, so that of some nine unnamed primary concepts that are capable of being revealed through ritual (and musical) performance, the Grand Banquet reveals four of them: “humanity,” “true affections,” “virtue,” and “service to undertakings.”

18. Zheng Xuan takes *shi zhi* 事之 differently, in the sense of the one in question “being placed in an official position” 立置於位.

19. “Suspended instruments” (*xuan* 縣) could also include chimestones, but here I follow the interpretation of Sun Xidan. In any case, only bells are mentioned in reference back to this later in the paragraph.

20. As various commentators have described it, this momentary cessation of music actually occurs only after the completion of an exchange of toasts between host and guest. Sun Xidan believes that there was originally a line “升歌〈清廟〉” (“The Ode ‘Qing miao’ is sung upon ascent”) that has dropped out just after this point, which would make sense given that this performance is alluded to later in the paragraph.

21. Sun Xidan parses differently, pairing Wu with the civil panpipe dance of Xia below. I here follow Zheng Xuan, who considers both Xiang and Wu martial dances (as the latter clearly is); Xiang and Wu are indeed closely associated together in early texts as separate dances of Zhou King Wu, whereas Xia is associated with Yu 禹 and the Xia dynasty. Referring to an entry from the “Preface” (*Xu* 序) to the *Shi jing*, Sun Xidan states that the Xiang dance was performed to the singing of the Zhou hymn 周頌 “Wei qing” 維清 (“Clear and Bright”); this is a one-stanza ode extolling the meritorious achievements of King Wen, who laid the basis for King Wu’s ultimate success.

22. “Yong” 雍 (“Harmonious”) and “Zhen yu” 振羽 were both Zhou hymns (the latter equivalent to “Zhen lu” 振鷺, “The Egrets Fly”); the former originally took the form of a sacrificial hymn from King Wu to King Wen, while the latter was ostensibly written to praise the descendants of the Xia and Shang kings –the regional lords of Qi 杞 and Song 宋– and performed when they came to assist in a royal sacrifice in the Zhou capital. “Cai qi” is not found in the *Shi jing*, and it is unclear whether it was a sung ode or simply an instrumental piece. As Sun Xidan notes, the hymns performed here at the guest-leaving and offering-clearing of the regional lords’ banquets are, according to early sources, purposefully differentiated from those respectively performed at

the Zhou King's banquet for the regional lords (where “Yong” is used for the clearing and the musical piece “Si Xia” 肆夏 for the guests' departure).

23. “Qing miao” 清廟 (“Pure temple”) is the first ode of the Zhou hymn section in the *Shi jing* as it has been passed down to us; its lyrics extol King Wen as the founder of the dynasty who set forth the clear model to be eternally followed by all the Zhou's subjects.

24. In the “Lun li” version, this last sentence comes after the end of the Master's comments on Kui below and effectively marks the end of Confucius' comments to the three disciples in the text.

25. Kui 夔 is a term that ordinarily referred to a mythical one-legged beast.

26. In the version from the “Wen yu” chapter of the *Kongzi jiayu*, Zizhang poses a different question to elicit the same answers: “Zizhang asked about the means by which the sages instructed” (子張問聖人之所以教).

27. Shi is Zizhang's given name. His full name was Zhuansun Shi 顓孫師, and Zizhang was his designation.

28. James Legge (Legge 1885, Part III, 276) understands this line quite differently, placing *qian* 前 adverbially at the head of the second phrase: “Shi, did I not instruct you on that subject before?”

29. We are, for now, treating “Zhongni yanju” as an integral composition. The “Lun li” variations, of course, suggest at least the possibility that the former may have been pieced together from originally separate parts, or, at the very least, that its separate sections appeared distinct enough to later editors that they felt free to break up the text and reframe its parts differently in their own narrative accounts. As will become clear below, however, the first of these two scenarios is in fact unlikely.

30. The text of this chapter as given here is taken from (Qing) *Liji jijie* 1989, 1274-1279, with reference also to (Qing) *Liji xunzuan* 1996, 751-756. As will be discussed below, a substantial portion of the text appears in the Shanghai Museum manuscripts, where it is given the title of “Min zhi fumu” 民之父母; see Ma 2002, 3 & 15-30 (photographic reproductions) and 149-180 (Pu Maozuo's 濮茅左 transcription). The manuscript text as it stands is complete, though it is possible that it may have been bound together with other texts on a longer physical manuscript; for further discussion of this, see Richter 2013, 55-57. I have presented my own annotated transcription of “Min zhi fumu” in Gu 2019; below, I restrict my notes on “Min zhi fumu” variants to only the more significant ones. A somewhat abridged version of the “Kongzi xianju” text also appears at the end of the “Lun li” chapter of the *Kongzi jiayu*, whereas the short section near the end of “Kongzi xianju” (from “Heaven has four seasons” to “[such] was the virtue of the great kings [King Tai]”) appears instead, in a relatively ill-fitting context, at the end of the second section of the “Wen yu” chapter of that work (the same chapter in which an orphaned section from “Zhongni yanju” is also found).

31. Significantly, “Min zhi fumu” does not include the opening line “Kong Zi rested at leisure,” beginning simply with “Zixia asked Kong Zi” 子夏問於孔子. “Lun li,” too, simply has “Zixia was sitting in attendance on Kong Zi, and said” 子夏侍坐於孔子日 at this point, but the phrase “Kongzi xianju” does occur at the very beginning of the chapter (which otherwise begins with the contents of “Zhongni yanju”).

32. The quoted lines come from the ode “Jiong zhuo” 洞酌 (“Drawing Water from Afar”) of the “Da Ya” 大雅 section of the *Shi jing* 詩經, an ode ostensibly written in praise of the virtue of Zhou King Cheng 周成王.

33. For *zhi* 致, “Min zhi fumu” has *zhi* 至; I use “achieve” here to capture both possible senses of “bring about” or simply “attain.” For *heng* 橫, here translated as “transfuse,” “Min zhi fumu” writes *huang* 皇, possibly just a phonetic loan for *heng* 橫, though we might alternatively understand it along the lines of “shine brightly.”

34. For *ci* 此, “this,” “such,” “Min zhi fumu” has the particle of suggestion *qi* 其 (which could also possibly be read *si* 斯, “this,” “such”).

35. At this point, our “Kongzi xianju” text has twenty-eight additional characters: “明目而視之，不可得而見也。傾耳而聽之，不可得而聞也。志氣塞乎天地。” As comparison with the unearthed manuscript “Min zhi fumu” now makes abundantly clear, this segment was accidentally displaced –almost certainly as the result of a misplaced bamboo strip in the received version’s source text– from the section elaborating on the “three absences” below, where I now relocate them. Chen Jian 陳劍 was the first to explicitly point this out; see Chen 2004, 251-255; see also the discussion of Chen’s findings in Shaughnessy 2006, 46-49. As the number of characters on this displaced strip would amount to twenty-eight, I would add that if we assume an average of twenty-seven to twenty-eight characters per strip on the hypothetical source manuscript, then the displaced strip would have come right after the fifth strip on such a manuscript; on this point, see my Gu 2004, 72 n. 14. Following “哀樂相生,” “Min zhi fumu” contains the additional line “君子以正,” which, given the even number of syllables and the obvious rhyme, suggests that those two lines should be read as a unit, and that the “是故正” of “Kongzi xianju,” in turn, is probably a corruption of “君子以正,” perhaps altered slightly in an attempt to make sense of the text at this point following the textual displacement. Chen Jian already makes note of the oddity of the character 正 in the received texts at the head of 明目 and likewise suggests that it is a holdover from the line “君子以正,” but makes no further observations regarding the rhyme here. Interestingly, although the “Lun li” chapter of the *Kongzi jiyu* contains the same misplaced lines as “Kongzi xianju,” it introduces its own rhyme *before* the “哀樂相生,” preceding it with the additional phrase of “詩禮相成” (“Poetry and ritual complete each other”) –its compiler perhaps sensing the incompleteness of the lone phrase and thus attempting to flesh out the sentence in his own way. “Lun li” also writes 是以正 where “Kongzi xianju” has 是故正, which is at least slightly closer to the “君子以正” of the unearthed manuscript.

36. For “intent” and “poetry,” “Min zhi fumu” instead has “things” (wu 物) and “intent,” respectively. This is a significant variation and suggests that either “Min zhi fumu” or “Kongzi xianju” may, at this point, have been separately re-crafted for a somewhat distinct pedagogical purpose –though we cannot rule out the possibility that the “Kongzi xianju” reading may have instead resulted from some sort of two-step scribal error (for one such scenario, see Ji 2003, 7). Given our focus in this paper on the *Liji*, however, I will concentrate here on the wording as given in “Kongzi xianju.”

37. Note that “reach” and “attain” in fact translate the same word here (*zhi* 至). More significantly, “musical expression” and “happiness” are alternately used to capture the two main senses of the word *yue/le* 樂.

38. The reading of this last phrase is based primarily on the “Min zhi fumu” parallel; see note 35 above.

39. The connection with *Lunyu* 8.8 is already implicit in Lü Yushu’s 呂與叔 (Lü Dalin 呂大臨; ca. 1040-1092) commentary on this passage, for which see *Liji xunzuan*, 752.

40. On the erroneous displacement of this text to the previous paragraph, see note 35 above.

41. In “Min zhi fumu,” this particular line is written 而得 (德) 既塞於四海矣, which Chen Jian reads in the sense of “and yet one’s virtue has already filled the expanse within the four seas,” and he suggests that the particles 而 and 矣 were removed and that 得 (德) 既 was read and rewritten as the phonetically close 志氣 in the received texts all in order to make sense of the text following the accidental displacement. Chen’s interpretation is entirely sensible and probably correct, but as 志氣 also makes sense here (roughly equivalent to the 氣志 we see elsewhere in the text) and would in any event not differ dramatically in sense from having 德既, I translate the “Kongzi xianju” lines here as is, though I add the word “virtuous” in the bracketed portion. Note that “Lun li,” in which the wording of the line is the same as in “Kongzi xianju,” adds an additional line following it: “and their practice pervades [the area within] the four seas” 行之充於四海. As Ning Zhenjiang has argued, this is just one of many instances in which the

compilers of the *Kongzi jiayu* appear to have added lines “to change an isolated line into a pair of parallel lines” 將散文改成對偶句; the same phenomenon may also partly account for that chapter’s 詩禮相成 phrase discussed in note 35 above. See Ning 2004, 284-85.

42. Note that this notion of “having heard in broad outline” is not present in the formulation of Zixia’s follow-up question in either “Min zhi fumu” or “Lun li,” each of which phrases the question somewhat differently.

43. The three cited lines in this reply come, respectively, from the Zhou hymn “Hao tian you cheng ming” 昊天有成命, and the odes “Bo zhou” 柏舟 and “Gu feng” 谷風 from the “Airs of Bei” (“Bei feng” 邶風). In “Min zhi fumu,” preceding these citations in Kong Zi’s reply are the lines “Wonderful! Shang, you have become worthy of teaching the Odes to!” 善才(哉)! 商也, (將)可(教)(詩)矣. In the first ode, the received *Shi jing* reads 其命 as 基命, “foundational mandate,” “original mandate,” though Zheng Xuan takes 基 here in the sense of 謀, “plan for”; the lines in question refer to King Cheng 成王.

44. See the “Yang Huo” 陽貨 chapter, *Lunyu* XVII.11.

45. In fact, these notions are borrowed in the “Xiu wen” 修文 chapter of the *Shuoyuan* (and in the “Liu ben” 六本 chapter of the *Kongzi jiayu*) and placed into just such a context: “The ritual of no bodily deportment is ‘reverence,’ the mourning of no apparel is ‘grief,’ and the music of no sounds is ‘joy.’ To be trusted without even speaking, awesome without even taking action, and humane without even bestowing is [all a matter of] ‘intent.’ When bells and drums are struck with anger, they will be martial; when struck with grief, they will be grave; and when struck with pleasure, they will be joyful. When the intent changes, so will the sounds. If one’s intent is sincere, it will penetrate through even bronze and stone –let alone humans!” 無體之禮, 敬也; 無服之喪, 憂也; 無聲之樂, 權也. 不言而信, 不動而威, 不施而仁, 志也. 鐘鼓之聲怒而擊之則武, 憂而擊之則悲, 喜而擊之則樂. 其志變, 其聲亦變. 其志誠, 通乎金石, 而況人乎?. See *Shuoyuan jiaozheng* 1987, 497.

46. Alternatively, we might understand this separately as “energy” and “intent,” or perhaps “spirit” and “will.”

47. “Lun li,” by contrast, contains only lines one and three (again with some variation) and omits the other three, untenably substituting in their stead a summary statement of the “three absences of partiality,” a notion that, in this text, forms the core of the next section.

48. Ning Zhenjiang proposes just this sort of explanation; see Ning 2004, 279-80.

49. “Lun li” carries through to the end of the next section below but then “omits” everything else up until the final line, this “omitted” portion relocated to “Wen yu” instead. The second half of “Lun li” may simply be an abridgement of “Kongzi xianju,” but if not, it would obviously complicate the scenarios presented below even further. However, the “omitted” portion clearly fits better within the context of “Kongzi xianju” than it does in “Lun li,” and further mitigating against the idea that it had made its way from the latter into the former is the fact that it also closely echoes the structure and wording of that context, repeating the phrase “Its expression in the Odes is this” (*qi zai shi yue* 其在詩曰) *verbatim* from the non-omitted portion as well as concluding those cited odes with nearly identical final lines to the effect of “[such] was the virtue of King X,” as Ning Zhenjiang has already pointed out. Since these phrases are all present in the “Wen yu” version of this passage, it is clear that it was “Wen yu” that lifted it out from “Kongzi xianju” (or a close predecessor to it) rather than the other way around. Wu Kejing offers a third scenario, in which the passage in question was originally an independent passage that made its way into the two texts separately, but this no less fails to account for the structurally repeated phrases just mentioned (which also occur in a *Hanshi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳 excerpt of the same passage). See Ning 2004, 283; and Wu 2015, 104-9.

50. The “three kings” ordinarily referred to Yu, King of Xia 夏王禹; Tang, King of Shang 商王湯; and King Wen of Zhou 周文王 –though this is not strictly reflected in the text below.

51. I am reading the *qi* 齊 here as is, in accordance with the Mao interpretation. Zheng Xuan reads *ji* 躋, “ascend,” “reach up to,” as his version of the *Shi jing* apparently had it, though in the received *Mao shi* 毛詩 it is instead the 齊 of 日齊 below that is written 躋; Zheng takes it here in the sense of Tang “ascending to the throne.” For the first phrase, (Song) Zhu Xi 朱熹 reads in the sense of “Heaven’s command never left them,” an interpretation that Legge also follows; as with Karlgren, my reading instead follows that of Zheng Xuan.

52. Zheng Xuan reads 齊 here in the sense of “solemn,” probably taking it as equivalent to 齋. I read it here like 躋, as the *Mao shi* has it. My reading of the first half of this sentence follows along the lines of Zheng’s interpretation. It is also possible to read in the sense of “Tang came down in good time,” as Karlgren has it, following the Mao interpretation; Legge interprets similarly.

53. If we can take this “respect” 祇 in a softer sense of “approval,” we might alternatively read this line as “and the Sovereign-on-high gave this his respect”; the nature of the verb, however, seems to suggest the reading given here, which is roughly also as Legge has it.

54. These lines come from the Shang hymn 商頌 “Chang fa” 長發 (“Long Manifested”), written in praise of Tang 湯, founding King of the Shang. Cf. the translations of James Legge (Legge 1871, 640); and Bernhard Karlgren (Karlgren 1946, 189-90).

55. See the line *chunri chichi* 春日遲遲 in the odes “Qi yue” 七月 and “Cai wei” 采芣, from the “Bin feng” 邠風 sub-section and “Xiao ya” 小雅 section of the *Shi jing*, respectively.

56. The text here reads “地載神氣，神氣風靈，風靈流形”; Lü Yushu 呂與叔 suspects that the four graphs 神氣風靈 in the middle of these lines are extraneous, as they make little sense as a unit and disrupt the otherwise even length of the descriptions for Heaven and Earth; see *Liji xunzuan*, 755. The resulting lines could be translated something like “Earth supports a spiritual energy, [which] flows into forms in a tempest.” Lü could well be right, or, more specifically, the terms *shenqi* 神氣 and *fengting* 風靈 could have both been accidentally repeated, though what may have caused such an accidental repetition would be difficult to determine. Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭, however, offers an intriguing alternate possibility: that the base text was written with repetition markers that were originally meant to be parsed differently, such that it should be read “地載神氣風靈，神氣風靈流形，庶物露生, which, though presenting phrases of uneven lengths, would rhyme; I tentatively follow this reading here (and try to reflect something of the rhymes in the English). See Qiu 2010, 442-443. Note that *fengting*, “tempest,” is more literally “wind and sudden thunder.” “Wen yu,” on the other hand, reads “地載神氣，吐納雷霆，流形庶物,” perhaps the result of an effort to make sense of an already corrupt or misunderstood source text; on this point, see Wu 2015, 110 (further citing the opinion of Guo Yongbing 郭永乘).

57. Or, in Sun Xidan’s reading, “he makes an opening [which is] invariably preceded [by Heaven’s assistance].”

58. According to Kong Yingda (based primarily on the Mao interpretation of the ode), the Marquis of Fu (a.k.a. Lü 呂) and Earl of Shen were both descendants of Boyi 伯夷 and were in charge of the sacrifices to the Four Peaks 四嶽 (Mt. Tai 泰山 in the East, Mt. Hua 華山 in the West, Mount Heng 衡山 in the South, and the other Mt. Heng 恆山 to the North), which explains their close relationship with the spirits of the mountain peaks in the ode.

59. These lines are from the ode “Song gao” 崧高 (“High and Lofty”) from the “Da Ya” 大雅 section of the *Shi jing*. The ode was actually written in praise of King Xuan 宣王 and his ministers, but the author here is clearly borrowing them to express a similar sentiment in regard to Kings Wen and Wu. Legge 1871, 535; Karlgren 1946, 121-22.

60. This interpretation partly follows that of Sun Xidan; alternatively, we could understand this as “The Kings of the Three Dynasties invariably prioritized their fine reputations.”

61. The cited lines come from consecutive couplets forming the final stanza of the ode “Jiang Han” 江漢 (“The Jiang and Han Rivers”) of the “Da Ya” section. This was also an ode written in praise of King Xuan (and his minister Shao Bohu 召伯虎), used here toward other purposes. For

chi 弛, one edition has *shi* 施, whereas the *Mao shi* has *shi* 矢; for *xie* 協, *Mao shi* writes *qia* 洽. *Da wang* 大王 could be read *Tai wang* 太王, “King Tai” 太王, as it in fact appears in “Wen yu” in some editions of the *Kongzi jiayu*; King Tai was King Wen’s grandfather, a kind of founding-father of the Zhou state. However, reading *da wang* 大王 as a general descriptor of “great kings” here would appear to make much better sense as a concluding line than to have a chronological jump backwards to King Tai (an attempt to resolve the oddity of the latter might also explain why this and the previous line about the Three Dynasties have been reversed in “Wen yu”). Note also that the ostensibly somewhat more reliable Song-dynasty “Large character Shu edition” 宋蜀大字本 of the *Kongzi jiayu*, preserved in the Yuhaitang 玉海堂 collection of Song manuscript editions, has *Wen wang* 文王, “King Wen,” instead of *Tai wang* 太王, presenting yet another possible (though less satisfactory) reading.

62. According to Zheng Xuan, this action indicates that his inquiry of the Master has finished, and he thereby makes way for the next person to come forward. If this is indeed the case, then it would suggest that there may have been other disciples present on this occasion after all.

63. If, however, King Tai were in fact the correct reading of *da wang* 大王, we could perhaps imagine that he was singled out not only in order to emphasise how virtue is something built up over time and kingly rule follows only on its heels, but also because he was a paragon of the “absence of partiality,” having famously forsaken possession of his threatened territory of Bin 邠/邠 in order to spare his people the sufferings of battle.

64. Richter 2013, 61. Richter’s argument that “Kongzi xianju” was a conscious amalgamation of originally distinct texts can be said to represent one particular version of a general view of the development of these texts that appears to be the dominant one among Chinese scholarship over the past fifteen years as well. See, for instance, Ning 2004, 283; and Wu 2015, 95.

65. The text of this chapter as given here is cited from (Qing) Wang Pinzhen 王聘珍, *Da Dai Liji jiegu* 1983, (1-8), with reference also to (Qing) Kong Guangsen 孔廣森 (1751-1786), *Da Dai Liji buzhu* 2013, 17-22. “Zhu yan” is listed as the thirty-ninth chapter of the original *Da Dai Liji*, but now appears as the first chapter in the surviving version of the work. The *Kongzi jiayu* contains a roughly equivalent chapter entitled “Wang yan jie” 王言解, in which *zhu yan* 主言 is written *wang yan* 王言 throughout, thus making it a “discourse of the king”; it appears likely that either *wang* 王 or *zhu* 主 resulted from graphic confusion with the other. Kong Guangsen finds the reading of 王言 more likely and follows it in his edition; I here stick with 主言.

66. Shen is Zeng Zi’s given name. Zeng Zi (“Master Zeng”) is an honorific; its use here suggests the possibility that this text may have been authored by, or at least at some point passed through the editorial hands of, Zeng Shen’s own disciples or followers. He, of course, appears as “Zeng Zi” throughout much of the *Lunyu* as well.

67. For *wen* 聞, most *Da Dai Liji* editions read *jian* 開, giving the phrase the sense of something like “remains within the limits of men of service and great officers”; I here follow Kong Guangsen in following the variant of *wen* 聞.

68. As with “noble men” above, this “men of royalty” also translates *junzi* 君子, but it is clear from context that in this latter instance it cannot be taken in its ordinary sense. It must refer specifically to heads of state; I suspect the 子 here is extraneous and that *jun* 君, “ruler,” was intended here. Wang Pinzhen attempts to surmount this difficulty by, somewhat implausibly, understanding *junzi* 君子 here as a kind of quasi-compound meaning one who “serves as ruler and cares for the people as he would for his children.”

69. That is to say, familiar from “Zhongni yanju,” as we will discuss further below.

70. At this point, his justification takes a kind of “legalist” turn by stating how “it is the officers’ fault if the governance is moderately appropriate and yet commands are not implemented” (政之既中, 令之不行, 職事者之罪也). This kind of language leads one to suspect that this text may have, in part, been written in quasi-concessive response to a kind of growing “Legalist” challenge

to Confucian ideas, one factor among others that would argue for a relatively late Warring States dating for this text.

71. *Da Dai Liji jiegu* 1983, 4; *Da Dai Liji buzhu* 2013, 19.

72. *Da Dai Liji jiegu* 1983, 7; *Da Dai Liji buzhu* 2013, 21.

73. The phrase “like the falling of timely rain” (若(/如)時雨降) appears in similar contexts in both the “Liang Hui Wang, xia” 梁惠王下 and “Teng Wen Gong, xia” 滕文公下 chapters of the *Mengzi* (I B.11 and III B.5).

74. See the brief discussion of such passages in relation to the term in Zuo 2008, 62. Note that the graphs 開 and 閑 are equivalent in this sense.

75. *Ibid.* Zuo cites in this regard relevant later passages from the *Shi ji* 史記 and *Han shu* 漢書. Though associating *xianju* 閒居 and *yanju* 燕居 closely together, as I do, Zuo does aver that the latter does not necessarily always demand the condition of “avoiding others” or limitations on the number of people present. He notes that all of the early Confucius dialogue texts in which the term *xianju* appears (i.e., “Kongzi xianju” and “Zhu yan,” along with two passages from the *Hanshi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳 and *Xiao jing* 孝經) involve the Master in conversation with only one disciple, whereas “Zhongni yanju” has him in conversation with three. The difference is indeed noteworthy, but it does not diminish the overall import of a relatively private setting, allowing for more wide-ranging and open discussion, for both terms.

76. By “early Chinese texts” I mean those that date from either pre-Han or Han times. And regardless of how one chooses to date them, in here and what follows I exclude from consideration both the *Kongzi jiayu* and *Kongcongzi* 孔叢子, which are manifestly derivative in nature (as our analysis of the former’s “Lun li” and “Wen yu” chapters shows) and would only confuse the analysis. I do, however, include such texts as the *Shuoyuan* 說苑 and *Xinxu* 新序.

77. There are two appearances of *da yu li* 達於禮 in the *Zhanguo ce* (and one in a *Kongzi jiayu* chapter, “Zigong wen” 子貢問, other than “Lun li”); the phrase *da yu yue* 達於樂 or the combination *da yu li yue* 達於禮樂 appears nowhere else than our two texts in question.

78. The one prime example found elsewhere in early literature comes from a statement directed at Zigong in the “Wei Ling Gong” 衛靈公 chapter of the *Lunyu* (XV.2): “The Master said: ‘Si, did you [really] think that I was one who [just] learns a lot and takes note of it all?’” 子曰：「賜也，女以予為多學而識之者與？」. The only other comparable example comes from the “You zuo” 宥坐 chapter of the *Xunzi*: in a couple of consecutive questions the Master puts forth to a disgruntled Zilu during their “difficulties between Chen 陳 and Cai 蔡” (note that the *Lunyu* passage in question also happens to come directly after one [XV.1] involving the Master’s answer to Zilu’s angry question upon meeting difficulties in Chen). A slightly different use of the *er yi... hu* 爾以... 乎 construction also appears in the “Tangong, xia” 檀弓下 chapter of the *Liji*, but it does not involve a teacher-disciple interaction. Aside from these, there are no further examples to be found.

79. A particularly intriguing anomaly here is the fact that the same phrase, “I will tell you” (吾語汝), is also to be found in the “Lun li” chapter of the *Kongzi jiayu*, just before the phrase “其義猶有五起焉” (“There are yet ‘five arisings’ of significance therein”), whereas in “Kongzi xianju” we instead find only “君子之服之也” (“In devoting himself to him, [the noble man]...”) in the equivalent place (“Min zhi fumu” is marred by a lacuna at this point). There are two possibilities to explain this: one is that the phrase was originally in the “Kongzi xianju” text but inadvertently omitted by a scribe at some point in its transmission (which would only strengthen the case for shared language suggesting common authorship or affiliation); the other is that the compiler of “Lun li” chose to add it here because it already appeared twice above in the portion of that chapter taken from “Zhongni yanju” and thus seemed only natural to include here as well (note that one of the three instances of the phrase in “Zhongni yanju” occurred in the passage transported over to the “Wen yu” chapter –perhaps yet another tell-tale sign that the passage

did indeed originally occur in “Zhongni yanju” and was forcibly separated by the *Kongzi jiayu* compilers).

80. The most notable occurrence outside of these collections comes from the “Yang Huo” 陽貨 chapter of the *Lunyu* (XVII.8), where Kong Zi uses the phrase in addressing Zilu.

81. One other interesting item, not listed in Table 1 below, is the phrase “*fu X er li*” 負X而立 (“stood with back against the X,” wherein X is a wall [*qiang* 牆 or *xu* 序] or some other object), which is not found with a disciple as its subject in any early text other than “Kongzi xianju” and “Zhu yan” (or the latter’s duplicate text “Wang yan jie,” wherein *xu* 序 is given as *xi* 席, “mat”). Though the precise context of the action is slightly different in each of the two texts, the uniqueness of their common occurrence can hardly be coincidental.

82. As noted above, certain features of “Zhongni yanju” suggest perhaps a slightly later date for it than “Kongzi xianju,” but not necessarily one that would preclude it from having an influence upon texts written in the middle decades of the 3rd Century BCE or thereabouts.

83. See especially note 49 above.

84. As mentioned earlier, a third possibility might be that the second half of the text represented a later, altogether new addition to an already existing text, written in the same spirit and with very close attention to its style and wording. But even if we were to take that portion of the text as a later, conscious addition, the very fact of its being so would still argue for treating “Kongzi xianju” as an integral text of sorts, just simply not one by a single author conceived in whole at a single point in time.

85. The archaeological record is not without examples of tombs containing texts or collections of passages derived from a larger text or collection. For example, as I and others have argued elsewhere –though this opinion is by no means universally shared– the three “Lao Zi” manuscripts of Guodian 郭店 most probably all represented deliberate selections from a larger collection of “Lao Zi” materials (though not necessarily equivalent to the whole of the received *Daode jing* 道德經). See Cook 2012, 199–205. Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭 has put forth a similar argument in Qiu 1999, 26–30.

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From ritual to text, the heuristic value of improprieties in the *Liji* 禮記

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Introduction

- 1 Ritual activities were an essential part of the cultural, religious and political life of ancient China. While always evolving through times, they constituted a series of norms regulating (at least for the elite) behaviour and relationship. They determined propriety and impropriety. Ritual but also historical texts often made mention of those improprieties. In some instances, a ritual norm was only indirectly referred to in occasions where an act was deemed ritually improper. Therefore, the exploration of ritual improprieties has the potential to yield “hidden” information on the ritual norms, to reveal more clearly what was implied in the positive mention of those standard forms of behaviour.
- 2 In this article, I will first present some aspects of ritual in ancient China. It will be followed by a short examination of the relationship between ritual per se and its textualization. In the final part, the heuristic value of two expressions, *feili ye* 非禮也 and *wuli ye* 無禮也, in the *Liji* and other received sources will be explored. This will give me the opportunity to argue that those expressions participated in the strategy of interpretation deployed in those ritual *compedia*.

The Chinese ritual, definition and historical characteristics

- 3 The Chinese definition of ritual is borne by the character *li* 禮 which is defined by the *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 as such:
禮:履也, 所以事神致福也.

[The character] *li* [means] ‘implementation,’ [it designates] what is (employed) to offer sacrifices to the gods in order to obtain [their] benediction.¹

- 4 The Han dynasty lexicon, *Erya* 爾雅, links three characters, *jia* 戛, *li* 禮 and *chang* 常, in order to define *li*:

戛，禮也。
《釋訓》云：「戛，常也。」

Jia [has the same meaning as] *li* and, by extension, *jia* [means] constant.²

- 5 Rituals are defined as the religious operations through which the gods are offered a cult and as a series of constant ways of conducting a variety of socially sanctioned actions. In those two texts, *li* has the meaning of “correct and appropriate countenance or behaviour.” This is valid in various contexts, ranging from military operations to marriages, symposiums and sacrifices.
- 6 Liu Xinlan 劉昕嵐 has examined the different meanings of the character *li*, its etymologies and some of the most important Western anthropological theories on the question.³ According to him, those theories point toward a religious origin of the term: rituals are a politico-religious tool destined to give society its norms. Indeed, sacrifice, in the *Liji* chapter “Jitong” 祭統, is the most important type of ritual:

凡治人之道，莫急於禮。禮有五經，莫重於祭。夫祭者，非物自外至者也，自中出生於心也；心忱而奉之以禮。是故，唯賢者能盡祭之義。

Of all the methods for the good ordering of men, there is none more urgent than the use of ceremonies. Ceremonies are of five kinds, and there is none of them more important than sacrifices. Sacrifice is not a thing coming to a man from without; it issues from within him, and has its birth in his heart. When the heart is deeply moved, expression is given to it by ceremonies; and hence, only men of ability and virtue can give complete exhibition to the idea of sacrifice.⁴

- 7 The ritual is immediately inscribed in the domain of politics. The *Liji* adds also moral considerations linking the completion of actual ceremonies with a certain state of mind. It bears witness to the evolution of the theories of ritual developed since the end of the Spring and Autumn period: under the influence of the Ru 儒 (or Confucianists), ritual as a pure praxis has been reinterpreted in the framework of self-cultivation.
- 8 This evolution of the ritual has been paralleled in the political domain by theories emerging at the end of the Spring and Autumn period. Yanzi 晏子 (578-500 BC), daifu (大夫 minister) of the State of Qi 齊, established a political theory founded on rituals, backed by the immutability of Nature:

禮之可以為國也久矣，與天地並。

Since time immemorial, rituals, born with Heaven and Earth, can establish and affirm the States.⁵

- 9 If we take into account both the moral and the cosmic discourses on ritual, it is easy to see how the category of ritual (as *li* 禮) has been construed to structure Chinese society, from its insertion in Nature to the moral formation of its elites.
- 10 This situation changed with the development of bureaucratic apparatuses, at the end of the Warring States period. Ma Tsang Wing has described how the profession of scribe, a

low-level official in charge of record-keeping, was opened to non-hereditary scribes because of the growing demand for administration under the First Empire.⁶ This, of course, related to administrative duties, and was not about the study of ancient texts specialised in ritual, or the future Five Classics, canonised by the Han. It is nevertheless an interesting evolution worth highlighting. It was connected to the more general opening of knowledge following the collapse of the ancient Zhou order. It coincided with the surge of written documents (attested by archaeological findings), which included, for a number of them, information regarding ritual.

Archaic Chinese rituals and the process of textualisation

- 11 This being said, what was the interaction between ritual as a *praxis* and ritual texts? This problematic can be formulated in a series of statements:
- Logically Ritual texts do not originate in other texts: their origin is the actual ritual practices. Therefore, rituals and texts belong to two different categories, the primacy belonging to ritual *in actu*.
 - The beginning of writing in the Chinese civilisation is considered to occur with the oracular inscriptions of the Shang. From this dynasty on, writing was bound together with rituals.⁷
 - The existence of ritual *compendia* is proof of an intellectual movement oriented toward a problematisation of ritual.
- 12 This effort of clarification is linked to the augmentation of writing materials on cheaper medium than bronze. With the passing of time, ritual text became less and less constrained by the use of bones or tortoise shells in ritual practice.⁸ The multiplication of writing forms might furthermore have been facilitated by the constitution of a database of rituals in the form of *verbatim* recording of ritualised dialogues in Zhou times bronze inscriptions. Lothar von Falkenhausen suggests in this vein that “[t]he custom of fixing in writing what was said at court must have been an important factor in the early transmissions of documents that eventually found their way into the early Classical texts.”⁹
- 13 According to Dirk Meyer, the development of writing material during the Warring States fostered the development of philosophical discourse.¹⁰ The same theory could be applied to the development of discourses and analysis of the ritual as such.¹¹ This effort, concretised in Han times ritual *compendia*, resulted in statements demonstrating a sophisticated understanding of the matter.
- 14 For example, the chapter “Jiaotesheng” 郊特牲 (“The single victim at the border sacrifices”) gives the following list of goals for the sacrifices:
- 祭有祈焉，有報焉，有由辟焉。
- Sacrifices were for the purpose of prayer, or of thanksgiving, or of deprecation.¹²
- 15 This list is in fact similar to the one found in the recent *Encyclopedia of Religion* edited by Mircea Eliade.¹³ Would this theorisation have been possible in a context devoid of the objectification and the extrospection permitted by the writing form? Several researchers have also noted that there is a certain structural resemblance between

texts and ritual. Michael Nylan suggests that the common point between ritual and text comes from another, psychological, characteristic: rituals and ritual texts “produce (...) compressed versions of reality that are more vivid and focused than ordinary perception.”¹⁴ For Nylan, there is a homothetic relationship between texts and ritual, since both (to use the author’s expression) “compress” human experience. If restrained to the temporal aspect of ritual, this compressed effect structures ritual time and constitutes an *a posteriori* historical effect for texts. It operates in the guise of cultural memory.¹⁵

- 16 There is another point of contact between ritual and texts, at least in the Chinese pre-imperial and imperial context: ostentation. Ritual is by definition ostentatious; it is meant to be seen and practiced in order to be observed. This ostentation has been one of the characteristics of writing since the Shang dynasty, but its scope has been modified, from a clan-based affair to a vast circle of participants or spectators, at least from the Western Han dynasty on.¹⁶
- 17 This ostentation had a political undertone as the story of Shusun Tong 叔孫通, a Qin dynasty scholar, shows. When emperor Han Gaozu 漢高祖 (Liu Bang 劉邦, founder of the Han dynasty), faced with the unruly behaviour of his comrades in arms after the pacification, wanted to find a solution:

叔孫通 [] 說上曰：「夫儒者難與進取，可與守成。臣願徵魯諸生，與臣弟子共起朝儀。」高帝曰：「得無難乎？」叔孫通曰：「五帝異樂，三王不同禮。禮者，因時世人情為之節文者也。[] 臣願頗采古禮與秦儀雜就之。」上曰：「可試為之，令易知，度吾所能行為之。」遂與所徵三十人西，及上左右為學者與其弟子百餘人為綿蕞野外。習之月餘，叔孫通曰：「上可試觀。」上既觀，使行禮，曰：「吾能為此。」

“Shusun Tong... spoke to the emperor, saying: ‘If it is difficult to be helped by scholars to conquer [the world], one can keep [the world with their help]. Your servant is willing to request the help of the scholars of the State of Lu, to work with my disciples so to establish rules of the court and [imperial] ritual.’ The emperor asked (then): ‘Will it be difficult [to put in place those rituals]?’ Shusun Tong said: ‘The five emperors had different styles of music; the three dynasties had different rituals. Rituals are embellished according to the spirit of the times... Your servant will as much as possible use old [royal] rituals, mixed with Qin court rituals.’ The emperor said: ‘Let us try it [but] you have to gauge my capabilities.’ ...Then, [Shusun Tong] brought [the scholars of the State of Lu] with him to the west and, with the collaboration of the emperor’s scholars and his own disciples, altogether more than one hundred of them, made a ritual area on the ground by ways of ropes outside [the capital, for practice]. After one month of repetitions, Shusun Tong told [the emperor]: ‘Your Majesty can attend our repetition.’ The emperor came to attend the repetition and when the rituals were finished, he said: ‘I can do that.’”¹⁷

- 18 How should we read this passage? The most obvious lesson is about the nature of ritual: it is understood as an instrument of political order. The second lesson is that aristocratic or royal rituals are complex affairs. Liu Bang had not received a formal education in this domain. Two elements must be considered: a. Liu Bang asks whether the rituals can be (literally) “obtained” (*de* 得); Shusun Tong immediately answers with a discourse on the historical variability of rituals and what is probably implied here is that Han scholars were already very well aware of the historical nature of the rituals; b. ritual complexity demanded the attention of specialists: it could not be improvised. Liu

Bang's reaction acknowledged that what was demanded from him was very limited. The "end result" was a ceremony that made the Han imperial court the true heir of the ancient royal houses: it determined a new order while retaining the "flavour" of antiquity.

- 19 There is another lesson to be gained from this story: the three ritual *compendia* contain very detailed descriptions of ceremonies and it would be tempting to treat that information as reconstructions or inventions. The painstaking process through which Shusun Tong "constructed" the new ritual, taking one month of repetition by experts, shows that those descriptions are not necessarily far-fetched. In this case, the complexity of the ritual is demonstrated directly; but what about ritual texts? What was their relationship with actual ceremonies?

The heuristic value of ritual mishaps

Texts and reality

- 20 The problem is almost intractable in archaeological terms, as shown by the example of the lists of gifts (*qiance* 遣策 or *fengshu* 贈書) in Warring States tombs: they, indeed, cannot be matched with the actual content of the tomb. That could indicate that texts could symbolically provide the equivalent of the objects evoked. Alternatively, gifts were indeed presented during the funerals but not included in the tomb.¹⁸
- 21 Another example shows that the situation is not always clear-cut. Such is the case for the "treaties of alliance" (*mengshu* 盟書). The material and the writing on it were intrinsically part of the ceremony as a whole and the archaeological data provides the proof that very elaborate and costly ceremonies were indeed performed "in real" before the ritual *compendia* even mentioned them.¹⁹
- 22 For received texts, what constitutes for the modern scholar a difficulty is the sheer number of details. However, this might be in part a matter of perspective: a lot of our own ritualised ways have disappeared by force of habit.

The problematics of ritual, misconducts and judgements

- 23 Ritual texts contain descriptive and normative elements. This latter aspect authorises and proscribes some forms of behaviour. A proscription is a negative judgement which can reveal aspects of ceremonies, in some cases the underlying social order sustained by the ritual. It can also highlight the hermeneutic strategies followed by redactors and commentators. In our exploration of these proscriptions, we will utilise two expressions as guides: *feili ye* 非禮也 and *wuli (ye)* 無禮(也), which must be translated according to the context of each passage. In some instances, a negative judgement reveals one of the characteristics of actual ceremonies. We illustrate this point through an anecdote found in the *Zuo zhuan* 左傳:

十五年，春，邾隱公來朝，子貢觀焉，邾子執玉高，其容仰，公受玉卑，其容俯，子貢曰，以禮觀之，二君者皆有死亡焉，夫禮，死生存亡之體也，將左右周旋，進退俯仰，於是乎取之，朝祀喪戎，於是乎觀之，今正月相朝，而皆不度，心已亡矣，嘉事不體，何以能久，高仰，驕也，卑俯，替也，驕近亂，替近疾，君為主，其先亡乎。

During the fifteenth years [of the Duke Ding], in spring, when Duke Yin of Zhu appeared at the court of Lu, Zi Gong (Duanmu Ci 端木賜, a disciple of Confucius) witnessed [the ceremony between the two princes]. The lord of Zhu bore his symbol of jade too high with his countenance turned upwards; the duke of Lu received it too low, with his countenance bent down. Zi Gong said: “Looking on and judging according to the rules of ceremony, the two rulers will soon die or go into exile. Those rules are the stem from which grow life or death, preservation or ruin. We draw our conclusion from the manner in which parties move to the right or to the left, advance and recede, look down and look up; and we observe this at court meetings and sacrifices, funerals and military rituals. It is now in the first month that these princes meet at court together, and they both violate the proper rules; their minds are gone. On a festive occasion like this, not behaving physically the way they should, how is it possible for them to continue long? The high symbol and upturned look are indicative of pride; the low symbol and look bent down are indicative of negligence. Pride is not far removed from disorder, and negligence is near to sickness. Our ruler is the host, and will probably be the first to die.”²⁰

24 This passage introduces a dichotomy between ceremonies as normative and their interpretations. Furthermore, we can say that it is the difference between the primary “goal” of the ritual and the ceremony’s actual execution that gave way to a new interpretation of the ritual itself. Ritual is a “fleshed-out” performance, depending for its efficacy on the way it is actually done.

25 The mention of ritual impropriety can sometimes be used to detect historical changes, a clash even between two types of concepts regarding (for example) the government. A passage in the *Chunqiu* and the *Zuozhuan* epitomises this. The *Chunqiu* has:

五年，春，公矢魚于棠。

“The fifth year, in spring, the duke [went] to shoot fishes in Tang.”²¹

26 In the *Zuozhuan*, one of the advisors to the duke tries to rebuke his master, saying:

若夫山林川澤之實，器用之資，阜隸之事，官司之守，非君所及也。[] 公矢魚于棠，非禮也。

“With the creatures found in the mountains, forests, streams and marshes; with the material for ordinary articles of use; with the business of underlings; and with the charges of inferior officers: with all these the ruler has nothing to do... It is improper for the duke to go spear fishes in Tang.”²²

27 This passage indicates a change in perception of the ancient ways. At first the monarch had a mystical link with the land, but the emergence of a more streamlined and bureaucratic government led to this link being cut. The advisor deemed improper that the inspection of mountains, rivers, and lakes be part of the normal activities of the prince. For him, the link had to be mediated by a bureaucratic hierarchy.²³

28 The heuristic value of the judgements of improprieties can be observed abundantly in the *Liji*.

The Liji and ritual improprieties

Brief remarks on the three ritual compendia and their relationship

- 29 To understand ancient Chinese ritual, the importance of the *compendia* cannot be overstated. Yet, the redactors of the ritual texts were not neutral *vis-à-vis* their material. To a certain extent, they were in the position of being both external and internal participants as they, themselves, were involved in the ceremonies practised during their lifetime. According to Michael Nylan, the great Eastern Han commentator Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200 AD) saw the relationship between the three ritual *compendia* as such: they were to be taken as complementary, notably in the particular case of the *Liji* and the *Yili*. Because of “explicit ties between the *Yili* and the final seven chapters of the *Liji*,” Zheng Xuan considered that those chapters were explanatory passages that “function as explanatory notes or appended essays (...) on the *Yili*’s ceremonials.”²⁴

The Composition of the *Liji*

- 30 The dating of the *Liji* different chapters is a notoriously difficult task, for one faces the the problem of the origin of the material composing them. For Timothy Baker, there might have been a collection that resembled the transmitted *Liji* during the late Western Han.²⁵ For Huang Wuzhi 黃武智, who has studied the historical value, composition and origins of the received *Liji*, most materials have a pre-Qin origin, but are supplemented by Han dynasty interpolations.²⁶ The received version available since the Song –which may even date back to the end of the Han dynasty– is composed of 49 chapters. Two versions (or prototypes) of chapter 33 “Ziyi” 緇衣 (The Black Robes) have been discovered in two series of bamboo strips, one in the Guodian Chu tomb, the other in the collection of manuscripts published by the Museum of Shanghai. They mention quotes from a chapter called “Yinji” 尹吉, traditionally attributed to Yi Yin 伊尹, corresponding partly to the chapter “Xian you yi de” 咸有一德 (“Common Possession of Pure Virtue”) of the received *Shangshu*, a chapter classified *guwen*.²⁷ Those discoveries show that prototypes to the received “Ziyi” were already in circulation during the fourth century BC.²⁸
- 31 Some passages in the *Liji* have an even more ancient origin. For example, a gift sequence in the *Liji*, in the chapter “Jitong” 祭統, has elicited comparison to bronze inscriptions of the Western Zhou period. The “Jitong” has:

古者，明君爵有德而祿有功，必賜爵祿於大廟，示不敢專也。故祭之日，一獻，君降立于阼階之南，南鄉。所命北面，史由君右執策命之。再拜稽首。受書以歸，而舍奠于其廟。此爵賞之施也。

In ancient times the intelligent rulers conferred rank on the virtuous, and emoluments on the meritorious; and the rule was that this should take place in the Grand temple, to show that they did not dare to do it on their own private initiative. Therefore, on the day of sacrifice, after the first presenting [of the cup to the representative], the ruler descended and stood south of the steps on the east, with his face to the south, while those who were to receive their appointments stood facing the north. The recorder was on the right of the ruler, holding the tablets on which the appointments were written. He read these, and [each man] bowed twice, with his head to the ground,

received the writing, returned [home], and presented it in his [own] ancestral temple –such was the way in which rank and reward were given.²⁹

- 32 This text can be compared to a gift sequence carved on a bronze vase from the Zhou dynasty, the Yihou Ze gui 宜侯矢鬲, which dates from the reign of king Kang 康王 (1005/3–978 BC)³⁰:

王省武王、成王伐商圖，遂省東或（國）圖。王卜於宜口土南。王令虞侯矢日：遷侯於宜。

The king [Kang], having examined the documents [written about] kings Wu and Cheng's military expeditions against the Shang, also examined the documents [written about military expeditions against] northern territories. The king, standing near the altar of the meat offerings, entered the area of the god of soil altar, facing south. The king gave Ze, the lord of Wu, the [following] instructions: "Very well, I am enfeoffing you as the lord of Yi."³¹

- 33 The Western Zhou ritual sequences of gift-offering have been analysed in detail by Chen Hanping 陳漢平.³² The author concludes in his book that, while numerous details in the ritual compendia correspond to the reconstructed ritual sequences mentioned in Western Zhou inscriptions, there are some variations (in particular regarding the exact place of the king during the ceremony). These could be explained by different chronological layers constituting the *compendia*. Lothar von Falkenhausen has studied the content of the dialogues in the inscriptions and has concluded that those dialogues were at least in part transcripts of actual oral exchanges which took place during Zhou royal court ceremonies.³³
- 34 The chapters of the *Liji* also bear witness to the flurry of theoretical activities revolving around the "historical" origins, the characteristics and the role of the rites. This, of course, reflects the general atmosphere of intellectual frenzy characteristic of the Warring States period, but the *Liji*, inasmuch as a lot of its components originate from this period, shows that discourses on the *li* were a privileged *topos* to reflect on and establish order. To a certain degree, one can surmise that the discourses on ritual were parts of an attempt to establish (or more precisely re-establish) the foundations of the society as a whole, before and after the unification made by the Qin empire.

Two characteristics of the text

- 35 The *Liji* is constituted by a series of abstract records, not simplified but made out of an amalgamation of different historical strata: a. it has abstracted its data from historical ceremonies, sometimes in excruciating details; b. those ceremonies have been commented upon directly in the text or interpreted in a way characteristic of Ru (Confucian) morality.
- 36 The abstractive process is showcased by the minimal amount of geographic and historical references present in the rituals. I have sampled the *Liji* for those references, beginning with the mention of some of the most important States of the Warring States period. Here is the result: the State of Han 韓 is not mentioned at all. The State of Wei 魏 is mentioned once in the chapter "Yueji" 樂記 in a discussion between lord Wen of Wei and Zi Gong, on music.³⁴ There are two mentions of the State of Zhao 趙, one in the chapter "Tangong b" 檀弓下 and the second in the chapter "Jiaotesheng" 郊特牲. The latter mention is interesting:

庭燎之百，由齊桓公始也。大夫之奏《肆夏》也，由趙文子始也。

(The use of) a hundred torches in his courtyard began with Duke Huan of Qi. The playing of the Si Xia (at receptions) of Great officers began with Zhao Wenzhi.³⁵

- 37 Here, the lord of Zhao is mentioned because of a ritual change attributed to his reign. In some instances, ritual modifications, because of their visible and direct impacts, made them particularly opportune to be included in historical records. These rituals were identified by a chronological reference and, henceforth, they were also a marker of diachronicity. Since rituals established constants, their change was notified very easily.
- 38 The State of Chu 楚 is mentioned in the chapter “Daxue” 大學 (The great learning) where it is cited as an example of virtue. There are three mentions of the State of Qin 秦, one in the chapter “Tangong b” 檀弓下, describing in moral terms a political manoeuvre of the Duke Mu of Qin 秦穆公 to extoll the virtue of Chong Er 重耳, the future lord of Jin 晉文公. The second one, in the same chapter, reports on an attack on Qin interrupted by the funerals of one of the allies. The third one, from the “Daxue” chapter, quotes from the chapter “Qinshi” 秦誓 of the *Shangshu* extolling the virtue of the monarch, who was able to choose a good minister. There are six mentions of the State of Jin 晉, most of them in the chapter “Tangong b,” recording moral lessons in relations with historical anecdotes.³⁶ The State most mentioned in the *Liji* (48 mentions in 12 different chapters) is the State of Lu 魯, which is not entirely surprising. Most of those mentions are connected with anecdotes on Confucius.
- 39 In the two other *compendia*, there is a dearth of historical and geographic mentions. In the *Liji*, those references are disseminated in the chapters, often to be treated as the starting point of a moral lesson. We can say that the chronological references give the impression that the redactors were highly conscious of at least some ritual transformations having happened in the past. However, those transformations were interpreted under quite a homogenous, *Ru*-style, way of moral interpretation.
- 40 Those interpretations were in some cases directly affixed to the precise description of ceremonies; they also sought to give a meaning to described ceremonies. We can say that those passages constitute “primary comments” on the ceremonies, prior to and distinct from the secondary comments recorded (for example) in the Song dynasty edition of the Thirteen Classics. Here is an example from the “Jiyi” 祭義 chapter, describing a sacrifice of the monarch to Heaven. It was located in the suburb and involved the sacrifice of an ox:³⁷

郊之祭也，[] 祭之日，君牽牲，穆答君，卿大夫序從。既入廟門，麗于碑，卿大夫袒，而毛牛尚耳，鸞刀以割，取腍膚，乃退。燔祭，祭腥而退，敬之至也。

At [the time of] the border sacrifice to Heaven [...] On the day of sacrifice, the ruler led the victim forward, along with and assisted by his son on the opposite side; while the Great officers followed in order. When they had entered the gate of the temple, they fastened the victim to the stone pillar. The ministers and Great officers then bared their arms³⁸, and proceeded to inspect the hair, paying particular attention to that of the ears. They then, with the knife with the bells attached to it, cut the animal open, took out the fat about the inwards, and withdrew (for a time). Afterwards they offered some of the flesh boiled, and some raw, then (finally) withdrawing. There was the highest reverence about everything.³⁹

- 41 This passage is composed of two parts; the longest one is a description of physical sequences (that is to say, gestures, displacements and actions) and the shortest one (only one sentence, 敬之至也) is a comment which gives the meaning of the sequence. This is only an example of the kinds of arrangements that can be found in the *Liji*. The chapter from which the above quoted passage is extracted, is named, aptly, “Jiyi,” the meaning of sacrifices. It can therefore be considered as a primary annotation and a general reflection on sacrifices as such.
- 42 The second passage is extracted from the “Liqi” (禮器, “Ritual vessels”):
是故七介以相見也, 不然則已慙. 三辭三讓而至, 不然則已蹙.
- When [two princes] have an interview, there are seven attendants to wait on them and direct them. Without these the interview would be too plain and dull. They reach (the ancestral temple) after the visitor has thrice declined the welcome of the host, and the host has thrice tried to give precedence to the other. Without these courtesies the interview would be too hurried and abrupt.”⁴⁰
- 43 This passage reveals a characteristic of ancient diplomatic encounters: assistants were needed, probably to do two things: a. to show the princes’ entourage and thus, indirectly, his power; b. to make sure that the political discussions would follow a fixed agenda, in order to avoid individual initiatives taken by the princes themselves. Here, a more “cynical” interpretation of the encounter between two princes is possible (or even more probable), but the primary interpretation of the *Liji* (functioning as a primary comment) was to mask this harsh reality of political prudence by means of vague courteous intent; in other words, while the *Liji* might have recorded the existence of actual ceremonies, it was interpreted in a moral way. In that regard, the ritualistic interpretations cover those realities with the veil of politeness.
- 44 This example must be compared with other instances, where harshness in the *Liji* takes the form of scathing judgements.

Ritual judgement in the *Liji*, impropriety and humanisation

- 45 Records of mishaps also allowed the redactors to comment on specific aspects of the ritual, in order to provide a first layer of explanation. They constitute another editorial tool for the purpose of establishing an authoritative tradition of interpretation: what constitutes a proper behaviour reveals at the same time the moral virtues favoured by the redactors.
- 46 There are 25 mentions of the expression *feili ye* 非禮也 ([this is] ritually improper) in the *Liji* with some passages containing more than one mention. The corpus is composed of the following passages:
1. “Quli” a (曲禮上, “Summary of the rules of propriety, part 1”):
太上貴德, 其次務施報. 禮尚往來. 往而不來, 非禮也; 來而不往, 亦非禮也. 人有禮則安, 無禮則危. 故曰: 禮者不可不學也.

In the highest antiquity, they prized [simply conferring] good; in the time next to this, giving and repaying was the thing attended to. And what the rules of propriety value is that reciprocity. If I give a gift and nothing comes in return, that is contrary to propriety; if the thing comes to me, and I give nothing in return, that also is contrary to propriety. If a man observes the rules of propriety, he is in a condition of security; if he does not, he is in one

of danger. Hence there is the saying “The rules of propriety should by no means be left unlearned.”⁴¹

- 47 The passage underlines the importance of the rules of reciprocity in society, rules cementing all relationship, not only in early China but even nowadays. The expression *lai er bu wang, yi fei li ye* 來而不往，亦非禮也 (being given something and not reciprocating is contrary to ritual) has even taken a proverbial value today.

2. “Quli” a:

謀於長者，必操几杖以從之。長者問，不辭讓而對，非禮也。

In going to take counsel with an elder, one must carry a stool and a staff (for the elder’s use). When the elder asks a question, to reply without acknowledging one’s incompetency and (trying to) decline answering, is contrary to propriety.⁴²

- 48 What is illustrated here is the hierarchical nature of society; the last passage probably originates in court exchanges when a word said too precipitously could lead to death.

3. “Tangong” b (檀弓下):

陳子車死於衛，其妻與其家大夫謀以殉葬，定，而後陳子亢至，以告曰：「夫子疾，莫養於下，請以殉葬。」子亢曰：「以殉葬，非禮也；雖然，則彼疾當養者，孰若妻與宰？得已，則吾欲已；不得已，則吾欲以二子者之為之也。」於是弗果用。

Chen Ziju having died in Wei, his wife and the principal officer of the family consulted together about burying some living persons (to follow him). When they had decided to do so, (his brother), Chen Zikang arrived, and they informed him about their plan, saying, “When the master was ill, (he was far away) and there was no provision for his nourishment in the lower world; let us bury some persons alive (to supply it).” Zikang said, “To bury living persons (for the sake of the dead) is contrary to what is proper. Nevertheless, in the event of his being ill, and requiring to be nourished, who are so fit for that purpose as his wife and steward? If the thing can be done without, I wish it to be so. If it cannot be done without, I wish you two to be the parties for it.” On this the proposal was not carried into effect.⁴³

- 49 The custom of burying persons in tombs of the aristocracy has been a common feature since the Shang dynasty. The same chapter contains a saying attributed to Confucius condemning the use of figures in tombs.⁴⁴ Here the condemnation is illustrated by an amusing anecdote, illustrating the fact that even ritual can be a source of humour.

4. “Tangong” b:

陳乾昔寢疾，屬其兄弟，而命其子尊已曰：「如我死，則必大為我棺，使吾二婢子夾我。」陳乾昔死，其子曰：「以殉葬，非禮也，況又同棺乎？」弗果殺。

When Chen Ganxi was lying ill, he assembled his brethren, and charged his son Zunji, saying, “When I am dead, you must make my coffin large, and make my two concubines lie in it with me, one on each side.” When he died, his son said, “To bury the living with the dead is contrary to propriety; how much more must it be so to bury them in the same coffin!” Accordingly, he did not put the two ladies to death.⁴⁵

5. “Tangong” b:

襄公朝于荊，康王卒。荊人曰：「必請襲。」魯人曰：「非禮也。」荊人強之。巫先拂柩。荊人悔之。

Duke Xiang being in attendance at the court of Jing, king Kang died. The people of Jing said to him, “We must beg you to cover (the corpse with your gift of a robe).” The men of Lu (who were with him) said, “The thing is contrary to propriety.” They of Jing, however, obliged him to do what they asked; and he first employed a wu (sorcerer) with his reed brush to brush (and purify) the bier. The people of Jing then regretted what they had done.⁴⁶

50 Death was a taboo and the monarch could not be put in contact with it. The mention of impropriety here must be linked to the more general context of the relationship between monarchs and death.⁴⁷

6. “Zengzi wen” (曾子問, “The questions of Zengzi”):

孔子曰：「諸侯適天子，必告于祖，奠于禩。冕而出視朝，命祝史告於社稷、宗廟、山川。乃命國家五官而後行，道而出。告者，五日而遍，過是，非禮也。」

Confucius said, “When princes of states are about to go to the (court of the) son of Heaven, they must announce (their departure) before (the shrine of) their grandfather, and lay their offerings in that of their father. They then put on the court cap, and go forth to hold their own court. (At this) they charge the invocator and the court scribe to announce (their departure) to the (spirits of the) land and grain, in the ancestral temple, and at the (altars of the) hills and rivers. They then give (the business of) the state in charge to the five (subordinate) officers, and take their journey, presenting the offerings to the spirits of the road as they set forth. All the announcements should be completed in five days. To go beyond this in making them is contrary to rule.”⁴⁸

51 This passage bears witness to the relaxation of the visit-rules to the royal court, after the Zhou kings entered into a spiral of decline. It evokes a rule of 5 days applied to those visits; whether this rule existed or not (or was generalised) is another question but at least, it gives the researchers a hint about the existing rules.

7. “Zengzi wen” (曾子問, “The questions of Zengzi”):

曾子問曰：「祭如之何則不行旅酬之事矣？」孔子曰：「聞之：小祥者，主人練祭而不旅，奠酬於賓，賓弗舉，禮也。昔者，魯昭公練而舉酬行旅，非禮也；孝公大祥，奠酬弗舉，亦非禮也。」

Zeng-zi asked, “Under what circumstances is it that at sacrifice they do not carry out the practice of all drinking to one another?” Confucius said, “I have heard that at the close of the one year’s mourning, the principal concerned in it sacrifices in his inner garment of soft silk, and there is not that drinking all round. The cup is set down beside the guests, but they do not take it up. This is the rule. Formerly Duke Zhao of Lu, while in that silken garment, took the cup and sent it all round, but it was against the rule; and Duke Xiao, at the end of the second year’s mourning, put down the cup presented to him, and did not send it all round, but this also was against the rule.”⁴⁹

52 There are two elements in this passage. The first one is a diachronic one: it documents a change in ritual. As we have said, ritual is the scene where visible changes are most easily noticed. The second one has more direct heuristic value: offering a cup of wine during certain occasions is followed or not by drinking. The inner logic of this must be worked up according to ritual circumstances.

8. “Liyun” (禮運, “Ritual usages”):

孔子曰：「於呼哀哉！我觀周道，幽、厲傷之，吾舍魯何適矣！魯之郊禘，非禮也，周公其衰矣！杞之郊也禹也，宋之郊也契也，是天子之事守也。故天子祭天地，諸侯祭社稷。」

Confucius said: “Ah! Alas! I look at the ways of Zhou. (Kings) You and Li corrupted them indeed, but if I leave Lu, where shall I go (to find them better)? The border sacrifice of Lu, (however,) and (the association with it of) the founder of the line (of Zhou) are contrary to propriety –how have (the institutions of) the duke of Zhou fallen into decay! At the border sacrifice in Qi, Yu was the assessor, and at that in Song, it was Xie; but these were observances of the Sons of Heaven, preserved (in those states by their descendants). The rule is that (only) the Son of Heaven sacrifices to heaven and earth, and the princes of states sacrifice at the altars to the spirits of the land and grain.”⁵⁰

- 53 Since the State of Lu was created by one of the brothers of King Wu, the famous duke of Zhou, this passage could be read as a veiled criticism of lineage-based form of power or at least as a plea for a more exclusive handling of power by the ruling Han emperor. It comes at odds with other sources asserting the right of the State of Lu to practise kingly sacrifices.

9. “Liyun”:

祝嘏莫敢易其常古，是謂大假。祝嘏辭說，藏於宗祝巫史，非禮也，是謂幽國。醜罍及尸君，非禮也，是謂僭君。冕弁兵革藏於私家，非禮也，是謂胥君。大夫具官，祭器不假，聲樂皆具，非禮也，是謂亂國。

When no change is presumptuously made from the constant practice from the oldest times between the prayer and blessing (at the beginning of the sacrifice), and the benediction (at the end of it), we have what might be called a very great (service). For the words of prayer and blessing and those of benediction to be kept hidden away by the officers of prayer of the ancestral temple, and the sorcerers and recorders, is a violation of the rules of propriety. This may be called keeping a state in darkness. [The use of] the *zhan* cup (of Xia) and the *jia* cup (of Yin), and (the pledging in them) between the impersonator of the dead and the ruler are contrary to propriety; these things constitute “a usurping ruler.” [For ministers and Great officers to] keep the cap with pendants and the leather cap, or military weapons, in their own houses is contrary to propriety. To do so constitutes “restraint of the ruler.” For Great officers to maintain a full staff of employees, to have so many sacrificial vessels that they do not need to borrow any; and have singers and musical instruments all complete, is contrary to propriety. For them to do so leads to “disorder in a state.”⁵¹

- 54 This text is rhythmized by several utterances of the same ritual judgment and is very complex to analyse. I will note here two elements. The first one is the general tone of condemnation of the independent initiatives taken by officers with regard to their status and the position of the ruler: it is obviously a political lesson. The second is a phenomenon linked to the composite nature of the *Liji* itself: while this passage says that a great officer should borrow at least some of his ritual vessels, another chapter (“Quli b”), says the opposite.

10. “Liyun”:

故仕於公日臣，仕於家日仆。三年之喪，與新有昏者，期不使。以衰裳入朝，與家仆雜居齋齒，非禮也，是謂君與臣同國。

Thus, one sustaining office under the ruler is called a minister, and one sustaining office under the head of a clan is called a servant. Either of these,

who is in mourning for a parent, or has newly married, is not sent on any mission for a year. To enter court in decayed robes, or to live promiscuously with his servants, taking place among them according to age: —all these things are contrary to propriety. Where we have them, we have what is called “ruler and minister sharing the state.”⁵²

- 55 This passage is probably linked with the decaying authority of territorial lords *vis-à-vis* the *daifu* (ministers).⁵³

11. “Jiaotesheng”:

朝覲，大夫之私覲，非禮也。大夫執圭而使，所以申信也；不敢私覲，所以致敬也；而庭實私覲，何為乎諸侯之庭？為人臣者，無外交，不敢貳君也。

When appearing at another court, for a Great officer to have a private audience was contrary to propriety. If he were there as a commissioner, bearing his own prince’s token of rank, this served as his credentials. That he did not dare to seek a private audience showed the reverence of his loyalty. What had he to do with the tribute offerings in the court of the other prince that he should seek a private audience? The minister of a prince had no intercourse outside his own state, thereby showing how he did not dare to serve two rulers.⁵⁴

- 56 The mention of ritual impropriety is indicative of political wheeling and dealing abundantly illustrated by numerous anecdotes in pre-Han history. It reads like a warning to monarchs. The following passage is in the same tone.

12. “Jiaotesheng”:

大夫而饗君，非禮也。大夫強而君殺之，義也；由三桓始也。

For a Great officer to receive his ruler to an entertainment was contrary to propriety. For a ruler to put to death a Great officer who had violently exercised his power was (held) an act of righteousness; and it was first seen in the case of the three Huan.⁵⁵

- 57 There is another mention of the three Huan in the same chapter. It follows the same line of reasoning: they established private temples to the ruler of Lu, thus weakening the power of the rightful lord of Lu by asserting the legitimacy of their own lineages.

13. The chapter “Zaji” b (雜記下, “Miscellaneous records”, Part II) includes three mentions of impropriety, for minor behaviour:

- 58 The expression *wuli* 無禮 is present in the *Liji*: there are 11 mentions in 8 passages. What it denotes is quite different from the expression *feili ye*. The political overtone of condemnation is also present but only in some instances. In most cases, the expression is simply to state that this or that behaviour is improper. It seems to denote the capacity of ritual to act as an instrument of culture understood as differentiation from animals. A passage in the “Liyun” chapter illustrates that:

言偃復問曰：「如此乎禮之急也？」孔子曰：「夫禮，先王以承天之道，以治人之情。故失之者死，得之者生。《詩》曰：『相鼠有體，人而無禮；人而無禮，胡不遘死？』是故夫禮，必本於天，殺於地，列於鬼神，達於喪祭、射御、冠昏、朝聘。故聖人以禮示之，故天下國家可得而正也。」

Yan Yan again asked, “Are the rules of propriety indeed of such urgent importance?” Confucius said, “It was by those rules that the ancient kings sought to represent the ways of Heaven, and to regulate the feelings of men. Therefore he who neglects or violates them may be (spoken of) as dead, and he who observes them, as alive. It is said in the *Book of Poetry*, ‘Look at a rat –

how small its limbs and fine! Then mark the course that scorns the proper line. Propriety's neglect may well provoke; a wish the man would quickly court death's stroke.⁵⁶ Therefore those rules are rooted in Heaven, have their correspondences in Earth, and are applicable to spiritual beings. They extend to funeral rites, sacrifices, archery, chariot driving, capping, marriage, audiences, and friendly missions. Thus the sages made known these rules, and it became possible for the kingdom, with its states and clans, to reach its correct condition."⁵⁷

59 Here, backed up by a quote from the *Canon of odes*, the concept of ritual is expressed as both the main constituent of true human nature (as opposed to animality) and, the mentor of human civilisation.⁵⁸

60 The expression *wuli* is not specific to the *Liji* but this concept is; it probably reflects in part the school of Xunzi.⁵⁹

61 In the *Zuozhuan*, there are three mentions of *wuli* 無禮 that I shall briefly present to offer a contrast. The first one is in the tenth year of the Duke Zhuang (莊公十年); it is the first mention of the complete destruction and absorption of a territory by another:

齊侯之出也，過譚，譚不禮焉，及其入也，諸侯皆賀，譚又不至，冬，齊師滅譚，譚無禮也。

When the lord of the State of Qi fled [his state], he came to the territory of Tan, [and the lord of] Tan did not treat him well; when he entered [this territory again], the lords congratulated him but not the lord of Tan who did not come; in winter, the army of Qi destroyed Tan, because Tan did not behave properly.⁶⁰

62 What we have translated by “Tan did not behave properly” is in fact, literally, “Tan did not have ritual.” The second anecdote is mentioned in the 27th year of the Duke Xi (僖公二十七年):

二十七年，春，杞桓公來朝，用夷禮，故日子，公卑杞，杞不共也。[] 秋，入杞，責無禮也。

On the 27th year of the Duke Xi, the Duke Huan of Qi came for a state visit. He made use of the rites of the Yi (barbarians), that is why (the Annals only give him) the title of zi (nobility title inferior to duke), the duke of Lu despised Qi because of its lack of respect. [...] In autumn, (we, that is to say Lu) invaded Qi, reproaching them their lack of (proper) ritual.⁶¹

63 The third one is found in the 19th year of the Duke Xiang (襄公十九年)

且夫大伐小，取其所得以作彝器，銘其功烈，以示子孫，昭明德而懲無禮也。

When a great [state] attacks a small one, it takes the booty to make bronze vessels, inscribed with its glorious deeds, in order to show its descendants, how manifest was its own brilliant virtue and how it had punished [those] who did not have (proper) ritual (rules).⁶²

64 In all those instances, the expression *wuli* (*ye*) 無禮 (也) is linked with the destruction of states, interpreted as a punishment for disrespecting the ritual rules. While it can be interpreted in a very cynical way, the fact is that the pretext for invasion is deemed to be a ritual offence. Of course, it might also be an editorial tool used by the redactors, but it seems to have been more than a trope in the political rhetoric of the times.

Conclusion

- 65 The *Liji* compendium offers a variety of texts, some rather descriptive, other commentarial. All those passages, heterogeneous in nature and representative of several layers of historical accretions, constitute a synthetic understanding of what ritual stood for. If we go back to two of the main uses of ritual, that is to say the prescriptive and the proscriptive, the mention of ritual impropriety allows one to see at work how those uses are deployed in the editorial process. Many elements yielded by the two expressions *feili ye* and *wuli (ye)* remain to be studied, but this preliminary research has shown that they function as useful signposts. They stand either as a *posteriori* judgements on ritual matters or as mentions of rituals otherwise not known.
- 66 The heuristic value of those expressions has at least been emphasised. In future research, I will explore other, non-ritual, pre-Han texts. I have already begun to work on the *Zuozhuan*, where the expression 非禮也 is present in abundance: 52 occurrences in 44 passages. All those passages should be analysed in detail in order to acquire a finer understanding of the “life” of ritual concepts in ancient China.⁶³ Indeed, there is as much information to gain from ritual improprieties as from descriptions of them: ritual mishaps constitute, in a manner, a roadmap to historical changes and contradictions in the ancient Chinese societies.

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FOOTNOTES

1. This definition might be derived from the *Liji* 禮記, chapter “Jiyi” 祭義 (ed. of the *Shisanjing zhushu* 1983 noted below as SZ) where this passage (a definition of filial piety) associates *li* and *lü*: 禮者, 履此者也. “The ritual, it is its deployment.”

2. SZ. 3. 18.
3. Cf. Liu 2010.
4. SZ. 49.374, translation James Legge (modified) (Legge 1885, Part IV, 236).
5. *Zuo zhuan*, Duke Zhao 昭公 26th year, SZ 52. 413.
6. Ma 2017.
7. On this topic, see Venture 2002, 225-227 on the Shang oracular inscriptions and some of their ritual characteristics.
8. Ritual texts retained nonetheless some characteristics of those two ancient media of writing, as noticed by Nylan 2001, 51.
9. Falkenhausen 2011, 269.
10. Cf. Meyer 2014.
11. In later times, ritual notions became a source of literary and cultural metaphors. See for example Jullien 1991, 2-37 on the metaphors of blandness developed from a sacrificial dish, the great soup.
12. SZ. 26. 229.
13. Eliade 1993, 549.
14. Cf. Nylan 2005, 9-10.
15. See Nylan 2005, 8. The cultural memory was constructed in part as an attempt to provide the “correct” meaning of ritual through commentaries.
16. Nylan 2005 wrote on the historical evolution leading to what she calls a “public display culture” (23-24, 26).
17. Biographies of Liu Jing and Shusun Tong 劉敬叔孫通列傳 in *Shiji* 1985, 99. 2722-2723. We have also consulted Wang 2001, and Nylan 2001, 176.
18. Cf. Sterckx 2008, 856-857.
19. For the most famous of those texts, the treaty of alliance of Houma 侯馬盟書, see Poo 2008. Williams 2013 proposes to date those covenants between 442 and 424 B.C.
20. *Zuo zhuan*, fifteen year of the Duke Ding 定公, SZ 56.450, translation by James Legge (modified). See Legge 1994, 791.
21. *Shiji* 1985 (part “十二諸侯年表”, 14. 551) has: 公觀魚于棠, 君子譏之 “(the fifth year, the duke went to look at the fishes in Tang. The gentleman faulted [him] for that.”
22. Fifth year of the Duke Yin 隱公五年: SZ, 3.24-25, translation taken from Legge 1994, 19. According to Paul Goldin, the text of the *Zuo zhuan* dates from the fourth century BC. Cf. Goldin 2010.
23. On this point, see Boileau 2013, chapter II, 109.
24. Cf. Nylan 2001, 174.
25. Cf. Baker 2006, 149-168.
26. Cf. Huang 2009, 21-54 & 404-406 for the “Ziyi” chapter, 428-436.
27. The composition of the *Shangshu* is notoriously difficult to trace. Some chapters were transmitted in the reformed characters post-Qin (they are called the *jinwen* chapters, chapters in “new characters”), some others were transmitted in older forms (hence the name *guwen*, chapter in “old characters”). On this topic see Cheng 2008, 2-22.
28. Cf. Jingmenshi bowuguan 1998. Voir également Ma 2004, 177; Jingmenshi bowuguan 1998, 129, 132, n. 14-15.
29. SZ. 49.377, translation Legge 1885, Part IV, 247.
30. The dates of reign of this king are given according to Shaughnessy 1991, xix.
31. “Yihou Ze gui” 宜侯矢簋 in Ma 1988, 34.
32. Cf. Chen 1986, 101-130.
33. Falkenhausen 2011.
34. SZ. 37. 300, translation from Legge 1885, Part IV, 94.
35. SZ. 25.219, Legge 1885, Part III, 420.

36. Of note is a mention in the “Liqi” 禮器 chapter, mentioning several details on sacrifices, interpreted in moral terms.
37. The royal (and imperial) sacrifices to Heaven and their historical transformations have been studied by Bujard 2000. While the author casts doubt on the existence of such sacrifices before the Han, it is still a useful introduction to the topic.
38. Literally: “bare their chest.”
39. SZ, 47. 366, translation (modified) by Legge 1885, Part IV, 217–218.
40. SZ. 24.211, Legge 1885, Part III, 407.
41. SZ. 1.03, Legge 1885, Part III, 65.
42. SZ. 1.05, Legge 1885, Part III, 67.
43. SZ., Legge 1885, Part III, 181–182. There are two other mentions in the same “Tangong b” chapter with pseudo-historical anecdotes aimed at discouraging the practice of “followers” in tombs, that is to say persons sacrificed to accompany the defunct.
44. 孔子謂爲芻靈者，善爲俑者不仁。不殆於用人乎哉？“Confucius said that the making of the straw figures was good, and that the making of the (wooden) automaton was not benevolent. Was there not a danger of its leading to the use of (living) men?”
45. SZ. 10.82, Legge 1885, Part III, 183–184.
46. SZ, 10. 84., Legge 1885, Part III, 186–187. This episode is also mentioned in the *Zuozhuan*, 29th year of the Duke Xiang 襄公, SZ, 39. 302–303.
47. On this point, see Boileau 2013, 47, 263.
48. SZ. 18.161, Legge 1885, Part III, 314.
49. SZ. 18. 163, translation Legge 1885, Part IV, 317–318. There are two other passages in the same chapter containing criticisms of impropriety during –or linked to– funerals.
50. SZ. 21. 189, translation (modified) from Legge 1885, Part III, 372.
51. SZ. 21. 189–190, translation (modified) from Legge 1885, Part III, 374.
52. SZ. 21. 190, translation Legge 1885, Part III, 374–375.
53. On this point, Pines 2002 is particularly useful.
54. SZ. 25. 219, translation Legge 1885, Part III, 420–421.
55. SZ. 25.219, translation Legge 1885, Part III, 421. Those Three Huan 三桓 were sons of the father of the Duke Zhuang of Lu 魯莊公, Duke Huan 魯桓公, and their clans displaced the legitimate power of the duke during the following period.
56. This is a quote from the Ode “Xiangshu” 相鼠 (Odes of the countries, style of Yong 國風 鄘風), SZ 3-2, 51. Qu Wanli 屈萬里 dates those odes from the Spring and Autumn period (*Shijing shiyi* 1961, 49-50).
57. SZ. 21.186-187, translation Legge 1885, Part III, 367.
58. Ritual, and particularly sacrifice, has been regarded in the Warring States period as such a mentor. We have studied this question in detail in Boileau 2013.
59. There is another passage in the “Quli b” chapter which does not quote from the Mao Shi, but is equally apt to illustrate the same concept.
60. SZ. 8.65.
61. SZ. 16.120.
62. SZ. 34.266.
63. The two other primary commentaries of the *Chunqiu* (the annals of Lu) also have numerous mentions of the expression *feili ye*. For the *Gongyangzhuan* 公羊傳, there are 30 occurrences; for the *Guliangzhuan* 春秋穀梁傳, only 14 occurrences.

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Ritual practices in ancient China

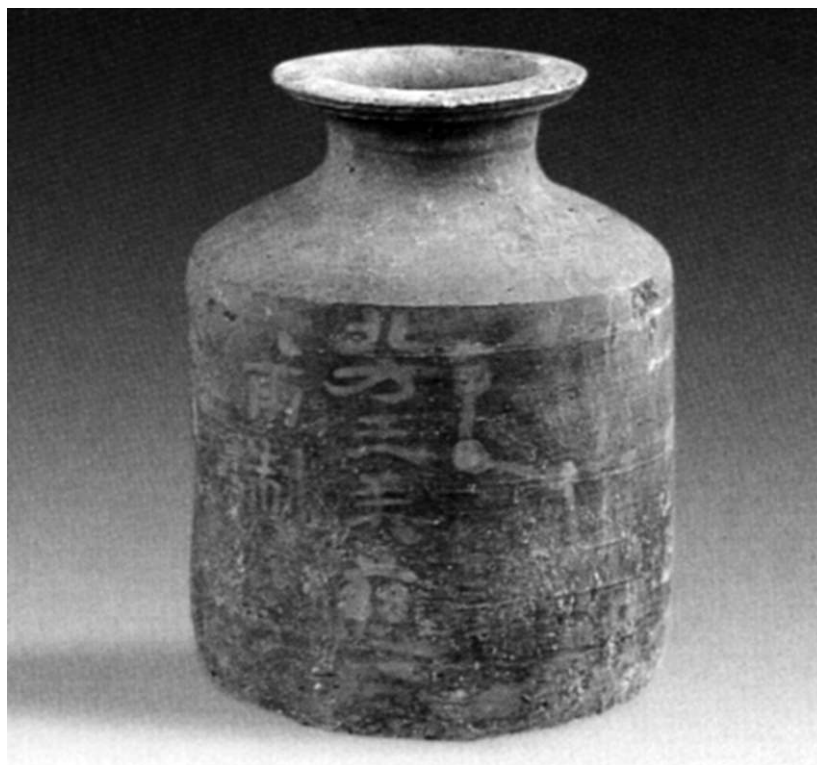
Let the dead bury their dead: the confinement of the tomb in the Eastern Han Period¹

Marianne Bujard

Translated by Alice Crowther

- 1 Fear and respect characterise the attitude of the ancient Chinese towards death. Literary sources as well as excavated documents provide many examples of the contradictory behaviours prescribed when dealing with the dead. In his time, Marcel Granet (1884–1940) studied the various recommendations that can be found in the chapters devoted to mourning in the Ritual Treatises (above all the *Liji*).² This article aims to show that an ambiguous attitude towards death also emerges from the archaeological artefacts discovered in the past and in more recent times. Two different kinds of texts will be examined. The first kind consists of two stories of resurrected men. One is about a man named Dan 丹 who was restored to life three years after his death and made recommendations about the proper way to treat the dead.³ The other is about another resurrected man who was sent to Xianyang 咸陽 in Shaanxi and gave similar advice to the living. Dan's account is written on six bamboo slips that were discovered in the grave of a local Qin official who died in the second half of the third century BC. The second account is written on a wooden tablet which belongs to the looted manuscripts bought by Peking University; it has no precise date, but two calendars from the same series of manuscripts bear the dates of 216 and 214 BC.⁴ Professor Li Ling dates the tablet to the Qin dynasty (221–206).⁵
- 2 The second kind of text is written on a very different material: dozens of terracotta jars or bottles discovered during the 20th century in tombs of medium-sized or modest dimensions.⁶ Most of them were found around the former capital cities of Chang'an (Xi'an) and Luoyang, in tombs dated 60 to 193 AD. (Fig. 1)

Fig. 1



One of the five apotropaic bottles found in the tomb M17 discovered in Sanmenxia cemetery, Henan; H: 15,8 cm
Reproduced from Wenwu, 2009, 3, p. 11

- 3 The inscriptions on these apotropaic objects refer to the growth of an underworld bureaucracy in charge of controlling the dead, as well as to various procedures to ward off curses. They are very similar to the *defixiones* curse tablets or to the magical papyri of the Greco-Roman culture.

The make-up of an ancestor

- 4 In his celebrated study on “The language of pain,” Marcel Granet develops a close analysis of the chapters dedicated to mourning in the Ritual Treatises. He shows that the two principal objectives of funeral rites were to ensure a definitive separation between the deceased and the living and to install the deceased in his new status as an ancestor. In the case of the death of a father, the transformation of the deceased into an ancestor coincides with the accession of his eldest son to the rank of head of the family and of the ancestral cult. This procedure demands the exercise of a frightening asceticism on the part of the eldest son. The future head of the family is bound, firstly, to imitate the condition of the deceased by mimicking a corpse: “[The practices] consist in a sort of participation in the state of the defunct, this participation implies an almost total exclusion from social life. Cast out from society, like the defunct himself, his close relatives submit to being quarantined.”⁷ The son, for whom mourning conditions are strictest, lives in a state of confinement, he is “shut up alone in his hut, like the defunct in his coffin.”⁸ He is even “obliged to have a dark complexion,”⁹ because “black is the colour of the North and of Winter, the direction and the season of death.”¹⁰

- 5 Why was the deceased to be imitated? Granet explains that the reclusion of those in mourning protects society from the pollution cast by the deceased on those close to him and that the imitation of the corpse functions according to a homeopathic principle. Illness is cured by illness, a real death by a feigned death. Yet, at the same time mourning is manifested through shouts, tears, leaps, and collective actions, which accompany the transformation of the deceased into an ancestor and act out his separation from the living. After all, the best way to protect oneself from the deceased is to transform him into an ancestor: “Through appropriate gestures carried out at the useful times, the deceased, source of impurity, principle of ill ease, enfeeblement and exclusion, will be transformed, thanks to the collective effort of those close to him, into an ancestor, tutelary power, title of nobility, principle of confidence and radiance.”¹¹
- 6 The recommendations given by the Ritual Treatises for the transformation of the deceased into an ancestor are valid when he has peacefully departed a sort of ideal world where patriarchal order reigns supported by the rules of precedence and filial piety. But what of cases in which the deceased was the victim of a violent death, cut off in the flower of life, or carried off by an unjust fate?

How to transform a tragic death (*malemort*) into a good death (*bonne mort*)?

- 7 The account of the resurrection of a certain Dan 丹 gives us some answers. The manuscript that recounts his adventure was discovered in 1986 in a tomb dated to 239 BC from Fangmatan 放馬灘 cemetery, near the town of Tianshui in Gansu Province, in North-West China.¹² The tomb was of medium size, consisting of a vertical pit with a wooden tomb chamber at the bottom. The manuscripts (A and B) “were placed inside the coffin at the east end by the head of the deceased along with a writing brush in its case”,¹³ the six bamboo slips (23 cm long) concerning the resurrection belong to the end of the B manuscript.¹⁴ According to the quantity and the quality of the burial goods, and to the content of the various manuscripts, the excavators assume that the occupant of the tomb was a local official of the Qin administration.
- 8 Although the Ritual Treatises provided all the details, Granet needed to explain why the living imitated the dead, the Fangmatan text enlightens us as to the second stage of the funeral rites, *i.e.*, the way in which the deceased became an ancestor or, in a more prudent interpretation of the narrative, as to how to transform a bad defunct, a *malemort* into a good defunct, that is to say a defunct capable of acceding to the status of ancestor.
- 9 Whereas the transformation of a mourner into a corpse rests entirely on a carefully dosed asceticism that respects moral and social behavioural norms, the Fangmatan metamorphosis introduces a new underworld authority in the form of a bureaucracy of the dead. The Ritual Treatises do not speak of this authority. This is a first innovation unearthed in the funerary practices preserved in texts originating from archaeological discoveries.
- 10 In the Fangmatan narrative, this underworld administration is still sparsely populated. It consists of two figures, the Director of the Life-Mandate, the Siming 司命, and his secretary, the Scribe of the Director of the Life-Mandate (the *Siming shi* 司命史). The former is only implied because of the existence of the latter; he does not intervene in

the narrative. In the Ritual Treatises received through history, the Director of the Life-Mandate belongs to the domestic pantheons of the king and the feudal princes.¹⁵ Nothing indicates that the Director of the Life-Mandate is at the centre of an underworld administration. It would even seem to be to the contrary, since he is presented as one of the sublunary powers who regulate the ordinary life of mankind.

- 11 Let us look at the path of the Fangmattan resurrectee. His story holds in three sentences: a man whose name is Dan 丹 is executed; after spending three years underground, he is restored to life thanks to the intervention of his former employer with the underworld administration; and, thanks to this experience, he expounds the right way to honour the dead.
- 12 Dan is a *malemort* in several respects: he is the victim of an injustice (and is therefore filled with bitterness and can only search revenge from the living). He committed suicide by cutting his throat and is therefore one of those dead by means of a weapon, and we know from another manuscript –*Jiudian chujian rishu* 九店楚簡日書, c. 300 BC– that these dead are so dangerous that the god Wuyi (*Wuyi jun* 武夷君) was specially appointed to take care of them.¹⁶ Finally, his corpse was exposed at the market place (which signifies that, having been tortured, he is an avenging spirit endowed with full power) before being buried outside the South Gate (thus a relegated defunct who has not found a place in the family cemetery).
- 13 After three years underground, Dan returns to life thanks to an administrative procedure that his former employer engages with the Scribe of the Director of the Life-Mandate, Gongsun Qiang 公孫強 († 487 BC), who may be identified as a historical personage, *malemort* too, who had caused the ruin of the state of Cao 曹國 two centuries earlier.¹⁷ When the claim that Dan should not have died so soon is submitted to him, the Scribe of the Director of the Life-Mandate immediately sends “a white dog” to dig up Dan’s tomb and free him.
- 14 Afterwards, Dan remains standing on his tomb for three days. Three days is exactly the period prescribed by the Ritual Treatises between death and the encoffining ceremony (*Da lian* 大斂). Dan then commences his reconversion from dead to living under the direction of the Scribe of the Director of the Life-Mandate who takes on the role of a psychopomp. This transformation takes place in the north, which, as Granet reminds us, is the abode of the dead. The north is also the direction towards which the soul of the dead is called back.¹⁸ It happens in a place called Boqiu 柏丘, literally “cypress [*Thuja*] mound.” This toponym must almost certainly be interpreted as a way of designating a cemetery since traditionally, and still today, grave mounds are surrounded by cypresses. The cypress is regarded as a demon-repulsing tree.
- 15 Dan thus enters a place intended to house the dead, in contrast to his first burial place which had been a relegation “to the south of the outer gate.” After four years, he is able “to hear the crowing of roosters and the barking of dogs and to eat like the living.” He still retains traces of his stay among the dead: a scar on his neck, thinned eyebrows, an inky complexion, and stiff limbs. Here we recognise the dark complexion evoked by Granet to describe the man in mourning imitating the corpse.
- 16 But Dan has regained the essential: hearing and taste. Can we go so far as to conjecture that, thanks to the first, Dan will hear the prayers and lamentations that his new status of *bon mort* entitles him to, and that, having regained the sense of taste, he will be able to appreciate the offerings made to him? The remainder of the narrative allows this

conclusion since it discusses the appropriate way of conducting the cult to the dead, and the right way to sacrifice to them without frightening them –that is by weeping– and to nourish them in accordance with their tastes.

- 17 In order to discuss the recommendations given by the resurrectee to the living, let us look at the narrative of the other man who returned to life three years after he died (Fig. 2). His recommendations parallel (sometimes contradict) those given by Dan. Below is my translation of “The man who died in Taiyuan”:

秦原有死者，三歲而復產，獻之咸陽，言曰：

A man who died in Taiyuan was restored to life three years later. He was sent to Xianyang where he made the following statement:

「死人之所惡，解/予死人衣，必令產見之，弗產見，鬼輒奪而入之少內。

“The dead do not like to have clothes given to them torn; it is necessary to have [the clothes] seen by the dead when still alive.¹⁹ If they have not seen them, the ghosts will immediately take them away and deposit them in the Lesser Treasury.

死/人所貴黃圈，黃圈以當金，黍粟以當錢，白菅以當繇。

The dead like golden sprouts. Golden sprouts substitute for gold, tassel millet substitutes for metal coins; white woolly-grass substitutes for silk.²⁰

女子死三/歲而復嫁，後有死者，勿并其冢。

A young woman has died and after three years is married again, when there is another death (*i.e.*, her previous husband), do not place his grave next to her grave.²¹

祭死人之冢，勿哭。須其已食/乃哭之，不須其已食而哭之，鬼輒奪而入之廚。

When you make offerings at the tombs of the dead, do not weep. Wait until the dead have eaten and weep only afterwards. If you do not wait until the dead have eaten before weeping, the ghosts will immediately seize [the offerings] and bring them to the Kitchen.

祠，毋以酒與/羹沃祭，而沃祭前。

When you sacrifice, do not pour any liquor and broth on the offerings, but pour it before making the offerings.

收死人，勿束縛。毋決其履，毋毀其器。/令如其產之卧殿，令其[1]²² (魄)不得蒼(落)思。」

When you lay out the dead, do not tie him with ropes, do not damage his shoes, do not break his burial goods. Ensure that he lies in the same position he lay in when alive; ensure that his soul *po* does not leave [his body].”

黃圈者，大叔(菽)/殿，[1](斲)去其皮，置於土中，以為黃金之勉。

The golden sprouts are soya beans; peel their skin, place them in the soil to stand as gold coins.

Fig. 2



The Taiyuan tablet; H: 23 cm; L: 4,7 cm
Reproduced from Wenwu, 2012, 6, p.71

- 18 Here is not the place to conduct a philological analysis of the two accounts. Suffice it to say that in the narrative concerning the resurrection of Dan, the word ghost (*gui* 鬼) refers to the dead, while in the Taiyuan story, it designates employees of the underworld administration, the dead being called *sizhe* 死者 or *siren* 死人. It is possible to speculate that in the second story the subterranean bureaucracy has developed enough to fully mirror its terrestrial model, including its corrupt practices to increase the wealth of the Underworld Treasury! It is also worth noting that in Dan's story, the recommendations are more helpful to the *malemorts* (*gui*) like him, while those given by the Taiyuan resurrectee are intended for the regular dead (*siren*, *sizhe*), hence the discrepancies between the tastes and the wishes of the two kinds of dead.

A comparison with the *Yili* and other sources

- 19 Similarly to the record of the resurrectee, the Ritual Treatises, notably the *Yili* 儀禮, provide precise procedures to follow when burying a gentleman and explain what kind of offerings to make on his tomb. Several chapters of the *Yili* are devoted to the various “mourning garments” worn by the mourners according to their relation to the dead²³ but also to the “clothes for the dressing of the corpse” and the “funeral offerings.” Further research is necessary to compare term by term the items and gestures mentioned in the manuscripts and in the ritual treatises. Here I shall limit myself to the clothing of the dead, weeping on the tomb, the taste for various kinds of seeds, and the treatment of the burial goods. Ideally, the comparison should include three sources: the ritual treatises, the manuscripts and the archaeological data. This is not always possible. Let us look first at the clothing.

- 20 The recommendation for the clothing of the dead expresses the fear that his clothes may be damaged or torn, and that the dead may be dispossessed of them. The Ritual Treatises prescribe numerous rules for the dressing of the dead. These organise two grand moments: the Lesser Dressing and the Greater Dressing. The first happens after the corpse has been washed, the second before it is placed in the coffin. In both cases, extremely precise instructions regulate the number and type of clothes that are appropriate, how they should be disposed before the dead is dressed in them and the order in which they are to be put on. The first part of the warning –“The dead do not like to have their clothes torn”– can be linked to these recommendations; not term for term but to their general spirit. For example, in the chapter “Shi sang li” 士喪禮 of the *Yili*, there is a passage on the care to be taken when laying out the clothes of the dead before the “Greater Dressing.” It reads as follows:

厥明，滅燎，陳衣于房，南領，西上，綉。[]凡三十稱。紵不在算，不必盡用。

At early dawn the cresset is extinguished, and the clothes are laid out in the chamber, with their collars to the south, and graded from the west, folded (*zheng* 綉). [...] In all, thirty suits, the quilt not being included in the summation. Not all of these are necessarily used.²⁴

- 21 The tale of the resurrectee of Taiyuan no doubt refers to a defunct of more modest extraction who has been dressed in clothes that he himself chose while alive (“It is necessary to have [the clothes] seen by the living”) and not with the forty-nine suits that the Lesser Dressing (nineteen suits) and the Greater Dressing (thirty suits) prescribe for the burial of a gentleman.²⁵
- 22 The recommendation on the appropriate moment for tears (“When you make offerings at tombs of the dead, do not weep”) is echoed by similar injunctions in the Ritual Treatises. Too numerous to cite here, they enjoin the mourners when to weep and when to abstain from weeping. However, the Taiyuan manuscript refers more to the cult of the dead at their tomb side than to the funeral, and a comparison with the Han period manuscripts from Xuanquan 懸泉 is more relevant, as noted by Jiang Shoucheng.²⁶ Among the bamboo slips published by Hu Pingsheng and Zhang Defang in 2001 under the title “Daybook About Death” (*Rishu si* 日書 – 死), we read several similar recommendations on tomb side weeping. These are primarily calendrical taboos:

辰死者，不幸。[]以死者，不出三年有五喪。勿以哭泣，以哭泣，不出三月復哭。

To die on a *chen* 辰 day is unlucky.²⁷ If the death takes place on such a day, in less than three years there will be five mournings. Do not weep. If you weep, you will weep again in less than three months.

夏三月寅，不可以哭泣，不出三月復哭。

In the three months of Summer do not weep on the days which contain the earthly branch *yin* 寅. (If not), you will weep again in less than three months.

²⁸

- 23 And a more general recommendation:

其死者，毋持刀刃上冢，死人不敢近也。上冢，不欲哭，哭者，死人不欲食，去。

As for the dead, do not hold a sharp knife when you go to the tomb, the dead will not dare to approach. When you approach the tomb, do not weep. If you weep, the dead will not dare to eat and will go away. [...] ²⁹

- 24 What is articulated in the *Yili* in terms of ritual norms translates in “practical texts” as calendrical taboos, but the preoccupation is the same: to determine the favourable moment and the appropriate way to interact with the dead in order to participate in exchanges with them that are profitable and without danger.
- 25 The recommendation about the value that the dead attach to several sorts of cereals implicitly refers to the underworld treasury.³⁰ It was indeed necessary to make sure that the dead had capital in the form of gold, silver and silk so that they would be able to pay for their purchases in the other world and live there at ease. This precaution is expressed numerous times in the apotropaic inscriptions discussed below. One of the best-known examples is the jar of Zhang Shujing 張叔敬 discovered in Shanxi in 1935. Its inscription unequivocally shows the monetary value of soya sprouts and other grains and their seeds, and their final destination: the Underworld Treasury. “Soya beans and melon seeds are used by the dead to pay taxes in the Underworld” (黃豆瓜子, 死人持給地下賦).³¹ The Taiyuan tablet also explains how to get things cheaply when paying in gold pieces in the underworld: “The golden sprouts are soya beans; peel their skin, place them in the soil to stand as gold coins.” Similar recipes for this sort of substitution can be found in the Zhoujiaitai manuscripts, for example when the offering of “a black cow” may be easily replaced by a “head louse.”³²
- 26 As for white woolly grass (*baimao* 白茅 or *baijian* 白菅), the Fangmatan resurrector also regards it as precious: “The dead think that white woolly grass is fortunate” (死人以白茅為富). There is a still more ancient example of the deposit of white woolly grass in a tomb: tomb n°. 1 of Mashan 馬山, near Jiangling 江陵, in Hubei Province. White woolly grass was placed on the lid of a large round basket, and inside several small and medium rectangular covered baskets, sometimes as part of a layer on the bottom of the basket which also contained animal bones or everyday objects, sometimes alone or with fragments of silk.³³ This deposition of silk consisted in 452 silk fragments, all of different sizes (largest 11.2 x 5.8 cm; smallest 1.4 x 0.8 cm), some brocade (*jin* 錦), some gauze (*sha* 紗), some raw silk (*juan* 絹), embroidered or not.³⁴ The authors of the excavation report consider that, as in Mawangdui 馬王堆 Tomb n°. 1 and in Tomb 167 of Fenghuangshan 鳳凰山, these pieces of fabric represent a monetary treasure.³⁵ In the Fenghuangshan tomb, from the Han period, three inventory slips confer a fictive monetary value on the contents of two purses and a basket. On slips 54 and 56 we find written, respectively, “an embroidered purse containing 8,000 gold pieces” (繡囊一盛八千金) and “an embroidered raw silk purse containing 19,000 gold pieces” (素綉囊一盛萬九千金), and on slip 57 “a basket of silks, inside of which silk pieces worth 20 million” (繪筥合中繪直(值)二千萬).³⁶ The archaeologists have not identified what among the burial goods correspond to the two purses. On the other hand, they have linked the statement on slip 57 to a bamboo basket tightly packed with 35 rolls of silk (fictively worth 20 million), rods to calculate with, a writing brush, a knife, tablets to write on, pieces of money, and needles in a box.³⁷
- 27 The recommendations on the manner of positioning the deceased’s corpse and on his ritual goods reflect all the ambiguity of the behaviour towards the dead that is required. When the man who died in Taiyuan declares: “When you lay out the dead, do not tie him with ropes, do not damage his shoes, do not break his burial goods. Ensure that he lies in the same position he lay in when alive; ensure that his soul *po* 魄 does not leave [his body]”, he is referring to practices that he wishes to denounce, and this gives an insight into the possible divergences of funerary practices from the ritual norm.

This norm seeks to preserve the life of the deceased by allowing him to rest in his tomb as he rested, when alive, on his bed. But to act to the contrary of this is precisely to protect against the deceased's return among the living –bound by ropes and without shoes, he is unable to leave the tomb, whilst his broken everyday objects prevent him from using them normally; with his body in a mortuary position and his soul departed, he is still further from life.

- 28 Here the archaeological evidence offers further points of comparison. The particular positioning of corpses in certain Qin tombs –legs bent and knees tucked in³⁸– is not that of the ordinary rest of the living (“the same position he lay in when alive”). Moreover, to maintain this position, the legs of the deceased were no doubt bound with ropes, another practice disapproved of by the Taiyuan resurrectee: “When you lay out the dead, do not tie him with ropes.” One also thinks of the corpse of the Mashan tomb, dressed in several layers of sumptuous clothes but bound from head to toe with nine brocade ties,³⁹ or of the corpse of the Marchioness Dai 韞 of Mawangdui, similarly trussed.⁴⁰
- 29 Over time the deposition in the tomb of *mingqi* 明器, objects of substitution or replicas, gradually tended towards the creation around the deceased of a material environment similar to that which he enjoyed in his lifetime. Under the Qin and the Western Han, *mingqi* were mainly ritual vases and, in Qin custom, cooking stoves, as well as some quotidian objects. From the first century AD, real substitutions of animals, buildings, furniture and familiar objects began to be made. In reality, however, these objects were often unusable, being only imitations, of better or worse quality.⁴¹ The *locus classicus* on the subject is to be found in *The Book of Rites*:

孔子曰：之死而致死之，不仁而不可為也；之死而致生之，不知而不可為也。是故竹不成用，瓦不成味，木不成斫，琴瑟張而不平，竽笙備而不和，有鐘磬而無簠簋，其曰明器，神明之也。

Confucius said: “In dealing with the dead, if we treat them as if they were entirely dead, that would show a want of affection, and should not be done; or, if we treat them as if they were entirely alive, that would show a want of wisdom, and should not be done. On this account the vessels of bamboo (used in connection with the burial of the dead) are not fit for actual use; those of earthenware cannot be used to wash in; those of wood are incapable of being carved; the lutes are strung, but not evenly; the pandean pipes are complete, but not in tune; the bells and musical stones are there, but they have no stands. They are called vessels to the eye of fancy; that is, (the dead) are thus treated as if they were spiritual intelligences.”⁴²

- 30 The intentional breaking of funerary goods is treated in Ma Liqing's 馬利清 study of Qin mirrors. She sets out to demonstrate that, contrary to popular opinion, these objects are not broken because they were poorly made but that, in Qin tombs, they were intentionally broken.⁴³ On the basis of a wide-ranging study of burial goods from the end of the Warring States period up to the beginning of the Han, she notes that more than eighty percent of Qin-made mirrors are broken. More interestingly still, she shows that in tombs of the Guanzhong 關中 region, the area of influence of Qin, mirrors of non-Qin provenance are also broken, whereas in the south of the Empire no mirror, whether made in Qin or elsewhere, is damaged. The Henan area offers an intermediary situation with as many intact as broken mirrors. The mirror discovered in the well-known tomb of a local official in the Qin administration at Shuihudi 睡虎地在 Hubei was not damaged. Nevertheless, other aspects of the burial were partly those of

Qin (legs bent, manuscripts deposited in the coffin near to the deceased, etc.).⁴⁴ From this, Ma Liqing concludes that the Qin custom of broken mirrors did not diffuse beyond its zone of origin unless later to the Xiongnu and Xianbei. If the recommendation “do not break his burial goods” of the Taiyuan resurrectee holds true for mirrors, we could read it as the desire of someone originating from a southern region, where the breaking of mirrors was not practised, to oppose a practice in vogue in Xianyang, where he delivered his recommendations.⁴⁵ This is, of course, only a hypothesis, the archaeological context of the tablet not being known.

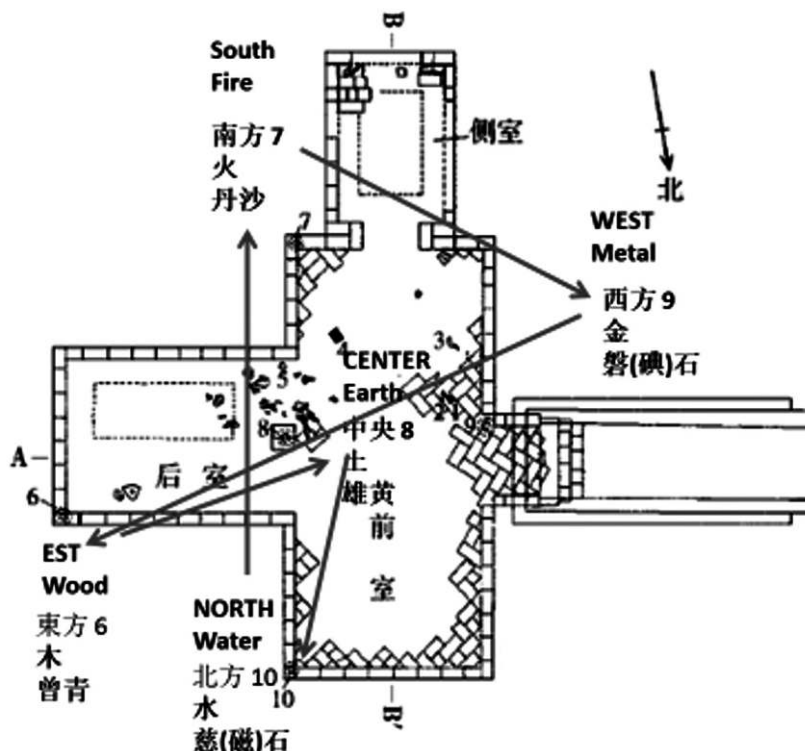
- 31 Let us now look at the apotropaic pottery. We are aware of the jump several centuries forward that this parallel presupposes. Although the Taiyuan manuscript is not dated, that of Fangmatan would appear to be from the second half of the 3rd century BC, while the first apotropaic jars are from no earlier than the first century AD. However, on the one hand, older documents mark the process of the formation of concepts about the afterlife, and, as we have seen with the Xuanquan slips, a certain continuity exists in ritual prescriptions. While not furnishing firm proof, these elements permit the comparison. We are also aware that the materials compared are of a different nature. On the one hand, funerary inscriptions inserted into a literary text, composed on bamboo or wooden supports, and belonging to an assemblage of manuscripts carried into the other world by a local official (at least in the case of the Fangmatan resurrectee); on the other, inscriptions placed on objects with an apotropaic value, no doubt composed by exorcists called in by families to protect them from their dead. However, these documents all express a double and contradictory necessity: to guarantee the comfort of the dead and to seal their irrevocable seclusion, and their comparison throws light on the progressive formation of an underworld bureaucracy.

The Dark Underground Abode, the Blue Sky Above

- 32 The recommendations of the Ritual Treatises come to a stop, in a way, at the entrance to the tomb. They aim above all to regulate, down to the smallest details, the conduct of individuals who are in mourning and to stipulate the behaviour of their friends and acquaintances so that society can recover the balance disrupted by death –Durkheim is not far off. If the two accounts of the resurrectee give supplementary information about the preferences of the dead during their stay in the netherworld, the terracotta jars set inside the graves provide more details on the other side, the hidden face –one might say the life of the dead, or at least their life as imagined by the living. In particular these objects offer a considerable development of an organism only referred to summarily in the resurrection accounts: the underworld administration modelled on the worldly administration.
- 33 Before looking at the apotropaic pottery in more detail, it is necessary to recall that both their presence in tombs and their function are intimately linked to the change in burial method that took place between the second century BC and the first century AD. ⁴⁶ Once placed at the bottom of vertical pits intended to never be reopened, the dead now came to rest in tombs organised horizontally. From this it became possible to reopen the tomb at different moments and to place other coffins into it. It is in this context, and because of the pollution brought about by contact with the dead when the tomb was reopened, that vases were placed in at least certain tombs, with a prophylactic intent.

- 34 We have previously mentioned the Scribe of the Director of the Life-Mandate (Siming shi) who has no counterpart in the ritual treatises. There is also the “Lesser Treasury” (*Shaonei* 少内) to which the demons carry off both the clothes of the deceased if he had not already viewed them whilst alive, and the offerings made to the dead when tears have inauspiciously escaped from the mourners.⁴⁷ Already in the 2nd century BC a vice-prefect in the local administration (*Jiangling cheng* 江陵丞) informed a “Vice-Prefect of the Underworld” (*Dixia cheng* 地下丞) of the arrival of a defunct and of the goods he was bringing with him.⁴⁸ A century later it is to the Lord of the Earth (*Tuzhu* 土主) that an official announces the arrival of a convict labourer from his jurisdiction.”⁴⁹ Archaeology attests that *post-mortem* life was strictly controlled as soon as the first century AD. Not only did an underworld administration, as formidable as that for the living, register and watch over the dead but exorcistic procedures and spatial dispositions based on the theory of correlative cosmology transformed the tomb into an enclosed world.
- 35 The most informative materials for this subject are the dozens of terracotta jars or bottles discovered during the twentieth century in tombs of average or modest dimensions. These pottery vessels, most often designated by the name *zhenmuping* 鎮墓瓶 “tomb-securing jars” or *jiezhuping* 解注瓶 “tomb-purifying or -exorcising bottles,” are small containers 15–20 cm high. On the body of the jars are short inscriptions. Their length ranges from less than 10 to, at the longest, 200-odd characters. On a dozen of these jars the inscription is accompanied by a *fu* 符 talisman of unclear meaning. The majority of the 230 jars –of which 91 bear an inscription– were discovered in the area of the former capitals Chang’an (Xi’an) and Luoyang in tombs dating from between AD 60 and AD 193. A few contained crystals from various metals (*shenyao* 神藥, *wushi* 五石) and, inside or alongside, lead figurines identified by the inscription as funerary servants (in the manner of the Egyptian *oushebt* funerary figurines). We must, of course, keep in mind that these are a small number of objects found in a limited geographical region and over a period of a century and a half. Regardless, the spirit which presides over their use is, I believe, more generally present.
- 36 When the grave goods have not been too disturbed by looters (who, fortunately, are not very interested in these crude pottery containers) we frequently find that the bottles are placed at the tomb’s entrance and, in a few exemplary cases, at the four cardinal points and in the centre of the pit. The apotropaic power of these objects lies not only in their inscriptions but also in the place they occupy in the pit. This is the case for the tomb M17 discovered in Sanmenxia 三門峽 cemetery, in Henan, in 1998 which belonged to a powerful lineage dating from the end of the Eastern Han.⁵⁰ By placing beneath the paving of the tomb, at the four cardinal points and in the centre, recipients filled with *materia medica* of the colour corresponding to their position (each cardinal direction, as well as the centre, corresponds to a different colour);⁵¹ by tracing inscriptions on the bottles that indicate the portion of space which they are protecting and the quinary divinity that presides over it; and by placing these divinities under the patronage of the Big Dipper, Beidou 北斗, a higher celestial power who is depicted on each of the bottles, the tomb is made into a completely controlled place (Fig. 3).

Fig. 3



Fire (South) overcomes metal; metal (West) overcomes wood; wood (East) overcomes Earth; Earth (Centre) overcomes water; water (North) overcomes Fire. The disposition for securing the tomb by means of the system of the domination of elements (wuxing xiangsheng 五行相勝). Tomb M17 discovered in Sanmenxia cemetery, Henan.

- 37 This system seems capable of functioning by itself, with each bottle controlling through its position, its content, and its inscription, the portion of space that it dominates by virtue of the principles of correlative cosmology. But not all the jars and their inscriptions function on this model. There are other possible ways for the surviving to protect themselves from the return of their dead.
- 38 There is, firstly, according to the inscriptions of the apotropaic bottles, the date of the ritual. It has been carefully chosen for its hemerological efficacy and itself possesses an apotropaic force. This is generally followed by the evocation of an envoy (*shizhe* 使者) who acts as a messenger of a higher divinity –sometimes the Heavenly Emperor (*Tiandi* 天帝), or the Yellow God (*Huangshen* 黄神), or else the Yellow Emperor (*Huangdi* 黄帝). In this capacity he addresses, or even orders, the underworld powers. The action of this intermediary is similar to that of the interventions of the *fangxiangshi* 方相氏 exorcist known to us from the received texts. Whilst the *fangxiangshi* descends into the tomb to expel the monsters who devour the heads of corpses,⁵² the envoy of the apotropaic inscriptions has a variety of methods at his disposition. He may use his own skill and knowledge of the names of demons to perform an exorcism without passing by the administration and the infernal courts.⁵³ He may also use performative utterances. Often rhyming, these aim at delimiting the spaces occupied by, on one side, the dead – Mount Taishan, the tomb, the Dark Underground Abode (*dixia mangmang* 地下茫茫), and, on the other side, the living –the capital Chang’an, the house, the Blue Sky Above (*shangtian cangcang* 上天蒼蒼).

- 39 Performative utterances were also intended to liberate the deceased, the living, or the other occupants of the tomb from the harmful consequences of faults they had committed in the past. This process was often immediately followed by the expression of wishes for good fortune: abundant posterity, good fortune, and peace for the living. These wishes establish the relation of independence that will exist from then on between the living and the dead, with each one believing himself quits with regard to the other.
- 40 The comfort of the deceased is another preoccupation for the living, who mean to ensure that he does not return to haunt them. Substitutes in the form of lead figurines are put at his service in order to spare him from routine tasks and *corvées* in the afterlife. One inscription from AD 17 assures that, “These servants are most capable, they know how to husk rice and to cook, to drive a chariot and to wield a pen.” (鉛人池池, 能舂能炊, 上車能御, 把筆能書).⁵⁴ The deceased may also benefit from a permanent rent that protects him from want and reassures the other occupants of the tomb who might have worried about welcoming a potential supplicant: “As soon as the bottle arrives may all the dead be at peace, the clan chief [who arrives in the tomb] will himself enjoy a rent of 20 million pieces” (瓶到之後, 令母(每)人為安, 宗君自食地下租稅二千萬).⁵⁵
- 41 However, the exorcist alone cannot contain the harm that the dead could cause. In our corpus, on a bottle dating from 122, a Vice-Prefect of the Burial Mound (*Qiucheng* 丘丞) is presented as the parallel alter ego of the administrator of the capital (生人自屬長安, 死人自屬丘丞).⁵⁶ Two decades later (147), the underworld administration is composed of two distinct departments: one is in charge of the registers of the living and the dead, under the direction of the Director of the Life-Mandate (*Siming* 司命) and of a Director of Registers (*Silu* 司錄); the other, under the Prefect of Songshan (*Songgao zhang* 嵩高長)⁵⁷ assisted by Patrollers of the Paths (*Moshang youjiao* 陌上游徼), is in charge of watching over the souls of the dead and preventing them from leaving the realm of shadows.⁵⁸ After this the underworld administration and the pantheon in charge of the dead proliferate to the point of saturating the tomb with agents posted to particular spaces. Agents are posted to the top of the tomb, to the bottom, to the centre, to the left, and to the right of the tomb (墓上, 墓下, 中央, 墓左, 墓右).⁵⁹
- 42 Our corpus of inscriptions attests not only to a chronological complexification of the underworld pantheons, but also to the coexistence of several traditions of exorcism characterised by common points and borrowings. Certain practices are anchored in an intellectual cosmological tradition –the Five Agents, *yin* and *yang*– and act according to a performative mode whilst also having recourse to *materia medica*, or to funerary servants and treasures. In a later development, the exorcist proceeds via the intermediary of an administration which he addresses in the name of a higher divinity (Huangdi, Tiandi, Beidou) in order to command obedience. The final formula “act in accordance with the statutes and ordinances” (*ru liling* 如律令) adds a comminatory value to the procedure, which is borrowed from the bureaucratic order. The underworld administration comes, in a way, to interpose itself between the higher divinity and the exorcist.
- 43 As we saw in the narrative of Dan’s resurrection, the “bureaucratic metaphor” predates the imperial period. But in the first two centuries AD it fills out and becomes more complex to become a true mirror of the administration of the living. As for the underworld pantheon, two phenomena are discernible: as in the case of the Director of

the Life-Mandate, its members take on new tasks; as with the Vice-Prefect of the Burial Mound (*Qiucheng*), the Earl of the Tomb (*Mubo* 墓伯), the Guardian of the Soul Gate (*Hunmen tingzhang* 魂門亭長), and many others, a new pantheon not mentioned in the Treatises is created.

- 44 In conclusion, we can try to situate our examples in a wider context. Anyone at all familiar with *defixiones* or magical papyri will be struck by the similarities between the apotropaic rituals and healing rites of the ancient Chinese world and those of Greco-Roman Antiquity.⁶⁰ We find the same attention paid to specific gestures and postures, the use of *materia medica*, the care taken in the choice of a favourable moment and place. It would not be useful to search for influences or contaminations. Yet, it is evident that the relationship between what we will call, for sake of simplicity, “magical practices,” and the religious practices prescribed by the Ritual Treatises is comparable to that between magical practices and public cult in the Greco-Roman world. Indeed, the first is private, secret and searches for personal benefit; the second is collective, public and aims at the common good. A term-by-term comparison would be meaningless because the social, political and religious contexts are so very different (in Ancient China, we find neither city-state nor citizen but Empire and subjects). But rather than envisaging magical practices as belonging to the popular classes or to certain set-apart categories of individuals, or else as customs particular to a region or period or even to a particular church, it would be better to recognise an ensemble of methods that exist in parallel to the rituals conserved and sanctioned by the scholarly tradition. As a matter of fact, curse formulas (*zuchuwen* 詛楚文), healing rites (*bingfang* 病方) and bewitchments (*gu* 蠱) exist among all levels of society, from the humblest to the emperor, not omitting princesses, eunuchs and even certain literati.

Appendix

- 45 Adapted from Donald Harper, 1994, “Resurrection in Warring States Religion,” *Taoist Resources* 5.2: 13–28; Chinese text, see Chen Wei 陈伟, 2015, *Qin jiandu heji* 秦简牍合集, Wuhan: Wuhan daxue, vol. 4, 202–207 (transcription), 343 (bamboo slips).
- 46 Day *jisi* of the eighth month of the eighth year, the Assistant Magistrate of Di, Chi, dares to inform the Chief Prosecutor about a man from Daliang, Wangli Village [1], the convict-labourer named Dan. [1] Seven years [ago], Dan injured a man by stabbing him in Yuanli Village, and because of this he killed himself with his sword. [1] He was exposed in the market for three days, then buried outside the south gate of Yuanli. Three years later Dan came back to life. The reason that Dan came back to life was because he was our Xi Wu’s retainer. Xi Wu disputed his retainer’s life-mandate considering that Dan was not yet fated to die. Therefore he made a declaration to the Scribe of the Director of the Life-mandate, Gongsun Qiang, who then had a white dog dig up the pit to let Dan out. Dan stood on the tomb for three days. Then he departed northwards to Zhao, accompanied by the Scribe of the Director of the Life-mandate, Gongsun Qiang, and went to Boqiu in the North Territory. Fully four years later he then heard dogs barking and roosters crowing, and he ate human food. His body had a scar on the throat and sparse eyebrow hair, (his face) was inky, and his four limbs were useless.
- 47 Dan says: “The dead do not want many clothes. The dead think that white woolly grass is fortunate; while the ghosts (consider) receiving something else as (more) fortunate.”

- 48 Dan says: “Let those who offer sacrifices at tombs not dare to weep. If they weep, the ghosts will depart and flee in fright. Once the offering is over, collect the sacrificial food and bury it; in this way the ghosts will not eat forever.” Dan says: “Those who offer sacrifices must carefully sweep and purify (the place of the sacrifice). Do not wash [1] the place of the sacrifice. Do not pour the broth over the sacrificial food, for the ghosts will not eat.”

Sun Zhanyu 孫占宇, 2013, *Tianshui Fangmatan Qin jian jishi* 天水放馬秦簡集釋, Zhang Defang 張德芳 ed. Lanzhou: Gansu wenhua chubanshe.

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FOOTNOTES

1. I would like to thank Alain Thote, Marc Kalinowski, Donald Harper and Benjamin Ringard for their valuable advice, as well as Alice Crowther for her remarkable translation, and Joseph Ciaudo for his editorial work.
2. Granet 1922. Granet most often cites chapters I “Quli” 曲禮, II “Tangong” 檀弓, XVIII “Zaji” 雜記, “Sang daji” 喪大記, XXXII “Wen sang” 問喪, XXXIV “Jianzhuang” 間傳, XXXV “Sannian wen” 三年問, XLVI “Sangfu sizhi” 喪服四制.
3. See Chen 2015, vol. 4, 202-207 (transcription), 343 (bamboo slips).
4. See “Beijing daxue cang Qin jiandu gaishu” 2012, 65.
5. Li 2012.
6. The best study of these artefacts remains Seidel 1987.
7. Granet 1922, 98.
8. Granet 1922, 100.
9. Granet 1922, 113.
10. *Idem*.
11. Granet 1922, 105.
12. The date of the tomb has been deduced from the “eighth year” given at the beginning of the resurrection account, considered by the authors of the excavation report to be the eighth year of the First Qin Emperor, or 239 BC (*Wenwu* 1989.2, 10-11), but other dates have been proposed. For further discussion, see Thote 2017, 24-25.
13. For a detailed description of the tomb, see Thote 2017, 21-24.
14. See Sun 2013, p. 59-60 (bamboo slips) and 269-276 (transcription and notes); Chen Wei 2014. For the English translation, see Harper 1994; for an amended translation, see Appendix 1 below.
15. These pantheons consist of seven and five gods, respectively. For the king these are the god of the Life-Mandate, the god of the Impluvium (*Zhongliu* 中霽), the god of the Capital (or Kingdom) Gates (*Guomen* 國門), the god of the Capital Roads (*Guoxing* 國行), the god of the Wandering Souls of his [the king’s] Predecessors (*Taili* 泰厲), the god of the Doors (*Hu* 戶), and the god of the Stove (*Zao* 竈). The feudal princes had only the first five (see Legge 1885, part. IV, 206-207; « Jifa » 祭法 in *Liji jishuo* 1985, vol. 2, 254-255).
16. Lai 2005, 5-6.
17. See Legge 1872, 814-816; Yang 1981, Duke Ai, 7th and 8th years, 1644-47; *Shiji* 1982, vol. 35, 1573; Harper 1994, 16.
18. See “Shi sang li” 士喪禮 in *Yili* 1936, vol. 2, 179; Steele 1917, vol. 2, 45.
19. Jiang Shoucheng 姜守誠 believes that the repetition marker = is missing after the character *yi* 衣 and that it should read 死人之所惡, 解予死人衣。= (衣) 必令產見之, nonetheless he reads the phrase in the same sense as Li Ling; see Jiang 2014, 149. Donald Harper suggests punctuating after 解 and reading “The dead hate exorcism” (personal communication); this is also the reading proposed by Huang Jie 黃傑 (Huang 2013, 443-444). The meaning of this statement remains in any case obscure.
20. Li Ling reads the last graph as *yao* 繇, meaning “silk” *chou* 綢 (Li 2012, 82); Jiang Wen suspects a scribal mistake and reads it as *mian* 緜, which designates a better quality of silk than *chou* (Jiang 2019, 43).
21. It would be an anachronism to translate “do not place him into her grave,” because in Qin at this period tombs were vertical pits and could not be re-opened to house a new corpse, as would be the case later. See the contribution of Alain Thote in this volume.

22. The number in between square brackets indicates the number of missing Chinese characters.
23. “Sangfu” 喪服, chapter 11 and “Shi sangli” 士喪禮, chapter 12 in *Yili* 1936; Steele 1917, vol. 2, chapters 22-25.
24. Steele 1917, 61; *Yili* 1936, vol. 2, 187.
25. *Yili* 1936, 184 (nineteen suits) and 187 (thirty suits).
26. Jiang 2014, 157.
27. That is to say a day whose binome contains the earthly branch *chen*.
28. Hu & Zhang 2001, 178-179.
29. The end of the last phrase is broken off. Hu & Zhang 2001, 183.
30. For a detailed discussion on this matter, see Jiang 2019.
31. See Zhang & Bai 2006, 160.
32. See the “Recipe for dental decay” in the manuscripts of Zhoujiatai (*Guanju Qin Han mu jiandu* 2001, 129, slips 326-328); see also Bujard 2017, 329.
33. Mashan Tomb n°. 1 dates from around 300 BC. It contains 18 bamboo baskets of different shapes, one round and 17 rectangular, these last in three different sizes. See Hubei sheng Jingzhou diqu bowuguan 1985, 86-93. I would like to thank Alain Thote for indicating this reference to me.
34. See Hubei sheng Jingzhou diqu bowuguan 1985, 28; plate XLVI-4 and XIX-2, coffin 8-11.
35. See Jilin daxue lishi xi kaogu zhuan 1976, 41.
36. And not 繪一筭值千金 as is written in the Mashan report (Hubei sheng Jingzhou diqu bowuguan 1985, 28).
37. See Fenghuang shan yiliuqi hao Hanmu fajue zhengli xiaozu 1976, 37 and Hubei sheng kaogu yanjiusuo 2012, 171-72.
38. See Falkenhausen 2004, vol.1, 125 & 135-141.
39. Hubei sheng Jingzhou diqu bowuguan 1985, colour plate no. 2.
40. *Mawangdui Han mu wenwu* 1992, 41. I thank Donald Harper for indicating this parallel to me.
41. On the use and production of these objects, see Sterckx 2009, 857-858, and, in Qin in particular, Falkenhausen, 2004, vol.1, 152-153.
42. See Legge 1885, part. III, 148; “Tangong” 檀弓 in *Liji jishuo* 1985, vol. 2, 40.
43. Ma 2009.
44. See Thote 2017, 25-29.
45. Archaeologists believe that the group of manuscripts to which the tablet belongs comes from the south of China, from the commandery of Nan (南郡) in present day Hubei Province, see “Beijing daxue cang Qin jiandu gaishu” 2012, 65.
46. Pirazzoli t’Serstevens 2009, 341-43.
47. For the clothes and for the offerings, the phrasing is in fact parallel: “the ghosts will immediately take them [the clothes] away and deposit them in the Lesser Treasury” 鬼輒奪而入之少内; “the ghosts will immediately seize [the offerings] and bring them to the Kitchen” 鬼輒奪而入之廚.
48. “Jiangling Fenghuangshan yibailiushiba hao Hanmu” 1993.
49. “Jiangsu Hanjiang Huchang wu hao Hanmu” 1981.
50. “Henan Sanmenxia Nanjiaokou Hanmu” 2009; *Sanmenxia Nanjiaokou* 2009, 278-98.
51. In fact, chemical analysis has demonstrated that only two bottles actually contained the substances mentioned in their inscriptions. See Yang & al. 2009.
52. Wang 1982, vol. 2, 574.
53. Inscription dated 156 on a bottle discovered near to Luoyang in 1980; see Zhang & Bai 2006, vol. 1, 150-53.
54. Inscription of 147 composed on behalf of the Jia family for a deceased 24-year-old woman, see Zhang & Bai 2006, vol. 1, 142-43.
55. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 182-83.

56. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 107-109.
57. The Songgao zhang, from the name of the Central Peak, situated near to the capital Luoyang, where souls reside, an equivalent to Mount Taishan in the east of the Empire.
58. Zhang & Bai 2006, vol. 1, 142-43.
59. Bottle held in Japan, probably discovered in Shaanxi and dated 175, see Zhang & Bai 2006, vol. 1, 162-64.
60. See Graf 2004. His chapter “*Defixiones et images d’envoûtement*” (139-198) contains many references, in particular note 4, 286.

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Confucius et la tombe de ses parents : de quelques prescriptions funéraires du « Tangong » vues à la lumière des découvertes archéologiques

Alain Thote

- 1 Cet article fait pendant à celui de Marianne Bujard, car nous avons conçu comme deux volets complémentaires nos interventions au colloque *All about the Rites: from canonised ritual to ritualised society* : Marianne Bujard a montré que les textes rituels transmis restent parfois muets sur certaines pratiques funéraires tandis que ma présentation visait à confronter avec les données de l'archéologie les informations relatives à des pratiques funéraires mentionnées dans ces textes. Notre problématique commune était donc la suivante : informations livresques et données de terrain concordent-elles ? Et dans quelle mesure est-il possible d'interpréter les faits archéologiques à la lumière des textes de l'antiquité ?
- 2 Vues en général sous l'angle des normes confucéennes, les pratiques funéraires occupent une grande place dans le *Liji* 禮記, notamment dans ses chapitres 3 et 4 réunis sous le titre « Tangong » 檀弓 (上, 下), un assemblage d'environ deux cents textes qui constitue de loin la plus longue section de l'ouvrage (10 503 caractères)¹. Cette source littéraire est très précieuse pour étudier les prescriptions du deuil. En vis-à-vis, si l'on peut s'exprimer ainsi, la documentation archéologique relative aux tombes de la Chine pré-impériale et du début de l'empire, entre le deuxième millénaire et le début de l'ère chrétienne, est des plus abondantes. Elle s'est enrichie depuis quelques dizaines d'années dans des proportions rarement atteintes dans d'autres pays. Cette situation est due à l'intérêt que les archéologues chinois ont développé pour la fouille des cimetières et des grandes tombes, tandis qu'ils négligeaient la fouille des sites d'habitat². En un mot, par l'archéologie nous en savons plus sur les morts que sur les vivants. Ceci étant, le domaine funéraire est particulièrement important pour

comprendre les sociétés anciennes, en Chine comme ailleurs³. Il se prête donc tout à fait à une confrontation des sources. Cet examen nous paraît d'autant plus nécessaire que l'étude des tombes de l'antiquité subit souvent un biais important. Les archéologues chinois sont en effet tentés de lire les données du terrain à travers le filtre des textes de l'antiquité, qu'ils soient rituels ou historiques, au lieu d'interroger à l'inverse les textes, voire de remettre en question ce qu'ils nous disent, lorsque les données archéologiques contredisent les informations qu'ils contiennent⁴.

- 3 Dans cette confrontation des sources, une première difficulté tient à la nature même du *Liji*. Les anecdotes édifiantes, les prescriptions, les coutumes anciennes qui y sont rassemblées forment une anthologie composée sans doute à l'usage des ritualistes Han⁵. Certaines anecdotes se rapportent à un passé très lointain, remontant à l'époque des empereurs légendaires. D'autres mettent en scène Confucius (vers 550-479 av. J.-C.). Cependant, ce texte hétéroclite a été compilé au début de l'empire, soit plusieurs siècles après bien des faits qui y sont relatés. Dans sa structure, il comprend des fragments que les spécialistes datent diversement, entre le III^e et le II^e siècle avant notre ère pour la plupart, quelques-uns pouvant être plus anciens. L'écart entre le moment où se situent les anecdotes ou les faits rapportés et leur consignation dans le *Liji* laissait de la place à l'interprétation, favorisant l'accumulation d'erreurs, de points obscurs ou d'approximations.
- 4 Un second ordre de difficultés provient de la nature même des rites funéraires. Ils suivent immédiatement la mort d'un individu, mais comme les larmes versées lors des funérailles, ces rites ne laissent pas de traces dans le sol. La tombe, une fois fermée, représente, quant à elle, l'ultime aboutissement d'un processus qui, dans l'antiquité chinoise, durait de quelques jours à plusieurs mois, voire des années. Un prince faisait souvent préparer sa sépulture de son vivant. Ce fut ainsi le cas du Premier Empereur, mort en 210 av. J.-C., qui lança ce chantier dès le début de son règne en 221 av. J.-C.⁶. Les rituels nous décrivent des gestes, des pratiques, des conventions qui relèvent de l'immatériel tandis que la tombe est constituée des vestiges matériels d'une construction réalisée à un moment donné de l'histoire et qui, de surcroît, allait subir par la suite les épreuves du temps. Le *Liji*, et le « Tangong » en particulier, ne livrent guère d'informations précises sur les tombes et leur contenu. Ils sont en revanche intarissables sur les funérailles et les rites du deuil qu'il convient d'observer. Tirant parti de la richesse des rituels de l'antiquité, Marcel Granet a publié un remarquable article sur « Le langage de la douleur », dans lequel passant en revue les rites funéraires il montre comment dans l'antiquité ils permettaient d'exprimer les sentiments des proches pour les disparus⁷. Le « Tangong » a pour seule unité son sujet : le traitement que l'on doit réserver aux morts. Encore ne recense-t-il pas systématiquement les différentes règles du deuil, ni leurs caractéristiques selon les classes sociales par exemple. Sans doute même ne reflète-t-il que les coutumes d'une région.
- 5 Dans notre investigation, nous nous limiterons à ce qui de près ou de loin concerne la tombe dans son aspect physique, en partant de l'anecdote tirée du « Tangong » sur la tombe des parents de Confucius.

Confucius souhaite enterrer sa mère auprès de son père

- 6 Deux passages du *Liji* se rapportent à l'enterrement de la mère de Confucius (*Liji*, 3.6 et 3.10). Traitant du même sujet tout en se complétant l'un l'autre, ils forment une seule et même anecdote :

孔子少孤，不知其墓。殯於五父之衢。人之見之者，皆以為葬也。其慎也，蓋殯也。問於邾曼父之母，然後得合葬於防。

3.10 Devenu orphelin tout jeune, Confucius ne savait pas où se trouvait la tombe [de son père]. [Or, sa mère, qui venait de mourir] reposait dans son cercueil à un croisement situé à Wufu. Tous les témoins de la scène pensaient qu'il s'agissait de l'endroit où elle allait être inhumée. [En fait,] Confucius procédait [alors] à la fermeture du cercueil avec tous les soins nécessaires. Il s'enquit [du lieu où avait été enterré son père] auprès de la mère de Man Fu de Zou (où il était né), après quoi, il put réunir les deux sépultures de [ses parents] (*hezang* 合葬) à Fang⁸.

孔子既得合葬於防，曰：「吾聞之：古也墓而不墳；今丘也，東西南北人也，不可以弗識也。」於是封之，崇四尺。孔子先反，門人後，雨甚；至，孔子問焉曰：「爾來何遲也？」曰：「防墓崩。」孔子不應。三，孔子泫然流涕曰：「吾聞之：古不修墓。」

3.6 Confucius ayant réuni les sépultures de [ses parents] (*hezang*) à Fang, déclara : « J'ai entendu dire qu'autrefois on ne couvrait pas les tombes d'un tumulus. Mais aujourd'hui, moi qui voyage d'est en ouest et du nord au sud (sans relâche) je ne peux me permettre d'ignorer où se trouve [leur tombe]. » Aussi fit-il élever un tertre de quatre pieds de haut [sur leur tombe]. [Puis,] Confucius s'en retourna en premier. Comme ses disciples quittaient à leur tour le site, une pluie torrentielle survint. Quand ils arrivèrent auprès de lui, Confucius leur demanda : « Pourquoi arrivez-vous si tard ? ». Ils lui répondirent : « La tombe s'est effondrée à Fang. » Confucius ne prononça plus une parole. Par trois fois [ils avaient répété ces mots], quand Confucius éclatant en pleurs leur dit : « Je savais pourtant que les anciens ne construisaient [pas de tumuli] sur les tombes »⁹.

- 7 Notre traduction se base sur celle de Couvreur, mais en l'adaptant et en la modifiant sensiblement¹⁰. En particulier, il traduit ainsi la première phrase du passage 3.6 : « Confucius ayant retrouvé [la sépulture de son père] et enterré sa mère dans la même tombe à Fang... », ce qui dans son esprit impliquait la réouverture de la tombe du père de Confucius. Nous rendons ici l'expression *hezang* 合葬 d'une façon qui nous semble plus neutre : « réunir les deux sépultures ». D'autre part, Robert Eno, dans une traduction très récente (2016), rend l'expression *hezang* par « joint burial », qu'il explique ainsi :

Joint burial, which is alternatively referred to as a “ritual of attachment” (fù 祔), involved reopening a grave pit in order to install an additional coffin, a practice that might typically be carried out in the case of spouses.¹¹

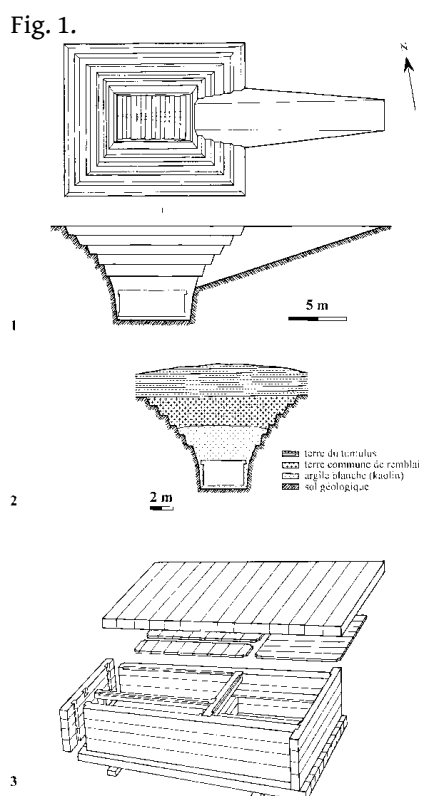
- 8 Cette explication, proche de l'interprétation de Couvreur, n'est pas satisfaisante non plus. Ici, c'est la fosse (*grave pit*) qui est réouverte, parce qu'il suppose que le cercueil du père se trouvait à même la terre sans protection particulière, ce qui revient à considérer qu'il avait un statut social très bas. Aussi bien chez Couvreur que chez Eno, la tombe du père fut donc réouverte plusieurs années après son décès.

- 9 D'autre part, dans le passage 3.6, Couvreur traduit ainsi les mots de conclusion de Confucius : « J'ai entendu dire que les anciens ne réparaient pas les sépultures (parce qu'elles étaient disposées avec tant de soin qu'elles ne se dégradait jamais). » Ici, nous suivons plutôt la traduction d'Eno : « I have heard that according to ancient rule, no mound was constructed on graves. » Il semble en effet que la question soulevée dans ce passage était de savoir s'il fallait ou non construire un tertre sur une tombe, comme l'indique la remarque de Confucius quand il déclare en préambule que les tertres funéraires autrefois n'existaient pas¹². Ce sont ces deux aspects qui seront traités ici, la coutume du *hezang* et la construction de tumuli sur les tombes.
- 10 Ces deux passages du « Tangong », complémentaires puisqu'ils traitent du même sujet, mais indépendants l'un de l'autre, nous apportent plusieurs éléments d'information en dépit de leur sobriété. On s'est depuis longtemps étonné que Confucius n'ait pas eu connaissance à un moment donné de sa vie du lieu où se trouvait la tombe de son père et qu'il ne s'en soit préoccupé qu'après la disparition de sa mère¹³. Cette quête tardive est d'autant plus surprenante qu'il a tenu absolument, au décès de sa mère, à réunir ses parents au même endroit. Le texte 3.6 nous indique aussi qu'un tumulus servait à signaler la présence d'une tombe dans le paysage environnant, et pour les membres d'une famille à localiser celle d'un proche. Or, au ^v^e siècle avant notre ère, d'après les données archéologiques, les sépultures étaient rarement isolées dans le paysage, sauf pour quelques membres de l'élite. Elles étaient plutôt groupées, comme du reste les tombes des classes moins privilégiées, dans des cimetières lignagers situés à proximité des villes. Il était donc relativement simple de savoir où étaient enterrés les membres de sa famille. Les dimensions et la richesse des tombes dans ces cimetières varient considérablement, selon le rang social, la position acquise au cours d'une vie, le sexe et l'âge, et selon d'autres facteurs encore. Probablement, à proximité des tombes d'un même lignage se trouvait aussi enterrée une partie de leur clientèle. En l'absence d'analyses systématiques de l'ADN des ossements, il n'est pas encore possible de comprendre les liens génétiques unissant les différents individus inhumés dans le même cimetière. D'autre part, si l'archéologie funéraire est bien documentée pour les membres de l'aristocratie et leurs proches, les tombes des gens du commun, qui semblent ne pas avoir laissé de traces dans le sol, sont mal connues. Nous reviendrons plus loin sur la présence de tertres funéraires, réservés, semble-t-il, à des individus jouissant d'un certain statut social.

L'architecture funéraire à l'époque pré-impériale

- 11 Sous les Zhou, différentes formes régionales ont été adoptées pour la construction des tombes, et l'on observe une évolution tout au long de la période, révélant d'importants changements¹⁴. Cependant, elles présentent plusieurs points communs entre elles. En particulier, leur architecture ne permettait à aucune d'être réouverte pour y déposer un autre cercueil. En général, les tombes sont constituées d'une fosse verticale ayant entre moins d'un mètre et près de vingt mètres de profondeur, selon le statut du défunt et divers autres critères. Au fond de la fosse, quand il s'agit d'une tombe riche, se trouve une construction en bois appelée « cercueil extérieur » (*guo* 槨) de dimensions variables, parfois compartimenté ou accompagné de fosses annexes (Fig. 1). Une fois les funérailles accomplies, la fosse était remblayée de couches de terre damée jusqu'au niveau du sol. Ainsi, les tombes étaient-elles hermétiquement scellées. Seuls des

pillards ont pu s'y introduire pour s'emparer de leur contenu, suivant une pratique relativement commune en des temps troublés. On en connaît de nombreux témoignages : les archéologues découvrent fréquemment, lorsqu'ils fouillent une tombe, que des individus y ont pénétré dans l'antiquité. Les couches scellant les tombes portent la trace des puits qu'ils ont creusés. Ainsi, dans la tombe du marquis Yi de Zeng (Zeng hou Yi 曾侯乙), mort vers 433 av. J.-C. ou peu après (tombe 1 de Leigudun 擂鼓墩, district de Suizhou 隨州 au Hubei), des voleurs se sont introduits entre la fin du III^e siècle avant notre ère et le début des Han de l'Ouest (206 av. J.-C.-8 apr. J.-C.), laissant sur place leurs outils¹⁵. Un autre cas de réouverture, plus exceptionnel, est mentionné par Henri Maspero dans *La Chine antique*. Il s'agit de la vengeance de Wu Zixu 伍子胥 et de Bo Pi 伯嚭 qui, bannis de Chu 楚, firent extraire le cadavre du roi Ping 楚平王 pour le fouetter¹⁶.



Plan et coupe de la tombe 1 de Wangshan, municipalité de Jingzhou (Hubei), vers 330 av. J.-C. 1. La fosse et la rampe d'accès ; 2. La fosse et le tumulus (coupe Nord-Sud) ; 3. Vue en perspective du cercueil extérieur guo

D'après Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, 湖北省文物考古研究所 (éd.), 1996, *Jiangling Wangshan Shazhong Chu mu* (江陵望山沙塚楚墓), Beijing, Wenwu chubanshe, fig. 2, 3 p. 6 et fig. 5 p. 9.

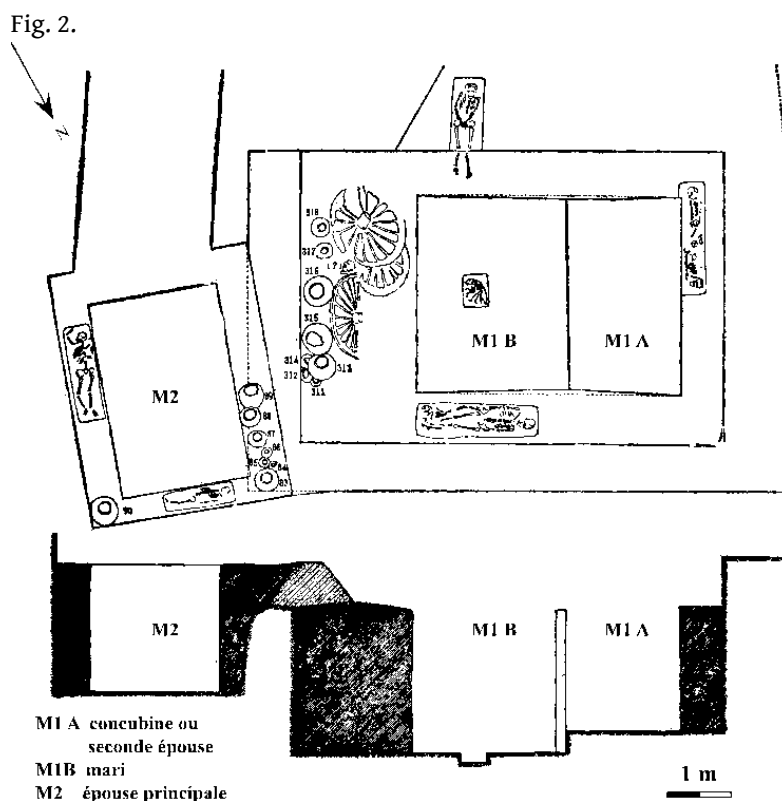
- 12 Lors des funérailles d'un prince, à l'époque des Zhou, une ou deux rampes permettaient d'accéder à l'intérieur de la tombe durant le bref temps de la cérémonie¹⁷. Ces rampes étaient utilisées pour faciliter l'aménagement de la tombe, mais leur présence constituait un privilège réservé à quelques défunts. Elles menaient à l'intérieur de la fosse jusqu'au niveau du cercueil extérieur (*guo*) qu'elles surplombaient souvent de quelques mètres. L'une d'elles servait à introduire plus aisément le mobilier funéraire à

l'intérieur et à descendre le (ou les) cercueil(s), tandis que l'autre rampe, à degrés, devait probablement accueillir les proches du défunt lors des rites rendus peu avant la fermeture du cercueil extérieur, suivie du remblayage de la fosse. À la fin des funérailles, le plafond du *guo* était en effet recouvert de plusieurs couches de terre damée jusqu'au niveau du sol. La présence de rampes d'accès, même dans les tombes princières les plus riches, n'avait rien de systématique, car cet aménagement répondait à des critères de statut, ce qui limitait son usage, régi par des règles somptuaires, au même titre que l'utilisation de cercueils emboîtés, la taille et la forme de la tombe, la composition du mobilier funéraire, en particulier celle des ensembles de bronzes rituels¹⁸. Au-dessus de la fosse remblayée, soit un temple commémoratif, soit un tumulus, soit encore une autre construction signalait à l'extérieur la présence de la sépulture¹⁹. Les tombes de l'antiquité ne sauraient avoir été pillées aussi systématiquement si leur emplacement n'avait pas été indiqué par quelque aménagement au niveau du sol.

Sacrifices humains et morts d'accompagnement

- 13 Quand aujourd'hui les archéologues découvrent à l'intérieur de la tombe d'un membre de l'élite sociale plusieurs individus, inhumés chacun dans un cercueil à côté du propriétaire, il s'agit le plus souvent d'épouses et de concubines ayant suivi leur mari, parfois de serviteurs enterrés avec leur maître. Dans la tombe du marquis Yi de Zeng, les archéologues ont découvert, outre le double cercueil du défunt, vingt-et-un cercueils contenant les restes de jeunes femmes, qui étaient sans doute au service du défunt, ainsi qu'un cercueil renfermant un chien²⁰. Leur inhumation collective s'est faite lors des funérailles du marquis.
- 14 On entend par « morts d'accompagnement » les personnes qui suivaient « de leur plein gré » le propriétaire de la tombe au moment de ses funérailles contre la promesse d'un sort plus heureux dans l'au-delà. Ils pouvaient également agir par fidélité²¹. On les distingue ainsi des victimes sacrifiées lors de rites funéraires, dont les corps sont disséminés dans la terre de remblai en divers points de la tombe à des fins propitiatoires. Dès l'antiquité, les Chinois ont désigné sous des noms différents les premiers (*renxun* 人殉) des seconds (*rensheng* 人牲)²².
- 15 Cette différence de traitement transparaît clairement dans plusieurs sépultures des Zhou, par exemple dans les tombes M1 et M2 (M pour *mu* 墓) de Rujiazhuang 茹家莊, près de Baoji 寶雞 (Shaanxi), parallèles l'une avec l'autre (Fig. 2) : ces deux tombes datables vers 900 av. J.-C. se divisent en deux groupes, avec d'un côté une tombe double, M1A et M1B, dans laquelle sont enterrées deux personnes, un prince de Yu et une femme, très probablement une concubine, l'un comme l'autre ensevelis dans un cercueil. La concubine peut être considérée comme un mort d'accompagnement, étant donné le soin apporté à son inhumation. La tombe M2 coupe la tombe M1, elle lui est donc postérieure. Elle appartient à l'épouse du prince de Yu, comme l'indiquent les inscriptions de ses bronzes. De plus, la tombe M1 de Rujiazhuang contenait aussi sept victimes sacrifiées : cinq inhumées dans trois fosses et les deux dernières victimes gisant dans le remblai de la rampe d'accès, leurs ossements dispersés en cinq points différents. Ces différents sacrifices correspondent à des rites effectués successivement lors des funérailles, probablement pour protéger la tombe. Dans la tombe de la princesse (M2), deux victimes étaient inhumées dans des fosses creusées dans la plate-

forme entourant le cercueil extérieur²³. Toutes ces victimes ont été sacrifiées soit successivement durant le déroulement des funérailles, soit ensemble avant d'être dispersées en des endroits jugés importants pour la protection de la tombe.



Plan et coupe des tombes 1 et 2 de Rujiazhuang, municipalité de Baoji (Shaanxi), IX^e s. av. J.-C.

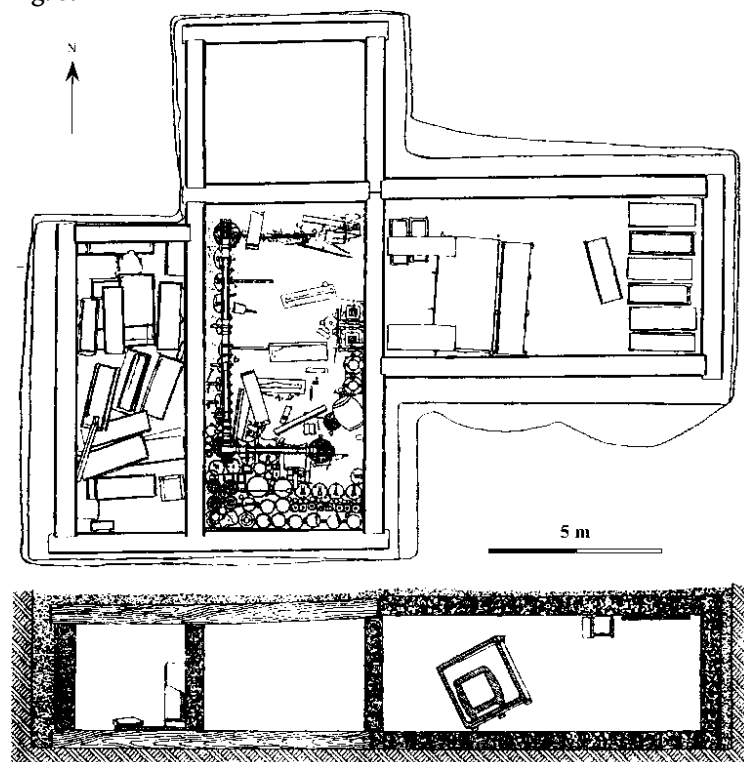
D'après Lu Liancheng, 卢连成 et Hu Zhisheng, 胡智生, *Baoji Yu guo mudi* (寶雞 國墓地), 1988, Beijing, Wenwu chubanshe vol. 1, fig. 187 p. 272.

L'évolution de la structure des tombes

- 16 À l'époque des Royaumes combattants (481-221 av. J.-C.), des changements sont intervenus dans l'agencement des tombes, lesquels ont conduit à l'édification de mausolées pouvant atteindre des dimensions considérables dans des parcs funéraires (*lingyuan* 陵園)²⁴. C'est aussi à cette époque que s'est développée la construction de tertres funéraires, parfois de très grandes dimensions. Ces changements ont accompagné une évolution non moins importante des mentalités, axée sur la réussite sociale et le prestige personnels à mesure que se manifestait de manière plus ostensible l'ambition individuelle des rois et des princes²⁵. Mais si ces changements ont affecté l'organisation spatiale des tombes, les principes de construction n'ont pas varié pour autant, du moins jusqu'au début de l'empire.
- 17 Plusieurs innovations ont été progressivement introduites dans l'organisation interne de la tombe et dans son mobilier. La tombe du marquis Yi de Zeng présente des traits exceptionnels pour l'époque, mais qui annoncent l'évolution qui va suivre jusqu'au début de l'empire (Fig. 3). De vastes dimensions (env. 141 m²), le *guo* comprend quatre

chambres disposées selon un plan irrégulier. Le défunt était pourvu d'un mobilier pour la vie quotidienne (nécessaires pour boire et manger, vaisselle de luxe, coffres remplis de vêtements, instruments pour jouer de la musique de divertissement, etc.). La chambre du centre contenait l'ensemble du mobilier rituel (vases en bronze pour les sacrifices, instruments de musique pour les cérémonies). Celle de l'ouest renfermait les cercueils de treize femmes tandis que celle du nord, la plus petite, contenait des armes, deux énormes jarres en bronze, et les inventaires des chars qui composaient la procession et la liste des cadeaux apportés au défunt à l'occasion de ses funérailles. Au plan symbolique, chaque chambre revêt une fonction précise. Sont représentés les appartements privés du défunt à l'est, la vie publique du défunt au centre, un véritable arsenal au nord, et la domesticité à son service à l'ouest (peut-être en charge de l'ensemble rituel ou des instruments de musique de la chambre centrale). Les quatre pièces communiquaient entre elles par de très petites ouvertures. Sur les peintures du plus petit des deux cercueils du marquis Yi de Zeng figurent une fenêtre et deux portes, tandis que le second cercueil est percé sur un côté d'une ouverture de même taille que celles des parois entre les chambres²⁶. Il a été suggéré que cette disposition relevait d'une conception nouvelle de la tombe, symbolisant la demeure ici-bas, sans pour autant en être une imitation parfaite. Cette « demeure » devait permettre à l'âme *po* 魄, censée rester avec le cadavre dans la tombe, de bénéficier de tout le confort matériel nécessaire et de conserver à l'intérieur de la sépulture toute sa mobilité²⁷. Selon les croyances anciennes chinoises, l'homme possède en effet deux âmes, *hun* 魂 et *po*, croyances qui se seraient formées dès le IV^e s. av. J.-C. ou même antérieurement, d'après une mention dans le *Zuozhuan* 左传, compilé vers 350 av. J.-C., pour l'année 534 av. J.-C.²⁸.

Fig. 3.

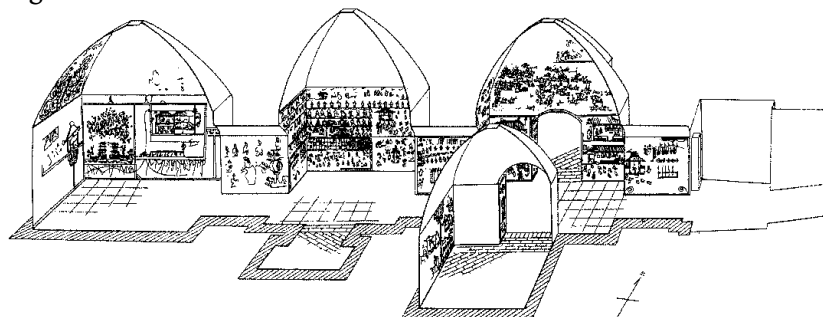


Plan et coupe de la tombe 1 de Leigudun, municipalité de Suizhou (Hubei), vers 433 avant notre ère

D'après Hubei sheng bowuguan, 湖北省博物館 (éd.), *Zeng Hou Yi mu* (曾侯乙墓), 1989, Beijing, Wenwu chubanshe fig. 5 p. 9.

- 18 Sous les Han, l'architecture des tombes s'est transformée radicalement : à partir de la fin du II^e siècle avant notre ère, les plus vastes d'entre elles sont devenues de véritables palais souterrains comprenant une porte à double battant, puis un corridor, une antichambre accédant à plusieurs pièces dont les fonctions reproduisaient celles d'une demeure et de toutes ses dépendances (Fig. 4)²⁹. Ces tombes ont désormais été conçues selon une disposition horizontale, car on pouvait y pénétrer lors des funérailles par une rampe menant à une porte d'entrée : le cercueil du défunt y était introduit, accompagné par les proches de ce dernier – ce qui n'eût jamais été possible auparavant. Les premiers exemples de cette forme de construction sont des tombes creusées dans une falaise, datées de la toute fin du II^e s. av. J.-C.³⁰. Quelques décennies plus tard, quand elles seront bâties en briques puis en pierres, les tombes pourront être réouvertes pour y déposer un second cercueil, celui de l'époux ou de l'épouse. L'emploi de ces nouveaux matériaux a permis de construire des tombes dont l'architecture prenait modèle sur l'architecture résidentielle. L'évolution des tombes de la région de Luoyang montre que, d'abord de dimensions réduites, limitées en partie par des techniques de construction en brique encore mal maîtrisées, les tombes ont progressivement pris de l'envergure avec l'invention de la voûte³¹. La meilleure analyse de ce dispositif et de l'aménagement intérieur des tombes Han, depuis leur structure jusqu'à leur décor, en relation avec les croyances de l'époque, est due à Michèle Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens³².

Fig. 4.



Vue en coupe de la tombe de Helinge'er, Mongolie intérieure, vers 170 avant notre ère.

D'après Nei Menggu wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, 内蒙古文物考古研究所 (éd.), 1978, *Helinge'er Han mu bi hua* (和林格尔和漢墓壁畫), Beijing, Wenwu chubanshe plan I, hors-texte

- 19 Le passage de la structure verticale parfaitement hermétique, qui avait prévalu depuis les Shang et sous les Zhou, à une structure horizontale autorisant une réouverture à la façon d'un caveau familial ne s'est pas fait en un jour. Il s'est effectué en plusieurs étapes sur un ou deux siècles, mais il a représenté une véritable révolution dans l'histoire des pratiques funéraires.

Fu 祔 et hezang 合葬

- 20 Dans le « Tangong » 3.28 se trouve la phrase suivante :

舜葬於蒼梧之野，蓋三妃未之從也。季武子曰：「周公蓋祔。」

Shun fut inhumé dans les contrées inhabitées de Cangwu ; apparemment, ses trois femmes ne le suivirent pas dans la mort. Ji Wu Zi (chancelier de la principauté de Lu, mort en 535 av. J.-C.) dit [alors] : « C'est, semble-t-il, à l'époque du Duc de Zhou que fut introduite la coutume [appelée] *fu* »³³.

- 21 Dans cette première traduction, nous conservons le mot *fu* 祔 sans le traduire. En effet, traditionnellement, *fu* a deux sens distincts. Dans son acception la plus courante, il s'agit d'un rituel pratiqué dans le temple des ancêtres pour honorer le défunt juste avant de descendre son cercueil dans la tombe. Il consiste à installer sa tablette sur l'autel auprès des autres tablettes. Le second sens serait un équivalent de l'expression *hezang*. C'est ce sens que R. Eno a choisi dans sa traduction de ce passage du « Tangong », et il s'en justifie en rapprochant le passage 3.28 avec le passage 3.3, considérant que le même personnage Ji Wu Zi y est impliqué et se réfère dans les deux cas au Duc de Zhou³⁴. Pourtant, la coutume désignée sous le nom de *fu* dans 3.28 apparaît clairement distincte de celle du *hezang*, dans la mesure où *cong* 從 signifie « suivre dans la mort » (en se sacrifiant soi-même à la suite de son époux) : on aurait dans ce cas procédé à l'inhumation des trois femmes lors des funérailles de Shun, alors que la coutume du *hezang* impliquait de procéder à l'inhumation des trois femmes plus tard, en réouvrant alors la tombe de Shun, si l'on en croit Couvreur et Eno.

- 22 Il convient plutôt de traduire le passage de la façon suivante :

Shun fut inhumé dans les contrées inhabitées de Cangwu ; apparemment, ses trois femmes ne le suivirent pas dans la mort. Ji Wu Zi dit [alors] : « C'est, semble-t-il, à l'époque du Duc de Zhou que fut introduit le rituel *fu* consistant à placer la tablette du mort sur l'autel des ancêtres. »

- 23 La mise en place de cette tablette dans le temple ancestral, instituée par le Duc de Zhou, présentait l'avantage d'assurer à *travers elle* la présence du *défunt à proximité* de la résidence qu'il avait occupée de son vivant et permettait de lui rendre *régulièrement les sacrifices qui lui étaient dus*, d'entretenir pieusement sa mémoire, bien qu'il fût enterré au loin. Si ce rituel *fu* avait existé au temps de Shun, l'éloignement de sa tombe aurait probablement été jugé supportable aux trois épouses. Assurées qu'on veillerait toujours à sa mémoire malgré l'éloignement de sa tombe grâce à ce rituel, elles auraient accepté de le suivre dans la mort.

L'évolution de l'expression *hezang*

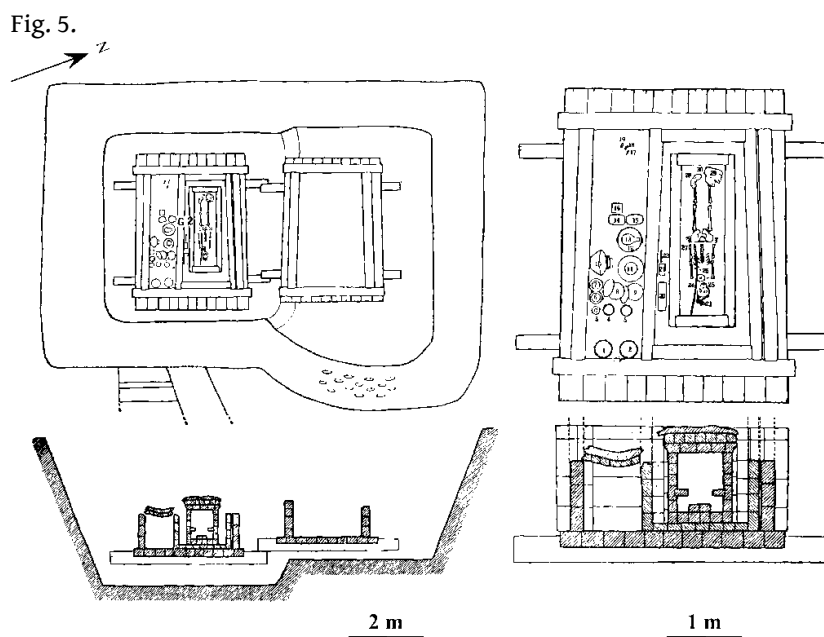
- 24 Dans l'anecdote relative à la tombe des parents de Confucius, le terme *hezang* arrête le lecteur, car il est la clé de l'histoire. Il y figure par deux fois (*Liji*, 3.6 et 3.10). Dans une seconde anecdote du « Tangong » (*Liji*, 3.3), il apparaît deux autres fois. C'est Ji Wu Zi qui évoque cette coutume :

[季]武子曰：合葬非古也，自周公以來，未之有改也。

[Ji] Wu Zi dit : « [La coutume du] *hezang* n'est pas si ancienne. Elle a commencé au temps du Duc de Zhou, sans subir de changement »³⁵.

- 25 Ce personnage historique étant mort en 535 av. J.-C. et le Duc de Zhou ayant vécu au XI^e siècle avant notre ère, cinq siècles au moins s'étaient déjà écoulés lorsque Ji Wu Zi fit cette déclaration. L'expression *hezang* apparaît donc quatre fois dans le *Liji*, et uniquement dans le « Tangong ».
- 26 Aussi bien Couvreur qu'Eno, dans leur traduction de l'expression *hezang*, considèrent que la réouverture de la tombe du père de Confucius était nécessaire pour y placer le cercueil de sa mère. Or, d'après les données archéologiques, aucune tombe de l'antiquité pré-impériale sur les dizaines de milliers qui ont été fouillées à ce jour n'a jamais été réouverte dans l'intention d'inhumer un second défunt. Rien n'aurait fait plus horreur à un fils que de faire ouvrir, peu après la mort de sa mère, par exemple, la tombe de son père afin d'y réunir leurs cercueils. Un tel geste aurait été considéré alors comme sacrilège. Mais ce ne serait plus le cas à partir du I^{er} siècle avant notre ère, sous les Han. Si nous considérons cependant que l'expression *hezang* existait déjà du temps de Confucius, et même antérieurement, c'est qu'elle n'avait pas la même signification. L'évolution des pratiques funéraires au cours du premier millénaire avant notre ère permet d'émettre l'hypothèse qu'elle a désigné successivement plusieurs coutumes distinctes.
- 27 Dès l'époque des Zhou de l'Ouest, dans les cimetières princiers, des tombes d'hommes et de leurs épouses ont été creusées l'une à côté de l'autre, parallèlement. Cet agencement est très clairement visible, par exemple, sur le plan du cimetière des princes de Jin 晉 situé à Tianma Qucun 天馬曲村 (Shanxi). On y distingue dix-neuf tombes principales, appariées (un groupe constitué de trois tombes, M63, M64 et M65, fait exception) ; selon le décompte, les huit ou neuf ensembles ainsi formés, distants d'une vingtaine de mètres, se détachent bien les uns des autres ; les tombes ont à peu près la même orientation, et une fosse contenant chars et chevaux est associée à chaque ensemble (sauf pour les tombes M91 et M92)³⁶. Dans cette première acception, *hezang* signifierait que deux tombes, celle d'un homme et celle de son épouse, sont « appariées ». Parallèles et situées à peu de distance l'une de l'autre, elles ont été aménagées en deux temps.
- 28 Au début de la seconde phase de l'évolution, à partir du VII^e s. av. J.-C., quelques « tombes doubles » ont été construites : il s'agit ici de deux tombes jointes, réunies dans la même fosse, une tombe pour l'homme, l'autre pour la femme. Elles ont été aménagées comme dans le cas précédent en deux temps, correspondant chacun aux funérailles de l'un des deux conjoints, mais de façon à être proches. L'exemple le mieux documenté par l'archéologie est celui du site de Baoxiangsi 寶相寺 dans le sud du Henan (Fig. 5). Il s'agit de la double tombe d'un prince, Huang Jun Meng 黃君孟, et de son épouse, Meng Ji 孟姬. La femme, morte la première, fut enterrée richement dans un cercueil extérieur en bois construit de forts madriers. Lorsque son mari la suivit dans la mort quelques années plus tard, sa famille fit creuser sa tombe juste à côté de celle de son épouse, comme s'il s'agissait de tombes appariées, mais en réunissant les deux fosses en une seule, de telle façon que les deux chambres funéraires fussent parallèles, presque contiguës – elles se trouvent à environ un mètre l'une de l'autre. Les inscriptions portées sur les bronzes nous donnent l'identité des défunts. D'autre part, la partie de la fosse où se trouve le cercueil extérieur de l'homme est moins profonde que

celui de la femme, avec un dénivelé d'environ soixante-dix centimètres. Et les madriers de soutènement de ce *guo* recouvrent partiellement ceux du cercueil extérieur de la femme. La partie de la fosse où repose l'homme est donc postérieure à celle où se trouve son épouse³⁷.



Plan de la tombe du prince Meng de Huang (Huang Jun Meng), à l'Est, et de celle de son épouse, à l'Ouest. À droite, vue en plan et en coupe du cercueil extérieur *guo* de la femme.

D'après Henan Xinyang diqu wenguanhui, 河南信陽地區文官會 et Guangshan xian wenguanhui, 光山縣文官會, 1984, « Chunqiu zaoqi Huang Jun Meng fufu mu fajue baogao » (春秋早期黃君孟夫婦墓發掘報告), *Kaogu* 4: 303 fig. 2

- 29 On date cette double tombe des environs de 700 av. J.-C. Sans être unique, ce cas est exemplaire en raison des informations croisées qu'il apporte aussi bien sur la disposition du site que sur l'aménagement des cercueils, la constitution des ensembles rituels, la nature du reste du mobilier et la présence des inscriptions. Le mode d'inhumation du couple qui vient d'être décrit pourrait bien correspondre au modèle suivi par Confucius pour la tombe de ses parents : selon cette supposition, la fosse dans laquelle se trouvait le cercueil de son père aurait été élargie afin de créer pour sa mère une seconde tombe, jointive de la première. On observe de surcroît que la double tombe de Baoxiangsi était surmontée par un tumulus commun, d'une hauteur d'environ sept à huit mètres. C'est aussi ce qu'indique le *Liji* à propos de la double tombe des parents de Confucius, qui serait recouverte d'un tertre – mais à cette époque, la hauteur devait être nettement inférieure à celle du tumulus de Baoxiangsi. Rappelons cependant que cette seconde forme de tombe double reste exceptionnelle. Il apparaît donc très étrange que Confucius se soit distingué de ses contemporains d'une façon aussi tranchée.
- 30 Il a fallu attendre le début de l'empire pour qu'apparaisse une troisième phase dans l'évolution des tombes, où l'expression *hezang* a pris un nouveau sens. La possibilité

donnée alors à une famille de pénétrer dans une tombe pour y placer un second cercueil a certainement généré d'après débats avant de devenir une pratique courante. Pour justifier la révolution qu'a provoquée cette coutume nouvelle sous les Han, il est plausible que la référence à Confucius dans les anecdotes du « Tangong » où il est question d'un *hezang* a servi de caution.

- 31 Dans les deux anecdotes consignées, rappelons-le, à l'époque Han, Confucius apparaît comme le garant d'une coutume funéraire ancienne, le *hezang*, mais dont la forme avait selon nous très fortement évolué depuis le début des Zhou, ce dont les compilateurs du *Liji* n'avaient probablement pas conscience. Initialement, *hezang* désignait deux tombes appariées, puis il s'est agi d'une double sépulture réalisée en agrandissant la fosse abritant initialement le premier des deux défunts. Enfin, ultime phase de l'évolution, apparue quatre siècles environ après la mort de Confucius, le cercueil d'un homme et celui de son épouse pouvaient désormais être réunis dans la même chambre funéraire lors des funérailles de celui ou celle qui mourait quelque temps plus tard, voire des années après son conjoint. Cette coutume fut rendue possible grâce à l'invention de tombes imitant la demeure d'ici-bas, pour les princes un palais avec ses multiples dépendances, pour les individus moins fortunés une simple maison, dans lesquels on pénétrait par une porte. Les modes de construction inventés à ce moment-là, en brique ou en pierre, ont rendu possibles de telles imitations. Sous les Han, on a pu croire que l'expression *hezang* désignait dans les anecdotes du *Liji* cette forme d'architecture et qu'elle avait toujours revêtu ce sens depuis le Duc de Zhou.

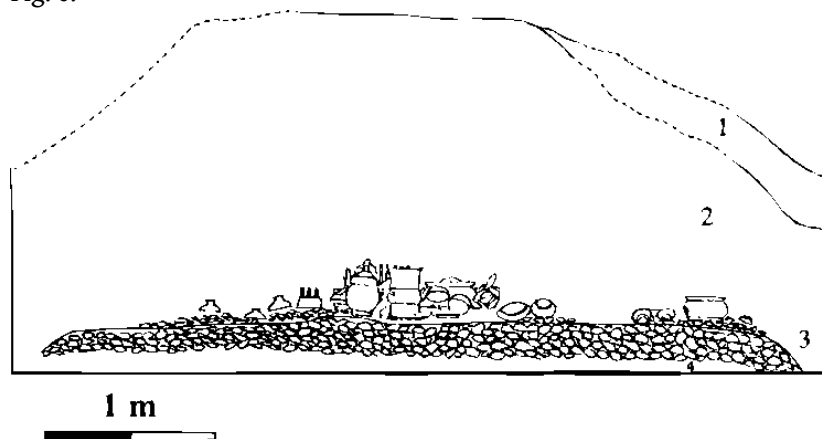
Le tumulus

- 32 Avant de faire édifier un tumulus sur la tombe de ses parents, Confucius déclarait, comme nous l'avons vu : « J'ai entendu dire qu'autrefois on ne couvrait pas les tombes d'un tumulus »³⁸. Par ces mots, il voulait signifier que la construction d'un tertre funéraire n'était pas conforme aux traditions antiques, celle des Shang sans doute, ou peut-être celle du début des Zhou. Mais ensuite, pour justifier sa décision de contrevenir aux usages « d'autrefois », il précise avoir ainsi voulu marquer l'emplacement de leur tombe afin d'en retrouver facilement l'endroit. Peut-être cherchait-il aussi, en la recouvrant d'un tertre, à rendre manifeste la réunion de ses parents, et témoigner par-là de plus vifs sentiments filiaux. Dans la double tombe de Baoxiangsi, le mobilier de la femme, morte en premier, est d'une qualité nettement supérieure à celui de l'homme. Ainsi en est-il aussi bien des bronzes, des jades que des différentes autres pièces qui s'y trouvaient. De plus, son cercueil extérieur occupait une superficie plus vaste que celle du cercueil extérieur de son époux. Cette situation, exceptionnelle dans l'antiquité, semble indiquer que par-delà les rites dus à une personne selon son statut ou son genre et en dépit des règles strictes qui régissaient les pratiques funéraires, des éléments d'ordre affectif entraient certainement en ligne de compte dans l'organisation de ses funérailles, même si la meilleure traduction par les vivants des sentiments qu'ils éprouvaient envers le défunt devait en passer par un langage rituel très codifié.
- 33 Les données archéologiques se rapportant à la présence de tumuli dans l'antiquité sont limitées du fait que nombre d'entre eux ont disparu au cours des siècles, surtout les plus modestes. Aujourd'hui, on pense souvent que la transformation des paysages en Chine est toute récente, due à une modernisation trop rapide, ce qui n'est pas faux.

Comme partout ailleurs dans le monde, ces paysages n'ont jamais cessé d'évoluer³⁹. En particulier, la nécessité d'augmenter la superficie des terres agricoles et de faciliter la mise en culture des champs a très souvent dans l'histoire conduit les paysans à aplanir les sols et à y faire disparaître tout ce qui constituait un obstacle à leurs travaux.

- 34 En dépit de destructions répétées, il subsiste une concentration de tumuli dans la région du cours inférieur du Yangzi (sud du Jiangsu, nord du Zhejiang, sud de l'Anhui) et sa périphérie, qui relève d'une tradition locale initiée à l'époque des Zhou de l'Ouest (env. 1050-771 av. J.-C.), peut-être même dès le deuxième millénaire⁴⁰. C'est donc dans les cultures archéologiques de cette assez vaste région que l'on observe les plus anciens tumuli de Chine. Les premiers à avoir été fouillés scientifiquement, entre 1959 et 1975, se situent à Tunxi 屯溪, dans la région sud de l'Anhui (Fig. 6)⁴¹. La construction de ces tombes ne correspond cependant à aucune technique connue ailleurs en Chine à la même époque ni plus tard. La tombe M1, prise ici comme témoin, est aménagée à même le sol de l'époque, avec comme pavement une épaisse couche de galets (env. 8,8 m x 4,4 m). Sur ce socle ont été disposés lors des funérailles le cercueil du défunt et le mobilier. Puis, un tertre a été élevé sur près de deux mètres de haut afin de les recouvrir entièrement, et il débordait largement de la surface couverte par le socle de galets. De forme ronde, il avait un diamètre de 33 m. À la différence des tombes de la plaine Centrale et de Chu, il n'y a sous le tumulus ni fosse ni cercueil extérieur *guo*. Les autres tombes à tumulus de la région du Bas Yangzi suivent plus ou moins dans le principe ce modèle, mais présentent aussi d'autres aménagements sur lesquels il n'est pas nécessaire de s'attarder, car cette région est très éloignée du pays de Lu 魯 et de la plaine Centrale. Ainsi, dans le pays de Yue, près de Shaoxing 紹興, par exemple, à Yinshan 印山 (Zhejiang), dans une zone de petites collines d'environ 100 m d'altitude, une tombe attribuée au roi Yunchang de Yue (*Yue wang Yunchang* 越王允常), mort en 497 av. J.-C. et qui régnait depuis 510 av. J.-C., prend la forme d'une colline haute d'environ 9,8 m au point maximum. Le tumulus construit en terre damée abrite une construction en bois de section triangulaire composée de trois chambres successives. Contemporaine de Confucius, cette tombe est certainement la plus remarquable de la région⁴². Il ne fait aucun doute que Confucius ignorait complètement cette forme de tumulus, qui ne fut jamais imitée en Chine du Nord et n'essaima pas plus dans la péninsule du Shandong. En effet, comme dans le cas de la double tombe de Baoxiangsi, plus les sites sont proches de la plaine centrale, et plus les tombes se révèlent conformes aux standards Zhou, moyennant des nuances régionales.

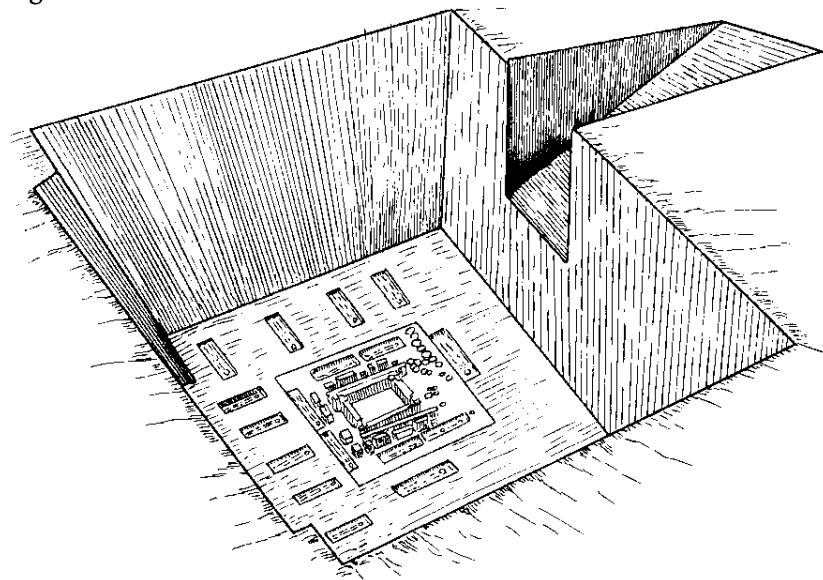
Fig. 6.



Coupe de la tombe 1 de Tunxi (Anhui), ca. IX^e siècle avant notre ère. 1. Couche de terre rouge. 2. Couche de terre blanche. 3. Terrasse de galets. 4. Sol géologique
 D'après Yin Feidi 殷非滌, « Anhui Tunxi Xi Zhou muzang fajue baogao » 安徽屯溪西周墓葬發掘報告, 1959, *Kaogu xuebao* 4 : 62 fig. 2.

- 35 Ainsi, la tombe de Hougudui 侯古堆, district de Gushi 固始 au Henan, comprend une fosse avec rampe d'accès, un cercueil extérieur renfermant le cercueil de la défunte entouré de six cercueils de morts d'accompagnement et d'une petite partie du mobilier funéraire (Fig. 7)⁴³. Autour du cercueil extérieur construit en bois au fond de la fosse étaient disposés onze cercueils de morts d'accompagnement. En outre, une chambre annexe en bois de vastes dimensions (9,4 m x 5,4 m à l'ouverture), au fond d'une fosse creusée à 13 m au nord de la fosse principale, contenait la plus grande partie du mobilier funéraire. La disposition générale de cette tombe correspond assez bien à la tradition funéraire qui s'est développée dans les pays de Lu et de Qi. Quant à la présence d'une chambre indépendante pour le mobilier, elle est caractéristique de la tradition qui s'est développée dans les petites principautés de la région sud du Henan. L'ensemble des aménagements de la tombe de Hougudui était couvert par un tumulus de 55 m de diamètre, d'une hauteur de 7 m (sans doute inférieure à la hauteur initiale). C'est avec la tombe de Baoxiangsi, mais postérieure à celle-ci d'environ deux siècles puisqu'on la date vers 500 av. J.-C., l'une des plus anciennes tombes avec tumulus de la Chine centrale. Son mobilier comprenait plusieurs pièces provenant de la région du Bas Yangzi qui attestent des liens personnels que la princesse entretenait avec l'un des pays, Wu ou Yue, qui y étaient implantés.

Fig. 7.



Vue de la fosse de la tombe 1 de Hougudui, district de Gushi (Henan), vers 500 av. J.-C.
 D'après Henan Sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 河南省文物考古研究所 (éd.), 2004, *Gushi Hougudui yi hao mu* (固始侯古堆一号墓), 6 fig. 4, Zhengzhou, Daxiang chubanshe.

- 36 Linzi 臨淄 fut la capitale de la principauté de Qi 齊 durant plusieurs siècles, entre le milieu du IX^e siècle et 221 av. J.-C. À proximité des ruines de la ville ancienne, au sud en particulier, 236 tumuli ont pu être identifiés. Ils ont été découverts lors d'un décompte effectué en 1970⁴⁴. Il n'en subsistait cependant qu'une partie en 1998 : 182 ont pu être analysés. L'étude scientifique menée a montré que leur construction suivait six modèles, une variété inconnue dans d'autres régions. Cependant, seules quatorze tombes ont pu être datées de la période des Royaumes combattants (481-221 av. J.-C.), quatre des Han de l'Est, tandis que le reste demeure indéterminé. Les dimensions sont assez élevées, entre 15 m et 106 m pour le plus long.
- 37 Quels que soient les sites, on fait le même constat – et dans le royaume de Chu comme dans la principauté de Jin 晉 il s'impose pareillement. D'une part, les tumuli recouvrent toujours des tombes de vastes dimensions dont les propriétaires appartenaient à une petite minorité de l'aristocratie, la plus riche ou la plus influente. Leur emploi, d'abord très limité, s'est généralisé pour les dirigeants, les princes ou les rois et leur famille, à partir du V^e siècle, ou plus sûrement du IV^e siècle avant notre ère⁴⁵. Il est possible que seuls subsistent aujourd'hui les plus grands tumuli, le temps ayant fait son œuvre. Cependant, leur mode de construction induit généralement un aménagement autour des fosses, car leur emprise au sol est toujours beaucoup plus large, parfois trois à quatre fois plus vaste que la fosse. Or, les cimetières où sont inhumés des individus qui étaient de rang inférieur, comme les membres de la classe des *shi* 士 à laquelle appartenait le Maître, sans être au bas de l'échelle sociale, sont constitués d'une forte concentration de tombes dont la densité ne permettait pas d'implanter un tumulus beaucoup plus vaste que les dimensions de la fosse, et cet aménagement, quand il a existé, devrait avoir laissé des traces sur et autour de la tombe, ce qui ne semble pas être le cas.
- 38 En Chine du Nord, le cimetière de Shangma 上馬 près de Houma 侯馬 au Shanxi, occupé continûment entre le VIII^e et le VI^e s. av. J.-C., comprenait au total 1373 tombes dont l'analyse révèle une nette stratification sociale⁴⁶. Cependant, aucune trace de tumulus, sur les plus grandes tombes comme sur les plus petites, n'y a été découverte⁴⁷. L'absence quasi-totale des recoupements de tombes, en dépit d'une répartition sans plan rigoureux apparent, suggère l'existence au sol de marques ou de structures autres que des tertres qui signalaient la présence des tombes et permettaient aux familles d'honorer leurs défunts.
- 39 Un constat similaire peut être fait à propos des cimetières de Chu, qui comptent au total plusieurs dizaines de milliers de tombes : seules les tombes de taille moyenne de la seconde moitié de l'époque des Royaumes combattants sont susceptibles d'être couvertes par un tumulus (Fig. 1). Mais un cimetière comme celui de Jiudian 九店, près de Jingzhou 荊州 au Hubei, dont l'activité s'est étendue de la fin du VI^e s. à la fin du III^e s. av. J.-C., ne comprenait qu'une tombe surmontée d'un tumulus sur un total de 597⁴⁸.
- 40 Dans toutes ces régions, la proportion de tertres funéraires est donc très faible, même si l'on tient compte du biais induit par les destructions des plus petits d'entre eux. D'autre part, la coutume s'est diffusée lentement dans la Chine centrale et la péninsule du Shandong, elle fut peu suivie avant le V^e siècle avant notre ère et son application paraît avoir été irrégulière sans qu'on puisse retrouver les règles autorisant ou non leur présence. On observe que plus la tombe est grande et richement pourvue, plus le

tumulus est vaste, et qu'aux IV^e et III^e siècles avant notre ère, les plus grandes tombes, aussi bien dans le royaume de Chu qu'en Chine centrale, sont toutes recouvertes d'un tertre. À la fin de la période, ce phénomène gagne les tombes de taille moyenne.

- 41 Dans ces conditions, il apparaît improbable que Confucius, vivant au tournant du V^e siècle avant notre ère, ait souhaité faire édifier un tumulus sur la tombe double de ses parents. Une telle intention semble anachronique. Elle aurait trouvé sa justification à l'époque des Han, quand la pratique s'était répandue dans plusieurs classes de la société, tout comme l'idée de réunir ses deux parents dans la même tombe, quand on avait les moyens de faire préparer à leur intention une tombe en briques. Mais eût-il voulu concrétiser son souhait de faire élever un tertre funéraire qu'il n'aurait probablement pu se le permettre en raison de son statut.

Conclusion

- 42 Dans le « Tangong », pour quelques éléments confirmés par l'archéologie, de nombreux autres éléments demeurent obscurs ou nous paraissent avoir été inventés quand l'information faisait défaut. Soit nous ne comprenons pas ce que signifiaient au juste certaines expressions en dépit des multiples commentaires qu'elles ont suscités, soit les commentaires qui s'y rapportent sont inexacts, soit encore c'est le texte même qui s'est trouvé entaché d'erreurs au cours de sa transmission. Dans certains cas, des coutumes sont traitées chronologiquement en les opposant les unes aux autres de manière à suggérer une évolution et faire sentir que les changements dynastiques induisaient l'introduction de pratiques différentes, qu'il s'agisse de matériaux, de couleurs ou de formes⁴⁹ :

有虞氏瓦棺，夏后氏罍周，殷人棺槨，周人牆置鬻。

Du temps de Shun, les cercueils étaient en terre cuite, sous les Xia on les entourait de briques, sous les Yin il y avait des cercueils intérieurs et extérieurs, sous les Zhou on disposait sur leurs parois des ornements. (3,12)

- 43 Cette tendance à historiciser les pratiques funéraires, qui s'est développée entre la fin des Zhou et le début de l'empire a conduit à des simplifications, et souvent à des erreurs : au temps des Xia, la brique n'avait pas encore été inventée ; avant les Xia, c'est-à-dire à la fin du néolithique, les urnes funéraires étaient des plus rares ; quant à la nature des ornements disposés sur les parois des cercueils les matériaux archéologiques commencent seulement à nous en donner une idée⁵⁰.
- 44 Dans les anecdotes qu'il renferme, le « Tangong » semble répondre à des questions que se posaient au moment de sa compilation certains milieux lettrés sur les rites à observer lors des funérailles. Un examen critique portant sur l'ensemble du *Liji* serait nécessaire en s'aidant des données archéologiques. Il permettrait de tester les connaissances des lettrés qui ont collecté les matériaux relatifs aux rites du passé, et de mieux distinguer la part qui relevait alors de connaissances bien établies de celle tirée de leurs suppositions quand il leur fallait pallier l'insuffisance de leurs informations.

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NOTES DE BAS DE PAGE

1. Le présent article porte sur quelques passages du « Tangong ». L'approche que nous suivons ici sera complétée, voire corrigée plus tard par une enquête plus systématique sur le *Liji* en intégrant l'analyse du *Zhouli* 周禮 et du *Yili* 儀禮, les deux autres grandes compilations rituelles de l'antiquité. Robert Eno a publié en ligne une traduction commentée du « Tangong » : Eno 2016. L'annexe B est une analyse très utile de la structure du texte : cf. 167-175.
2. Ce n'est pas le lieu ici d'examiner les causes de cette situation. L'analyse de Michèle Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens sur les origines d'un savoir archéologique en Chine et son évolution jusqu'au xx^e siècle en offre quelques clés : Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens 2010. Voir aussi Thote 2003.
3. Falkenhausen 2006, 74. L'analyse des cimetières et des tombes de la fin de l'âge du Bronze (env. 1000-env. 250 av. J.-C.) faite par L. von Falkenhausen lui a permis de mettre en évidence les distinctions de rang et de genre au sein des lignages exerçant un pouvoir territorial.
4. Voir Chang 1981 ; Falkenhausen 1993.
5. Riegel 1993.
6. D'après le *Shiji* 世紀 de Sima Qian 司馬遷, cf. Sima 1973, 265.
7. Granet 1922.
8. *Liji jijie* 1989, 170-171.
9. *Liji jijie* 1989, 168-169.
10. Cf. Couvreur 1950, tome I, première partie, 109-110 (3,3), 113-114 (3,6), et 117 (3,10).

11. Eno 2016, Appendix A, « Did the Zhōu People Practice “Joint Burial” and Mound Their Graves? A Discussion of Tán Gōng 3.3 and 3.6 », 155–166. Voir 155.
12. Cf. Eno 2016, 28, note 4, et Appendix A, 159 et suiv.
13. R. Eno évoque cette question, et montre comment les commentateurs l’ont traitée. Voir Eno 2016, 31.
14. Sur les tombes de Qin, voir Falkenhausen 2004. Voir aussi Thote 2004, 2009, et 2016.
15. Cf. Wang 2006 et Hubei sheng bowuguan 1989, 11-12.
16. Maspero 1978, 292.
17. C’est par exemple le cas de la tombe 157 de Zhangjiapo, près de Chang’an (fin x^e - début ix^e s. av. J.-C.). Cf. Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo 1999, 18-22.
18. Cf. Falkenhausen 2006, 74-126 (chapitre 2, « Distinction of Rank and Gender »).
19. Cependant, depuis le début de l’empire, plus de vingt siècles de cultures agricoles intensives sur un territoire aussi densément peuplé que celui de la Chine en ont souvent éradiqué toutes traces dans le paysage environnant.
20. Cf. Hubei sheng bowuguan 1989.
21. Testart 2004, 24-34.
22. Huang 2004.
23. Cf. Lu & Hu 1988, vol. 1, 270 et suiv.
24. L’un des plus célèbres mausolées est celui des rois de Zhongshan 中山 dont le plan a été découvert dans la tombe du roi Cuo. Cf. Hebei sheng wenwu yanjiusuo 1995 ; et Wu 2017.
25. Wu Hung a bien montré comment s’est traduite dans les faits matériels cette évolution mentale en comparant les différents lieux de culte associés aux morts, les temples ancestraux et les tombes. cf. Wu 1988, notamment 90 et suiv.
26. Cf. Thote 1991.
27. Cf. Falkenhausen 2006, 312-313; Wu 2010, 38 et suiv.
28. Cf. Loewe 1979, 9 et suiv. ; Seidel 1987, 223–237.
29. Cette évolution a été décrite dans un article fondateur de Yu 1980. Les premières tombes princières répondant au modèle horizontal ont été creusées dans des falaises ; voir par exemple les tombes jumelles de Mancheng 滿城, dans le Hebei, qui appartenaient à Liu Sheng 劉勝, prince de Zhongshan, mort en 113 av. J.-C., et son épouse Dou Wan 竇綰, morte avant 104 av. J.-C. Liu Sheng était un frère de l’empereur Wu des Han (Han Wudi 漢武帝, 140-87 av. J.-C.). Cf. Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo 1980.
30. *Idem.*
31. Voir Nickel 2011.
32. Cf. Pirazzoli-t’Serstevens 2009.
33. *Liji jijie* 1989, 185.
34. Eno 2016, 42, et Appendix A, 158-159.
35. *Liji jijie* 1989, 166.
36. Le plan le plus complet du site a été publié après la découverte des tombes 113 et 114, dont la présence n’avait pas été soupçonnée auparavant. Cf. Beijing daxue kaogu wenboyuan *et al.* 2001. Lothar von Falkenhausen mentionne d’autres sites de la Chine du Nord où se trouvent de grandes tombes disposées parallèlement deux à deux. Cf. Falkenhausen 1999, 505.
37. Voir Henan Xinyang diqu wenguanhui *et al.* 1984, 302-332 et 348.
38. Dans le *Liji*, c’est le mot *fen* 墳 qu’on traduit par tumulus, tandis que dans la langue d’aujourd’hui, on utilise le mot *dun* 墩.
39. La discipline que l’on appelle en Occident « archéologie du paysage », dont les résultats sont si probants partout dans le monde pour restituer l’environnement et les paysages de l’antiquité, reste encore quasiment ignorée des archéologues chinois.
40. Falkenhausen 1999, 527.

41. Un rapport préliminaire du site a été publié en 1959, *cf.* Yin 1959. Le rapport complet de 2006 remet en cause, à tort, les datations initiales, *cf.* Li 2006.
42. *Cf.* Zhejiang sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo *et al.* 2002.
43. Henan Sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 2004.
44. Shandong sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiuyuan 2007.
45. Falkenhausen 2006, 336.
46. *Ibid.*, 128 et suiv., et du même auteur une analyse non moins remarquable de ce cimetière, *cf.* Falkenhausen 2001.
47. Shanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo 1994, 17.
48. Il s'agit de la tombe 104 (première moitié du IV^e s. av. J.-C.), une tombe représentative de la catégorie supérieure de ce cimetière (types F et G), *cf.* Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 1995.
49. Wu 2010, 97. Wu Hung considère que ces observations faites dans les rituels ne sont pas pure fiction.
50. Thote 2012.

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On the Rites in mid-Eastern Han

Michael Nylan and Nicholas Constantino

- 1 This paper focuses on rituals and ritual masters during Zhangdi's 章帝 (r. AD 75–88) reign in Eastern Han, for which a great deal of roughly contemporaneous source material exists, including the *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書 (History of Eastern Han) biographies and treatises, the *Bohu tong* 白虎通 (White Tiger Hall Discussions) ascribed to Ban Gu 班固, and Xu Shen's 許慎 controversial *Wujing yiyi* 五經異義 (Rival Readings of the Five Classics), not to mention the scientifically excavated ritual sites in the environs of the capital at Luoyang.¹ By this sharp focus on a single reign of a “good” and apparently effective ruler, the paper aims to move beyond the usual generalities offered about Han ritual to dispute the existence of a “ritual system” in place at the time, or even an especially authoritative set of precedents.² This essay has much larger implications, as we have reviewed the relevant materials from mid-Western Han to late Eastern Han, and believe our conclusions to be valid for the four hundred years ruled by the two Han dynasties, or for long afterwards.
- 2 The essay consists of three parts, with each referring to a different set of sources that are seldom read together. Part I examines the career trajectories, ritual programmes, and theoretical claims of five of the most famous ritual masters at the courts of Zhangdi and his father, including Huan Rong 桓榮 and Cao Bao 曹褒, based on the relevant histories from the *Hou Hanshu*. Evidently, the emperor consulted these ritual masters on a wide range of matters that moderns generally deem far outside the realm of “ritual,” inviting us to rethink the purported boundaries between ritual and politics or law, *wen* 文 and *wu* 武, rewards and punishments, and, ultimately, the sources of classical authority.³ Part II turns to the excavation reports for the chief ritual complex, the Sanyong 三雍, built shortly before Zhangdi's reign in the Eastern Han capital of Luoyang, asking how well the physical remains confirm the early descriptions of the solemn activities performed there. The layout of the Taixue 太學 (Imperial Academy) and the Mingtang 明堂⁴ sites proves particularly interesting, for a review of the early descriptions attached to these two sites, buttressed by the archaeological reports, plainly shows that the Luoyang capital site functioned mainly as a ritual performance centre, even if many academics today imagine a teaching institution transmitting textual learning, on the model of the ancient Greek academies. Part III analyses the

fragments of the controversial literature generated during Zhangdi's reign that still survive. This literature, studied alongside the *Hanshu* and *Hou Hanshu* treatises devoted to the Luoyang court rituals, demonstrates that nearly every ritual, no matter how sacred, was subject to dispute and revision; the objects of worship, the proper liturgical forms, and the place and timing of worship were debated, again and again. "New rituals" were invented and reinvented with surprising alacrity, with reformers, even well into Eastern Han, consciously drawing inspiration from such models of flexible adaptation as the "model of classical learning" (Ruzong 儒宗)⁵ Shusun Tong 叔孫通 in Qin and early Western Han.

On the ritual masters

- 3 To give readers a better idea of the roles that ritual masters played at court, this essay examines the careers of five of the most prominent ritual masters at the courts of Mingdi 明帝 (r. 57-75) and Zhangdi 章帝 (r. 75-88), the second and third emperors of Eastern Han, all of whom participated in ritual controversies, not coincidentally. Each of those ritual masters (Huan Rong 桓榮, Zhao Xi 趙熹, Jia Kui 賈逵, Cao Bao 曹褒, and Ding Hong 丁鴻) bears a distinctive profile, as we will see, and yet four of the five masters cycled in an out of posts requiring expertise in the rites and posts in the military.⁶ (The fifth came to the court in Luoyang at an advanced age that precluded military service.) As we will see, other prominent experts on ritual, including Ban Gu and his patron Dou Rong 竇融, showed themselves to be equally conversant with military matters.⁷
- 4 To put these careers in historical context, we first present an overview of the court rites provided by the official history for Eastern Han. Fan Ye's 范曄 concluding Appraisal (*lun* 論) for the collective biography of some of these ritual masters, echoing an earlier assessment by Ban Gu,⁸ states plainly, albeit with regret, that neither the Western or Eastern Han dynasty ever managed to institute a ritual system, with standardised rites for court ceremonies:

論曰：漢初天下創定，朝制無文，叔孫通頗採經禮，參酌秦法，雖適物觀時，有救崩敝，然先王之容典蓋多闕矣，是以賈誼、仲舒、王吉、劉向之徒，懷憤歎息，所不能已也。資文、宣之遠圖明懿美，而終莫或用。[...] 孝章永言前王，明發興作，專命禮臣，撰定國憲，洋洋乎盛德之事焉。而業絕天筭，議黜異端，斯道竟復墜矣。[...] 修補舊文，獨何猜焉？

When the Western Han first settled the realm, the court regulations followed no discernible pattern. Shusun Tong to some degree (po 頗) chose from the Classics and rites, with an admixture of Qin models and institutions [for the rituals he devised]. Although this suited affairs at the time, and in some respects saved [the ruling house] from utter ruin, there were still many lacunae with respect to the rules for decorum laid down by the Former Kings. For this reason, the likes of Jia Yi 賈誼, Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒, Wang Ji 王吉, and Liu Xiang 劉向 burned with indignation and heaved repeated sighs.⁹ The far-sighted plans of Wendi and Xuandi were glorious and superb, but, in the end, none were actually put in place... The filial emperor Zhang (r. 75-88) was forever praising the Former Kings; night and day; he instituted new procedures, relying on his ritual masters, whom he commanded to selectively determine the constitution for his ruling house. How vast and far-ranging was the business directed by his full virtues and powers! Yet the undertaking was cut off mid-stream by that emperor's untimely death [of

thirty-one]. And then those who had put forth suggestions were dismissed for employing outlandish explanations (*yi duan* 異端), with the result that this Way [of the Former Kings], finally, once again, collapsed... So, when it comes to repairing and supplementing the old patterns, how can one possibly guess [what may happen next] (修補舊文, 獨何猜焉)?¹⁰

5 To reiterate the main points of the Appraisal:

1. Shusun Tong's first suggestions for court rituals were a mishmash of many influences, with no specific guiding principles, aside from the necessity to suit the exigencies of the time.
2. For generation after generation, the classicists, including the five whose biographies we sketch below, sought to have their respective rulers institute ritual reforms, to no avail.
3. While at least three emperors (Wendi, Xuandi, and Zhangdi) committed to undertake major ritual reforms, they failed to implement them, despite the widespread belief that the fortunes of the two Han dynasties, Eastern and Western, should rest upon some firmer "constitution" (set of ritual precedents?) than that provided by the Han founder and his ministers.
4. Given the nature of the rites and music, which have undergone endless emendations since the halcyon time of the Former Kings, it may be unrealistic to believe that any court can achieve a unified ritual system.

6 Multiple sources dating from the two Han dynasties suggest that Fan Ye's Appraisal was accurate and fair. One might note, for example, the repeated statements made by the committed ritual experts Dong Zhongshu, Yang Xiong 揚雄, Xu Shen, and Ying Shao 應劭; living at roughly hundred-years intervals during Western and Eastern Han, each bemoaned the *ad hoc* character of ritual matters, with "each following his own inclinations and ideas."¹¹ *Hanshu* 22, the treatise devoted to rituals, ends on the same discouraging note.¹² Thoughtful advisors were acutely aware that whenever the classicists were asked to devise court rituals, they engaged in seemingly endless disputations to no end, with each making bizarre suggestions supposedly justified by hallowed precedents.¹³ Certainly, during the reigns of Mingdi and Zhangdi, we know that Zhangdi changed the burial rites used for his father. To disobey one's father's dying wishes, in the hopes of legislating better rituals that would foster the long-term welfare of the dynasty –that seems extraordinary, yet it is just the tip of the ritual iceberg, as we will see. For even the all-important rites at the imperial ancestral temple remained "unfixed," as noted in the official histories.¹⁴

7 The ritual masters whose lives are detailed in the *Hou Hanshu* biographies operated in this historical context, as we shall see:

Huan Rong 桓榮 (d. ca. 60)

8 Huan Rong was one of the ritual masters, along with Zhang Chun 張純, who persuaded Mingdi that the Sanyong (Three Rituals' complex) must be built to the south of the capital of Luoyang, to secure the dynastic fortunes of the "restored" Liu clan. The complex was completed in AD 59, and Huan was singled out for honours at the inaugural ceremonies at the complex. Exceptionally for the ritual masters, Huan Rong held no military post,¹⁵ but he did hold a string of impressive official titles, including

Superintendent of Ceremonials (*taichang* 太常),¹⁶ Academician (for an Ouyang *Documents* reading),¹⁷ Gentleman Consultant (*yilang* 議郎), bureau official on the Chancellor's (*da situ* 大司徒) staff in AD 44,¹⁸ and Junior Tutor (*shaofu* 少傅)¹⁹ for the emperor in AD 52, as well as the courtesy title of “Quintuply Experienced” (*wu geng* 五更) in AD 59. Huan Rong, we learn, was one of the most famous teachers of the *Documents* classic in Luoyang.²⁰ When Huan in old age was still serving, rather reluctantly, in his capacity as minister in charge of court ceremonials, Mingdi organised a big event at the ministry, where many of the princes of the land were invited, along with the assembled students of the Classics, to try to stump Huan Rong.²¹ More than once, Huan Rong could barely get a word out about his understanding of a passage before Mingdi would thunder, “And the minister in this case is right!”²² Somewhat later, Mingdi urged his officials to offer gifts to Huan Rong’s family, as a way of signifying their gratitude for the excellence of his teachings.²³ (It is doubtless significant that Mingdi invited to this gathering Liu Cang 劉蒼, Prince of Dongping, insofar as Mingdi’s full brother also enjoyed a reputation as a ritual authority.)²⁴

Zhao Xi 趙熹 (AD 3–80)

- 9 Zhao Xi, like Huan Rong, already appears at the court of the Eastern Han founder, urging Guangwu to undertake the *feng* 封 and *shan* 禪 ceremonies in AD 54, to signify that peace prevailed throughout the new “restored” empire, and to build the Three Rituals’ complex (*Sanyong*) at Luoyang. When the complex was completed, it was also Zhao Xi, among others, who had to persuade Mingdi not to tear down the Taixue as a useless institution that duplicated functions of the Sanyong ritual complex nearby – a very interesting fact.²⁵ It was then apparently Zhao Xi, as Supreme Commander (*taiwei* 太尉), who supervised the obsequies for Guangwu in AD 57, following the final instructions left by the deceased. Zhao Xi rendered an extremely important service to Mingdi, by instituting new palace protocols that placed the emperor at a greater distance from his officials, the other princes, and his old allies in arms. We know that Mingdi was particularly worried about coups by Guangwu’s other children, and much of his reign was spent removing them from positions of power, even by trumped-up charges of treason, when necessary. However, Zhao Xi was dismissed in AD 60 for failing to discover and disclose the reports scammed by Xue Xiu 薛脩, Chancellor of Zhongshan, the kingdom of Emperor Ming’s half-brother Liu Yan 劉焉, whom Mingdi mistrusted.²⁶ And when Zhangdi ascended to the throne, in AD 75, Zhao assumed the role of Senior Tutor, sharing control of the Imperial Secretariat with the new *taiwei* Mou Rong 牟融, presumably until Zhao’s death five years later. Under Zhangdi, we know, Zhao Xi was honoured with the title of “Foremost Aged Person of the Empire” (*Guo yuan lao* 國元老), an epithet similar to Huan’s “Quintuply Experienced” title.²⁷ Zhao Xi recommended the classical scholar Lu Gong 魯恭 to his own staff, after which Lu participated in the famous White Tiger debates in AD 79.²⁸
- 10 Much of Zhao Xi’s biography styles him as a military man, not as a ritual master. Zhao had served the Gengshi 更始 emperor (as had Guangwu before toppling him in a coup) in a variety of military posts, including Wuwei Detached General (*Wuwei pian jiangjun* 武威偏將軍), General of the Gentlemen of the Palace (*Zhonglang jiang* 中郎將), and Noble of Courageous Deeds (*Yonggong hou* 勇功侯).²⁹ During Guangwu’s reign, Zhao served as Governor of Pingyuan 平原,³⁰ and Supreme Commander, by AD 51.³¹ He continued as

taiwei under Mingdi for a while, before his dismissal, but by AD 61, he was back in a military post, as Superintendent of the Guards in the palace (*weiwei* 衛尉).³² At one point in Zhao's career, it was due to his skills as military commander that rebels in Pingyuan were put down, and many brought under the control of the commanderies of Chenliu 陳留 and Yingchuan 潁川, Guangwu's strongholds. Presumably because he had switched loyalties to Guangwu in a timely fashion, and then loyally ministered to Mingdi, Zhangdi personally visited Zhao Xi during his final illness, and after his death, wanted to award him a posthumous title.³³ Zhao Xi was touted as an exemplary defender for the Eastern Han palace, in the eulogies.³⁴

Jia Kui 賈逵 (30–101)

- 11 Jia Kui, the ninth-generation descendant of the classical master Jia Yi, knew the *Erya* 爾雅, the Han-era *Annals* traditions associated with Zuo Qiuming's 左丘明 teachings, the Xiahou 夏侯 tradition for the *Documents* classic, and possibly a *guwen Shangshu* 古文尚書.³⁵ Because of his erudition, he was asked by Zhangdi to compile a book that would detail the "similarities and differences" (*tongyi* 同異) between the Ouyang 歐陽 version of the *Shangshu*, the two Xiahou versions of the *Shangshu*, and a *guwen Shangshu*. (Note that different *shuo* 說 attached to the Classics were treated as rival traditions.)³⁶ Concerned that he should have no distractions from his work, Zhangdi sent a handsome stipend of 20,000 cash to Jia's ageing mother, and appointed Jia Kui commander of the guards in the Northern Palace (*wei shi ling* 衛士令).³⁷ At some point, Jia Kui joined Ban Gu to work in the palace libraries, collating texts.³⁸ So Jia Kui compiled a 3-juan analysis, which he sent to the emperor, and Zhangdi duly approved it.³⁹ He then proceeded to do much the same for the various *Odes* traditions, and also, they say, for the *Zhouguan* 周官.⁴⁰
- 12 Zhangdi supposedly ordered all the classicists (*zhu Ru* 諸儒) to study four texts: the Mao version of the *Odes*, the *Zuoshi chunqiu*, the *Guliang zhuan* 穀梁傳, and a *guwen Shangshu* (possibly, but not necessarily Du Lin's 杜林 one-juan lacquer piece), and we are told that "from this time on," these texts became much more in circulation among members of the governing elite.⁴¹ Zhangdi had Jia Kui teach these four texts at the Academy, we are told, although four of these texts (all but the *Guliang*) had had no official Academicians appointed for them previously. Zhangdi in some sense "sponsored" them, since Jia Kui's students did very well in securing advisory posts in the Liu-clan kingdoms. (Apparently, Jia Kui was also allowed to select and teach twenty promising young *Gongyang* 公羊 scholars,⁴² as he thought best.)
- 13 Jia's influence was challenged by Li Yu 李育, the Academician for the *Gongyang*, who wrote a compilation in 41 sections, demonstrating the weaknesses of the *Zuo*, as he knew it, with frequent resort to the apocryphal texts to argue against Jia Kui.⁴³ Readers may recall that Jia Kui had argued the superiority of the *Zuo* by saying that it alone was in agreement with the apocryphal texts, *tu chen* 圖讖, which had caught Zhangdi's attention.⁴⁴ During the White Tiger Hall court conference of AD 79,⁴⁵ Li Yu was deemed the "winner" in every argument against Jia Kui.⁴⁶ Nonetheless, four years later, in AD 83, an edict by Zhangdi expressed continued interest in the *Zuo* teachings, along with other versions of the Classics not awarded Academicians' posts. After AD 85, until Zhangdi's death in AD 88, Jia Kui mainly figures in the records as a calendrical expert; his knowledge of history was deemed vital to the production of a new calendar –shades

of Liu Xin 劉歆, his father's teacher.⁴⁷ Let us recall Michael Loewe on timing: all ideal dynasties had to change the calendar in use.⁴⁸ Under Hedi 和帝, Zhangdi's successor, Jia Kui acted mainly as a consultant to the new throne, but in AD 97, in his late sixties, he was appointed concurrently to the palace courtiers, many of whom served as something like the praetorian guards, and then to a post as Cavalry Commandant. Jia purportedly wrote a million words on variant traditions preserved in the Classics, in addition to nine *pian* of praise songs for the dynasty.⁴⁹ Some 175 glosses of Jia's are preserved in Ruan Yuan's *Shisan jing zhushu* 十三經注疏, which are mainly devoted to the *Zuo*, but also gloss terms in the *Odes*, *Documents*, and the *Rites* canons.

Cao Bao 曹褒 (d. 102)

- 14 Cao Bao, son of Cao Chong 曹充, a famous ritual master whose help the Eastern Han founder had secured in setting up *his* court rituals, was acutely aware, thanks to his father's own teachings, that the court rites and music had varied, age by age, during the tenures of the most famous sage kings.⁵⁰ He was also one of the few masters of the *Qing shi li* 慶氏禮 traditions, along with his father.⁵¹ So when Zhangdi promulgated an edict, asking for help in devising new rituals, Cao Bao speedily answered the call, adding that auspicious signs had indicated that there ought indeed to be a change in the court observances of rituals.⁵² Zhangdi then appointed Cao Bao to undertake the task on his own. When several prominent figures at court protested that this would be a mammoth undertaking, too large for any single person to handle –with the *taichang* Chao Kan 巢堪 and Ban Gu, who recorded some of the White Tiger Hall debates, leading the protest– Zhangdi stood his ground, saying that when too many experts got together, nothing was likely to be accomplished in the way of ritual reforms. Evidently, Zhangdi had no intention of “being constrained” by his court officials in such matters, as custom dictated that he accept the decisions made in formal court conferences attended by experts.⁵³ So although Zhangdi issued a second edict asking for help, apparently as a way of appeasing his critics, in the end he confirmed Cao Bao's appointment to devise his new rituals, likening Cao Bao to Shun's legendary Music Master Kui 夔.
- 15 Cao Bao proceeded to write 150 *juan* on imperial rituals to guide specific ritual reforms, but Zhangdi hesitated to insist upon Cao's prescriptions, given his court officials' opposition; there is some indication that Zhangdi preferred to settle calendrical matters before instituting the ritual reforms tied to the calendar.⁵⁴ Ultimately Zhangdi died before the reforms were implemented, at thirty-one years of age. So far as we know, Cao Bao's *New Rituals* (*xin li* 新禮), as they were called, were used precisely once: when Zhangdi's successor, Hedi, came to be capped.⁵⁵ Meanwhile, after Zhangdi's death, some court officials called for Cao Bao's execution, and he was lucky to escape with his life.⁵⁶ We know that Hedi refused, when he became an adult, to use Cao Bao's inventions at his own court, and the text of the *New Rituals* may have fallen into disuse or ruin at that time.
- 16 If we closely examine Cao Bao's biography, we learn that he served in both explicitly ritual and explicitly military posts: he was Academician and Palace Attendant under Zhangdi, after a mixed record in the provinces; in AD 92, after Zhangdi's death, he served in two capacities as colonel.⁵⁷

Ding Hong 丁鴻 (d. AD 94)

- 17 Like Huan Rong and Cao Bao before him, Ding Hong was the son of a famous ritual master, Ding Chen 丁綝, and pupil also of Huan Rong. Like Huan Rong and Cao Bao, Ding Hong was also the scion of a noble house, with a fief inherited near the important centre of Yingchuan. In AD 67, Ding was first recommended to the court by a fellow pupil, and due to his expertise in one chapter of the *Documents* classic, he was given robes and caps comparable to those awarded to the Academicians. Soon afterwards, in AD 70, Ding was appointed to the inner circle of imperial courtiers. In AD 79, Ding (then magistrate in Lujiang 廬江, in southern Anhui Province) travelled to the court to participate in the White Tiger Hall discussions, where he exerted a strong voice in the proceedings. As it happens, others, including a military man, were sent to the conference to “stump” Ding.⁵⁸ In AD 85, he accompanied Zhangdi on an imperial progress, during which he presented a memorial praising the emperor’s pastoral care for his subjects and his attention to ritual matters. Ding remained in good standing throughout Zhangdi’s reign. After Zhangdi’s death, Ding Hong served as *taichang* 太常, Superintendent of Ceremonial at ministerial rank for the palace, during the regency of Dowager Empress Dou 竇太后. It was in that capacity that, not long after Hedi’s accession to the throne, he sent a sealed memorial to the throne warning of the ominous signs indicating that Dou Xian 竇憲, the dowager’s brother, was amassing far too much personal power. In response to the memorial, Ding, who had previously served in several military positions, including that of Colonel of Archers in AD 70, was appointed to the concurrent posts of *taiwei* and *weiwei* 太尉兼衛尉, commanding the palace guards in both the Northern and Southern Palaces, and it was Ding who “received” (*i.e.*, confiscated) General Dou’s official regalia, the ribbons and sashes.⁵⁹ Ding was thought to have encouraged the court coup that Hedi carried out, with the help of his eunuchs, to rid himself of the Dous.
- 18 Once again, we see the easy way that those in power switched easily between ritual roles and military appointments. Some modern scholars are wont to remark that it was the Qin custom to make the “men of the law” (*i.e.*, judges) “as models,” arguing that in Han times, legal and military experts were largely supplanted by classicists, if not Confucians.⁶⁰ We would argue instead that military and ritual matters, not to mention classical learning, were never placed in separate categories during Han times, or indeed, in the centuries after Eastern Han.⁶¹ One need only think of Huan Tan 桓譚 (d. 28 BC) who served two masters –Yang Xiong and a sword master– or Wei Lang 魏朗 in Eastern Han, to begin to question the standard narrative about the distant past. Notably, the two earliest historians of China, Sima Qian 司馬遷 and Ban Gu, also came from “mixed family backgrounds,” in the sense that their forebears were known equally for their military exploits and for their classical erudition.
- 19 Just as noteworthy in this regard is the famous ritual scene of instruction under Mingdi, in AD 57, at the establishment of the Sanyong, when copies of the *Xiaojing* 孝經 (Classic of Filial Piety) were handed out to the palace guards, presumably so that knowledge of that Classic would strengthen their loyalty.⁶² We no longer need puzzle over the invitation to generals to attend the White Tiger Hall Conference, along with Academicians and courtiers.⁶³ It was as likely that generals would be ritual masters as not, and ritual practices and indeed, classicism itself, were always at the service of Han legitimacy, which sought backing from its military men.

The main ritual performance sites in Luoyang

- 20 For the casual reader, it may seem impossible at this remove in time to sort out the confusing and seemingly contradictory accounts relating to the Eastern Han “Sanyong” or Three Rituals complex comprising the Mingtang 明堂, Biyong 辟/璧雍/壅 (Circular Moat), and Lingtai 靈臺 (Spirit Tower), let alone the relation between the Sanyong complex and two other sites that frequently appear with it in the early sources, the Taimiao 太廟 (Imperial Ancestral Temple) and Taixue 太學 (Imperial Academy).⁶⁴ Contributing to the confusion are several unambiguous statements in the early sources alleging that the same sites had different names in different eras, depending on function.⁶⁵ Some conflation in the sources between sites in Western Han and in Eastern Han are also at play. That said, careful attention to the archaeological evidence – imperfect at best – for the court-sponsored sites in late Western Han Chang’an and early Eastern Han Luoyang, considered in light of the claims registered in the received accounts, allows us to assess the accuracy of longstanding traditions, and consider what they might reveal about Han court rituals in relation to traditions of learning and emulation.
- 21 There were five major ritual sites in Eastern Han Luoyang or five proper nouns for sites frequently bandied about, at least.⁶⁶ There is no question that the dynasty must have had an imperial ancestral temple (a Taimiao), and yet we know least about its location, either from the histories or from archaeology. One would expect it *not* to be in the southern suburbs of the new capital at Luoyang, but safely nestled within the walls of the capital, and indeed, Hans Bielenstein located it snugly against the northernmost city wall of Luoyang, while admitting some bafflement as to the absence of records specifying its placement.⁶⁷ There is little dispute in Eastern Han or later about the Lingtai, thankfully. We know such a viewing tower did *not* exist in Chang’an, but the Eastern Han founder built it in Luoyang, so that experts might observe the stars as part of the formal rituals. Once we leave these two sites, we immediately confront multiple problems of interpretation. Not the least of them are: can we trust late Eastern Han reports to describe what Zhangdi’s Luoyang was like, and can we trust, as the archaeologists do, that the Wei-dynasty sites were placed more or less on the same sites dating to Eastern Han Luoyang?⁶⁸ At present, we have no alternatives but to do so.

On the Mingtang Ritual Centre

- 22 It is best to begin with the obvious: it is often difficult to tell which Mingtang the early sources are describing.⁶⁹ Hoary legends mention one or more Mingtang erected as early as mid-Western Han – a Mingtang erected near Mt. Tai, on the banks of the Wen 汶 River,⁷⁰ whose construction was said to harken back to the time of the Yellow Emperor, with nods to Yao and Shun and good King Wen of Zhou for good measure.⁷¹ It was not until late Western Han, however, that Chengdi’s 成帝 (r. 33-7 BC) court, propelled by proponents of the *haogu* 好古 (“loving antiquity”) movement, began to discuss building an impressive ritual centre in the southern suburbs of the capital (then at Chang’an). The proximate cause for these discussions was a chance find of sixteen ancient chime stones, widely interpreted as a sign or even order from Heaven to erect such a ritual site.⁷² Apparently, that ritual centre was not completed for nearly a decade, for in AD 5,

some four years before the downfall of Western Han, a single structure, variously called a Mingtang and a Biyong, was readied in the suburbs south of the capital, by which time the site already reflected a dense concatenation of meanings.⁷³ This Chang'an Mingtang-Biyong was evidently a squarish structure topped by a circular roof, in imitation of the cosmic powers of heaven and earth, sitting within a circular tamped-earth space bordered by a moat that is itself enclosed within square walls (see Fig. 1).⁷⁴ The smallish site was built close to a much larger ritual site with more than ten secondary sites within its walls.⁷⁵

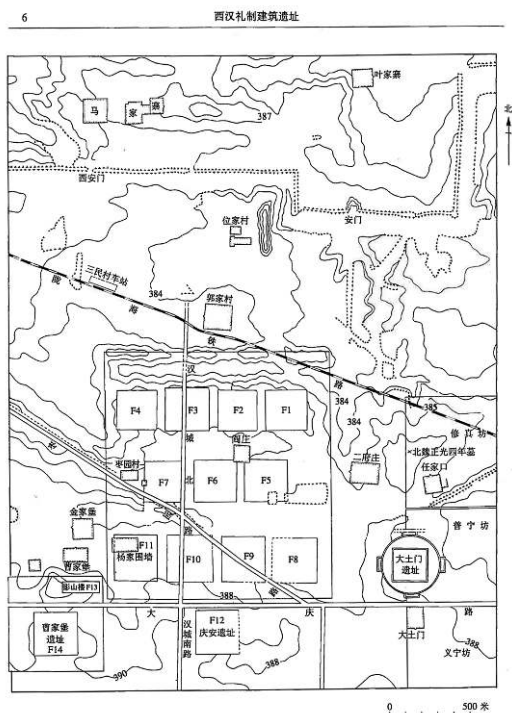
Fig. 1



Michael Nylan had this image generated, based on reconstructions found in *Zhongguo da bai ke quanshu* 中国大百科全书, *kaogu juan* 考古卷 and Steinhardt, Nancy Shatzman. *Chinese Traditional Architecture*. New York City: China Institute in America, China House Gallery, 1984. p 71-72

- 23 The Chang'an site identified as the Mingtang built under the regent Wang Mang 王莽 has an excavation report providing further details (Fig. 2).⁷⁶ Note first that the archaeologists' reconstruction shows not two ritual sites – a Mingtang and a Biyong – but a single structure surrounded by a circular terrace.⁷⁷ The structure had one audience hall, four sides (without walls), judging from the post holes, and it seems to have been thatched, with a connection to water, in that a moat surrounded the walls of the complex. The structure evidently had some sort of tower above the roof from which to observe the sky.⁷⁸ In late Western Han the sense was that the single building was the first ritual site of its kind built in the early empires, for a praise-song spoke of “the Mingtang and Biyong – fallen into disuse for a thousand years, with no one [before this] able to revive them.”⁷⁹

Fig. 2



图一 汉长安城南郊地形及已发掘的礼制建筑遗址

Found in *Xi Han li zhi jian zhu yi zhi* 西汉礼制建筑遗址. Beijing: Wen wu chu ban she 文物出版社, 2003, p 6.

- 24 For present purposes, it suffices to note that the Chang'an ritual site differed markedly from that built at Luoyang during the reign of Guangwu (r. AD 25–57) of Eastern Han,⁸⁰ and in use in the famous Yongping 永平 ceremonies, in AD 59, which figure so prominently in Eastern Han narratives,⁸¹ despite the occasional conflation with the Chang'an site in the scholarly literature. For example, if a recent excavation report is correct (which cannot be taken for granted),⁸² the Mingtang and Biyong occupied two distinct sites in the Luoyang ritual complex, to which a separate Lingtai site was added to the west, along with a separate Taixue to the east. Evidently, the first “restored” Eastern Han court accepted as settled precedent that such a ritual centre should be built to signal dynastic legitimacy. Certainly, in AD 56, soon after the Eastern Han founder had pacified the land, he began building the ritual complex we call the Sanyong comprising a Mingtang, Biyong, and Lingtai.⁸³ Mingdi's use of the ritual complex for a grand ceremony early on his reign, in AD 59, signalled that the Sanyong had been completed to his court's satisfaction. Ban Gu's “Eastern Capital *fu*” duly praised Mingdi on that occasion for

御明堂，臨辟雍，揚緇熙，宣皇風，登靈臺，考休徵。(班彪列傳下)

Holding audience in the Mingtang
 Visiting the Biyong
 Radiating continuous brightness
 He promulgates august teaching
 He ascends the Divine Tower
 Studies the good omens [in the sky]...⁸⁴

- 25 Judging from the excavation reports (one original and one emended), the Luoyang ritual complex contained not one Mingtang-Biyong surrounded by a circular moat, but

four of the five most solemn imperial ritual sites enclosed within a single territory, as seen in the first archaeological report.⁸⁵ The archaeologists believe, in other words, that they have located three separate ritual sites for the Sanyong plus a nearby Taixue (see below), and the building they identify as the Eastern Han Mingtang certainly differs from that erected in late Western Han.⁸⁶ Possibly relevant is the message conveyed by Ban Gu's *Hanshu* treatise on the rites and music: that both types of performances must change over time. But since Eastern Han testimony preserved in the received literature from the period contradicts important aspects of their picture, as do parts of the revised 2010 report on the ritual sites, we wonder how the lead archaeologists can be certain in all of their identification of buildings. The book-length archaeological report *Han Wei Luoyang gu cheng nanjiao lizhi jianzhu yizhi: 1962-1992 nian kaogu fajue baogao* 漢魏洛陽故城南郊禮制建築遺址: 1962-1992 年考古發掘報告 offers little to enlighten in this regard. But judging from the excavated remains, none of the four ritual sites in the southern suburbs at Luoyang was especially large.

Fig. 3

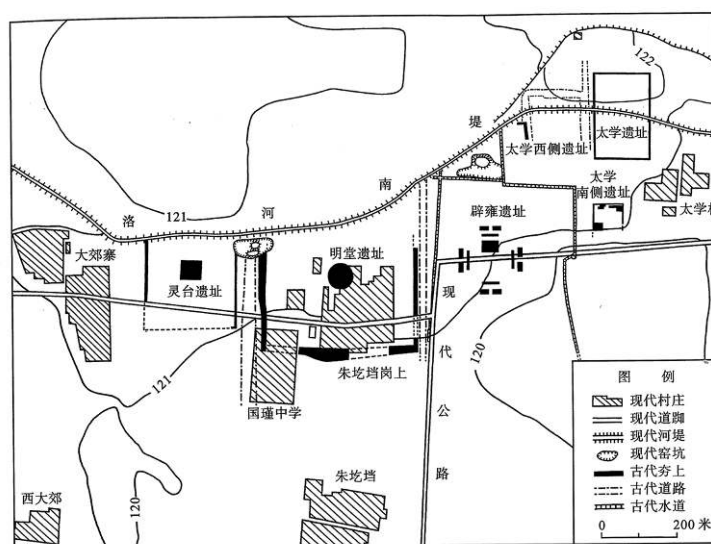


图3 汉魏洛阳故城南郊礼制建筑遗址分布图

Once identified as Eastern Han, these sites are now dated to the Wei dynasty by local archaeologists. The Eastern Han sites may not be identical to those shown.

Found in *Han Wei Luoyang gu cheng nanjiao lizhi jianzhu yizhi: 1962-1992 nian kaogu fajue baogao* 漢魏洛陽故城南郊禮制建築遺址 : 1962-1992 年考古發掘報告, Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2010, 3.

- 26 Late Eastern Han accounts register the idea that the Mingtang was the site where the court rituals –including meeting with the nobles– were performed, imperial ancestral sacrifices (*zong si* 宗祀) were offered, and policy measures were propagated (*bu zheng* 布政).⁸⁷ Xu Tianlin's (*fl.* 1205) *Dong Han huiyao* clearly shows us that, from the time of Mingdi onwards, if not earlier, the Mingtang was where some Han emperors –the *Hanshu* and *Hou Hanshu* mention Mingdi, Zhangdi, Hedi, and Shundi 順帝– worshipped the Five Lords with Guangwu, the Eastern Han founder, as coadjutor,⁸⁸ effectively using that site as adjunct to the Taimiao.⁸⁹ Likewise Zhang Heng's 張衡 (78–139) *fu* asserted of

Shundi, “he worships the Supreme Lords in the Mingtang, Honouring Guangwu as coadjutor.”⁹⁰ Perhaps this explains why several reputable Eastern Han sources state definitively that the Mingtang and Taimiao are one and the same site with one and the same function.⁹¹ The Mingtang, at least in such moments, functioned as a worship hall, where *ming* 明 referred to the spirits of the powerful dead.⁹² One key takeaway is that the Lu 魯 learning for the *Odes* equated the Taimiao with the Mingtang, on the basis of the Mao commentary to the *Odes* ascribed to Mao Heng 毛亨.⁹³ Simultaneously, several traditions equated the Mingtang with the Biyong, placing them both south of the capital.⁹⁴

- 27 Michael Loewe has long suspected that “Mingtang” may not be a proper name belonging to a specific site, but rather, more simply, a “worship hall.” Loewe’s theory would certainly account for the looseness found in the Han descriptions of the imperial worship hall built in the suburbs of the capital at Luoyang.⁹⁵ What such a Mingtang might indicate, then, would be a sacred space dedicated to the large civilising project of *jiaohua* 教化, with the emperor modelling correct decorum for his imperial subjects, through a wide range of imperial rituals acknowledging exemplary figures, past and present. Let us recall that Cai Yong’s 蔡邕 famous “Mingtang lun” begins with the assertion: “The Mingtang is the ancestral temple of the Son of Heaven, where the emperor offers cult to his ancestors, as coadjutors to the Lord(s) on High” (明堂者，天子太廟，所以宗祀其祖，以配上帝者也。) At the conclusion of Ban Gu’s “Two Capital *fu*”, there are three short poems, one each for the Mingtang, Lingtai, and Taixue, plus two praise poems detailing two auspicious events confirming Heaven’s favour for the “restored” Eastern Han.⁹⁶ Ban Gu’s rendering of the activities at the Mingtang dovetails nicely with that of Cai Yong. Doubtless, in Ban Gu’s vision of beneficent Eastern Han rule, the Mingtang’s significance and specific activities merged with those of other structures, which collectively and separately conveyed a powerful message affirming the legitimacy of his liege lord.
- 28 But confusion over the Mingtang is hardly a modern phenomenon. The *Beishi* 北史 and *Suishu* 隋書 contains duplicate lengthy descriptions of one Niu Hong 牛弘, Director of the Sui Ministry of Rites, who made a real effort to sort through the previous records regarding the ritual sites, in order to facilitate the process of planning a Mingtang for the court. Niu’s account, which cites multiple experts and documents no longer available to us, concludes that those accounts are too inconsistent to ever be reconciled. Moreover, the sizes ascribed to the sites in remote antiquity are impossibly small, given the complexity of the ceremonies supposedly held in the structure; worse, the most plausible source to provide the necessary information, the “Mingtang yueling” 明堂月令, is of uncertain date, with classical authorities dating it to every dynasty from Xia to Qin! Ultimately, Niu suggests that any plan must privilege statements in the *Rites* classics over other classical sources, no matter how eminent, which, curiously enough, seems to be the first time that such an argument is advanced. Although Niu immediately disregards his own “solution,” in order to cite the authority of the *Classic of Filial Piety*, by narrowing his source base Niu could devise a compromise plan for the Mingtang building, a plausible pastiche of disparate passages drawn from all three *Rites* classics. Nonetheless, the construction of the building was tabled, despite the Sui Court Architect’s construction of a wooden model, followed by a survey and divination of an appropriate site.⁹⁷ A Tang-dynasty Mingtang was eventually constructed, of course, and a reconstruction of it can be seen today in Xi’an. But Niu’s

submission to the throne shows how far Han and post-Han scholars strayed from their immediate tasks as members of the governing elite, to speculate on events, customs, and material artefacts from several millennia before.

- 29 A similar document, dated roughly to 632, was submitted to Tang Taizong 唐太宗 by the eminent scholar Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (581–645). Kong notes that many eminent classicists of his own day envision a tower above a structure,⁹⁸ although no classical authority sanctions such a view. What he proposes in place of a grand structure, in conscious defiance of the luxury-loving court he knows, is a relatively simple structure, a combined ancestral temple and audience hall (*miaotang* 廟堂), whose accoutrements would consist of the simplest and most “natural” (unprocessed and inexpensive) materials: mats made of woven straw, vessels made of clay and gourds, robes made of unhemmed animal skins. For such a structure advertised to all the close connections that the early exemplary rulers forged between heaven and earth. Kong asked, if, by some of the earliest records, the first Han-era Mingtang had no walls on its four sides, how could it have had a tower and five rooms? The Palace Attendant Wei Zheng 魏徵, chief compiler of the *Suishu*, disputed Kong’s arguments, reasoning from quite different premises: the Han through the Six Dynasties courts all built a Mingtang that more or less had the same form and dimensions. Wei urges his emperor to “Create what you will! What need is there to follow the ‘old ways?’” since a thousand years’ worth of court debates has never managed to provide any clarity. It seems to Wei that the sources each detail a different Mingtang under a different ruler, precluding any consensus.⁹⁹
- 30 At Wei’s prodding, Yan Shigu 顏師古 (581–645) consulted the relevant sources, and what he concluded is that all the experts disagreed down through the centuries, and mostly for selfish reasons. “It remains only for his majesty to build a Mingtang [on any plan he happens to favour], and it will provide a model for later generations.”¹⁰⁰ Yan even found a precedent for advising his emperor to do as he pleased, in defiance of precedents: after all, the classicist Ni Kuan 兒寬 had told Han Wudi to do the same, and only because of that, Yan reasons, the building of the worship sites proceeded and the solemn rites were performed.¹⁰¹ After all the back-and-forth, we discover from the standard histories that the court “had no time to build” the Mingtang, preoccupied as it was with more pressing matters, even when the conceptual hurdles had been cleared for it.
- 31 We suggested at the outset that many of the same issues reoccur, from dynasty to dynasty. Here we see the persistence of the same range of attitudes, Han through Tang, with the urge to “get it done!” for the sake of dynastic legitimacy usually, in the end, trumping disputes over the Classics. Small wonder that Madame Pirazzoli-t’Serstevens once called the Mingtang a veritable “cream puff”: filled with hot air, signifying little, but immensely satisfying to some tastes.¹⁰²

On the Taixue

- 32 Most scholars presume that during the reign of Han Wudi (r. 141–87 BC),¹⁰³ a building for the Chang’an Taixue or Imperial Academy was constructed, even if the foremost experts on the Han dynasties, scholars such as Cheng Dachang 程大昌 (1123–1195) and Lü Simian 呂思勉 (1884–1957), utterly reject this common view.¹⁰⁴ Turning to Eastern Han, we read in its sources that Guangwu was in some sense “the first” to build a

Taixue, a structure begun in Guangwu's fourth year and finished quickly.¹⁰⁵ It would be some three decades before Guangwu ordered the construction of the Sanyong. The original excavation report shows a Taixue rectangular site measuring about 200 metres on its long N-S sides and roughly 150 metres on its shorter E-W sides, but this turns out to be the dimensions of the Wei-era Taixue.¹⁰⁶ A revised map published in 2010 shrinks the Eastern Han Taixue, while admitting that its exact dimensions cannot be ascertained; presumably, it lies beneath the Wei site.¹⁰⁷ And then we go off the rails. For the *Hou Hanshu* then claims that “probably” “millions” of people “watched attentively and heard” the rituals planned at the suburban ritual complex.¹⁰⁸ The tip-off that these are wildly inflated numbers is subtle but sure: it is the introductory adverb *gai* 蓋, meaning “probably.” Neither the Taixue nor the whole suburban ritual complex had the capacity to house thousands of attendees, let alone millions. The histories claim that as many as 30,000 students or clients were in attendance at the Taixue in mid- to late Eastern Han.¹⁰⁹ Where are the residence halls, or the lecture halls, for that matter, in the excavation report?¹¹⁰ And are we seeing the same role assigned to the “students” at the Taixue, when the enrolment figures explode so quickly?¹¹¹

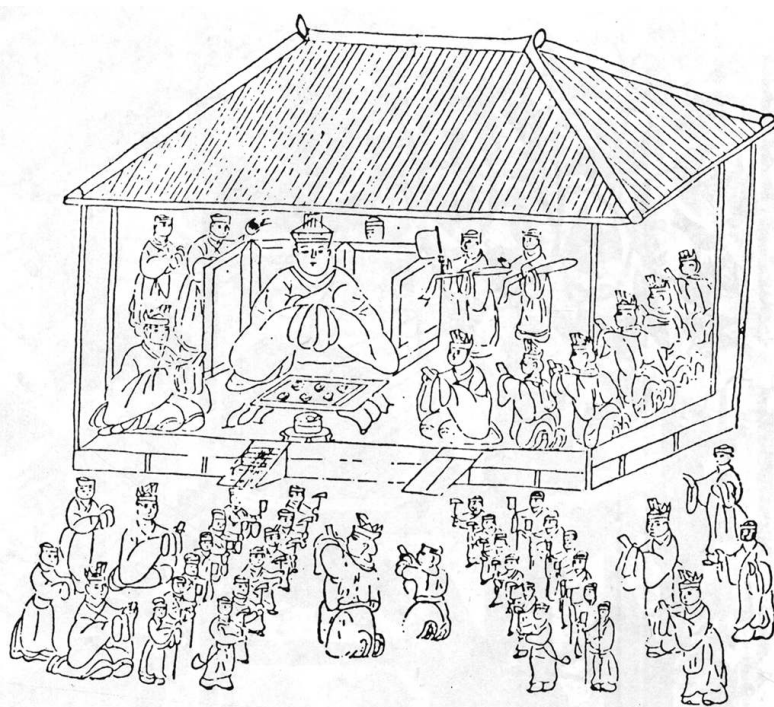
33 Certainly, we can locate snippets of information, although none is easy to assess, let alone put into context. In Han Shundi's era (r. 125-144), for example, a certain Zhai Pu 翟圃, then Court Architect, described a Taixue site gone to wreck and ruin, where animals grassed at will. He saw to it that the Taixue was repaired in AD 131, long after he had left office, and he was rewarded for his efforts with a commemorative stele by his admirers.¹¹² And certainly Lu Ji's 陸機 (261-303) “Luoyang ji” 洛陽記 describes outside the city walls of Luoyang, at a distance of eight leagues from the palaces, a *jiangtang* 講堂 (lecture hall) measuring 10 *zhang* 丈 by 3 *zhang* (i.e., 24.2 x 7.26 metres). Lu Ji does not specify whether his precise dimensions describe one or many lecture halls nor how he came by this information. Since Lu was but a child when the Wei dynasty fell, and living far from Luoyang until 289, he in all likelihood describes the Western Jin buildings he knew so well. For the same reasons, when the anonymous *Sanfu huangtu* 三輔黃圖 (sixth century?) describes a market and a prison next to the Chang'an Taixue, we cannot immediately inscribe this onto the Eastern Han landscape. Scattered clues, however intriguing, do not offer much elucidation.¹¹³

34 Lü Simian, the premier Han historian of the twentieth century, spoke of the “inflated numbers” given for the Taixue students by the *Hou Hanshu*. To the same end, Hans Bielenstein wrote that the extant histories for the entire sweep of the two hundred years of Eastern Han record but forty-nine students or clients at the Taixue, a laughably small number, if the Taixue represented a significant conduit for candidates for office undergoing academic training in one or more of the court-sponsored “explications” (*shuo* 說) for the Five Classics.¹¹⁴ For Lü Simian, it is obvious that the numbers of registered *dizi* 弟子 refer not to genuine students learning hallowed classical texts but to the clients who flocked to the capital to become part of the entourages attending ministers and other high officials.¹¹⁵ The *Han guan yi* 漢官儀, as it happens, proves Lü Simian to be right. The dowager empress Liang 梁 issued an edict, in the first and only year of the reign of Zhidi 質帝 (Liu Zuan 劉纘), to Liang Ji 梁冀, an all-too-powerful regent (in power from 141-159), suggesting that the sons of all the nobility and officials down to 600 bushel-rank attend “schools” in the capital.¹¹⁶ Reading this edict, it is hard not to make the connection with the *Guozijian* 國子監 of Ming-Qing Beijing. Apparently, we should resist the temptation, for commentaries in

the *Han guan yi* explain the edict in this way: “[Every year] in the third month of spring and the ninth month of autumn, they practise the Archery rituals, and all those who participate [as onlookers?] in the rites are made ‘students’ of the Taixue.”¹¹⁷ The *Hou Han shu* then details the predictable result, “From this time on, the ‘travelling students’ who came to the Taixue increased until they numbered more than 30,000.”¹¹⁸ Instruction went downhill, we are told, as all manner of unqualified “scholars” pronounced themselves “knowledgeable” enough to discourse on the Classics.¹¹⁹ Judging from this mid-Eastern Han text, dating to a time roughly sixty years after Zhangdi, proven mastery of a curriculum was not needed to style oneself a Taixue “student”: one only had to have witnessed an archery contest in the suburbs of the capital. Lack of qualified students was hardly a new problem, of course, judging from an earlier memorial of 102, which claimed that those attending the Taixue no longer acquired or used the formal training offered there.¹²⁰

- 35 Aside from these hyperbolic numbers, we do well to tarry over a distinctly odd passage that modern scholarship has often ignored, a passage that returns us to Zhai Pu, in Shundi’s reign. Zhai reported that Mingdi had wanted to get rid of the Taixue, since the capital already had a Biyong, but Mingdi faced stiff resistance from his *taiwei* Zhao Xi. Moderns expect lecturing by Academicians to take place in a Taixue, aka an Imperial Academy, and rituals to be performed in the cult sites known as the Mingtang and Biyong. Clearly, however, Mingdi thought the functions of the Taixue and Biyong sites to be identical or nearly identical.¹²¹ Therefore, in all likelihood, the Eastern Han Academicians’ ordinary instruction of their designated disciples (who numbered between one hundred and two hundred students, so far as we know)¹²² did not happen in the suburbs, though we can imagine formal lectures taking place on special ritual occasions before large crowds assembled at the suburban ritual complex, with perhaps several hundred or so in attendance, something that tallies with Lü Simian’s vision.¹²³ Let us recall that instruction in the Classics was mainly oral, as we see from a pictorial stone from Zhucheng 諸城, Shandong (fig. 4), and from several Han anecdotes.¹²⁴ This type of oral instruction is confirmed by numerous passages in the official histories, so it beggars belief that real teaching of the Classics’ *shuo*, in all their complexity, could have been delivered at any one time to many more than a hundred or so disciples, gathered round the master.

Fig. 4



图三五 山东诸城前凉台孙琮墓出土谒见（上计图）画像石摹本

Found in Ren Rixin 任日新. "Zhucheng Han mu hua xiang shi 诸城汉墓画像石." *Wenwu 文物* .10 (1981):14-21.

On the Imperial Ancestral Temple

- 36 On the Imperial Ancestral Temple (*taimiao*, or *zongmiao* 宗廟), where one would expect the records to be clearer, the *Hou Hanshu* says merely that one of the early ritual masters, Zhang Chun, a scion of the nobility, deemed the imperial ancestral rites to be in a faulty state during Guangwu's reign, in large part because Shusun Tong, in early Western Han, had instituted an incomplete set of rituals grounded in the Qin rites.¹²⁵ To establish Guangwu's "restored" line as continuous with that of Western Han and fully legitimate, Guangwu promptly, in the second year of his reign, erected a single ancestral temple to Gaozu 高祖, Wendi 文帝, and Wudi 武帝, these being deemed the most illustrious emperors of Western Han, in contrast to the later Western Han emperors, from whom Guangwu descended.¹²⁶ It was Zhang Chun, joined by Huan Rong who decades later, in AD 56, the nineteenth year of Guangwu's reign, succeeded in persuading Guangwu and then Mingdi to rethink and perfect the ancestral rites within the context of building a new ritual centre at Luoyang, called the Circular Moat. Zhang and others pointed out that the old ancestral temple in Chang'an could conduct some of the ceremonies honouring the Western Han emperors, so the ancestral temple in Luoyang could conduct ceremonies in honour of a select few.¹²⁷ Certainly once the main rivals to Guangwu had been suppressed and the empire somewhat pacified, Zhang Chun, in company with Zhu Fu 朱浮, memorialised that their emperor, had "selfishly" pushed forward the worship of his line over the worship of some of the most illustrious emperors of Western Han, and that he should delegate to officials the sacrifices for the members of his own line, rather than personally worshipping his forebears, who were not distinguished enough to merit such attention from the emperor.¹²⁸

- 37 Notably, Zhang Fen 張奮, Zhang Chun's son, ca. AD 97, complains, via a memorial or petition, that the "rites and music" comprising the court liturgies were still incomplete in his time, long after Zhangdi's demise. More significantly, Zhang Fen attributes this disgrace to two factors: first, the imperial intentions to reform the rites and music have repeatedly been hindered by "unthinking" classicists intent mainly upon refuting one another's visions (衆儒不達, 議多駁異);¹²⁹ second, successive emperors have been "too modest" to insist upon their own views. Such remarks may represent a posthumous rebuke of Zhangdi, given the two aborted attempts to reform court rituals made during Zhangdi's reign: the court conference at the White Tiger Hall in AD 79, whose results dissatisfied Zhangdi,¹³⁰ and the failure to implement Cao Bao's *New Rituals*.¹³¹ Bold enough to commission Cao Bao to model his court's rites on a different foundation than that advanced in the White Tiger discussions, Zhangdi nonetheless hesitated to put the *New Rituals* in place, and in the end Zhangdi died very young, before Cao's reforms could be put into place.¹³²
- 38 In an irony of ironies, the would-be reformers throughout the ritual debates cited a huge range of precedents to defend the overturning of the dynastic precedents.¹³³ Let us recall that the court controversies grew so heated over proposed changes to ritual protocols that not a few court officials, after Zhangdi's death, called for Cao Bao to be charged with a capital crime meriting the death penalty. Zhangdi's own conduct may have given some ritual experts pause and heightened the conflicts.¹³⁴
- 39 Before closing this section, we would draw the reader's attention to one additional piece of evidence, a stele dated to 280, some sixty years after the official demise of the Eastern Han, which commemorates the Jin-era Sanyong. The stele in many ways confirms the picture we have already built up in this paper: that Academicians and ritual masters were just as likely to be military men as not,¹³⁵ and that attention was paid to both the arts of war, in the form of the Imperial Archery contest, and the arts of peace, via a formal drinking feast, in ceremonies held at three months intervals in the Biyong.¹³⁶ Meanwhile the stele highlights the Jin-era Sanyong as a performance venue designed to underscore imperial legitimacy. Wearing the resplendent axe-patterned clothing, Jin Wudi invited to the site the princes, local lords, and officials, the Academicians and their teaching assistants, those who were known as ritual masters (*zhi li* 治禮), the keepers of precedents, and their disciples and clients, each of whom were to take their assigned places according to rank.¹³⁷ In company with a colonel and his Senior Tutor, the emperor formally announced his commitment to textual learning of the Classics, and his oversight of edifying rites and music. It was someone who could survey the Zhou, Qin, and Han dynasties and therefore make the right interventions to keep the cosmic and earthly powers on track who would be able to establish a dynasty that would last "for all time." Last but not least, the stele clearly indicates that a group of ritual experts were to examine and "correlate" (*he* 合) the ceremonial precedents, implying the possibility of further ritual reforms, as well as to transmit the ritual music.¹³⁸

On ritual controversies

- 40 Although modern scholars are wont to assume that there was greater unanimity of thinking in earlier eras, especially in ritual matters, making for a "ritual system" that was increasingly "standardised and sacralised,"¹³⁹ this appears to be wrong. Were this

the case, why would Andi, for example, have let the Taixue site decay, and why did none of the late Eastern Han emperors perform rituals at these sites, so far as we know, after Shundi? And whence the need to address the throne on the multiple failures of the palace examinations, for that matter?¹⁴⁰ If we dig deeply into the materials at hand, it is hard to posit a ritual system in place in pre-unification times, or even during the two Han dynasties. And once we take for granted that any ritual space is a cultural element constitutive of “power,” we may forget to ask the following question: how it is that certain rituals – “ramified so incessantly and thoroughly throughout experience” – come to seem “natural and essential” – so much so that contemporaries *want* and *need* to contend over all aspects of those rituals, including their meanings and functions?¹⁴¹ That need to contend is the subject of this third section of the essay, which focuses on the controversial literature.

- 41 Given this essay’s preoccupation with the reign of Zhangdi, it will mainly limit its remarks to the first century or so of Eastern Han, in order to demonstrate the stunning lack of a ritual system. Obviously enough, different courts put certain rituals in place, determining the ritual site where they were to be performed, as with the “Entertaining the Aged” ceremonies promoted by the early Eastern Han emperors. Readers will recall that Huan Rong was honoured at one such ceremony as “Quintuply Experienced,” in large part because he had been tutoring for Mingdi when he was still heir. At the same time, the sheer number and scope of ritual controversies is stunning, especially when one considers how little survives from the distant past. Almost certainly, many more controversies rocked the Eastern Han courts. We know almost nothing aside from the court classicism; the views of the provinces and non-elites being out of sight. We lack the very texts the Academicians taught and contended over: the *shuo* 說 (“sayings”, “readings”) attached to the Classics.¹⁴² And we have but a small collection of undated fragments of the apocryphal texts that loomed so large in Eastern Han court debates. The extant apocrypha lines have been excerpted mainly from Song *collectanea*, and hence they are of unknown date, despite their traditional ascriptions to Han figures.
- 42 One good reason to focus on Zhangdi’s reign, then, is that we have a relative wealth of sources on ritual from around that time. This may not be a coincidence, as Zhangdi received a good education in classical learning, and he, far more than Guangwu, Mingdi, or his successors, had a successful reign, one whose glories were not surpassed by his successors. In this he was like Chengdi, in Western Han, for whose reign we have numerous records.¹⁴³ True, Cao Bao’s 150-*juan* *New Rituals* is long gone,¹⁴⁴ but moderns have most of the *Bohu tong*, one of several reports about the court conference devoted to ritual in AD 79, and also Xu Shen’s *Wujing yiyi* (Variant Readings of the Five Classics), in addition to fairly lengthy biographies of the multiple ritual masters (*e.g.*, Diwu Lun 第五倫, Jia Kui) alive at the time.¹⁴⁵ Every single piece of evidence that we have alerts us to the controversies of the time, as do later standard histories, for example, the *Liangshu* 梁書:

漢氏鬱興，日不暇給，猶命叔孫於外野，方知帝王之為貴。末葉紛綸，遞有興毀，或以武功銳志，或好黃老之言，禮義之式，於焉中止。及東京曹褒 ... 百有餘篇，雖寫以尺簡，而終闕平奏。其後兵革相尋，異端互起，章句既淪，俎豆斯輟。

When the Han ruling house began, they had no time not taken up in crises, and still [the Han founder] ordered Shusun Tong to come to the capital from outside, so that men would rightly understand the honour attached to the imperial position. In later generations, there was chaos, with some

“restorations” of power and some periods of ruin. Some used military merit to sharpen their wills, and some preferred Huang-Lao theories. The models for the rites were stopped in mid-development, on account of this. When it came to Cao Bao, he compiled more than 100 *pian* on the rites, and even though this was written down on wooden boards and bamboo strips, in the end, it was thought to have lacunae, by critical memorials.¹⁴⁶ Later on, military reverses and coups followed one after another in quick succession, spurring the proliferation of more strange arguments and disparate explanations [among the classicists].¹⁴⁷ Once the *zhangju* 章句 (commentaries by chapter and verse) were in disrepair, there ended [the proper arrangements of] the meat platters and wine vessels [required in solemn sacrifices].¹⁴⁸

- 43 Scholars need not believe in the total collapse of the rituals to see that the extant records, fragmentary though they are, attest the continual eruption of ritual controversies over the course of the two Han dynasties. To offer further proof, we have devised Table 2 on the ritual controversies specific to Zhangdi’s reign, drawing mainly from the *White Tiger Hall Discussions* usually ascribed to Ban Gu,¹⁴⁹ Xu Shen’s *Wujing yiyi*, and Fan Ye’s *History of the Later Han*, but also from fragments from the Western Han Conference held at the Shiqu (Stone Canal) Hall 石渠閣 in 51 BC (SQG), since the Shiqu Conference was often invoked in the controversies of Zhangdi’s era. The table lists only instances in which opposing views of ritual matters can be clearly identified. In omitting cases in which only one side of a debate has survived, the table necessarily under-represents the number of controversies included in the foregoing texts. Readers should recall that most of these texts are themselves fragmentary at this point, and despite this, we know of several other attempts to adjudicate between various explanations of the Five Classics, including those by Fan Shu 樊儵 in AD 58, and Huan Yu 桓郁, in AD 72.¹⁵⁰ No fewer than 175 glosses by Jia Kui can be found in Ruan Yuan’s 阮元 Qing-era *Shisan jing zhushu* (preface 1815), and we cite some of those, where relevant.
- 44 Because the essay would be way too long, were we to survey all statements about Western and Eastern Han relating to ritual controversies, we give but a short sample of those controversies, specifically, the controversies concerning the all-important *liu zong* 六宗 (Six Origins)¹⁵¹ and the *wusi* 五祀 (Five Sacrifices). Ritual controversies relating to mourning were too numerous to catalogue, even in summary fashion, but an earlier essay alludes to some of those.¹⁵²

On the *liu zong* 六宗

- 45 The *liuzong* are six powerful deities to whom the emperor must offer a cult. The identities of the six are hotly disputed in Han times, however.¹⁵³ The *liuzong* are glossed in the Han sources as (1) heaven, earth, and the four seasons; (2) the four directions plus *yin* and *yang*, signifying the totality of the gods in the cosmos who can help people; (3) whatever lives between the six directions of the cosmos; (4) all the gods roaming “between heaven and earth; (5) the six “offspring” of Hexagrams 1 and 2 of the *Yijing*, said to be water, fire, thunder, wind, mountains, and water; (6) stars (*xing* 星), asterisms (*chen* 辰), water, fire, the Yellow River and the Great Rivers (*he du* 河瀆);¹⁵⁴ (7) the sun, moon, and stars in the sky, plus Mt. Tai, the Yellow River, and the four seas on earth;¹⁵⁵ and (8) the sun and moon, and stars, plus Sizhong 司中 and Siming 司命 and, as one

group, Fengshi 風師 and Yushi 雨師 (the deities of the wind and rain). For the *liu zong*, Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛 and Liu Qiyu 劉起鈞 list a total of twenty-one different theories,¹⁵⁶ even if the two most important theories in Han were (1) and (2). Theory (1) was promoted by Gao You 高誘 and Ma Rong among others, while (2) was promoted by Ouyang, Xiahou, Wang Chong 王充, He Xiu, Meng Kang 孟康, and others. However, (6) was promoted by Kong Guang 孔光, Liu Xin, Wang Mang, and Yan Shigu and (7) by Jia Kui. In Western Han, at Sweet Springs, Fenyin, they set up altars to worship the *liu zong*, and Chengdi discussed this with Kuang Heng 匡衡, the ritual expert.

- 46 The Eastern Han founder Guangwu hastened to offer sacrifices to the *liu zong* in the very first year of his reign, even if he cannot have been entirely sure to whom he was rendering cult. Zheng Xuan, in commentaries to the *Documents* classic, the *locus classicus* for the practice, emphasises the hierarchy among the gods, as he emphasises hierarchies on earth, but it is hard to see a settled pantheon, even after Pingdi's court, under Wang Mang, saw to it that all the powerful gods of the localities would be worshipped at once in the capital at Chang'an.¹⁵⁷ The *Dongguan Hanji* mentions ongoing controversies over whether blood sacrifices will be offered to the *liu zong*.¹⁵⁸ Judging from the *Guoyu*, "Zhou yu" section, and the *Shuowen*, this worship ceremony, described as a burned offering, included some kind of purification offering.
- 47 Just to complicate matters, over time in Eastern Han there come to be six emperors awarded the prestigious title of *zong*, something like "supreme ancestor" or model.¹⁵⁹ That said, the Eastern Han sources emphasise hierarchy in ranking sacrifices, with the ritual sites duly apportioned. For example, Heaven is above the Five Lords, and the two Han founders surpass their successors, but these powers commune in the suburbs to the south of the capital, while Earth and dowager empress Lü are worshipped in the northern suburbs, showing that male takes precedence over female. In Eastern Han, the dynasty, as if to verify that it is a "restored" dynasty, sets up temples to Gaozu in newly conquered territories.¹⁶⁰

On the *wusi* 五祀, or Five Sacrifices

- 48 Generally speaking, the Han-era texts presume the term *wusi* dates to early Western Zhou.¹⁶¹ Aside from that rare bit of consensus, the objects of cult in the Five Sacrifices are equally mired in controversy, right down to today, as we can see by recent efforts by scholars in the PRC, including Yang Hua, Chen Wei, and Zhang Hequan.¹⁶² Whereas there is no doubt that only the emperor was thought to have the privilege of offering cult to the Six Origins, there was no agreement down through the ages over who could and could not offer cult via the Five Sacrifices. Some texts identify the objects of cult as sage kings of the distant past –all of whom have become astral deities associated with the Five Planets.¹⁶³ Others identify them with the gods on earth.¹⁶⁴ Some modern scholars apparently believe that the Five Sacrifices propitiated wandering ghosts of high-rank who have been unjustly deprived of their lives.¹⁶⁵ Nor is there consensus over what offerings are to be used in each of these sacrifices,¹⁶⁶ or the schedule of when these sacrifices are to be offered, or whether such sacrifices are to be made regularly, with four of them tied to the four seasons, or at irregular times, specifically times of severe illness. Mainly on the basis of excavated Chu manuscripts, recent scholarship in the PRC has often tried to argue that even commoners felt compelled to render such cult, but Chu manuscripts cannot tell us about practices outside of Chu, and their

meaning and scope are often unclear. It is more likely that high-ranking counsellors enjoyed this type of ritual access to the divine, and emperors as well.¹⁶⁷ After all, the first mention of the *Zhouguan/Zhouli* in the *Shiji* speaks of the emperor worshipping the gods of earth (*Dizhi* 地祇) on the summer solstice.

49 If we carefully examine these sorts of controversies, which crop up again and again, this puts the ritual quandaries raised in late Western Han and Eastern Han into better historical context.¹⁶⁸ Then we recall the ritual debates over the *feng* and *shan* sacrifices, and over many other affairs of state. Xu Tianlin 徐天麟, in his *Dong Han huiyao* 東漢會要, has compiled a necessarily partial list of the topics debated during court conferences in Eastern Han. These were, by his reckoning,

- debates over the imperial rites for the ruling house (*dian li* 典禮);
- debates over who should succeed as heir, in the case of untimely deaths;
- debates over whether the ritual calendar needed to be changed or not;
- debates over the location of the capital;¹⁶⁹
- debates over whether to establish broadly an Ever-Normal Granary to regulate prices;
- debates over whether to restore the Salt and Iron offices to regulate aspects of the monopoly;
- debates over the weight (and therefore the value) to be assigned imperial coinage;
- debates over the recommendation process by which the commanderies and kingdoms put forward the names of suitable candidates for office;
- fairly continual debates over punishments and adjudicating their use (with Zhang Pu often said to be in trouble); and conferences over border affairs (also continual).

50 Notably, while we might deem many items in this list to be of a purely “practical nature,” all the foregoing had implications for ritual practices at the Eastern Han courts. Xu also drew up a very incomplete list of the most important ritual controversies generated in the first 50 or 60 years of Eastern Han, through Zhangdi’s reign. By his account, these were:

1. The controversy over whether and how to honour Guangwu’s own family in the rites (both imperial and noble); where Guangwu’s father should be worshipped; what he should be called; which member of the imperial family should offer cult to him; and what precedents he was to enjoy; Zhang Chun and Zhu Fu began this debate.
2. The controversy over whether Cao Bao alone could craft and “complete” (*cheng* 成) the imperial rites for the dynasty; objections from Chao Kan 巢堪, Ban Gu, and others.
3. The controversy over whether Dou Rong could be hailed by other officials with the slogan “*wan sui*” 萬歲 (“Long life!”) usually reserved for the emperor.¹⁷⁰

51 To Xu’s list, we must add 4. The controversy over how Mingdi was to be buried by his successor, Zhangdi. Mingdi supposedly left instructions for a frugal burial, and no worship in the imperial ancestral temple. At the same time, at Guangwu’s burial the text of the “*Gu ming*” 顧命 (Testamentary Edict) had been read out at the funeral, and that precedent was important, insofar as the *Documents* chapter envisioned a lavish burial for the ruler.¹⁷¹ Zhangdi, who disapproved of aspects of Mingdi’s murderous reign, was not inclined to bury his father with lavish obsequies. But several of his

ministers after Mingdi's death suggested that it would be wrong to follow his wishes, and that he should be worshipped with full honours along with Guangwu in the ancestral temple, an arrangement to which Zhangdi eventually agreed.¹⁷² From the treatises on the suburban sacrifices found in *Dongguan Hanji* and in *Hou Hanshu*, we glean that the ritual experts of the time saw two outstanding issues before the court: first, how to honour Mingdi while also following his expressed wishes; and second, what music/dance to perform at the offerings. Nothing about ritual was simple, it seems, when the stakes were sufficiently high.¹⁷³

- 52 When we consider why the ritual masters mentioned above should be in such continual contention over so many facets of the liturgies, we must dig below the surface of the official histories and enter into some informed speculation. In contrast to priests in the Christian West, the ritual masters of Western and Eastern Han were not preoccupied with orthodoxy (belief in the efficacy of the correct Word), but rather with orthopraxy (belief in the efficacy of correct performance of the rites). But unfortunately, past performances offered little guidance as to when and why changes in the imperial rites should be instituted. Some were put down to a particular emperor's inappropriate preoccupations (as with Wudi's preoccupation with immortality), but there was no gainsaying that certain rituals, however inappropriate their origins, had acquired the power of precedent, with the result that they could be invoked as models for the present.
- 53 What is equally or more germane to understanding the ritual controversies are these considerations: (1) very few ritual masters in Han times (one can posit Yang Xiong and Zheng Xuan as possible, but not probable exceptions) thought of the Five Classics as a single corpus offering a unified message.¹⁷⁴ (2) Academicians were not appointed to explicate and embody a particular Classic, but rather a particular *shuo* 說 (explications) for that Classic, with competing *shuo* for a single Classic honoured equally. By the rationale of the Western Han court, it was best to "gather as in a net" all the interpretive sayings, given lacunae and interpolations in the Classics, so that wise men might determine the "best" (i.e., most constructive) advice among several competing views, but there was no consensus by which to determine by what method the "best" could be ascertained. (3) Classicists at court were also accustomed to "choosing" from scattered citations to arrive at a solution, and when no ready solution was at hand, to consider current Han practices as a guide to antique rituals.¹⁷⁵ (4) Classicists at court (and probably in the provinces as well), and especially the Academicians appointed at the court and the official Five Classics masters appointed from Chengdi's reign on in the provinces,¹⁷⁶ had a strong vested interest in defending their turf, which gave them palpable privileges in the form of ritual robes, ritual precedence, gifts of meat and brew, at each of the regular ceremonies. To "reform" rituals meant reapportioning those boons, a prospect greatly to be feared. For all the foregoing reasons, idealising talk of "constant rituals" tended to appear in polemical pieces. Contention was the norm, it seems, as ritual experts needed and wanted to promote their own views about when and how to revise rituals.

Final conclusions, on writing the past

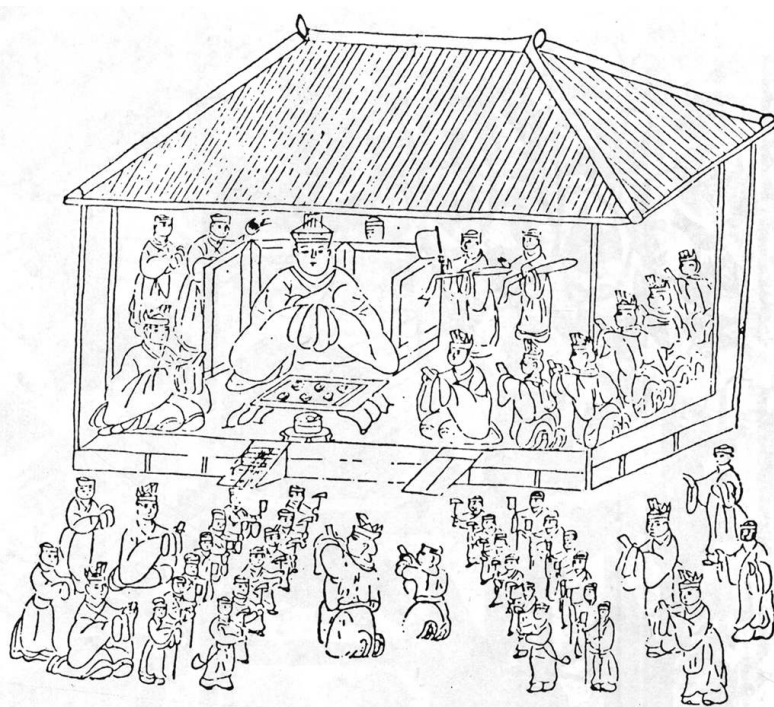
- 54 Had our research focused solely on the *post facto* idealising account given in the *Hou Hanshu* of the events of the second year of Mingdi's reign, which saw the completion of

the Three Sites (*Sanyong*), we might well have been persuaded that the imperial rituals were settled by this time. After all, according to the “Treatise on Ceremonials,” Mingdi “completed” (*bei* 備) in AD 59 the rites and music. However, any examination of the controversial literature relating to ritual from the reign of Mingdi’s successor, Zhangdi –the discussions held at the White Tiger Hall Conference in AD 79, the references to Cao Bao’s compilation of *New Rituals* on Zhangdi’s commission, and Xu Shen’s *Wujing yiyi*–shows that nothing was “completed” or “fixed” (*ding* 定), during Zhangdi’s reign or afterwards. Hence the repeated Han remarks, not all of them lament that the “rites and music” remained “incomplete” (*bu bei* 不備) and never “fixed” (*ding*).¹⁷⁷ What intrigues in the sources is the rhetoric that casts change as a form of constancy, and finds precedents for refusing to be hampered by precedents. We do not think this hypocritical; we celebrate the flexibility that this allows policymakers –a flexibility that modern scholars either do not see or reduce to calculated “pragmatism.”

- 55 Yes, imperial rituals needed at fairly regular intervals to be performed, and so they were duly performed. And court architects had to oversee the building and repair of ritual sites, no matter how mired in controversy the dimensions of the ritual sites were. But the meaning of the rites, the entities to be honoured, and even the venues and timing of rituals continued to be subjects of debate down through the end of Eastern Han, as we can see from multiple chapters in Ying Shao’s *Fengsu tongyi* 風俗通義 (compiled ca. AD 203). For this reason, while many, if not most scholars today presume a ritual system (*zhidu* 制度) was in place long before the end of the first century of Eastern Han, we do not. We urge that *lizhi* 禮制 be seen as something akin to a grab bag of “liturgical rules or precedents,” without presuming a well-articulated and stable protocols or consistent liturgical performances. The routine translation of “canons in writing” for *dian* 典 should also be queried, in light of the successive courts’ failures, during both Western and Eastern Han, to achieve consensus on a wide range of imperial ritual regulations; not all *dian* are even written, in our view, as some parts of the collections of precedents evidently drew upon earlier practices. The prevailing assumption that *guoxian* 國憲 should mean something like “national constitution” is no less problematic; we suggest, “regulations binding the members of the ruling house.”¹⁷⁸
- 56 Eastern Han officials (not to mention those in later eras) were all too aware that there could never be any “complete” ritual *system*, however much they might desire one in theory;¹⁷⁹ many classical scholars conceded that they had no textual basis on which to establish precedents.¹⁸⁰ Paradoxically, review of the precedents showed that different antique sage rulers had devised different rites and music, so that the one true precedent was change.¹⁸¹ With so many changes, said to number in the tens of thousands, the regulations “could not follow every flow and change.” This explains why, in fact, the ruler in each and every age, on the advice of officials, had to make continual adjustments, “adding and subtracting [the rules and institutions].”¹⁸² Officials like Cao Bao, acting on the personal commission from Zhangdi, might write 150-*juan* works (more than 12 times the length of Shusun Tong’s work for Liu Bang, the Western Han founder), in the hopes of “fixing” the rites and setting them on a new basis. And such *New Rituals* might be written down on strips of the length usually reserved for imperial edicts and/or the Classics. But Cao Bao’s *New Rituals*, as we know, were abandoned by Zhangdi’s successor almost immediately after his succession to the throne.¹⁸³

- 57 We must meanwhile consider the probability that no scenes of instruction on a modern university model ever took place at the Taixue, and that the Taixue was rather a ritual centre,¹⁸⁴ as was the Mingtang and Biyong.
- 58 What are the larger implications of the foregoing? For nearly a century, prominent scholars have repeatedly identified the central marker of Chinese ethnicity as its filial reverence for the ancestral family and related mourning practices, and its devotion to classical education by humanists.¹⁸⁵ This supposedly shared culture, manifested as ritual practices, is traced back to Western Zhou, if not earlier. For instance, responding specifically to Nazi claims alleging the purity of the Aryan bloodline, Qian Mu 錢穆 and Chen Yinke 陳寅恪 –both of whose influence in the Chinese-speaking world has matched that of Fairbank and Levenson in America– asserted in their works that “culture” (*wenhua* 文化), not “bloodline” (*xuetong* 血統), was the sole standard by which the Chinese distinguished themselves from other peoples in remote antiquity, with the result that a “barbarian” who adopted enough Chinese culture would be regarded as Chinese. But if a single, unified culture based in the rites was longstanding and shared, at least among members of the governing elite, it is hard to see why the early empires found it so difficult to agree upon and articulate its main features. The historicity of this rosy, if understandable reconstruction is open to question now, it seems.
- 59 We wonder if the language of “thin coherence,” as defined by William H. Sewell, Jr., would serve here, as that phrase intentionally queries older ideas of culture as self-enclosed, static, coherent, and impervious to challenge or change.¹⁸⁶ Adoption of the term “thin coherence” in relation to Han ritual would signal that it was liable to contestation and negotiation, with the acceptable parameters of debate not very strictly delimited, probably because the cultural logics did not demand that they be so.¹⁸⁷ After all, ritual experts at court paid allegiance to the same range of authoritative sources. That provided a degree of coherence. It was simply that the court found it difficult to adjudicate among authorities which so manifestly disagreed. In arguing for their positions, Han classicists were not so foolish as to assume a unitary past; instead they had to assess the relative merits of a disparate collection of authoritative pasts reflected in writings and practices they knew, to serve their own needs and those of the court in the present and immediate future. Not surprisingly, our sources show that no one classic or textual tradition provided the final word on ritual matters, then. This puts us in mind of a recent remark by John Bercow, the former Speaker of the House of Commons of the United Kingdom: “I understand the importance of precedent, but precedent does not completely bind... Things do change.”¹⁸⁸ More weight could be put on pronouncements in the *Documents* or *Annals* than on those excerpted from the *Rites*. The apocrypha, imperial edicts, dynastic precedents, and recent court activities were equally in play. It behoves all good readers of the distant past to expand their inquiries about the rites beyond the three *Rites* classics and the ritual treatises in the court histories, in consequence. As our subjects were broadly learned and supple thinkers, we must become better versed in all the relevant sources, lest we miss the distinctive views of ritual that the members of the Han court upheld, and intended onlookers and readers to register.

Fig. 4



图三五 山东诸城前凉台孙琮墓出土谒见（上计图）画像石摹本

Found in Ren Rixin 任日新.“Zhucheng Han mu hua xiang shi 诸城汉墓画像石.” *Wenwu* 文物 .10 (1981):14-21.

Table 1		
Name	Expertise/Training	Titles
Huan Rong 桓荣 (d. ca. AD 60)	Ouyang reading of the Documents 歐陽尚書	Offices of the Chancellor 大司徒府
		Gentleman Consultant 議郎
		Academician 博士
		Junior Tutor (to Mingdi) 少傅
		Superintendent of Ceremonial 太常
		Noble of the Interior 關內侯
		Quintuply Experienced 五更

Zhao Xi 趙憙 (AD 3-80)	None recorded in the extant sources	Detached General 偏將軍
		General of the Gentlemen of the Palace 中郎將
		Noble of Courage Deeds 勇功侯
		Magistrate of Huai 懷令
		Governor of Pingyuan 平原太守
		Superintendent of Transport 太僕
		Supreme Commander 太尉
		Noble of the Interior 關內侯
		Superintendent of the Guards 衛尉
		Acting Supreme Commander 行太尉
		Senior Tutor (to Zhangdi) 太傅
Jia Kui 賈逵 (AD 30- 101)	<i>Zuo zhuan</i> 左傳; Xiahou reading of the <i>Documents</i> 夏 侯尚書	Gentleman 郎 in the Lantai Depository 蘭臺
		Prefect of the Guards 衛士令
		(Left) Leader of the Gentlemen of the Palace 左中郎將
		Palace Attendant 侍中
		Commandant, Cavalry 騎都尉

Cao Bao 曹褒 (d. AD 102)	Qing Clan Rites 慶氏禮	Magistrate of Yu 圉令
		Academician 博士
		Palace Attendant 侍中
		Colonel, Archers under Training 射聲校尉
		Colonel of the City Gates 城門校尉
		Court Architect 將作大匠
		Governor of Henei 河內太守
		Palace Attendant 侍中
Ding Hong 丁鴻 (d. AD 94)	Ouyang reading of the Documents 歐陽尚書	Palace Attendant 侍中
		Colonel, Archers under Training 射聲校尉
		Superintendent of the Lesser Treasury 少府
		Superintendent of Ceremonial 太常
		Minister over the Masses 司徒
		Acting Supreme Commander 行太尉
		Superintendent of the Guards 衛尉

Table 2

#	Debated Topic	Positions
1		

	Under what circumstances should a local lord rush 奔 to mourn the Son of Heaven's death? (WJYY p. 196)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. According to the <i>Gongyang</i>, even if a local lord is mourning a parent's death, he should perform his duties and rush to mourn the Heavenly King. 2. Xu Shen says that all local lords within one thousand <i>li</i> must rush to mourn. If they are farther than one thousand <i>li</i>, then they must rush to mourn only if they have the same surname 姓 as the Son of Heaven. 3. Zheng Xuan says only those within one thousand <i>li</i> should rush to mourn, regardless of surname.
2	When the lady 夫人 of a local lord dies, should ministers wear mourning and attend the funeral? (WJYY p. 201)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. According to the <i>Gongyang</i>, when a lady of a local lord dies, ministers wear mourning and the lord attends the funeral. 2. According to the <i>Zuoshi</i>, the <i>shi</i> 士 wear mourning and attend the funeral. 3. Xu Shen says they wear mourning only if they have the same surname as the lady. 4. Zheng Xuan says they give the lady the same respect as the lord and wear mourning.
3	Can one conduct a burial when it rains? (WJYY p. 204)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. According to the <i>Gongyang</i>, one does not perform a burial for the Son of Heaven or local lords when it rains, but does not stop a burial for ministers and counsellors because of rain. 2. The <i>Zuoshi</i> says you divine the day of burial by pyromancy, but do not perform the burial if it rains. Common people do not stop a burial on account of rain. 3. The <i>Guliang</i> says that you do not stop the burial because of rain. 4. Xu Shen agrees with the <i>Gongyang</i> and <i>Zuoshi</i>.
4	Should one divine the day of a sacrifice? (WJYY p. 53)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The <i>Gongyang</i> says cast milfoil at the temple, but do not divine by pyromancy. 2. The Archaic <i>Zhou Rites</i> says divine by pyromancy.
5	How many women should the Son of Heaven marry?(BHT 10.469)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The ruler and local lords marry nine women. This models the Nine Provinces on earth. 2. The ruler marries twelve women. This models the twelve months of heaven.
6	Should music accompany the capping of a duke 公? (WJYY p. 144)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Records of the Duke of Zhou's capping mention no music. 2. The commentary to the <i>Chunqiu</i> says that when the lord is capped there is music of metal and stone. 3. Xu Shen says there is music when the ruler dines. Therefore, it would be against ritual for there to be no music when the ruler is capped.
7		

	What animal should be sacrificed during a blood oath? (WJYY p. 138)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Han version of the <i>Odes</i> says that the Son of Heaven and local lords use oxen and pigs, counsellors use dogs, and common people use chickens. 2. The Mao version of the <i>Odes</i> says that the ruler uses pigs, his subordinates use dogs, and the common people use chickens. 3. Zheng Xuan says that the ruler uses oxen, and those of lower rank use pigs.
8	Should one announce the new moon 告朔 on a <i>runyue</i> 閏月? (WJYY p. 78)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. According to the <i>Gongyang</i>, one should not announce the new moon on a <i>runyue</i>. 2. Xu Shen, following the <i>Zuoshi</i>, says that one must announce the new moon on a <i>runyue</i>, as one sets the calendar by this month. 3. Zheng Xuan, citing the “Yaodian,” says that one must announce the new moon on a <i>runyue</i>.
9	What should one give as offering to the God of Grain? (WJYY p. 32)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Xu Shen says that you do not offer rice and millet. 2. Zheng Xuan, citing the <i>Zhou Rites</i>, says that the God of Grain requires a blood sacrifice.
10	Who offers cult to the Stove God? (WJYY pp. 80–81)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Xu Shen, following the “Monthly Ordinances,” says that the king offers cult. 2. Zheng Xuan and the <i>Da Dai Liji</i> say the wife offers cult.
11	When one sacrifices to Heaven, is there a ritual stand-in 屍? (WJYY p. 14)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. According to the <i>Gongyang shuo</i>, there is no ritual stand-in. 2. According to <i>Zuozhuan shuo</i> and the “Lu suburban sacrifice rites,” there is a ritual stand-in during the suburban sacrifices. 3. Xu Shen follows the <i>Zuozhuan</i>.
12	Are local lords purely subjects 純臣 of the ruler? (WJYY p. 185; BHT 7.320)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The <i>Zuoshi</i> and <i>Changes</i> say that they are. 2. The <i>Gongyang</i>, Xu Shen, Zheng Xuan, and BHT say that they are not.

60 (This table presents a small sample of the ritual controversies that the authors have collected from Han sources. For a larger table of ritual controversies, drawn from a wider range of sources, please contact the authors, who would be happy to share their findings.)

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APPENDIX

Sources for Table 2

- WJYY: Xu Shen 許慎, 2012, *Wujing yiyi shuzheng* 五經異義疏證, annotated by Chen Shouqi 陳壽祺. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe.

BHT: Ban Gu 班固, 1994, *Baihu tong shuzheng* 白虎通疏證, annotated by Chen Li 陳立. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju.

FOOTNOTES

1. The *Wujing yiyi* is in some sense a response to the documents relating to the earlier Shiqu 石渠 court conference on the Five Classics during Xuandi's 宣帝 reign, part of whose results (now in fragments) are entitled *Wujing yaoyi* 五經要義. The sole subject of the *Wujing yaoyi* today is ritual; although there is talk of thirteen ritual experts attending Shiqu, the chief disputants seem to be a proponent of the Qingshi rites 慶氏禮 tradition, and several adherents of the rival Senior and Younger Dai 戴 traditions. See *Hanshu* 30.1710, 36.1929; also, *Yuhan shan fang yi yi shu*, vol. 2, 1059.1a-1063.7a. We include *Hou Hanshu* compiled in the mid-fifth century in this list of roughly contemporaneous works because it is known to be based largely on earlier histories, and to include many lengthy excerpts from Eastern Han compositions.
2. Underlying this study are queries about certain commonplaces of the field regarding the dominance of "ritual" in Han court life, the status of the Five Classics at court, and the appropriateness of applying the term "religion" to pre-Buddhist China.
3. For example, Ban Gu's conclusion to the treatise on the rites (*Hanshu* 22.1035) says casually, "Today, the ritual ceremonies that Shusun Tong wrote up are recorded along with the statutes and ordinances, and stored in the Judicial Office" (今叔孫通所撰禮儀, 與律令同錄, 臧於理官).
4. The name of this structure has been rendered in so many ways that it seems best not to translate it again. We prefer the translation of "Worship Hall" Michael Loewe uses, but Bright Hall and other translations are in frequent use. See below.
5. Literally, "impressive originator/ancestor."
6. Huan Rong appears to be an exception in this regard, but the list of offices for him may be incomplete. We also see the explicit pairing of military and civil in Fan Ye, *Hou Hanshu* 35.1205 of rites and punishments, often thought of as antithetical, as when Fan Ye couples two ritual masters (early and late) with two famous judges (Gao Yao, serving Shun, and Su Fensheng, serving Han). This pairing of civil and military should not surprise us as Shusun Tong, first "inventor" of the Han imperial rites also devised many of the Han statutes. See Yang 2007, 21. Other famous ritual masters who served in a military capacity include Wei Xuancheng, Xiao Wangzhi, Dai Sheng, and Wenren Tonghan.
7. Not surprisingly, we discussed including many other ritual masters in this section of the paper, including Fan Shu 樊噲 (who is mentioned elsewhere in our paper). Fan, like many other ritual masters, had a military background; it was in his capacity as colonel that Fan was asked by Mingdi to "fix" the imperial court rituals. Fan was also consulted when Mingdi was wondering whether to execute his brother for treason. Fan supported execution on the grounds that, "This [the empire] is Gaodi's realm, not your majesty's realm" (天下高帝天下, 非陛下之天下也).
8. See *Hou Hanshu* 35.1205n2, which cites Ban Gu's *Hanshu* 22.1075.
9. The dates for these figures are Jia Yi (200-169 BC, in service to Han Wendi); Dong Zhongshu (179-104 BC, in service to Han Wudi 武帝); Wang Ji (fl. 74-48 BC, in service to Xuandi); and Liu Xiang (79-8/7 BC, in service to Yuandi and Chengdi).
10. *Hou Hanshu* 35.1205. The omitted material at the ellipsis remarks upon the ceaseless changes made to the rites and music since the time of the Former Kings. The binomial *yi duan* has a range of meaning, and it means in some contexts simply "theories based on different premises."

11. For example, Xu Shen, at Zhangdi's time, wrote, "Men all use their private judgment, right and wrong has no standard, while clever opinions and slanted pronouncements have caused considerable confusion among scholars"; and Ying Shao wrote, "Each and every person follows his own mind, and none achieves the proper balance." See Nylan 2008, 721-77, particularly p. 739 n77-81; compare with Nylan 1999, 17-56, particularly p. 22. See also *Hanshu* 78.3278, which records Xiao Wangzhi's 蕭望之 defence that "each follows his own will." *Hou Hanshu* 43.1474 speaks of glossing texts, as one chooses. *Hanshu* 73.3116 notes Wei Xuancheng's 韋玄成 claim that the local lords do not follow the "old rites" (*guli* 古禮) as the court has not promulgated them. There was the expectation that the rites, if once firmly and "thoroughly" were put in place, there would be fewer crimes and misdoings, as in *Shiji* 22.1157: 道德仁義非禮不成, 教訓正俗非禮不備, 分爭辯訟非禮不決. The three official histories for Han repeatedly discuss the "incomplete" (*bu bei* 不備) state of the imperial rites in Han. See, e.g., *Hanshu* 23.1034; 72.3063; 78.3280; 88.3594, etc.

12. *Hanshu* 22.1075.

13. See *Hou Hanshu* 35.1199, citing Zhang Fen 張奮: 眾儒不達, 議多駁異.

14. *Hou Hanshu* 35.1194. The passage says that Zhang Chun, descendant of Zhang Anshi 張安世, "fixed" many (*duo* 多) of the imperial rituals, but not all of them, but we know that Mingdi and Zhangdi then emended the same, and it was these very rituals that came up for debate at the White Tiger Hall discussions. We also know that Zhang Chun was concerned that the Eastern Han founder Guangwu 光武 wanted to honour his own biological relatives in the imperial ancestral temple, which would undercut the dynastic ties to the Western Han emperors.

15. His son Huan Yu 桓郃 held military posts, however.

16. Huan Rong was appointed *taichang* under Guangwu. Before this appointment, one of his clansmen had mocked his ritual study, but once he became *taichang*, he mocked him no more. More or less the same story is told of Xiahou Sheng 夏侯勝, the *Documents* expert, in Western Han.

17. *Hou Hanshu* 37.1250.

18. According to Bielenstein 1980, the position of Chancellor (*chengxiang* 丞相) was changed to Grand Minister over the Masses (*da situ* 大司徒) in 1 BC, then shortened to Minister over the Masses (*situ* 司徒) in AD 51. "Little is known about the particular duties of the Minister over the Masses in Later Han Times. He presumably was still responsible for drawing up the annual budgets, although the sources are silent on this point. He had the same censorial and advisory responsibilities as the other two Excellencies" (p. 14). Loewe styles the *situ* as Chancellor, in order to show that he had the same responsibilities as the Chancellor (*chengxiang*) in Western Han. Possibly Huan Rong served as aide or official in the office of *da situ* Ouyang Xi 歐陽歙, a renowned expert in the *Documents* classics.

19. Note that there was a Senior Tutor at this time, Zhang Yi 張佚, but he is mentioned nowhere else outside Huan Rong's biography, so it seems that Huan was preferred over him in this advisory post. Only Huan Rong was feted by Mingdi as "Quintuply Experienced," judging from the extant records. It is important to remember that, according to the *Hou Hanshu* "Treatise on Officials," in the Eastern Han, the Senior Tutor to the Heir did not manage any of the heir's staff of advisors, but the Junior Tutor to the heir did. See *Hou Hanshu, zhi* 志 27.3608. That may mean that Mingdi knew Huan Rong significantly better than he knew Zhang Yi.

20. *Hou Hanshu* 79.2566. We say this based on the number of students he taught. Huan Rong brought with him to Luoyang the commentary of the previous Academician of the Ouyang *Documents*, Zhu Pu 朱普, which he edited down from 400,000 to 230,000 characters while serving as Mingdi's teacher. His son, Huan Yu, then edited the commentary down to 120,000 characters. This became the standard *Commentary by chapter and verse (zhang ju) of the Masters of Ceremonial, Senior and Junior Lord Huan (Huan jun Da xiao Taichang zhangju* 桓君大小太常章句), according to *Hou Hanshu* 37.1256.

21. Significantly, Mingdi invited Huan Rong and his students to lecture on the Classics to those in attendance; and Mingdi served him as one would an elder brother (*xiong* 兄) during the ritual. The *Bo hu tong* specifically enjoined ritual obeisance by the emperor to his tutor; such public displays served to increase the authority of Mingdi's teacher (and by extension Mingdi himself).
22. *Hou Hanshu* 37.1253.
23. Mingdi showed extremely deference to Huan Rong on this occasion, and in several ways showed his respect for his age as well.
24. Constantino wonders whether Mingdi was using Huan Rong in a power play, by making Liu Cang, an authority himself, offer gifts to Huan Rong as supreme ritual master. This is worth consideration.
25. As seen from the excavation reports, the Taixue (as tentatively identified) occupied lands in Luoyang very near the Sanyong ritual complex space, so near that it could appear to be part of the same ritual complex. Strictly speaking, however, the Sanyong was comprised of the Mingtang 明堂, the Hall of the Circular Moat (*piyong* 辟雍) and the Spirit Terrace (*lingtai* 靈臺). For Zhao Xi's views, see *Hou Hanshu* 48.1606.
26. Sometime in the eighth year of Mingdi's reign, Zhao Xi asked to be relieved of his official duties altogether, to carry out the mourning ceremonies for his mother, but Mingdi refused his request, and instead sent lavish gifts for the burial. See *Hou Hanshu* 26.915. At that time, Zhao was acting as "Acting *taiwei*" (Acting Supreme Commander) on behalf of Mingdi.
27. *Hou Hanshu* 3.130n2.
28. *Hou Hanshu* 25.874.
29. *Hou Hanshu* 26.912.
30. Earlier, the ritual master Xiao Wangzhi had served in this post, which may or may not be relevant to our topic. See *Hanshu* 19B.805, 34.3274.
31. He is credited with ridding Chang'an of the Red Eyebrows in *Hou Hanshu* 26.914.
32. *Hou Hanshu* 3.130n2. *Hou Hanshu* 24.853. Under Zhangdi, Dou Rong assumed the position of Supreme Commander (*taiwei* 太尉).
33. See *Hou Hanshu* 2.96n13, though a much later ritual master, Ying Shao, protested that officials should not receive posthumous titles, regardless of their merits.
34. *Hou Hanshu* 26.915 says of Zhao Xi, "Within the palace, Zhao Xi supervised the guards; outside the palace, he performed the duties of chancellor" 意內典宿衛，外幹宰職。
35. The Siku editors believe that because Jia Kui was from the same commandery as Du Lin, he must have been familiar with Du's one-juan so-called *guwen* version. But Jia Kui is chiefly associated with commentary to the Han-era *Zuo*, and he prepared, for Zhangdi, a work on the "similarities and differences between the *Zuo*, the *Gongyang*, and the *Guliang*". We write of the "Han-era *Zuo*" as that work was both reorganised and re-edited in the post-Han period. Jia Hui 賈徽, father of Jia Kui, had studied the *Zuo* under Liu Xin (*Hou Hanshu* 36.1234), and he was the reputed author of a book explaining the *Zuo* entitled *Zuoshi tiaoli* 左氏條例, with expertise in the *Guoyu* as well. Kui compiled an "Explanation and Glosses" (*jie gu* 解詁) for the *Zuo zhuan* 左傳 and *Guo yu* 國語, in fifty-one *pian*.
36. This is one of many reasons why it would not be wise to divide Han scholarship into "New Text" and "Old Text," or even Modern Script vs. Archaic Script.
37. *Hou Hanshu* 37.1264n4.
38. *Hou Hanshu* 48.1599; 36.1235. Earlier Jia had copied texts in the Lantai.
39. See Yang 2007, 48.
40. This is curious, as we know of only one version of this work, but perhaps more circulated in Han times (?), and perhaps "Zhou guan" is the name of a classification of writings, rather than a title of a single work.

41. *Hou Hanshu* 36.1223. Judging from the extant sources, his work on the *Zuo* tradition and the *Guoyu* was known to many generals. We distinguish the Han-era *Zuoshi chunqiu* from today's *Zuozhuan*, as the first was heavily emended in the post-Han period.
42. The *Gongyang* scholars were studying two interpretive traditions: 公羊嚴、顏諸生高才者 (*Hou Hanshu* 36.1239).
43. Li was initially appointed, on Ban Gu's recommendation, to the staff of Liu Cang, king of Dongping and a general at the time. (Note his work with Ban in the palace libraries.) He was considered a client of the Mas, whose prominence began with Ma Yuan, the general, and the Mas went on to become a consort clan.
44. *Hou Hanshu* 36.1237. Jia Kui, in a carefully worded memorial, reminded Zhangdi that Guangwu had favoured setting up an Academician's post for the *Zuo*, given his fondness for the apocrypha.
45. Jia Kui's biography mentions another court conference, held in the Southern Palace in the *Yuntai* 南宮雲臺, but we know nothing about it. See *Hou Hanshu* 35.1236.
46. *Hou Hanshu* 79B.2582. The possibility exists, of course, that the adherents of the *Gongyang* and *Guliang* were in the majority at the court conference. Later, during the reigns of Huandi 桓帝 and Lingdi 靈帝, another controversy would become famous, that between He Xiu 何休 and Zheng Xuan. But that is outside the purview of this essay.
47. *Hou Hanshu*, *zhi* 志 2.3025. Apparently, during the Yongping 永平 era, Jia Kui worked with Ban Gu to produce histories for the ruling house. See *Hou Hanshu* 14.588; probably these were something like the Diaries of Activity and Repose.
48. Loewe 1995, 305-28.
49. *Hou Hanshu* 36.1240: 逵所著經傳義詁及論難百餘萬言.
50. Cao Chong was master of the *Qingshi li* 慶氏禮, a text that is now lost. Aside from being an expert in that tradition, Cao Chong is credited with re-establishing this scholastic tradition in Luoyang, when he produced a *zhang ju* 章句 (commentary by chapter and verse) for it. See *Hou Hanshu* 35.1201. Cao Chong uttered the refrain that not even the sagely Five Lords and Three Kings kept to the same rites and music used by their predecessors (五帝不相沿樂, 三王不相襲禮); see *Hou Hanshu* 35.2001. In Cao Chong's understanding, then, these exemplary sage-kings set the precedents for *not* adhering to precedents.
51. Only three ritual masters are named for this tradition: Cao Bao, his father, and a ritual master from Jianwei commandery Dong Jun 董鈞. See Yang 2007, 179, plus Chapter 5.
52. *Hou Hanshu* 35.1203 says, "When Cao Bao examined the edict, he sighed and said to his students: 'Long ago Xisi eulogised Lu, and [Yin] Kaofu sang of Yin. When subjects rely upon duty to make their lords illustrious, using every ounce of their loyalty to commend their rulers, this is excellent conduct!'" (褒省詔, 乃歎息謂諸生日: 昔奚斯頌魯, 考甫詠殷。夫人臣依義顯君, 竭忠彰主, 行之美也。) Whether Cao Bao sighed out of admiration for his ruler or sighed because he knew he might be in for trouble, the passage does not plainly state, but usually such sighs indicate admiration.
53. *Hou Hanshu* 35.1202: 帝知群僚拘攣。
54. *Hou Hanshu*, *zhi* 志 2.3026.
55. Hedi ascended the throne at the age of 9, so his capping must have taken place after his ascension to the throne. The Basic Annals for Hedi mention him adopting a cap in his third year; see *Hou Hanshu* 3.171, 317n1.
56. *Dongguan Hanji* 東觀漢記 tells us that Zhang Pu 張酺, a *Documents* classic expert, who had studied under Huan Rong and taught himself at the capital's Four Noble Clans' Academy (*sixing xiaohou* 四姓小侯) set up in the South Palace, protested that Cao Bao's rituals were not likely to usher in the much-desired Great Peace, and instead, Cao Bao's regulations were "inauspicious" (非禎祥之特達).

57. Cao Bao was *Shesheng xiaowei* 射聲校尉 (Colonel, Archers under Training) in AD 92, and later, at an unspecified time, but before AD 96, as *Chengmen xiaowei* 城門校尉 (Colonel of the City Gates), with responsibility for the capital defences; in AD 96, he served as Governor, a position that combined military and civil functions.
58. *Hou Hanshu* 37.1264, speaking of Wei Ying who in AD 80 was appointed Governor of Shangdang and also Cavalry Commandant: 使五官中郎將魏應主承制問難.
59. *Hou Hanshu* 37.1267.
60. Kim 2013 cites Yu Ying-shih on this supposed transition in time.
61. See Nylan & Yin forthcoming.
62. See, e.g., *Hou Hanshu* 42.1431n1, 62.2051, 79A.2546; cf. *ibid.* 26.918, 32.1126, 79A.2546. The texts mention the *Xiaojing* “with commentaries in chapter and verse”, but notes to the *Hou Hanshu* repeatedly mention the court’s preoccupation with the apocryphal traditions attached to this classic of elementary learning, which some, following Harry Hsin-i Hsiao, would call “Legalist” in origin. See Hsiao 1973.
63. Wang Weizhen’s 王惟貞 extremely helpful study of early Eastern Han begins by confessing his own confusion concerning the inclusion of the generals at such a meeting (Wang 2007). See also his book, Wang 2011. Wang takes up this “puzzle” in chapter 5, but his answer is somewhat unsatisfactory.
64. The *Bohu tong* gives an elaborate explanation for the graph *yong* 壘, which in the earliest Yuan Dade edition, explains the *yong* as “warding off malformed and destructive persons” (壘天下之殘賊). The same text also explains why the surrounding trench or moat was circular: to symbolise the spreading influence of the imperial charisma to the four corners (於雍水側象教化流行也.) The expression *can zei* 殘賊 apparently comes from Jia Yi’s writings, a passage of which is quoted in *Hanshu* 24.1128. Thereafter, in *Hou Hanshu*, the same expression is deemed ominous. Many have written on the Mingtang, including the classicists Lu Zhi 盧植, Ma Rong 馬融, Zheng Xuan and Cai Yong 蔡邕 (the last authored the “Mingtang lun” 明堂論); the Mingtang also figures largely in the writings of Liu Xiang, Xu Shen, Ban Gu, and the *Xiaojing* apocrypha entitled “*Xiaojing soushen qi*” 孝經搜神契. Liu Xiang’s *Bielu* 別錄 talks of a two-*pian* “Mingtang yinyang ji” 明堂陰陽記. That is lost, but Liu Xin’s “Seven Summaries” mentions a similar/same text that is slotted under the “Ritual Experts” (*Lijia* 禮家). One of the best secondary sources on this issue, aside from the excavation reports themselves and Lü Simian’s work cited below, is Xue 2015, which focuses on Zheng Xuan’s (127–200) ideas. However, Xue barely mentions the *Yi Zhoushu* 逸周書, a major source for Han thinking, and she gives credence to the tales (tall tales, in our view) about Zhou and pre-Zhou worship halls, as do, admittedly, some of her sources.
65. See, for example, the apocryphal texts in Yasui & Nakamura 1971–1992, vol. 5, 35, 50–51; vol. 3, 83.
66. This paper will not consider the sacrifices in the northern suburbs of Luoyang, initiated by Guangwu to honour Earth and Gao hou 高后 (aka Dowager Empress Lü of early Western Han), as little is known about them, and they figured less in post-Han imaginaries. See *Hou Hanshu* 1B.84.
67. A map in Bielenstein 1976 places it in the north-east, inside the inner city wall, but his main text, so far as we can judge from the book, which lacks a proper index, omits discussion of the evidence for this placement. Checking *da miao* 大廟 in the electronic databases yields nothing, but Xu 1960, *juan* 22, discusses several ancestral temples erected to illustrious Han emperors, including the Gao di miao 高帝廟, erected to the Western Han founder Gaozu, and the Guangwu miao 光武廟, erected to honour the Eastern Han founder.
68. For example, Liu *et al.* 2010 says that the dimensions of the Eastern Han Taixue are “hard to ascertain” (*nan yi queding* 難以確定) (p. 242), while the Wei-Jin site measures 150+m east-west, and 220m north-south. Lü 1983 speculates that the original Eastern Han Taixue was inside the palace, and “only later moved outside the city walls, and put in the suburbs” (p. 495).

69. Zhang Heng 張衡, in his “Eastern Metropolis” *fu* (東京賦), lines 241–244, describes what must be the Mingtang, though he never names it (see below). By name, he describes the Circular Moat and Lingtai. At the entire ritual complex, by Zhang Heng’s account, “the various lords arrive from all directions,” as do crowds of officials, and kings of the border states; brilliantly arrayed, the emperor entertains his guests, teaching them through the ceremonial. He is said to worship the high gods and Guangwu, as coadjutor (lines 407–411), which allows the seasons to turn, as do his other ancestral sacrifices (line 416). For an annotated translation of the *fu*, see Knechtges, Xiao 1982:243–310.

70. Often called the Wenshang Mingtang 汶上明堂. Han Wudi or his court had this built in 109 BC.

71. The *Hanshu* tells us that a worship hall (aka a *mingtang*) was built by Han Wudi near Mt. Tai, and possibly by Wudi’s uncle, the Prince of Hejian 河間, in his own kingdom. As Lü 1983, vol. 3, p. states, if Wudi built a Mingtang (here a worship hall) near Mt. Tai, on the banks of the Wen River 汶上 (Shandong Province), and “sat there after descending from the mountain” (降坐明堂), Wudi was certainly worshipping Taiyi 泰一, not heaven-and-earth or his ancestors. Michael Loewe has alerted me to the possibility that *mingtang* here is not a proper noun (personal communication), and Lü’s remarks seem in line with Loewe’s. For further information, compare *Shiji* 130.3296. The *Hanshu* bibliographic treatise (“Yiwen zhi” 藝文志) includes a notice about the King of Hejian’s writings on the Sanyong, and responses to questions on some 30+ issues, in three *pian*. That does not, of course, guarantee that the prince built such a ritual structure in his own kingdom.

72. *Hanshu* 22.1033.

73. *Hanshu* 22.1034–35 says that work began on the Biyong/Mingtang site under Chengdi, but when Chengdi died at a relatively young age in 7 BC, the work was stopped. The phrase “dense concatenation of meanings” is borrowed from Koziol 2002, esp. 388.

74. Note the doubling of round to square, of heaven to earth. The “Kaogong ji” 考工記 chapter of the *Zhouli* insists that the number of rooms the Mingtang should have are nine, a number that supposedly corresponds to the Nine Ministers at court (?), for reasons unknown.

75. As this site has no counterpart to Eastern Han Luoyang ritual sites, and the tentative identification made between it and Wang Mang’s 王莽 Nine Temples is shaky, we say nothing more here.

76. See Fig. 5–18, from Liu *et al.* 2010, 212.

77. The question of one or two sites has been settled, it seems, by this archaeological excavation. So far as we can discover, the Mingtang is never described in the same passage as the Biyong, making it likely that they were one and the same site. The *Shiji* “Treatise on the *feng* and *shan* sacrifices,” associates Mingtang-Biyong with the emperor, but it seems to be a double-name (not two sites), as it may be with Wang Mang, in the *Hanshu*; cf. *Dongguan Hanji*, *juan* 5. Similarly, the one mention given in the *Yantie lun* 鹽鐵論, *pian* 37, may be talking of a single ritual centre, or two parts of the same ritual centre.

78. That this was the “classic” shape for the Mingtang-Biyong-Lingtai we are told by the Western Jin commentator who styles himself “your servant Zan” (*chen Zan* 臣瓚). See *Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan kaogu yanjiu suo* 2003, esp. pp. 211–17.

79. *Hanshu* 99A.4069. The departure from earlier precedent may explain why Wang Mang asked four members of the imperial and *waiqi* clans to superintend the building, Liu Xin, a member of the imperial clan and a leading proponent of the *haogu* movement, and three *waiqi* dignitaries, Ping Yan, Kong Yong, and Sun Qian. The names of the last three are found in the *Hanshu* Table devoted to the *waiqi*.

80. The Chinese reads, 中元元年, 初建三雍.

81. AD 59 corresponds to the second year of the Yongping reign era. In Yongping 8, six years later, Mingdi performed an ancestral sacrifice at the Mingtang, then “nourished the triply aged” (*yang san lao* 養三老) and the *wugeng* 五更 (Bodde’s “quintuply experienced”) in the Mingtang.

Later in the dynasty, the same sacrifices are said to be performed in the Biyong. See Xu 1960, 48. Indisputably, they are two sites in Zhang Heng's "Qi bian" 七辯, in Yan Kejun, *Quan Hou Han wen* 全後漢文, juan 55 [hereafter Yan Kejun, *Hou Han wen*]. I used the advanced search in CHANT to check proximity of the two terms, within four lines of each other.

82. I say this because of the heavy reliance of the archaeologists and excavation reports on their readings of the received literature, so that the report by no means represents independent confirmation of the early received sources. There is an additional problem, in that there are discrepancies between the maps of the sites provided in *Zhongguo kaogu xue* (p. 234) and in *Han Wei Luoyang cheng* (*passim*), and hence between two competing sets of dimensions. For the latter text, see below.

83. *Hou Hanshu* 79.2545 states that Guangwu began building the Sanyong in the first year of the Zhongyuan 中元 period, which corresponds to AD 56, so roughly 30 years after he came to the throne and less than one year before he died. Earlier in his reign, Guangwu was preoccupied with pacifying the territories to which he laid claim.

84. "Liang du fu" 兩都賦, cited in *Hou Hanshu* 40B.1372.

85. Figure 3 comes from *Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan kaogu yanjiu suo* (2010), p. 3.

86. One should note, meanwhile, that *Zhongwen da cidian* (Taipei, 1973), 3 ce, 437, equates the Biyong with the Taixue, saying the Biyong is simply the name for the Zhou dynasty Taixue; also that archaeological reports in respected journals (e.g. that in *Zhongyuan wenwu* 中原文物 2014:1, 92-95) base their accounts on this.

87. Zhang 2011, esp. 24, examines the term zongsi as an innovation. By some accounts, including the *Zhouli*, the Mingtang is the place where rewards and punishments would be doled out/announced, and this would make sense if the Mingtang is the ancestral imperial temple, as Du Yu asserts in his commentary to the *Zuo zhuan*. For example, the *Bohu tong* states: 明堂上圓下方，八窗四闔，布政之宮，在國之陽。上圓法天，下方法地，八窗象八風，四闔法四時，九室法九州。 In the same vein is Li You's 李尤 "Biyong fu," which contains the lines 神聖班德，由斯以匡。 See Yan Kejun, *Hou Han wen*, juan 50.

88. In some texts, Guangwu is said to be coadjutor to the Five Lords (*wu di* 五帝); others imply he is coadjutor to Heaven (*Tian* 天) itself. In the Eastern Han, Heaven seems to have outranked the Five Lords, although it may be just a name for the collectivity.

89. Xu's compilation dates to Song, but it was based on earlier documents, some of them presumably now missing. We write, "as adjunct," presuming that Hans Bielenstein's siting of the Taimiao is correct.

90. See Zhang Heng's "Eastern Metropolis" *fu*, lines 406-7.

91. Cai Yong and Zheng Xuan concur in this view, for example.

92. Xu 1960, juan 2, 48-49. Compare note 4 above. The identity of the Five Lords (*wu di* 五帝) for whom Guangwu acted as co-adjutant, seems to have been the centre plus the four directions (given the "blue-green" lord), but accounts vary. In one account, recorded in *ibid.*, p. 50, Dai She and Dou Rong spoke of the Five Lords from Xuandi to Pingdi, suggesting that sources deliberately conflated the best Han emperors with the lords of heaven.

93. See Xue 2015, esp. p. 28.

94. It is possible that they are talking of Western Han Chang'an, of course, not Eastern Han Luoyang.

95. Loewe (personal communications, several).

96. These events were the discovery of a precious tripod in AD 63 and the auspicious submission of tribute in the form of a white pheasant in AD 38 or 39, first under Guangwu, then again during Mingdi's reign and also at the very start of Zhangdi's reign. One or more white pheasants, along with white rabbits, were presented in the ninth month of the thirteenth year of Guangwu's reign by a southern group from Nanjiao 南徼 (*Hou Hanshu* 1B.62). This auspicious sign came right after the appointment of Dou Rong 竇融 (Ban Gu's patron) to the post of *da sikong* 大司空, which may

be significant. For Mingdi's omen in his eleventh year, see *Hou Hanshu* 2.114; for Zhangdi, see *ibid.*, 3.145, 40B.1373, 1382, 86.2835, with the last sighting explicitly analogised to the tribute brought by the Yue Shang 越裳 to the court of King Cheng of Western Zhou.

97. See *Jiu Tangshu* (“Li yi zhi” 禮儀志) 22.849.

98. One wonders if they have conflated the Mingtang and the Lingtai, but at this remove we cannot know. As Ni Kuan had a very mixed reputation, it is interesting that Yan Shigu takes him as ethical model.

99. *Jiu Tangshu* (“Li yi zhi” 禮儀志) 22.850.

100. *Jiu Tangshu* (“Li yi zhi” 禮儀志) 22.852.

101. *Jiu Tangshu* (“Li yi zhi” 禮儀志) 22.853.

102. Personal communication at the Collège de France. We invoke Madame Pirazzoli with profound pleasure, thinking of her grace and wit.

103. But see below, for an expert raising objections to the consensus view. Possibly no separate building was especially built for this purpose.

104. Cheng 2002, 8.170, says unambiguously, “In the Western capital, there was no Imperial Academy; therefore they set up the great archery contests at the Qu tai.” In truth, the *Shiji* (“Ru lin zhuan” 儒林傳) says only that Wudi wanted to erect a Taixue, but in Lü's opinion, such a structure was never built or completed (p. 733).

105. Possibly this means Guangwu was the first to do so in Eastern Han, but the phrasing is odd.

106. See Liu *et al.* 2010, 242.

107. See Liu *et al.* 2010, for the contrasting figures 5–26 and 5–27 (pp. 231, 234). Figure 5–27 is small, but the resized Taixue seems about 90m x 175m (?). See note 82 above for further doubts.

108. *Hou Hanshu* 79A.2545: 儒執經問難於前，冠帶縉紳之人，蓋億萬計。Tang Zhen 唐甄 (1630–1704) criticised them in *Qianshu* 潛書, *juan* 1, p. 6: 眾觀而已，何益之有？ See the “Jiangxue” 講學 entry in the book, in <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=418758#%E5%8F%A3%E4%BA%8E>.

109. We say “students or clients” because the term *dizi* 弟子 can mean either. The key point was legal registration to a master.

110. *Hou Hanshu* 48.1606, speaks of housing for the Academicians (*boshi she* 博士舍), but not their “disciples” or “clients.” The dimensions of the Eastern Jin Taixue (bigger than the Eastern Han Taixue) are 24.2 x 7.26 m = 175.692 square metres or 0.04344 acres (.0175 ha). For comparison, the UC-Berkeley campus, with about the same number of students, encompasses approximately 1,232 acres (499 ha), though the “central campus” occupies only the low-lying western 178 acres (72 ha).

111. The number of *boshi dizi* 博士弟子 (assumed to be the same as *Taixue sheng* 太學生) increases dramatically, from 200 under Xuandi, 1000 under Yuandi, and 3000 under Chengdi, to the figure of 30,000 given for Shundi's reign in Eastern Han.

112. Very precise figures are given for his repairs, which may or may not be correct: in all, he had built 240 lecture halls, with 1,850 rooms 凡所造構二百四十房，千八百五十室。 If the rooms are in the halls, then there are 7.70 rooms/hall.

113. *Sanfu huangtu*, *juan* 5.

114. Students of history often forget that the two Han dynasties did not sponsor, in *stricto sensu*, Academicians' chairs in the Five Classics, but rather chairs in the various readings given those Classics, in the *shuo*. Lü 1983 reckons each Academician was responsible for training about fifty official students, but what that training consisted of we do not know; he writes that those who were “registered” (“on the books”) as students were great numbers, but “not very many were actually what we could call ‘students’” (p. 736). “Official learning was ever thus” (官學如此). Lü then adds, “it seems as if the disciples were outside [the capital].” Moreover, Lü draws our attention to the fact that “commanderies and kingdoms” also set up Five Classics posts, at the low rank of 100 *shi* 石, who would have drawn locals to their lectures and/or ritual performances. See *Hanshu* 88.3596; *Hou Hanshu* 22.785. In general, Lü greatly complicates these numbers, arguing

that when Ru Chun 如淳 (fl. before AD 280) glosses the *Shiji* “Rulin zhuan,” and speaks of there being certain numbers, (a) this contradicts the *Hanshu* figures, and also (b) conflates several time periods together (p. 737).

115. We think of the Roman empire, where clients of the great were expected to perform the morning salutations for their patrons, in return for which they might receive some consideration. One relevant passage can be found in *Hou Hanshu* 67.2201, which speaks of Li Ying’s 李膺 hangers-on. At the same time, Lü notes, the commanderies and kingdoms appointed aspiring students learning the Five Classics traditions to very low-level posts.

116. *Hou Hanshu* 79A.2547, 2547n6.

117. We do not see how that many people could have participated, but if several hundred looked on twice a year, the numbers can add up.

118. The Chinese reads: 大將軍下至六百石，悉遣子就學，每歲輒於鄉射月一饗會之，以此為常。The *Han guan yi* reads, 春三月秋九月，習鄉射禮，禮生皆使太學學生。

119. *Hou Hanshu* 79A.2547.

120. *Hou Hanshu* 44.1500.

121. See *Hou Hanshu*, *zhi* 8.3177n1-3 for the conflation of the Taixue with the Biyong: 太學者，中學明堂之位也，ascribed to Wei Wenhou’s commentary to the *Xiaojing* 魏文侯孝經; also, the conflation of the Mingtang with the Biyong.

122. The only reliable figures say that Zhaodi had determined that each Academician might register 100 disciples for himself, and that at the end of Xuandi’s reign that number was doubled. There is talk under Chengdi of allowing this number to be raised to 3,000 disciples (in honour of Confucius, whom legend said had that many) but that would simply have been rounding up the number of Academicians’ number of disciples (14 x 200). See Lü 1983, 732ff. Lü Simian cautions us against presuming that these were “disciples” in the sense of “students,” when they were more probably clients, most of them.

123. For these reasons, we discount the characterisation by Yu Ying-shih, writing of the “student movements” “under the Han and Song dynasties” as a fundamental distortion of earlier realities for present political purposes. See Yu 2016, vol. 2, 193.

124. See, e.g., the story told of Ma Rong and Zheng Xuan (teacher and student) in *Hou Hanshu* 35.1207. More examples can be found in Nylan 2001.

125. *Hou Hanshu* 35.1201, 1203, 1205.

126. One should recall that Guangwu was descended from Yuandi 元帝 by a lateral line, rather than the main patriline.

127. By a temporary solution, the emperors Chengdi, Aidi 哀帝, and Pingdi 平帝 were to be worshipped, via seasonable sacrifices, in Gaozu’s temple in Chang’an. Guangwu initially worshipped three emperors himself at Luoyang, but some of his advisors, including Zhang Chun, urged “adding” sacrifices to Xuandi and Yuandi (making a total of five), but this “solution” immediately became problematic upon Guangwu’s death, when Xuandi’s tablet had to be moved to Chang’an as well, to make room for Guangwu’s tablet in Luoyang, as there were a limited number of emperors who could be worshipped at the Taimiao.

128. At issue here is how many emperors were to be worshipped as *zong* 宗 (superior lineage heads) at any one time, four, five, or seven. In AD 59 (Yongping 2), Mingdi worshipped Gaozu, Wendi, and Wudi of Western Han (three emperors altogether), together with Guangwu, in the expectation that he after death would join this illustrious company. He reportedly worshipped Guangwu in the Mingtang as coadjutor to the Five Lords, though the identity of those five was disputed. Two months later, in the Biyong, the Imperial Archery Ritual was held. The Biyong is invariably linked to the archery contest, suggesting that it must refer to the ritual space in the vicinity of the Mingtang. For the disputes over the identity of the Five Lords, one may consult Li 2006, 107. Li Ling believes that these Five Lords mentioned represent the royal/imperial of the Qin, which identification may hold for some texts but not necessarily for all. In the *Hou*

Hanshu 1B.70, 25.883, etc., the Five Lords appear to be five of the most prominent of Western and Eastern Han emperors surnamed “Liu.” See Table 5 in Xue 2015.

129. *Hou Hanshu* 35.1199.

130. *Hou Hanshu* 35.1201 reveals the problem: that the crowds of conferees at the White Tiger conference simply wanted to use their erudition to “constrain him” (帝知群僚拘攣), and a careful reading of the *Bohu tong* supports that view. In particular, many *Bohu tong* passages address the relation of the *Tianzi* 天子 (Son of Heaven) to the *zhuhou* 諸侯 (with many court officials themselves nobles or clients of nobles), and most of those passages support the powers of the *zhuhou* and the view of the emperor as *primus inter pares*. See Tanaka 1990, esp.102ff. Zhangdi also clearly knew that court conferences involving too many people were unlikely to arrive at a consensus that could support definitive reforms. Note 1) *Qun* 群 seems to emphasise their number and 2) this sentiment aligns with Zhangdi’s later statement that “a house built beside the road will not be finished within three years” (作舍道邊, 三年不成). “Too many cooks spoil the broth,” by the English idiom.

131. Here, many examples could be adduced.

132. *Hou Hanshu, zhi* 24.3555. We speculated above that Zhangdi thought it best to have his calendrical reform in place before pressing the question of the rites tied to the calendar. But recall that Cao Bao’s *New Rituals* were used at least once for Zhangdi’s successor, Hedi.

133. Cao Bao, for example, says, “The Five Lords did not continue each other’s music, nor did the Three Kings inherit each other’s rites” (五帝不相沿樂, 三王不相襲禮). Here Cao Bao follows the language of his father, nearly word for word.

134. On the one hand, Zhangdi did not wish to bury his father with the full imperial burial rites. On the other, he agreed (we do not know how reluctantly) to have his father called “Xianzong” 顯宗, which flattering title virtually guaranteed that his father would be worshipped alongside Guangwu as a truly great emperor, despite Mingdi’s murderous tendencies. Zhangdi himself would be honoured as “Suzong” 肅宗 by his son and heir Hedi, who was duly honoured after his death as Muzong 穆宗 (a pattern that suggests that the Eastern Han courts were tired of adjudicating who were good emperors). See Wang 2007, 110n44, citing Wang Fuzhi’s 王夫之 *Du Tongjian lun* 讀通鑑論 7.193. In later times, Zhangdi would be excoriated as “unfilial” by the likes of Wang Fuzhi, on the grounds that he introduced many ritual changes very soon after his father’s death. Many have followed Wang, ignoring the question whether the changes were beneficial, after the bloody reign of Mingdi. Wang Fuzhi’s exact words are these: 章帝初立, 鮑昱、陳寵急矯先君之過, 第五倫起而持之, 視明帝若胡亥之慘, 而已為漢高, 章帝聽而速改, 將不得復為人子矣... 為人子者, 奈何其殉之. Ban Gu registers a curious comment (and possibly an oblique criticism) about burial rites in his Appraisal of Yang Wangsun 楊王孫 in *Hanshu* 67.2928.

135. The stele mentions an Academician’s Libationer and Cavalry Commander, Liu Xi 劉熹 from Jinan, along with three other officials, one a Master of Ceremonials (or *taichang*), one a minor noble (*tinghou* 亭侯) of Le’an 樂安, and one an Academician from the capital; these four men were commissioned to “examine and harmonise the liturgies.”

136. Somewhat contrary to our expectations, the feast was held in winter and the archery contest in spring.

137. Hence the writing of many commemorative pieces to honour the occasion. One, ascribed to Fu Yi 傅毅, can be found in Yan Kejun, *Hou Han wen, juan* 43, titled “Luoyang du fu” 洛都賦 (*Fu* on capital at Luo).

138. The ritual experts included the Master of Ceremonials, Zhuge Xu 諸葛緒 from Langya 琅琊; the Academician Libationer Cavalry Commander, Liu Xi 劉熹 from Jinan; and the Academician Duan Pu 段溥 from Jingzhao 京兆 (the capital).

139. One egregious example of this tendency (exhibited in an otherwise fascinating book) is Yang 2012. The phrase “standardised and sacralised” comes from Yang 2000, 46. The same assumption underlies Cao 2005, 25–29. Of the post-Mao scholarship, only Mao 1962 acknowledges disputes over many aspects of the record. Lü 1983, 495 chides Zheng Xuan for constructing a ritual system that never was.

140. For Xu Fang’s 徐防 memorial of 102 (under Hedi), see *Hou Hanshu* 44.1500.

141. See Koziol 2002, esp. p. 386. As Koziol argues, we need to see rituals as a coherent, continuous part of a battery of cultural practices specific to the time and place, rather than as social facts in isolation. Nathan Sivin has made the same point when he talks of the “cultural manifold” in his writings.

142. Academicians did not teach the Five Classics themselves, but instead were appointed on the basis of their expertise in one or another of the “sayings” attached to a Classic, as with the Ouyang or Xiahou *shuo* for the *Documents*.

143. Michael Loewe, like Michael Nylan, believes that the dynasty was on a downward trajectory by Hedi’s reign (personal communication, April 2018). By AD 140, the chaos was evident to all men who were well-informed, many of whom then became social critics.

144. It is possible that it was destroyed in mid-Eastern Han by Zhangdi’s successors and Cao Bao’s opponents. Despite stiff opposition, the *Suishu* bibliographic treatise unaccountably treats Cao Bao’s *Xinli* as putting in place ritual rules for Eastern Han (是後相承，世有制作), even as it concedes that the *Xinli* did not resolve ritual controversies. See *Suishu* 33.972. Clearly, by early Tang the *Xinli* was no longer extant. *Jinshu* 21.662 says that Han Shundi used part of the *Xinli* for the capping ceremonies along with another ritual text.

145. As Diwu Lun was a noble of noble descent (from the Tian 田 clan of Qi), who was admired in his own lifetime and afterwards. He served mainly outside the capital of Luoyang, as Governor in Zuopingyi 左馮翊 [near Chang’an], in Shu, and in Kuaiji, prior to his last appointment in the capital, in AD 75, serving as *da situ*, soon after Zhangdi came to the throne. Diwu Lun promptly presented a memorial objecting to the high offices held by the Ma family of the Dowager, and another urging that officials act less harshly. Though it had been appropriate for Guangwu to establish a firm regime after the civil war which followed Wang Mang’s rule, it was time for a more generous policy. Continuing that line, Diwu Lun supported Yang Zhong’s proposal to end the exile of convicts from the southeastern region of the empire at the northern frontier, and argued against further expeditions against the Xiongnu. He retired in AD 86, in old age. We call him a ritual master because he successfully propagated the capital ritual norms in the south, where wizards and diviners had before been in charge of local cults. For Jia Kui, too little survives, aside from brief citations of his views in commentaries to the Classics and official histories. See Lin Zhiqi 林之奇, *Shangshu quanjie* 尚書全解, *juan* 2, for Jia Kui’s ideas on the *liuzong* 六宗. See our “ritual masters” section.

146. Translation tentative for *ping zou* 平奏, based on the *Hanshu* 23.1104 parallel.

147. Translation tentative, but presuming something like the concluding Appraisal of Zheng Xuan’s biography: 異端紛紜，互相詭激 (different theories became muddled, with each giving rise to ever more contradictions). See *Hou Hanshu* 25.1213, glossed as “Learned men each maintained their own views, without being able to clarify matters or understand each other” (學者各守所見，不疏通也.)

148. *Liangshu* 25.379–80. *Nanshi* repeats this account almost *verbatim*. Note that here the *zhangju* are said to represent the last “wall” against the collapse of classical learning, whereas the Han texts occasionally register protests against the *zhangju* as the uninspired and uninspiring products of the court –sponsored learning. See Yang 2007, 192. We have few *zhangju* from the period, but they do not, at this remove, look much different from the writings of those who went on record opposing them.

149. The Siku editors dispute this ascription, on fairly good textual grounds.

150. In *Hou Hanshu* 32.112, we are told that Fan Shu was appointed colonel and then commissioned to set the suburban sacrifices and other rituals, and to use the apocrypha to correct the different interpretations of the Five Classics” (以讖記正五經異說). We considered including Fan Shu among our ritual masters, but his main activity was during the reign of Zhangdi’s predecessor, Mingdi. Fan Shu, who was said, with the help of the ministers and other high-ranking officials, to “fix in a hodgepodge way” (*za ding* 雜定) the court rituals, at the start of Mingdi’s reign, in AD 58. Under Zhangdi, he was appointed Colonel of the Long Waters (*Changshui xiaowei* 長水校尉) (*Hou Hanshu* 3.138) and Colonel of Recovered Lands (*Futu* 復土 *xiaowei*) in AD 59. For his biography, see *Hou Hanshu* 32.1122–1125. Huan was commissioned to edit a commentary on disparate interpretations of the Five Classics (*Wujia yaoshuo zhangju* 五家要說章句) later in Mingdi’s reign, apparently in AD 72. De Crespigny 2017, 75, is certain that this *wujia* 五家 should be changed to *wuxing* 五行 (Five Phases, or Five Elements in his writing). We disagree, thinking that the text refers to Five Experts and hence Five Traditions of classical learning. At this time, for example, there were five, not three traditions for the *Annals* classic.
151. This translation is very tentative, but it seems to get at the reason why cult is to be offered.
152. See Nylan 1996. Yang 2012 takes up the issue of “not speaking for three years” after a ruler’s death, but unfortunately, he fails to consult the official histories for Han, as his focus is on Shang-Yin customs.
153. The *Shiji jijie* for 1.24 offers good notes, as does *Shangshu Zhengzhu*, *juan* 1.7; and *Wujing yiyi shuzheng* 22–24, not to mention *Hou Hanshu*, *zhi* 3157n2.
154. See *Hanshu* 25A.1191, acknowledging the many sayings; *ibid.* 25B.1256, 1267–70.
155. See *Hou Hanshu* 38 (*zhi* 8).3184.
156. Gu, Liu 2005, vol. 1, 124.
157. See Tian 2015, 262–93.
158. *Dongguan Hanji*, *juan* 5.
159. *Hou Hanshu* 5.238n3 implies that the Eastern Han courts welcomed the notion of six earthly *zong* who would be counterparts for the Six Origins. The Chinese reads: 六宗謂孝文日太宗, 孝武日代宗, 孝宣日中宗, 孝元日高宗, 孝明日顯宗, 孝章日肅宗.
160. *Hou Hanshu*, *zhi* 7.3161.
161. See, for example, *Yi Zhoushu*, “Xiao kai jie” (*pian* 23); in *Yi Zhoushu huijiao jizhu*, vol. 1, 227.
162. See, for example, Yang 2012, one chapter of which is devoted to the Five Sacrifices (pp. 379–401), which contains references to Chen Wei and other secondary sources. For Zhang Hequan, see Zhang 2011.
163. See *Zuozhuan*, Lord Zhao, Year 29; cf. *Han jiu yi* 漢舊儀 4.4.22 (CHANT).
164. Zhang Taiyan’s whole theory about the Five Sacrifices was premised on his belief that these sacrifices were offered to the lowly gods of earth.
165. See Yang 2012, 400–401.
166. *Bohu tong*, section 2.81, reveals the nature of these debates.
167. One chapter in the late Western Han compilation, the *Liji* (“Zengzi wen”), explicitly says the emperor makes these sacrifices. The *Zhouli*, “Zongbo” 宗伯 section, has the *Tianzi* offering sacrifices to these with a slightly less impressive ritual cap. In a similar vein, the *Hou Hanshu* treatise on sacrifices says that these offerings are made to the gods of earth by an imperial representative, whereas the emperor himself offered cult to the *liu zong*. Some Han texts, including the *Yantie lun* (*juan* 6, *pian* 29 “San bu zu”) have high-ranking counsellors offering these sacrifices. Zheng Xuan believed that the emperor alone offered Seven Sacrifices, but as this is part of his theorising about the differences between Shang and Zhou ritual practices, his opinion is highly unreliable regarding this topic. It is more likely that Shusun Tong wanted Han Gaozu to offer seven, rather than five, to elevate his position at court. Zhang Taiyan (aka Zhang Binglin, 1869–1936) believed that the Five Sacrifices went back to Anyang, based on a few OBI.
168. These ritual controversies were detailed in Loewe 1974.

169. In this connection, one might note the assertion found in *Shangshu dazhuan*, *juan 6* (“Lüe shuo, xia”) that the term “capital” is reserved for the city that houses an ancestral temple with the tablet of the dynastic founder.
170. See *Dong Han huiyao*, *juan 2*, 52–53; *juan 22*, 233.
171. See De Crespigny 2017, 75.
172. See *Dong Han huiyao*, *juan 2*, 50–51.
173. See Wang 2011, 86, 86n51, citing Wang Fuzhi’s *Du tongjian lun* 讀通鑑論, *juan 7*, 192–194.
174. The difficulty of making those Five Classics cohere underlay Zhu Xi’s decision to elevate the Four Books.
175. See, e.g., *Shiji* 12.473: 儒采封禪尚書、周官、王制之望祀射牛; also Yang 2007, 197, speaking of Zheng Xuan’s method of argumentation.
176. Thanks to Lü 1983, Nylan has found one reference to Academicians’ posts in the provinces, at 100 *shi*: “The commanderies and kingdoms set up officials ranked at 100 *shi*, for the Five Classics” 郡國置五經百石卒史。成帝末，或言孔子布衣養徒三千人 (*Hanshu* 88.3596).
177. *Hou Hanshu* 35.1199, said by the *taichang* (Minister of Ceremonies) Zhang Fen, whose family had served in that post for generations.
178. A preliminary check seems to have this mean something like “rules governing the conduct of the members of the imperial family,” as we learn, for example, that one prince, Liu Mu 劉睦, refused to entertain prospective clients, since the rules governing the imperial clan grew stricter during his lifetime. See *Hou Hanshu* 14.556. The phrase *guoxian* reoccurs in the biographies of Cao Bao and Cai Lun, both of whom were asked by the reigning court to supervise ritual reforms.
179. The *Hanshu* treatise on rites and music ends by saying that, despite concerted efforts by a number of ritual masters beginning with Shusun Tong, Jia Yi, and Dong Zhongshu, the Han imperial rites were always incomplete and overly indebted to corrupt models; see *Hanshu* 22.1075.
180. For example, see Du You 杜祐, *Tongdian* 通典, *juan 80* (“Li dian, yan ge” 禮典, 沿革).
181. Here one recalls the *Changes*, where the only constant is said to be change.
182. *Hou Hanshu* 35.1205: 斯固世主所當損益者也。
183. *Hou Hanshu* 35.1203, 1213. There may be a difference between the two verbs *shou* 授 and *chuan* 傳 (generally treated as interchangeable synonyms, meaning “to confer teachings on others”). Certainly, in some instances, *shou* seems to be reserved for teaching others who do not belong to one’s own household or clan, going outside the *jia ye* 家業 (the “family enterprise”), whereas *chuan* meant “to transmit” to close kin. These boundaries were doubtless blurry, insofar as disciples and clients could register with their teachers and masters, as dependents of the household.
184. Recall that Mingdi wanted to get rid of the Taixue once the Biyong was built, on the grounds that the Taixue was superfluous.
185. See, e.g., Wang Guowei 王國維, *Guantang jilin* 觀堂集林, *ce* 冊 2, 453–56, on the importance of the ancestral model and the rules for mourning (*zongfa ji sangfu zhi zhi* 宗法及喪服之制).
186. Sewell 2005, 152–174.
187. We believe that strict parameters often impede policy discussions.
188. Bercow, quoted in *The New York Times*: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/19/world/europe/brexit-speaker-john-bercow.html> [consulted in spring, 2020].

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Zheng Xuan's commentaries on law

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- 1 Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200) is usually portrayed as a Confucian scholar, mostly known for his prolific commentaries on the Classics, of which several were later selected as standard interpretations in official compendia.¹ Although he was not a professional jurist –he was neither appointed as a judge, nor commissioned to draft laws– he is nonetheless credited with having produced several treatises on law, of which unfortunately no copies have been preserved. In addition, Zheng Xuan's commentaries on the Classics contain several references to Han law as well as refined definitions of important legal categories. Late Qing jurists, such as Shen Jiaben 沈家本 (1840–1913), sometimes depicted as the progenitor of Chinese legal history, often referred to Zheng Xuan's works in their effort to study the evolution of Chinese law since the Han dynasty.²
- 2 However, given the fact that most of the legal documents written between the Han 漢 dynasty (206 BC–AD 220) and the Tang 唐 dynasty (618–907) are now lost, and that we merely have access to fragments of Zheng Xuan's work on law, it is difficult to describe in detail the evolution of Chinese law during this period. Within the framework imposed by the limitations of the extant documentation, we are nonetheless able to identify some aspects of Zheng Xuan's influence on the construction of Chinese codes.
- 3 More generally, several factors may explain the interactions between Confucian scholars' interpretation of the Classics and the formation of Chinese imperial law as codified by each dynasty from the Three Kingdoms period onwards (220–280).³ Scholars commenting the Classics often discussed political matters; some were in charge of codifying law. Meanwhile, jurists were educated in Confucian teachings. There was no separation between different domains of knowledge, and it was not unusual for a same person to comment on both the Classics and law, as did Zheng Xuan. Because they made use of the same interpretative methodology and references, the commentaries on the Classics permeated Chinese jurisprudence. Finally, since the Classics were used as guidelines to organise the government, their commentaries naturally became references for jurists writing legal documents.

- 4 In the first section of this paper, I will start by describing the interactions between canonisation of rituals and codification of law in China in order to shed a clearer light on the general context surrounding Zheng Xuan's commentaries. Then, in the following section, I will present an overview of Zheng Xuan's works that includes legal commentaries. Finally, I will discuss the extent to which they influenced the evolution of Chinese law, notably with regard to his understanding of legal categories and their posterity for later Chinese jurists.

From the canonisation of rituals to the codification of law

- 5 Canonisation of rituals and codification of law in China are two processes sharing similar features. They are entrenched in a common intellectual background and occurred within the same political context. From the Han Dynasty onwards, Chinese thinkers toiled hard to classify and systemise all accumulated knowledge. After Confucian thought had become the underlying basis of the Chinese imperial state, it was essential to determine its exact content. Chinese scholars achieved such a goal mainly through the selection of the texts composing the canons. And it is with the help of commentaries that they built an unequivocal interpretation. There were strong political implications behind the state-sponsored elaboration of the heterodox corpus of knowledge that scholars devised to provide intellectual foundations for the government and to legitimise the Han dynasty.⁴ A similar pattern was thereafter adopted with regard to the codification of law. From the end of the Eastern Han (AD 25–220) period onwards until the beginning of the Tang dynasty, Chinese jurists progressively streamlined Chinese law through a process of codification, *viz.* the intellectual operation of creating a coherent body of law.⁵ Chinese codes were not the mere compilation of extant laws but rather the systematisation of law in one single corpus –in this sense it could be compared to the codification of law that occurred in Modern Europe during the 18th and 19th centuries. Archaeological materials excavated during these last four decades show that laws in effect during the Qin 秦 (221–206 BC) and the early Han periods were not organised in codes.⁶ The first extant code was promulgated at the beginning of the Tang dynasty, but historical sources written during the Chinese Medieval period strongly suggest that the idea of codification first arose at the end of the Han dynasty.⁷
- 6 The influence of the canonisation of rituals on the codification of law was twofold. Firstly, the intellectual process of the harmonisation of several corpora of rules was basically the same for both the ritual and the legal spheres. Chinese scholars culled rules and rewrote them as needed in order to guarantee the coherence of the corpus as a whole. They also standardised interpretations, clarifying and unifying the understandings of specific terms. The codification of law took place in China in a context propitious to the clarification of existing knowledge. Secondly, Chinese jurists benefited from the existence of a canonical system of thought that structured the state organisation and its ideology. In determining the principles that underpinned the new codes, they took the Classics as a major reference. While the expression “Confucianisation of law” is rightly contested by scholars working in the context of the transition between the Qin and the Han dynasties, it describes rather well the process of reformulating legal norms to frame them into a comprehensive system of

government.⁸ Confucianisation should be understood here as the reformulation of legal rules according to the newly established corpus of Confucian canons. These texts served as blueprints for the implementation of an ideal government, of which law was an important component. Such an understanding took place in a general context of research for the systematisation of the form of government already perceptible under the Qin dynasty.⁹ It is thus worth noting that the term Confucian here refers to this ideological construct fashioned at the service of the Han government rather than to what would be the genuine thought of Confucius.

- 7 The overall process leading to the conformation of law to the Classics lasted several decades and can be divided into several stages. Many important Chinese scholars (of which Zheng Xuan is one of the most prominent) took part in this evolution. Before him, Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179–104 BC) had already used the Classics to interpret laws when adjudicating cases for which strict compliance with the law would have led to unfair judgments.¹⁰ Compared to Dong Zhongshu, Zheng Xuan's approach was more systematic: he did not ponder specific issues but rather discussed the legislation as a whole. Although Zheng Xuan is mostly known as a Confucian scholar who produced several important commentaries on the Classics, his areas of interest were not limited to ritual questions *per se* and he had great influence on several aspects of Chinese thought. After Zheng Xuan's death, during the Cao-Wei 曹魏 (220–265) and Jin 晉 (265–420) periods, several generations of jurists established the foundations for a body of knowledge specific to law. It became more independent from the hermeneutic of the Classics than it had been for Zheng Xuan. This “study of law” (*lǜxue* 律學) was consecrated with the appointment during the Cao-Wei period of a Doctor of Law (*lǜ boshi* 律博士), who was in charge of research on legislation and of the diffusion of legal knowledge. With the development of jurisprudence, comprehensive studies of law were further developed, which led to the promulgation of systematic codes.¹¹
- 8 Even though Zheng Xuan wrote commentaries on law, he should not be associated with *lǜxue* in a narrow sense. Zheng Xuan and other Confucian scholars of his generation only laid the foundations for the development of Chinese jurisprudence. These two processes –the canonisation of the Classics and the Confucianisation of law– were often carried out by the same persons, who had recourse to a common methodology and pursued similar purposes. One example excerpted from the *Rites of Zhou* (*Zhouli* 周禮) can illustrate how law could have been adapted to conform to the Zhou institutions. The “plead for a trial” (*qiju* 乞鞫) was a form of judicial review which already existed in the state of Qin. Several provisions of the legislation promulgated at the beginning of the Han dynasty set up the legal framework of this procedure. At the beginning of the Han dynasty, a person convicted for a crime had one year to lodge an appeal.¹² The period was later reduced to three months, in compliance with the description of the office of the Audience Monitor, who was in charge of enforcing rules of conduct in audiences and whose decisions could no longer be subject to appeal three months after their being pronounced. Zheng Xuan quotes a commentary of Zheng Sinong 鄭司農 (?–83 AD) stating that the time limit to lodge a plead for a trial had accordingly been fixed to three months.¹³
- 9 In some ways, the Tang Code is the final outcome of the evolution Chinese law underwent from the Han dynasty onwards, a process during which Chinese jurists revamped legal institutions according to principles they found in the Classics. Although we cannot render the details of this long-term process, the comparison between Han

and Tang laws as well as commentaries recorded both in the Tang Code and in non-legal sources provide us information on the major influence exerted by the Classics on law. I will now briefly present several aspects of this influence, in order to illustrate the nature of the relation that existed between the two kinds of resources.

- 10 Firstly, the Tang Code with its commentaries (*Tang lü shuyi* 唐律疏議) contains many direct or implicit references to the Classics. These commentaries were originally designed to provide officials with clarification about the meaning of statutes, and to establish a standard interpretation for the degree in law of the imperial examination.¹⁴ Commentaries are also very informative about the intellectual framework Chinese jurists had in mind when they drafted the code. The Classics were used to explain the law from several perspectives, such as relations between Heaven and man, the concept of punishment or fundamental social institutions.¹⁵ The *Book of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記) and the *Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial* (*Yili* 儀禮), whose role was fundamental in the shaping of social and family rituals, are the most often quoted Classics in the Tang Code. Several rituals described in these two texts served to frame notions transversal to the code. The legal definition of kinship or matrimonial relationships, largely determined by ritual relations expounded in the Classics, had an influence on the code that went far beyond the specific issues they addressed. They were core concepts whose influence pervaded the entire code. They meanwhile illustrate how the Classics became the backbone of the Chinese legal system and the relations between codification and canonisation of Classics. The five degrees of mourning (*wufu* 五服) is certainly the most obvious exemplification of the interpenetration between rites and law.
- 11 For a large array of crimes, the offender's liability was quantified according to the nature of his relation to the victim. When they were parents, the responsibility was determined by the respective duty of mourning which bound them to each other. For instance, in the Tang Code, a person beating a relative of the same generation but older of the fifth degree of mourning is punished by one hundred blows of the heavy stick. The punishment respectively increases to one and two degrees for fourth- and third-degree mourning relatives, and to one additional degree for relatives of higher generation.¹⁶ The degrees of mourning were also a common standard to mete out punishment for crimes such as illicit sexual relations, theft between relatives, or to determine conditions of mutual concealment between relatives. Chinese law is not the only legal system in which the quantum of the punishment varies when the offender and the victim are kin. The specificity of the Chinese legal tradition lies rather in the systematisation of those relations than in the mere correspondence between kinship and punishment.¹⁷
- 12 The outlines of funeral rituals and of the mourning system evolved between the Warring States period and the Han dynasty before being fixed in the *Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial*.¹⁸ The canonical liturgy of family rituals was thereafter determined according to the texts arranged and annotated by Zheng Xuan.¹⁹ Meanwhile, these duties pervaded the legal sphere and progressively became legal obligations. Even though the traditional historical sources record that the five degrees of mourning were adopted as legal standard under the Jin dynasty, this formalisation is the result of a process that had already started during the Han dynasty.²⁰
- 13 The adoption of ritual categories in the code required several adaptations and clarifications with regard to the notion of kinship and the limit of its scope. The term "relatives" (*qinshu* 親屬) is defined in the Tang Code according to the *Book of Rites* and

Zheng Xuan's related commentary. Under three articles of the code, *qinshu* is described as encompassing persons within the fifth degree of mourning (*sima* 緦麻) on the paternal side, and those within the third degree of mourning by marriage (*dagong yishang hunyin* 大功以上婚姻).²¹ This scope conforms to the delineation of kinship within the fifth degree of mourning as recorded in the *Book of Rites* (*sishi er si, fu zhi qiong ye* 四世而緦, 服之窮也).²² However, the comparison between the scope of each of the mourning degrees in the *Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial* and in the Tang Code shows several minor discrepancies, which reflect the work Tang jurists made to adapt ritual definitions when they established legal categories.²³ Despite a clear influence, the legal definitions of kinship were not the plain transposition of ritual categories.

- 14 Commentaries to the Classics were also used to address legal issues for which no clear answer was provided in the code. Given the complexity of the kinship pattern and all potential problems that concrete situations could give rise to, many questions remained unsolved in the code. One example related to kinship illustrates the kind of difficulties jurists could have to face and how they had recourse to the Classics to resolve them. Article 331 of the Tang Code specifies punishments when wives and their late husband's parents fight or curse each other. This article applies when the husband is dead and the wife has remarried, at the exclusion of situations in which a wife has been repudiated or divorced, for the relations between them are severed. When the bonds between the two families remain unharmed despite the death of the husband, the punishment therefore depends on the respective mourning duties between the offender and the victim. A commentary to this article discusses the hypothesis of a wife who does not remarry while her mother-in-law either is a young widow who had remarried or had been repudiated. By contrast to the general rule set out in article 331, the bond remains even when the separation is intentional and is not caused by the sole death of the husband.²⁴ The different understanding of the two situations is justified upon a commentary Zheng Xuan made to the *Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial* on the nature of the relation between a mother and her son. According to Zheng Xuan, "the way of the relation between a mother and her son can never be severed" (*muzi zhiqin wu juedao* 母子至親無絕道).²⁵ As a consequence, even though the mother-in-law had been repudiated, the bond remains with her son and his wife. The punishment is therefore decided according to their respective mourning duty and they are not considered ordinary persons when they fight each other.
- 15 Classics and their commentaries were an important resource Chinese jurists had recourse to in order to structure Chinese codes. The definition of kinship according to the Classics, which became a notion central to many legal institutions, exemplifies the interpenetration between ritual and legal orders, as well as the relations between canonisation and codification. After codes were promulgated, Classics remained the standard to assess situations ignored in the code.

Zheng Xuan's legal commentaries: an overview

- 16 According to Long Daxuan's recent research, 193 legal commentaries drafted by Zheng Xuan are still available today. They are for a great majority recorded in one of the three general commentaries on rites: the *Commentaries to the Etiquette and Ceremonial* (*Yili zhushu* 儀禮注疏), *Commentaries to the Book of Rites* (*Liji zhu* 禮記注) and *Commentaries to the Rites of Zhou* (*Zhouli zhu* 周禮注).²⁶ Most of the commentaries are found in the last of

these three books, which includes a chapter entitled *Office of Autumn* (*Qiuguan sikou* 秋官司寇) focusing on legal matters. However, Long Daxuan's enumeration encompasses texts of different natures, some of which, even though providing information on Han law, can hardly be considered genuine commentaries on law. As already mentioned, two kinds of Zheng Xuan's works include commentaries on law: treatises on law, of which a few fragments have been preserved, and commentaries on Classics. Only the first category directly purposed to address legal questions and can be considered legal commentaries in the strict sense of the term. The second category of texts comprises general commentaries –commonly on the Classics–, which may time to time refer to law. Although they were not commentaries on law *per se*, these texts reflect how Zheng Xuan interpreted law. I will successively present these two types of sources and discuss their utility to understand Zheng Xuan's contribution to the clarification of law.

- 17 According to the “Legal treatise” of the *Book of Jin* (晉書刑法志), Zheng Xuan, as well as other Han scholars such as Ma Rong 馬融 (79–166) or Ying Shao 應劭 (140–206), wrote “commentaries in chapters and verses on laws” (*lü zhang ju* 律章句).²⁷ These lengthy texts –often above a thousand words– which were dedicated to Han laws were inspired by the “commentaries in chapters and verses” (*zhangju* 章句) that became the main technique for exegesis of Confucian texts under the Han. This method is similar to a systematic gloss of important words followed by a more or less elegant paraphrase of the text in order to explain each term in the general context of the paragraph. These works were then overloaded and were criticised for focusing only on details and unable to capture the substance of the text studied. The genre evolved in the 2nd century A.D., especially under the influence of commentary by annotation (*zhu* 注): the commentaries became more condensed and focused on their subject. Most of the remaining commentaries date from the latter period, so that we often have only an incomplete picture of the commentaries in chapters and verses. Following this method, Han jurists glossed a large array of norms, including statutes (*lü* 律), ordinances (*ling* 令) and regulations (*ke* 科). Most of these commentaries were likely to be based on the Classics, with authors citing the Classics to interpret law (*yin jing zhu lü* 引經注律), according to an expression commonly used in modern scholarship. Today, these commentaries are almost completely lost; only a few fragments have been preserved in scattered documents.
- 18 Cheng Shude 程樹德 (1877–1944), a thinker and a legal historian of the early republican era, wrote a legal treatise in which he collected information on Han law available in historical sources. In an appendix to the section on “specialists on law” (*lüjia* 律家), he mentioned eight “explanations on law” (*lü shuo* 律說), which he considered to be the only remnants of commentaries in chapters and verses.²⁸ Among these documents, one can be attributed to Zheng Xuan with certainty. Yan Shigu 顏師古 (581–645) quotes an extract of a Zheng Xuan commentary to gloss a term in the *Book of the Han* (*Han shu* 漢書). The Tang scholar did not have direct access to Zheng Xuan's work, but he excerpted a quotation from Zhang Yan's 張晏 own comment on the *Book of the Han*:²⁹

『設附益之法』注引張晏曰：『律鄭氏說，封諸侯過限日附益。或曰阿媚王侯，有重法也。』

“Establishment of the law on increased profits” according to Zhang Yan's explanation as quoted: “Mr Zheng said, when the regional lords overstep the limits, it is called ‘increasing profits,’ or flattering the high nobility. It is suppressed by severe punishments.”³⁰

- 19 Promulgated under the reign of emperor Wu 武 of the Han dynasty (r. 141–87 BC), this law targeted the members of the imperial family who had been granted the title and benefits of regional lords at the beginning of the dynasty, and whose power was threatening the constitution of a centralised empire. The existence of specific laws dedicated to the regional lords is confirmed in both historical and archaeological sources, which suggests the genuineness of information recorded in the *Book of the Han*.³¹ The law on increased profits attempted to sever relations between officials at the court and regional lords in order to diminish the princes' authority. It is likely that Zhang Yan quoted an actual legal commentary Zheng Xuan wrote on law. According to Yan Shigu, the expression *fuyi* (附益) derives from a quotation of the *Analects*: “Qiu collected imposts for him [the head of the Ji family], and increased his wealth” (求也爲之聚斂而附益之).³² Yan Shigu explains this section as being a criticism against those who disobey law and, as a result, accumulate private interests.³³
- 20 Although these documents are only indirect testimonies on Zheng Xuan's commentaries in chapters and verses on laws, they are likely to reflect the kind of reasoning Chinese jurists carried out at that time. Their main purpose was to clarify the meaning of laws, a goal they reached by resorting to both historical evidence and the Classics: the former provided the institutional context while the latter guaranteed that these laws fit into the framework of the ideal government.
- 21 In addition to “explanations on law,” the most important part of this extant documentation consists of definitions of legal terms. These are scattered in commentaries to the Classics or in official dynastic histories. Firstly, we find general definitions of legal terms similar in form to those given by Xu Shen 許慎 (58–148) in his etymological dictionary *Shuowen* (說文). Xu Shen had mainly recourse to exegetical commentaries (*xungu* 訓詁) to clarify the meaning of specific terms, a technique of interpretation which was commonly used by Han scholars. For instance, Xu Shen defines “to receive bribes” (*shou qiu* 受賂), as “curving the law in return for a present” (*yi caiwu wangfa xiangxie ye* 以財物枉法相謝也).³⁴ Yan Shigu quotes a very similar definition in a comment of the notion of *qiu* 賂 he made in the *Book of the Han*.³⁵ Xu Shen's definition obviously clarifies the meaning of the Han statute punishing the one “who receives a bribe in order to curve the law” (*shouqiu yi wangfa* 受賂以枉法) to the same sentence as those condemned for theft.³⁶ Similarly, Zheng Xuan provides general definitions of legal terms recorded in the Classics. For instance, in the *Rites of Zhou*, he glosses “ordinance” (*ling* 令) as “order” (*ling you ming ye* 令猶命也).³⁷
- 22 In other passages, Zheng Xuan refers to a law to illustrate the section of a text in context. For instance, he paralleled the section of the *Rites of Zhou* indicating that the Treasurer for Market Taxes (*quan fu* 泉府) was in charge of fixing the interest rate for loans contracted by commoners according to the state's needs with Wang Mang 王莽 (r. 9–23 AD)'s economic policy aiming to conform to Confucius's teachings by fixing a maximum legal interest rate.³⁸
- 23 We find several similar examples in which Zheng Xuan relies on current laws to explain a term in the Classics. For instance, a passage of the *Book of the Han* mentions that the prime minister Liu Qumao 劉屈氂 was sentenced to be cut in two at the waist (*yaozhan* 要斬) and his wife's head was to be severed and exposed on the marketplace (*xiaoshou* 梟首), for they were involved in a witchcraft scandal that occurred at the end of the reign of the emperor Wu. The text was followed by a commentary from Zheng Xuan on

this provision, which provides information about the legal context of Liu Qumao's punishment. According to Zheng Xuan, a husband whose wife practises black magic (*wu gu* 巫蠱) is jointly held liable and sentenced to be cut in two at the waist (妻作巫蠱，夫從坐，但要斬也).³⁹

- 24 In total, we have records of three different Zheng Xuan commentaries on the character *gu* 蠱. In the *Book of Rites*, he mentions black magic as an illustration of “deviation” or “heterodoxy” (*zuodao* 左道), suggesting the political implication of such facts sentenced to the death.⁴⁰ Although we know that during the Han period the character *gu* clearly referred to black magic, and was intended to both harm an enemy and to acquire his wealth, it is unclear what kind of magical practice was specifically targeted.⁴¹ It could be that law evolved and at some point encompassed several situations. In the *Book of the Han*, we find mentions of the use of human images to cast spells, even though black magic is also associated with the “*gu* poison” (*gu du* 蠱毒) made of insects and reptiles.⁴² In the Tang Code, the practice of *ku* was more univocally identified with the confection of insect poison.⁴³ The existence of a Han law suppressing the practice of *ku* is confirmed in the index of the articles contained in the Han statute on assault (*zei lü* 賊律), recorded on the wooden board number 29 discovered on the Gurenti 古人堤 site, Hunan Province.⁴⁴ Documents unearthed on this site are dated from the end of the first century A.D. and reflect Eastern Han law several decades before Zheng Xuan wrote his commentaries. It is likely that Zheng Xuan refers to this law in a commentary on the *Rites of Zhou* in which he states that, according to the statute on assault, the one practising *ku* on somebody else, as well as the person who commanded him to act as such, were both to be executed on the marketplace (敢蠱人及教令者，棄市).⁴⁵ The punishments described in the three commentaries are slightly different, and Zheng Xuan may have referred to similar, yet diverse, situations. Notwithstanding their limits, these documents inform us about the closeness in form and content between gloss on law and other commentaries.
- 25 Extant documentation discloses only one aspect of Zheng Xuan's study on law. His commentaries in chapters and verses on laws are almost completely lost, and we can mostly rely only on fragments excerpted from commentaries he wrote on the Classics. These texts are not legal commentaries *per se*, they were designed to clarify and unify the interpretation of the Classics. They thus are not symmetric to commentaries on law and cannot be used to directly deduct their content. However, quotations excerpted from the Classics and official dynastic histories show that Zheng Xuan was learned in law. They are also useful to observe interactions between law and other areas of knowledge. They are therefore informative about the identity of those sections of the Classics that were connected to law. Though we cannot ascertain the direct influence Zheng Xuan's commentaries in chapters and verses had on law at the end of the Han period, we better know how Tang jurists had recourse to his commentaries on the Classics to construe relations between ritual and legal orders.

Zheng Xuan's commentaries on law and their influence on the formation of Chinese imperial law

- 26 Zheng Xuan's commentaries were already esteemed outstanding when they were drafted. At the beginning of the Wei dynasty, in an effort to unify legal interpretation, emperor Ming of Wei 魏明帝 (r. 226-239) ordered judges to interpret the laws only

according to these commentaries. This decision suggests that Zheng Xuan's commentaries outweighed other scholars' works. This situation lasted until the beginning of the Jin dynasty, when the new sovereign considered it too partial to refer to only one source of interpretation and therefore ordered his minister to draft a new code of laws.⁴⁶ The influence of Zheng Xuan's work was also determined by the general context of the formation of Chinese law that followed the end of the Han dynasty. This period represents a watershed in the constitution of the intellectual framework which later underpinned Chinese law. As already seen above, the process of codification of Chinese law was streamlined by the intellectual apparatus Confucian scholars fixed all along their commentaries of the Classics. Chinese jurists relied to a large extent on this new orthodoxy to establish a comprehensive legal system. They mainly took inspiration in legal definitions as well as in the depiction of idealised administrative institutions of the Zhou dynasty as provided in commentaries of the Classics. Besides, Zheng Xuan's legal commentaries had a lingering influence on Chinese law due to the large diffusion of his works. Ming and Qing legal scholars continued quoting his definition when discussing basic concepts of Chinese law. Zheng Xuan's commentaries were cited among others, as a link in a chain of legal works starting from antiquity.

- 27 It is nevertheless almost impossible to determine whether Zheng Xuan's commentaries had a direct influence on Chinese law and the extent to which his commentaries were accepted as a standard when interpreting legal categories. Such an issue is mostly due to the shortcomings of the materials available. In comparison to the laws enacted at the beginning of the Han dynasty, we have a rather superficial understanding of late Han legislation. Moreover, as mentioned above, the larger part of the legal commentaries written at that time have been lost.
- 28 In fact, what we are able to reconstruct today is rather the general picture of the interactions between law and commentaries to the Classics than a precise description of the specific contributions Zheng Xuan and other scholars may have made to the evolution of law. In addition, given that all the codes promulgated between the Han and the Tang dynasties are lost, we can only infer potential influence from the study of the Tang Code. We have seen in the preceding section of this paper that Tang jurists occasionally relied on the Classics and their commentaries to interpret legal provisions of the Tang Code. For several of these occurrences, they explicitly refer to Zheng Xuan's work.
- 29 For instance, under statute 5 of the Tang Code, death penalty is defined as the extreme punishment, the one for which a part of the soul returns to heaven (*hun* 魂) and another to earth (*po* 魄), before the deceased eventually merges with all the creation. The text is followed by a Zheng Xuan commentary to the *Book of Rites* associating the death penalty with the notion of exhaustion (*si* 逝).⁴⁷ This definition does not have any legal implication and is mostly informative about the intellectual context of the provision.
- 30 Another example shows a more direct influence of Zheng Xuan on the content of law. The Eight Deliberations (*ba yi* 八議) is a legal institution, which granted judicial privileges to several categories of persons in the Tang Code. These persons, including members of the imperial family or high-ranked officials, could not be prosecuted without the previous authorisation of the emperor.⁴⁸ No such institution existed in the early Han dynasty. It was probably introduced in Chinese law during the Western Han dynasty. The institution took its inspiration from the Eight Rules (*ba pi* 八辟) recorded

in the *Rites of Zhou*. Although we have little information about the actual function of the Eight Rules under the Zhou, they were later considered a mark of the correspondence between social status and punishments in Zhou society. The institution is generally considered to have been codified during the Cao-Wei dynasty, although several texts suggest that its inception must be dated from the Eastern Han.⁴⁹ In his commentary to the *Rites of Zhou*, Zheng Xuan quotes a gloss of Zheng Sinong, which associated the “rule for the morally worthy” (*yi xian zhi pi* 議賢之辟) with the obligation to first send a memorial when a member of the imperial house committed a crime.⁵⁰ This obligation is similar to the rule of the Tang Code, which compels officials to submit a memorial each time a person deserving one of the Eight Deliberations committed a capital crime.⁵¹ Even though we do not know if the institution of the Eight Deliberations was as formalised in the Eastern Han law as it later became in the Tang Code, we can trace from Han times a process leading to the creation of this legal mechanism. And this process took as model an institution described in the Classics.

- 31 The study of the commentaries inserted in the Tang Code also demonstrates the pervasive influence of Zheng Xuan on the interpretation of this institution. The Eight Deliberations are justified upon a famous interpretation of the *Rites of Zhou* stating that “Punishments do not extend up to the great officers” (*xing bu shang daifu* 刑不上大夫). Then, the Tang Code extensively quotes Zheng Xuan’s commentary to this passage: “If they commit offences, they are judged under the Eight Deliberations, and the weight of the sentence is not governed by the books of punishment.” (犯法則在八議，輕重不在刑書也). Likewise, several commentaries defining each of the Eight Deliberations and the corresponding terms in the *Rites of Zhou* are relatively similar. In the Tang Code and its commentaries, the “deliberation for the morally worthy” (*yi xian* 議賢) is defined as the category of persons “whose conduct is greatly virtuous” (*you da de xing* 有大德行). This is a rewording of Zheng Xuan’s commentary to the *Rites of Zhou*, in which he glosses morally worthy as a “virtuous conduct” (*xian you dexing* 賢有德行).⁵² Likewise, the “deliberation for achievement” (*yi gong* 議功) is defined as “those of great achievement and glory” (*you da gongxun* 有大功勳) in the Tang Code and glossed as “great achievement and to accomplish great merit” (*you da xunli ligong* 有大勳力立功). Although not all the definitions were similar, it is clear that some commentaries in the Tang Code took their inspiration in Zheng Xuan’s commentaries. This similarity might be indicative of the influence Zheng Xuan had on the codification of the Eight Deliberations.
- 32 Zheng Xuan’s contribution to the definition of criminal intention is another achievement for which he is often praised in legal treatises. In the Zhangjiashan legal documents, which reflect the law implemented at the beginning of the Han dynasty, intent was not as clearly defined as it was in the Tang Code. It was nonetheless taken into account for the determination of the criminal responsibility. The term *zei* 賊, often associated with homicide (*sha* 殺) had a very broad meaning, encompassing notions of harmful intent, malice and intent to do a wrongful act. Killing with malice, as well as killing in affrays (*dou sha ren* 鬪殺人) and plotting to kill (*mousha* 謀殺) were punished by death, which blurred the distinction between these legal categories. Someone killing during a game (*xi sha* 戲殺) or killing by mistake or by negligence (*quoshi sharen* 過失殺人) was authorised to redeem the death with money.⁵³ These categories also existed in the Tang Code, in which punishments were, however, graded more precisely in consideration of the nature of the homicide. Moreover, the code and its commentaries

display clear definitions of these different categories of homicide. For instance, in the Tang Code, killing by negligence meant “wherein eyes and ears could not perceive and where thought and planning could not prevent” (*er mu suo bu ji, si lü suo bu dao* 耳目所不及, 思慮所不到). The code further provides several examples of homicide by negligence. It could be a man not being able by himself to support a heavy weight that he lifted together with another person (*gong ju zhongwu, li suo bu zhi* 共舉重物, 力所不制); losing his foot while climbing to a dangerous height (*cheng gao lü wei zu die* 乘高履危足跌); killing or wounding someone while hunting birds or animals (*yin ji qinshou, yizhi shashang* 因擊禽獸, 以致殺傷). Killing in an affray refers to situations where originally there is no intent to kill and was therefore sentenced to strangulation, a degree lesser to the punishment perpetrators of killing with intent (*gu sha* 故殺) were subject to.⁵⁴

- 33 These definitions were fixed through a long-term process to which Zheng Xuan contributed. Although there are differences between Zheng Xuan’s definitions and those who were later codified in the Tang Code, we can observe a common understanding between Zheng Xuan and Tang jurists on the notion of “fault” or “negligence” (*guoshi* 過失). Zheng Xuan emphasises the absence of intent, which justifies a punishment more lenient than in situations in which a criminal acts out of intent to harm the victim: “When the intention to harm is remote, it has to be treated lightly” (*qu shanghai zhi xin yuan, shi yi qing zhi* 去傷害之心遠, 是以輕之).⁵⁵ Zheng Xuan also mentioned that in the law on killing by negligence, no one was sentenced to death. He then illustrated the notion with the following example: “negligence, such as raising a blade to cut [grass or trees] and due to excess use hitting someone” (*ju ren yu zhuo fa, er yi zhong ren* 舉刃欲斫伐, 而軼中人).⁵⁶ In Zheng Xuan’s definition, the situation is less predictable than in those exemplifying the legal provision in the Tang Code. Although both Zheng Xuan and Tang jurists had recourse to concrete situations to delimit the framework of a legal category, the Tang Code also provides a general definition that is lacking in the Han scholar’s work. Several decades after Zheng Xuan’s death, Zhang Fei 張斐, considered as one of the most prominent jurists of the Jin dynasty, elaborated a more abstract understanding of the notion of intention. Zhang Fei distinguished between negligence (*guoshi* 過失), defined as “inadvertently offending without intention” (*bu yi wu fan* 不意誤犯) and intent (*gu* 故), when someone knows and offends (*qi zhi er fan* 其知而犯).⁵⁷ By contrast, Zheng Xuan defined negligence together with inattention (*yiwang* 遺忘) and ignorance (*bushi* 不識), the three categories for which a person liable to the death penalty was exempted from that punishment due to the existence of mitigating circumstances (*san you* 三宥). This classification, which appears only in the *Rites of Zhou*, was never codified in Chinese law, in which only negligence was consecrated as a legal category. Although Zheng Xuan’s definition of criminal intention did not have a long-term influence on Chinese law, it remains a landmark attempt to clarify legal categories.

Conclusion

- 34 Zheng Xuan, who is mostly recognised for his contribution to the construction of the Confucian corpus, also undoubtedly played an important role in the formation of Chinese law. Given that many legal documents of this time are lost, it is difficult to determine his contribution with certainty. According to Chinese standard histories, he

wrote several commentaries to the Han law, whose authority was officially acknowledged by an imperial decision. However, since neither law in force at that time, nor Zheng Xuan's commentaries on law came down to us, we cannot assess the exact influence he had on Eastern Han law. Actually, we know Zheng Xuan's work on law mostly through his commentaries to the Classics, some sections of which are dedicated to the study of law. This documentation was used by legal scholars of later periods as a source of information on Western Han law, which ensured Zheng Xuan to be cited among prominent Chinese jurists. As a consequence of the Tang Code being framed according to the tenets of the Classics, Zheng Xuan's commentaries to the Classics were a source of inspiration for the generations of legal scholars who contributed to the development of Chinese codes.

- 35 From this perspective, Zheng Xuan's influence was twofold. Firstly, he largely contributed to shaping the orthodox interpretation of the Classics through his commentaries. Secondly, several of his definitions were quoted in the Tang Code, several of which having direct legal effect. Meanwhile, it is not necessary to overstate Zheng Xuan's influence on Chinese law. He was not a jurist, did not draft codes, and, as we have seen, some of his definitions on legal terms were not consecrated in law. Zheng Xuan's contribution is a link, yet important, in a chain of works that linked the ritual and legal spheres.

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FOOTNOTES

1. For a biography on Zheng Xuan, see Knechtges 2014.
2. Shen 1912. See also Xue 1982.
3. The compilation of laws into one single corpus is a process which is considered to have begun with the promulgation of the *Wei lü* 魏律 in AD 229. On the legislative process at the beginning of the Cao-Wei dynasty, see Qiao 1999, 21-22.
4. On the process leading to the elaboration of this corpus, see Nylan 2001, 1-59.
5. Despite statements we find in Tang historians' works, the first Chinese codes were not promulgated during the Warring States period, but more probably appeared after the end of the Han dynasty. As it has been convincingly stated in several studies, Tang historians created a genealogy of codes going back to the *Canons of Law (Fajing 法經)* of Li Kui 李悝, then Minister of the kingdom of Wei 魏, in order to legitimise their own code, which was then consecrated as the successor to an ancient tradition, see Ogawa 1933.
6. For a presentation and translation of these materials, see Hulsewé 1985; and Barbieri-Low and Yates 2015.
7. Several editions of the Tang Code were successively promulgated. The most important version, which was later diffused in East Asia and Viet Nam is the one promulgated in 653 with its commentaries (*Tang lü shuyi* 唐律疏議). We know the Tang code through a later edition of 737. For a translation in English of this text, see Johnson 1979 and 1997.
8. The expression "Confucianisation of law" was coined in Ch'ü 1961, 363-380. For a recent reappraisal of the concept, see Goldin 2012.
9. Schaberg 2010.
10. Queen 1996, 163-181. See also Huang 2009, 31-97.
11. Chen 1962, *juan* 21, 611.
12. Barbieri-Low and Yates 2015, 180-182.
13. Zheng Xuan 鄭玄, *Zhouli zhushu* 周禮注疏, *juan* 35, in Ruan 1980, 878.
14. Liu 1975, *juan* 50, 2141.
15. Liu 2012 and Liu 2005, 75.
16. Tang Code, art. 327. According to Johnson's translation, Johnson 1997, vol. II, 362.
17. Constant 2017.
18. Lai 2003.
19. Ebrey 1991, 18-19.
20. Chen 2015.
21. Tang Code, art. 143. According to Johnson's translation. Johnson 1997, vol. II, 116.
22. Zheng Xuan 鄭玄, *Liji zhengyi* 禮記正義, *juan* 34, in Ruan 1980, 1507. This passage is mentioned in a commentary to statute 315 of the Tang Code.
23. Liu 2012, 177-199.
24. Tang Code, art. 331. Johnson 1997, vol. II, 369-370.

25. Zheng Xuan 鄭玄, *Yili zhushu* 儀禮注疏, in Ruan 1980, 1104.
26. See Long 2012, 53.
27. Fang 1997, *juan* 30, 923. Ma Rong is credited with the redaction of the *Lüben zhangju* 律本章句. Ban 1964, *juan* 48, 1613.
28. Cheng 1927, *juan* 8, 18.
29. Zhang Yan 張晏 was a contemporary of Zheng Xuan whose life is not documented in historical materials.
30. Ban 1964, *juan* 14, 395-396.
31. On archaeological fragments on the law on regional lords, see Cao and Zhang 2010, 188-191.
32. Translation adapted from *Analects*, XI, 16, trans. Legge 1893, 242-243.
33. Ban 1964, *juan* 14, 396.
34. Duan 1981, 6B/21a, 282.
35. Ban 1964, *juan* 15, 449.
36. See Peng, Chen and Kudō 2007, 113-114.
37. Zheng Xuan, *Zhouli zhushu*, *juan* 29, in Ruan 1980, 835.
38. Zheng Xuan, *Zhouli zhushu*, *juan* 15, in Ruan 1980, 738. On Wang Mang's economic reforms, see Dubs 1940.
39. Ban 1964, *juan* 6, 209-210.
40. Zheng Xuan, *Liji zhengyi*, *juan* 13, in Ruan 1980, 1344.
41. On a comparison between extant documents, see Mizuma 2003.
42. See Feng and Shryock 1935 and Ch'ü 1961, 222, note 100.
43. Tang Code, art. 262. Johnson 1997, vol. II, 262-263. In the same text, statute 264 specifically addressed the crime of black magic. See Johnson 1997, vol. II, 267.
44. The document has been edited in Hunan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Zhongguo wenwu yanjiusuo 2003, 79-80.
45. Zheng Xuan, *Zhouli zhushu*, *juan* 37, in Ruan 1980, 888.
46. Fang 1997, *juan* 30, 927.
47. Tang Code, art. 5. Johnson 1979, vol. I, 60. Zheng Xuan, *Liji zhengyi*, *juan* 7, in Ruan 1980, 1281.
48. Tang Code, art. 7. Johnson 1979, vol. I, 83-87.
49. Long 2012.
50. Zheng Xuan, *Zhouli zhushu*, *juan* 35, in Ruan 1980, 874.
51. Tang Code, art. 8., Johnson 1979, vol. I, 88.
52. Zheng Xuan, *Zhouli zhushu*, *juan* 35, in Ruan 1980, 874.
53. Barbieri-Low and Yates 2015, 237-240.
54. Tang Code, art. 306. Johnson 1997, vol. II, 331.
55. Zheng Xuan, *Yili zhushu*, *juan* 13, in Ruan 1980, 1011.
56. Zheng Xuan, *Zhouli zhushu*, in Ruan 1980, 880.
57. Fang 1997, *juan* 30, 928.

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The Neo-Confucian *Book of Rites*

“The *Yili* is the Classic, the *Liji* explains it” “儀禮是經，禮記是解儀禮” Zhu Xi and the *Yili Jingzhuan Tongjie* 朱熹與儀禮經傳通解

Roger Darrobers

Translated by Jia Bingwei

- 1 What place do rites and treatises on rites, especially the *Yili* 儀禮 (*Ceremonial Rites*) and the *Liji* 禮記 (*Record of Rites*), occupy in the works of Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), the famous scholar from the Song dynasty (960–1279) who produced an important Confucian synthesis? This is a question which is particularly relevant as the extensive intellectual and philosophical works produced and passed on by Zhu Xi have, as we know, an important editorial and interpretative dimension –the *Sishu jizhu* 四書集注 (*Collected Commentaries on the Four Books*) provide here the most remarkable example. Committed scholar, administrator, educator, philosopher, Zhu Xi was also a philologist, a hermeneut and a classicist. Three books written or compiled by Zhu Xi are exclusively dedicated to rites or ceremonies: rites celebrated within the family can be found in the famous *Jiali* 家禮 (*Family Rituals*);¹ local rites in honour of Confucius are described in a brief work named *Shaoxi Zhouxian shidian yitu* 紹熙州縣釋奠儀圖 (*Protocol and illustrations of the ceremonies carried out in memory of Confucius in prefectural and sub-prefectural schools during the Shaoxi era*),² and finally the “ancient rites” in all forms – familial, local, educational, royal, state-organised, funerary, sacrificial– are presented in the compendium named *Yili jingzhuan tongjie* 儀禮經傳通解 (*Comprehensive Explanations of the Text and Commentaries of the Ceremonial Rites*),³ published after Zhu Xi’s death. This extensive ritual encyclopaedia written for scholars is a systematic compilation in which the *Liji* 禮記, in complement with the *Yili* 儀禮, occupies a predominant place. One could also add that the volume of the *Yili jingzhuan tongjie*, which I will mainly focus on in the present paper, is around fifty times larger than that of the *Jiali*.

- 2 In addition to these three treatises, different essays dedicated to ritual questions should also be taken into consideration. They can include some educational texts such as the *Xiaoxue* 小學 (*The Elementary Learning*), a short educative encyclopaedia for children in which a large number of passages of the *Liji* are quoted.⁴

The Book of Rites

- 3 Among all the books written or compiled by Zhu Xi, the *Yili jingzhuan tongjie* is no doubt the most ambitious because of its encyclopaedic nature and the wide range of rites it covers. It is a collaborative work like the *Zizhi tongjian gangmu* 資治通鑿綱目 (*Summary of the Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government*),⁵ and the fruit of a long-term undertaking accomplished thanks to the cooperation of more than twenty scholars scattered in several provinces. This book can be regarded as a synthesis regarding ancient rituality and as a work that aimed at enlightening the world. In this compendium, the *Liji* 禮記 and some other ancient works have been incorporated into the *Yili* 儀禮 which was regarded as the fundamental canonical source. For Zhu Xi, the *Liji* 禮記 should be read together with the *Yili* 儀禮, because the *Yili* 儀禮 gives an account of the procedures of ritual events while the *Liji* 禮記 expounds the moral lessons (*yili* 義理) they contain:

禮記要兼儀禮讀，如冠禮、喪禮、鄉飲酒禮之類，儀禮皆載其事，禮記只發明其理。讀禮記而不讀儀禮，許多理皆無安著處。

The *Liji* should be read together with the *Yili*, notably with regards to the “capping ceremonies,” “the funeral rites,” and “ceremonies at the canton banquets.” The *Yili* records the events while the *Liji* develops their moral significance. If we are satisfied with reading the *Liji* without reading the *Yili*, numerous truths cannot be properly established.⁶

- 4 Zhu Xi often mentions the contrast between ritual knowledge in the strict sense and what can be called here “moral philosophy” (*yili* 義理) which is at the heart of his thought. His ambition lies specifically in achieving a reconciliation between these two dimensions. At first sight, the descriptive and technical ritual knowledge recorded in the *Yili* 儀禮 could give the impression of a series of gestures accomplished almost mechanically, peppered with abstruse enumerations of clothing items and filled with archaic titles. For Zhu Xi, it is thus advisable to associate the formal aspect of the rituality and the moral principles:

禮學是一大事，不可不講，然亦須看得義理分明，有餘力時及之乃佳。不然，徒弊精神，無補於學問之實也。

The study of rituals is an important thing that is impossible to bypass, but one should first gain a good insight into what concerns the moral philosophy and study the rituals only if one has some energy remaining. Or else one might waste one’s spirit without acquiring any real knowledge.⁷

- 5 Twenty years before undertaking the writing of this great book, Zhu Xi had this to say about what had been the preliminary work done to this end:

讀禮記，須先讀儀禮。嘗欲編禮記附儀禮，但須著和注寫。

If one wants to read the *Liji*, it is advisable that one should start with reading the *Yili*. I have once thought of compiling the *Liji* by annexing it to the *Yili*, but this needed writing and annotating.⁸

- 6 In Zhu Xi's eyes, only the *Yili* has the right to claim to be a real classic while the *Liji* plays the role of a "commentary": the latter is however able to bring a new spirit to the canonical text, namely its "moral" significance. The *Liji* is thus given the task of explaining and shedding light on the *Yili*, similarly to the way in which a commentary is supposed to cast light on a classic:

儀禮是經，禮記是解儀禮。

The *Yili* is the classic, and the *Liji* explains it.⁹

- 7 In this approach, the *Liji* is given an "explanatory" role secondary to that of the *Yili*. From this idea expressed many times by Zhu Xi stemmed the project of compiling a kind of ritual encyclopaedia in which the *Yili* should constitute the basis. This compendium later entitled *Yili jingzhuān tongjie* 儀禮經傳通解 (*Comprehensive Explanations of the Text and Commentaries of the Ceremonial Rites*) has integrated almost all the chapters of the *Yili*, associated with certain chapters of the *Liji* meant to explicate them. What is more, a large number of quotations from the *Liji* and other books have also been incorporated into these chapters.¹⁰ Zhu Xi's approach is based on the fact that certain chapters of *Yili* and of *Liji* seem to be closely related and complementary to one another. According to Zhu Xi, several chapters of the *Liji* constitute actual commentaries on chapters of the *Yili*:

如儀禮有《冠禮》，禮記便有《冠義》；儀禮有《昏禮》，禮記便有《昏義》；以至《燕》、《射》之類，莫不皆然。只是儀禮有《士相見禮》，禮記却無《士相見義》。

For example, the *Yili* contains [the chapter] "Guanli" (The capping ceremonies) and the *Liji* contains [the chapter] "Guanyi" (The meaning of the capping ceremonies); the *Yili* includes [the chapter] "Hunli" (The wedding ceremonies) and the *Liji* includes [the chapter] "Hunyi" (The meaning of the wedding ceremonies). It is the same with all the chapters down to [the last chapters which are dedicated to] "banquets" and "archery." The only exception is that the *Yili* contains [the chapter] "Shixiangjianli" (The visit of a common officer to another), whereas the *Liji* does not have [a chapter entitled] "Shixiangjianyi" (The meaning of the visit of a common officer to another).¹¹

- 8 The same argument is repeated elsewhere:

禮記只是解儀禮，如《喪服小記》便是解《喪服》傳，推之每篇皆然。惟《大傳》是總解。

The *Liji* does nothing more than explicating the *Yili*. For example, the chapter "Sangfu xiaoji" [of the *Liji*] (Record of Smaller Matters in the Mourning Attire) is equivalent to a commentary on the chapter "Sangfu" (Mourning attire) [of the *Yili*]. It is possible to infer that it is the same with all the other chapters, except for the chapter "Dazhuan" (Great treatise) [of the *Liji*] which is a general explanation.¹²

- 9 Zhu Xi notices that the rites described in the *Liji* concern essentially the rituals carried out in the imperial court and that, being "mingled in total disorder" (*zaluān* 雜亂), they could not be of use for "daily practice" (*riyong* 日用). If one wishes to make these very

ritual rules appropriate for “daily practice,” it is advisable to abridge them and to take into consideration only certain chapters of the book, such as, “Yuzao” 玉藻 (Jade-Bead Pendants of the Royal Cap), “Neize” 內則 (Pattern of the Family), “Quli” 曲禮 (The Rules of Propriety), or “Shaoyi” 少儀 (Smaller Rules of Demeanour).¹³ This simplistic approach was to be adopted by Zhu Xi in the *Yili jingzhuan tongjie*. In the *Jiali* 家禮, the same method is also used with the aim of encouraging the performance of family rituals by all people.¹⁴

- 10 As for the *Yili*, the difficulty in its reading resulted from the fact that it was not subdivided into paragraphs and that its “explanatory notes” (*ji* 記) were separate from its main text. These notes were actually added at the end of each chapter. Furthermore, the “commentaries” (*zhu* 注) of Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200) of Eastern Han and the “sub-commentaries” (*shu* 疏) of Jia Gongyan 賈公彥 (7th century AD), written at the beginning of the Tang dynasty (618–907), were arranged into clusters separated from the rest of the text, which made the reading strenuous. In 1197, when the manuscript of the *Yili jingzhuan tongjie* was practically ready for publication, Zhu Xi wrote:

前賢常患儀禮難讀，以今觀之，只是經不分章，記不隨經，而注疏各爲一書，故使讀者不能遽曉。今定此本，盡去此諸弊：恨不得令韓文公見之也。

Scholars of old often complained about the difficulty in reading the *Yili*. From today’s vantage point, it results simply from the fact that the classic is not divided into paragraphs and that its “explanatory notes” do not follow [immediately] the canonical text, and the commentaries and the sub-commentaries were written separately. As a result, the reader has no means of obtaining an immediate understanding. Now the plan of this book being set up, all these faults will be corrected. I just regret that Han, Duke of letters [*i. e.* Han Yu 韓愈, 768–824], could not see this.¹⁵

- 11 The project initiated by Zhu Xi aimed at overcoming this difficulty by facilitating the reading of *Yili* through complementary and “explanatory” texts and a simplified annotation system built on the “*zhangju*” 章句 model. By the end of the Qing dynasty, Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764–1849), editor of the *Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經注疏 (*Commentaries and Explanations to the Thirteen Classics*) also put emphasis on the profusion of Jia Gongyan’s sub-commentaries on the *Yili* 儀禮 (“賈疏之筆冗蔓”), as well as Zhu Xi’s decision to clarify this extensive annotation system by removing what was erroneous or unnecessary. Indeed, most of the Ming editions of *Yili* had eventually adopted Zhu Xi’s annotation, abandoning almost entirely Jia Gongyan’s sub-commentaries.¹⁶
- 12 In fact, in his letters to his friends, Zhu Xi frequently mentioned the difficulty in reading the *Yili* and suggested that they should note down the difficult points while reading the text, in order to later consult them anew. According to him, everything would eventually become clear thanks to the numerous repetitions in the text:

此書雖難讀，然却多是重複，倫類若通，則其先後彼此展轉參照，足以互相發明，久之自通貫也。

This book [the *Yili*] is indeed difficult to read, but there are numerous repetitions in its text. If one is able to grasp their significance through assimilation brought about by reading the similar passages at the same time, these passages will finally shed light on one another. After a certain time, one can eventually obtain a spontaneous general comprehension of the whole text.¹⁷

- 13 Zhu Xi had once suggested changing the order of the chapters of the different treatises on rites. This gave rise to his project of reorganising all the ritual books so that they could complement and shed light on one another, while offering at the same time a more suitable annotation system. A hint of this ambitious idea can be found in a letter that Zhu Xi wrote to his friend Lü Zuqian 呂祖謙 (1137–1181). When the whole thing was still a project, Zhu Xi proposed to reorganise the three ritual treatises by placing certain chapters of the *Liji* after the *Yili* chapters.¹⁸
- 14 The real starting point of the *Yili jingzhuan tongjie* can be traced back to a letter to Pan Gongshu 潘恭恕 (n.d.) in 1186, in which Zhu Xi shared his wish to compile a book by associating the *Liji* and the *Yili*. Zhu Xi, then aged fifty-six, said that he was too old to undertake alone such a work which his friend Lü Zuqian also wished to accomplish before his death. Zhu Xi thus encouraged the recipient of this letter to join his project.¹⁹ The project of the *Lishu* 禮書 (*Book of Rites*) –the title by which Zhu Xi referred to the future book– took shape that very same year. Pan Gongshu submitted a plan in five parts to which Zhu Xi added some notes and remarks. Zhu Xi emphasised that the *Liji* which was organised into thematic chapters (*fenlei* 分類) should be methodically associated with certain chapters of the *Yili* corresponding in terms of content.²⁰ The future *Lishu* was then conceived as a kind of thematic compendium modelled on the traditional encyclopaedias (*leishu* 類書). Scholars participating in the project were called upon to classify and reorganise the ritual sections of numerous books, among which the *Liji* was the most important. Zhu Xi also talked about this project to Lü Zujian 呂祖儉 (?–1198), the younger brother of Lü Zuqian who had died five years earlier:
- 聞子約教學者讀禮，甚善。然此書無一綱領，無下手處。頃年欲作一功夫，後覺精力向衰，遂不敢下手。今日潘恭書討去整頓，未知做得如何。
- I heard that you teach the rites [*i.e.*, the *Yili*] to your students. This is a great thing. However, as the text of this classic has no programmatic axis, we do not know where to begin when reading it. I have once thought of devoting myself to this work, but later I became aware that my energy was in decline, so I dared not take it up. These days, Pan Gongshu is trying to put it in order and I do not know how his work is going on yet.²¹
- 15 Two years later, in 1188, Lü Zujian formally joined the endeavour and sent a part of his work to Zhu Xi.²²

The composition

- 16 The *Yili jingzhuan tongjie* consisted originally of thirty-seven chapters (*juan* 卷), to which twenty-nine other chapters were added at a later stage constituting henceforth its sequel. Among the initial thirty-seven chapters, only the first twenty-three were revised and published by Zhu Xi before his death. The fourteen following chapters were revised afterwards by his son-in-law, Huang Gan 黃榦 (1152–1221). In order to be distinguished from the rest of the book, the chapters that had not been finalised by Zhu Xi were given the subtitle: *Yili jizhuan jizhu* 儀禮集傳集註 (A collection of commentaries and annotations to the *Yili*).
- 17 The first twenty-three chapters published by Zhu Xi comprise the following four parts: “Family rites” (*jiali*), “Canton Rites” (*xiangli* 鄉禮), “Rites pertaining to learning” (*xueli*

學禮), and “State rites” (*bangguo li* 邦國禮). These four parts are further divided into forty-two “sub-chapters” (*pian* 篇). The chapter 15 dedicated to “Writings and Numbers” (*shu shu* 書數) is the only text that has never been written: it does not contain a single word. The following fourteen chapters revised by Huang Gan are solely dedicated to “Rites of the royal court” (*wangchao li* 王朝禮) and are divided into eighteen sub-chapters, and the sub-chapter dedicated to “Divination by means of turtle and milfoil” (*bushi* 卜筮) is also missing. The thirty-seven chapters were put together and published for the first time in 1217, seventeen years after Zhu Xi’s death.²³

- 18 In a short preface written in 1217, Zhu Zai 朱在 (1169–1229), Zhu Xi’s younger son, gave an account of the circumstances in which this book was composed:

先君所著家禮五卷、鄉禮三卷、學禮十一卷、邦國禮四卷、王朝禮十四卷，今刊於南康道院。

其日：經傳通解者凡二十三卷，蓋先君晚歲之所親定，是為絕筆之書，次第具見於目錄。惟《書數》一篇闕而未補，而《大射禮》、《聘禮》、《公食大夫禮》、《諸侯相朝禮》八篇，則猶未脫稿也。其日《集傳集註》者，此書之舊名也，凡十四卷，為《王朝禮》，而《卜筮》篇亦闕，餘則先君所草定而未暇刪改者也。今皆不敢有所增益，悉從其稿。至於喪、祭二禮，則嘗以規摹、次第屬之門人黃幹，俾之類次。他日書成，亦當相從於此，庶幾此書始末具備。

The parts written by my departed father are the following: “Family Rites” in 5 chapters, “Cantonal Rites” in 3 chapters, “Rites Pertaining to Learning” in 11 chapters, “State Rites” in 4 chapters and “Rites of the royal court” in 14 chapters. They have now been printed in the Dao Academy of Nankang.

It is entitled [*Yili*] *Jingzhuān tongjie* (*Comprehensive Explanations of the Text and Commentaries of the [Ceremonial Rites]*), and is composed of twenty-three chapters that my father had finalised himself during the last years of his life. These were his last work. The entire list of these chapters can be found in the table of contents. Only the chapter on “writings and numbers” is missing and has not been completed. As for the eight “sub-chapters” [included in the chapters 21 to 23] on the “Rites of the great archery meeting,” the “Rites of courtesy visits (state to state),” the “Rites of the prince feasting a great officer,” the “Rites of the meetings between feudal lords,” it seems that they have never been drafted in their final state.

The set of chapters entitled [*Yili*] *jizhuān jizhu* (*A collection of commentaries and annotations [to the Yili]*) is given the former title of this book. It consists of fourteen chapters dedicated to “Rites of the royal court;” the sub-chapter on “divination by means of turtle and milfoil” is also missing. The rest of them, drafted by my father, have never been amended or corrected by himself for lack of time. We did not dare to add anything to it; this edition remains faithful to my father’s manuscript.

As for the “funeral rites” and the “sacrificial rites,” they have been entrusted to the disciple Huang Gan so that he should continue with the compilation while keeping to the planned form and order. As soon as his work is accomplished, it will be placed after this book and the whole book will be complete at that time.²⁴

- 19 Huang Gan, Zhu Xi’s disciple and son-in-law, actually took on the responsibility of composing the next part dedicated to “funeral rites” (*sangli* 喪禮) and “sacrificial rites” (*jili* 祭禮). The sequel entitled *Yili jingzhuān tongjie xu* 儀禮經傳通解續 (Sequel to Comprehensive Explanations of the Text and Commentaries of the *Ceremonial Rites*) was published separately in 1123 and consisted of twenty-nine new chapters divided into thirty sub-chapters. Like Zhu Xi, Huang Gan did not have the time to revise the entire book. Yang Fu 楊復 (n.d.), a former disciple of Zhu Xi who later became the disciple of

Huang Gan, edited and published in his turn the chapters unrevised by his teacher. The same Yang Fu later edited a final version, that was first published first 1231,²⁵ i.e., thirty-one years after Zhu Xi's death. The two separate works were joined together in this book. This version was entitled *Yili jingzhuan tongjie* 儀禮經傳通解 (Comprehensive Explanations of the Text and Commentaries of the Ceremonial Rites), a title which had originally been used to refer solely to the part approved by Zhu Xi. The complete version comprised a total of sixty-six chapters grouped in seven parts and divided into ninety sub-chapters. Henceforth, a number of editions following this structure have appeared until the end of the Qing dynasty (1644–1911). In the twentieth century, this book was relegated to the background because of a changed political and social context in which the ancient rituality appeared to be completely anachronistic.²⁶

20 The different points mentioned above are summed up in the following table:

(See also Annexes 1 to 4)

<p><i>Yili jingzhuan tongjie</i> 儀禮經傳通解 <i>Comprehensive Explanations of the Text and Commentaries of the Ceremonial Rites</i> Chapters 1 to 23, revised and corrected by Zhu Xi.</p>	<p><i>Jiali</i> 家禮, <i>Xiangli</i> 鄉禮, <i>Xueli</i> 學理, <i>Bangguoli</i> 邦國禮 Sub-chapters 1 to 42.</p>
<p><i>Yili jizhuan jizhu</i> 儀禮集傳集註 <i>A collection of commentaries and annotations to the Yili</i> Chapters 24 to 37 edited by Huang Gan. The thirty-seven chapters were first published in 1217.</p>	<p><i>Wangchaoli</i> 王朝禮 Sub-chapters 43 to 60.</p>
<p><i>Yili jingzhuan tongjie xu</i> 儀禮經傳通解續 <i>Sequel to Comprehensive Explanations of the Text and Commentaries of the Ceremonial Rites</i> Chapters 1 to 29 The first fifteen chapters were edited by Huang Gan the following fourteen chapters were edited by Yang Fu. The twenty-nine chapters were first published in 1123. The entire book entitled <i>Yili jingzhuan tongjie</i> was published by Yang Fu in 1131.</p>	<p><i>Sangli</i> 喪禮 and <i>Jili</i> 祭禮 Sub-chapters 1 to 30.</p>

The production of a thesaurus

21 The *Yili jingzhuan tongjie* was thus the fruit of a work that had lasted for more than four decades and had mobilised two or even three generations of disciples. The beginning of the project dated back, as we have seen, to the end of the year 1180 when Zhu Xi had not yet attained the age of sixty. It was only thirty years after his death that the project was finally completed. The order of the chapters was set in 1188, when Zhu Xi wrote to Lü Zujian, the brother of his friend Lü Zuqian in Zhejiang concerning what form to give to the *Lishu* 禮書 (*Book of Rites*). Zhu Xi proposed to place the part about the “funeral rites” (*sangli*) before the part on the “sacrificial rites” (*jili*).²⁷ Slightly later, Zhu Xi started working on a book dedicated to ceremonies in honour of Confucius that were to

be practised in prefectural schools, the *Shaoxi Zhouxian shidian yitu*.²⁸ In 1194, after he took up a post in Changsha, Zhu Xi wished to mobilise the scholars of Hunan to work on his *Lishu*, but the situation did not allow him to do so. He was confronted by too many problems:

禮編，纔到長沙，即欲招諸公來同理會。後見彼事叢，且不為久留計，遂止。

Regarding the compilation of the [Book] of Rites, as soon as I arrived in Changsha [in May 1194],²⁹ I thought of inviting the local gentlemen to work on it together. In the end, as my responsibilities multiplied, and as I could not afford to plan a long-term stay, I gave the whole thing up.³⁰

- 22 In July of the same year, namely 1194, Zhu Xi was convened to the capital. He was appointed to the rank of academician and was assigned the task of giving Confucian lectures to the new emperor. It was in the context of a particularly tragic imperial succession that Zhu Xi's appointment took place. Guangzong 光宗 (r. 1189–1194), seized by a kind of paranoid madness, was obliged to abdicate in favour of his son Zhao Kuo 趙擴, the future Ningzong 寧宗 (r. 1194–1224).³¹ Actually, Guangzong refused to see his father, Xiaozong 孝宗 (r. 1162–1189) at his bedside while the latter had abdicated five years earlier in his favour, and later refused to attend his father's funeral. This extremely serious violation of the basic rules of filial piety set off a ripple of panic at court. After his arrival in the capital in October 1194 when the crisis was only partly defused, Zhu Xi gave the emperor a series of lectures dedicated to the *Daxue* 大學 (*The Great Learning*).³² In November 1194, he submitted to the court a memorial about the clothing and the duration of mourning and discussed how much money should be spent on this occasion.³³ At the same time, he wrote some other official reports on ritual questions, particularly on the placement of the ancestral tablets in the imperial ancestral temple. For example, how many generations back in time should be worshipped as ancestors and founders of the dynasty? In what order should their ancestral tablets be placed?³⁴ These questions were raised soon after Xiaozong's funeral. Furthermore, a suitable site was to be found as his burial place. Zhu Xi participated actively in these kinds of debates.³⁵ Basing his arguments on the *Liji*, Zhu Xi advocated organising a ceremony that should not be too costly. He argued that the expenses incurred should not be excessively extravagant because Xiaozong himself had wished to reduce them when he was alive.³⁶
- 23 Beside this, Zhu Xi took advantage of his appointment at court, the very first in his career, to plead in favour of the *Lishu* and to seek official support for a reorganisation of the three ritual books (*san li* 三禮): the *Zhouli* 周禮, the *Yili*, and the *Liji*. In a letter addressed to the new emperor, Zhu Xi began with emphasising the importance of the *Zhouli* which he considered as the “programmatically axis of rituality” (*li zhi gangling* 禮之綱領). With regard to “ceremony rules” (*yifa dushu* 儀法度數), he then added that only the *Yili* had the right to claim to be the “fundamental classic” (*ben jing* 本經) while the chapters contained in the *Liji* constituted its “explanatory discourse” (*yi shuo* 義說). Zhu Xi deplored once again the radicalism of the reforms carried out by Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021–1086) a century earlier and the abolition in the imperial examinations of the test on the *Yili* to give place to the *Liji* alone. This meant “casting aside the classic to use the commentaries” (*qi jing ren zhuan* 棄經任傳) or “abandoning the essential in favour of minor details” (*yi ben zong mo* 遺本宗末). Before these reforms, even though the rites had not really been practised, scholars were at least acquainted with some concepts contained in the classic. But since the test on the *Yili* was abandoned, scholars

contented themselves with repeating idiotically the “empty texts” (*xu wen* 虛文) with the sole aim of passing the examinations. Zhu Xi also mentioned the music which, on a par with the rites, constituted one of the pillars of social equilibrium. The ignorance about the music and the ceremonies had led to a problematic situation: scholars were unable to answer questions during important debates. Under such circumstance, Zhu Xi proposed to reorganise the major ritual treatises around the *Yili* with the support of the court. He requested that around ten ritual experts be invited and provided with appropriate material conditions, as well as allowed special access to the books kept in the imperial library so that they could see the project through successfully. In his letter, Zhu Xi also requested that dedicated premises be put at their disposal, equipment and paper be supplied, and around twenty copyists be mandated to help them. The meal expenses of the ritual experts invited to the capital should be fully paid for by the court, but this did not mean that they should receive an extra salary. All things considered, this represented only a relatively modest investment, compared with the “eternal influence” of such an undertaking that was likely to allow scholars to acquire a “real knowledge” (*shi xue* 實學) which was bound to be useful for the dynasty.

37

- 24 This letter did not bring about any change, since in the following days Zhu Xi was expelled from the capital: the remarks he had made before the emperor were considered offensive. At the end of what was to be his last lecture on the *Daxue*, given on the third of December 1194, he delivered a four-point discourse in which he encouraged the young emperor, then aged twenty-seven, to be patient with his father who had been struck with madness and dismayed by his forced abdication. His remarks in favour of a good government exhorted the emperor to resist the absolutist temptation rendered by the expression “making decisions on his own” (*du duan* 獨斷), and to prevent people of his entourage and his favourites from interfering in the affairs of state. The emperor, offended by these remarks, dismissed Zhu Xi from his duty “in view of his age” – Zhu Xi was then sixty-four years old.³⁸ Zhu Xi had to leave for Fujian the next day, in conformity with the ritual rules recorded in the first chapter of the *Liji*, the “Quli,” which required that a dismissed government official should take to the road immediately after receiving the order of dismissal:

凡爲君使者，已受命，君言不宿於家。

Whenever one is charged with a mission by his ruler, after he has received from him his orders, and (heard all) he has to say, he should not remain over the night in his house.³⁹

- 25 This sudden dismissal was only the prelude to a campaign initiated in the following year (1195) against Zhu Xi and the way of thinking referred to by the term “Study of the Way” (*Daoxue* 道學). This way of thinking favoured a government which should serve the common good while involving more scholars in the governance.⁴⁰ Two years before his death, when asked how the work on the *Lishu* was going and what was the situation of the manuscript, Zhu Xi recalled his hastily leaving from the court four years earlier:

散在諸處，收拾不聚。最苦每日應酬多，工夫不得專一。若得數月閑，更一兩朋友相助，則可畢矣。頃在朝，欲奏乞專創一局，召四方朋友習禮者數人編修。俟書成將上，然後乞朝廷命之以官，以酬其勞，亦以少助朝廷蒐用遺才之意。事未及舉，而某去國矣。

All is scattered around and I am unable to put anything back together. The most tiresome are those everyday social obligations that stop me from focusing my attention on my work. If only I could have several months of vacation and be assisted by one or two friends, I would possibly be able to achieve the work. At the time when I was still at court, I thought of addressing a report to suggest that a special office be established and that friends having a good knowledge of the rites from all over the country be invited to compile [the book]. I would submit it to the emperor when it would have been completed and request that these scholars be assigned to posts in the government, so that they could be rewarded for their work. This would have also been a modest help for satisfying the court's wish to employ left out talent. However, I had to leave the capital before this could materialise.⁴¹

- 26 Seventeen years after Zhu Xi's death, his son Zhu Zai mentioned once again this story in his preface to the first edition of the incomplete book:

顧念先君蚤歲即嘗有志於是書，昨在經筵嘗具奏，欲請於朝，乞招致生徒，置局編次而不果上，然其著述之志意具存此篇。

I think of my departed father who aspired for a long time to write this book. When he was in the capital, delivering lectures on the classics to the emperor, he had wished to submit a request to the court so that his disciples could be convened and an office be established for the compilation of the book, but the project fell through. Nevertheless, the determination that was his to write such a book is kept intact in the present book.⁴²

- 27 After his return to Fujian, in spite of the inquisition that struck the school of thought of which he was the main representative, Zhu Xi actually devoted the last years of his life to the project of the *Lishu*. He was charged with spreading a “fallacious doctrine” that “put the dynasty at risk.”⁴³ In a different political context, his project could have given birth to an official compilation under the patronage of the imperial court. In the end, it regained the status of a private work achieved collaboratively by a group of scholars scattered in several provinces and united by Zhu Xi, the architect of the whole project, henceforth fallen into disfavour. Shu Jingnan, author of a monumental biography of Zhu Xi, has identified around twenty collaborators who participated in the compilation, the putting in order, the classifying and the annotation of this book.⁴⁴ Scholars from three provinces have contributed to the realisation of this project of an encyclopaedic nature: Fujian, Jiangxi and Zhejiang. In Zhejiang, a metropolitan province, four centres were mobilised for the project. Shu Jingnan wrote:

閩中以建陽爲中心，由黃幹、劉砥、劉礪兄弟負責；江西以廬陵爲中心，由吳必大、李如圭負責；浙中又分成四路撰寫中心：金華由呂祖儉負責，四明由孫枝負責，永嘉由葉賀孫負責，黃巖由趙師夏負責。

The Jianyang centre of Fujian was directed by Huang Gan, Liu Di and the Liu Li brothers; Luling of Jiangxi was supervised by Wu Bida and Li Rugui; Zhejiang province had four centres: Jinhua, directed by Lü Zujian; Siming, directed by Sun Zhi; Yongjia, directed by Ye Hesun; Huangyan, directed by Zhao Shixia.⁴⁵

- 28 The compilation of the *Yili jingzhuān tongjiē* was the fruit of a real collaborative work completed by several teams in separate regions under the direction of Zhu Xi who was responsible for elaborating the plan, establishing coherence and completing annotations. In addition to the twenty-three collaborators listed by Shu Jingnan,

another person should also be mentioned: Hu Yong 胡泳 (n.d.) from Nankang of Jiangxi Province who, residing on the shores of Lake Poyang and taking advantage of an interruption in his official career due to the mourning of one relative, wrote the chapters dedicated “to funeral rites and built a typology of different events that follow the death of an individual” (自始死以至終喪，各立門目).⁴⁶ At the end of the mourning period, he submitted his work to Zhu Xi who besought him “not to give up halfway through the compilation of the [Book of] Rites” (編禮亦不可中輟), but Hu Yong complained that “the examination of the ritual treatises was boring” and announced that he would “withdraw for the time being” (考禮書無味，姑且放下). Zhu Xi did not deny that the study of ritual texts could appear tedious at first sight, so he suggested that his friend devote only half of his time to philosophical and moral questions, designated by the term “*yili* 義理,” such as the questions of “Duty and Principle” or “Moral Principle,” and the other half to the classification of the thematic of the texts that were to be included in the compendium:

橫渠教人學禮，呂與叔言如嚼木札。今以半日看義理文字，半日類禮書，亦不妨。

When Hengqu (Zhang Zai, 1020-1077) was teaching the rites, [his disciple] Lü Yushu (Lü Dalin, 1040-1092) stated that the study of the rites was as [insipid as] “chewing wood shavings.” Nothing keeps you at present from devoting half of the day reading philosophic texts and the other classifying [our] *Book of Rites*.⁴⁷

- 29 In 1196, Zhu Xi was formally accused of being the head of a “fallacious doctrine” (*weixue zhi kui* 偽學之魁) and his discourses recorded by his disciples were under request to be destroyed.⁴⁸ In the same year, the Chief Councillor Zhao Ruyu 趙汝愚 (1140-1196), forced out by Han Tuo Zhou 韓侂胄 (d. 1207), a relative of the empress, died on the way to his place of banishment.⁴⁹ The sixteenth of January 1197, Zhu Xi was dismissed officially from his post and, one month later (the fifteenth of February), was discharged from his “temple post.” As soon as he received the order, Zhu Xi addressed a letter to the court to “thank” it for the decision, in accordance with the established custom.⁵⁰ In the same year, the “fallacious sect” (*weidang* 偽黨) was condemned as a “seditious party” (*nidang* 逆黨), of which Zhu Xi was the leader (*dangkui* 黨魁).⁵¹ It was an extremely serious accusation. A government official called for the publicising of a black list indicating the names of four former Chief councillors and twelve academicians including Zhu Xi, as well as the names of around forty government officials and scholars.⁵² Despite suffering from this disgrace, Zhu Xi nevertheless managed to continue his work on the *Lishu* 禮書, thanks to the leniency shown to him by the local authorities. All official support from the court being henceforth impossible, Zhu Xi mobilised once again the different collaborators entrusted with the work, of which Huang Gan, Zhu Xi’s son-in-law, was the kingpin. Zhu Xi told him his fear to see the manuscript of the book destroyed if someone happened to request its destruction:

人人知有此書，若被此曹切害，胡寫兩句取去燒了，則前功俱廢，終為千載之恨矣。

Everyone knows about the book now. If it is preyed on by those men and if they scribble something stupid on it so that it be confiscated and burnt, all the work that has been done would be entirely wiped out. This would be regretted even in a thousand years.⁵³

- 30 The fear of seeing the book censored and destroyed was expressed once again in another letter written in 1197, in which Zhu Xi prayed the receiver not to reveal that he worked on the project, for fear that the book be censored, in the way that the ancient ritual treatises were destroyed by the first Qin emperor in 213 B. C:

勿廣此說，恐召坑焚之禍。

Please never disseminate these discourses lest it should bring us to be buried alive and our book to be burnt.⁵⁴

- 31 These details show that the preparation of the *Lishu* continued in a half-clandestine way while Zhu Xi was compelled at the same time to meet constraints imposed by social life. He complained that his frequent moves and numerous activities in the city kept him from spending more time on the *Lishu*. When congratulating his son-in-law on the quality of the work he had done, Zhu Xi recalled that the *Yili* dealt essentially with the “rites for officials” which should not be confused with the “court rites.”⁵⁵ A letter retained the traces of the various corrections and suggestions of modification made by Zhu Xi to the section devoted to “funeral rites” which was compiled by Huang Gan, showing that Zhu Xi took overall responsibility for the compilation of the book, from designing the general structure and determining the internal organisation to putting the citations in order.⁵⁶ To another disciple, Zhu Xi indicated where to insert the chapters “Wangzhi” 王制 and “Jifa” 祭法 of the *Liji* into the part devoted to “sacrificial rites” (*jili* 祭禮).⁵⁷ In a letter to Huang Gan, Zhu Xi announced that Wu Bofeng 吳伯豐 (n.d.) who worked on the “sacrificial rites” just had his work sent to him, but that his official activities had kept him from devoting himself entirely to the work, so that he had to call in another collaborator (Li Baozhi 李寶之). The same letter tells us that it was Lü Zujian, who was entrusted with the task of marking down the pronunciation of difficult characters in the part devoted to “court rites.”⁵⁸ The issue of indicating the pronunciation was also mentioned in a letter written to Wu Bofeng when the compilation of the book was to be completed.⁵⁹ Some other instructions given to Huang Gan also mentioned how the tasks would be distributed among the different teams in Zhejiang and Jiangxi provinces.⁶⁰
- 32 Two letters addressed to Yu Zhengfu 余正甫 (n.d.) in 1197 are particularly important, since they show how the book was like during its preparation. Zhu Xi, despite the disgrace that struck him but also, perhaps, because of the enforced idleness he was undergoing, doubled his activities and continued to encourage the different teams. His son-in-law Huang Gan supervised in Luling 廬陵 (Jiangxi) the sections devoted to “funeral rites” and “sacrificial rites,” while in Zhejiang other scholars worked on their part.⁶¹ Zhu Xi came to the conclusion that the groups of texts devoted to “funeral rites” and those regarding “sacrificial rites” should constitute two distinctly separate parts and be placed after the “state rites” and “rites of the royal court” parts. He deplored the fact that the *Zhouli* was hardly exploited and worried that there was no “leading thread” (恐無綱領), which would lead to the fact that people “revered the *Zhouli* in word but devalue it in reality” (名尊周禮而實貶之).⁶²
- 33 Zhu Xi disapproved of the practice of purchasing a printed book with the only aim of cutting out the paragraphs in order to stick them down on the manuscript, which would allow avoiding copying the texts by hand. Zhu Xi confided that he had once tried to use this method, but finally noticed that in most cases, as the format did not fit in, all the texts eventually had to be copied by hand. As a result, one good solution was to call

in the “copyists” (*bili* 筆吏), indicating to them the borders of the space in which the characters should be written. Zhu Xi suggested copying in big characters while leaving large space between lines permitting the addition of notes, and to leave an empty column at the end of each paragraph, which would allow sticking new texts afterwards.

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- 34 The year 1197 marked a major step forward for the project and for choosing its title: *Yili jizhuan jizhu* 儀禮集傳集註 (A Collection of Commentaries and Annotations to the *Yili*). This name was first chosen to refer to the whole of the book; it became later the “subtitle” designating, as we have seen, the fourteen chapters that were not published by Zhu Xi in the first edition of what was to become the *Yili jingzhuan tongjie* (Comprehensive Explanations of the Text and Commentaries of the *Ceremonial Rites*).⁶⁴ A letter written in 1197 recapitulated the progress of the project and the structure of the book:

累年欲脩儀禮一書，釐析章句而附以傳記，近方了得十許篇，似頗可觀。其餘度亦歲前可了。若得前此別無魔障，即自此之後便可塊然兀坐，以畢餘生，不復有世間念矣。元來典禮淆訛處古人都已說了，只是其書袞作一片，不成段落，使人難看。故人不曾看，便爲儉人舞文弄法，迷國誤朝。若梳洗得此書頭面出來，令人易看，則此輩無所置其姦矣，於世亦非少助也。勿廣此說，恐召坑焚之禍。

For years, I have wished to work on the *Yili* by commenting it and by dividing it into sentences and paragraphs in order to insert commentaries and explanatory notes. It is only recently that I have achieved around ten chapters that appear readable to me. The rest of them should be completed before the end of the year. If no catastrophe strikes me by that time, I could thereafter be content with sitting serenely waiting for the end of my life without any worldly ambition.

People of ancient times have already talked about the confusions and errors contained in the ritual treatises in the *Yili*. They are caused by the fact that the text of this book is all in one block and not divided into different sections, which makes the reading difficult. This is why people do not read it any more, and why smooth talkers (*xianren* 儉人) used the text by extracting all kinds of meanings from it, misleading the country and failing the dynasty. If we succeed in arranging and amending it in order to restore its real nature so that people could read it easily, those men would have no way to conceal their misdeeds. The benefit this would bring to the world is far from negligible.

Please never disseminate these discourses lest it should bring us to be buried alive and our book to be burnt.⁶⁵

- 35 One of Zhu Xi’s aims, as he recalled, was to facilitate the reading of the *Yili* by annotating and reorganising it with the help of the addition of explanatory chapters of the *Liji* and some other ancient books. Without this reconstruction and these clarifications, the *Yili* 儀禮 would always remain a rarely read book:

儀禮人所罕讀，難得善本。

The *Yili* is a book that is rarely read by people. It is difficult to get a good edition of it.⁶⁶

- 36 In 1198, two years before he died, Zhu Xi summarised how he intended to structure the *Lishu* 禮書: each subchapter should be divided into “sections” (*zhang* 章) incorporating the “supplementary notes” (*ji* 記) which would be annexed at the end of the chapters of the original *Yili* 儀禮 text. The annotation system would be simplified according to the

form of “*zhangju* 章句,” which means inserting the commentaries “sentence by sentence and paragraph by paragraph.” The “explanatory” chapters of the *Liji* 禮記 were also added. Zhu Xi wrote once again that the book was articulated in seven chapters: “Familial Rites,” “Cantonal Rites,” “Rites pertaining to Learning,” “State Rites,” “Rites of the Royal Court,” “Funeral Rites,” “Sacrificial Rites.”

- 37 Zhu Xi noticed that the Han scholars’ knowledge could also lead to the elucidation of certain ritual questions.⁶⁷ Zhu Xi alluded to the set of dramatic events which led to accession of Ningzong on the 24th of July 1194.⁶⁸ What kind of mourning should be observed by him, who was only the grandson of the deceased emperor? Zhu Xi was sure to have found the answer to this question in the commentaries on the *Yili* written by Zheng Xuan and in the sub-commentaries written by Jia Gongyan.⁶⁹ The controversy around the ritual matters aroused by the non-standard imperial succession had confirmed Zhu Xi in his belief: he should pursue his undertaking.
- 38 In 1199, Zhu Xi’s health deteriorated. Weakened by his illness, Zhu Xi requested his son-in-law, Huang Gan, to go back to Fujian in order to help him put the final touches to the *Lishu*.⁷⁰ Shortly before this, two disciples of Nankang in Jiangxi province had come to assist him with his revision of the different parts of the manuscript. If one (Hu Yong) was “particularly meticulous” (*shen zixi* 甚子細), the other (Li Jingzi 李敬子) was “not scrupulous enough” (*wei ximi* 未細密). At that time, Zhu Xi had only a small group of faithful disciples around him and complained that most of his students had moved away from him.⁷¹ In the posthumous biography of Zhu Xi written by his son-in-law, the author related that most of Zhu Xi’s disciples had chosen to cut ties with him and to change master, passing by his door without even stopping. The renunciation of some of them was so radical that they behaved like the sybarites, taking off the Confucian headdress and long-sleeve robe to put on fashionable dresses, deliberately haunting pleasure districts as if ostensibly breaking with the austere lifestyle which was strictly regulated and peculiar to what still considered as an obnoxious sect.⁷²
- 39 In 1200, Zhu Xi announced that “half of the manuscript of the *Lishu* was about to be definitely finalised” (禮書半藁略可寫淨) and that he was getting ready to have the manuscript sent to Huang Gan so that he could commission the copyists to copy it.⁷³ He also had copies of the manuscript distributed to different people in the hope of finding someone to examine them.⁷⁴ In a letter written ten days before he died, Zhu Xi mentioned once again the compilation of the *Lishu* 禮書 and deplored that he possessed only flawed editions of the chapter “*Xiaxiaozheng*” 夏小正 of the *Liji*:

夏小正文已變入禮書，但所見數本衰多舛誤。

The text of “*Xiaxiaozheng*” is henceforth included into the *Book of Rites*, but all the different editions that I have read contain numerous mistakes.⁷⁵

- 40 Zhu Xi’s last letter, written the night before he died, was addressed to the faithful Huang Gan and concerned once again the *Lishu* 禮書. Zhu Xi congratulated his son-in-law for the work he had accomplished and encouraged him to see through this undertaking.⁷⁶ Thus, the last words of Zhu Xi were devoted to the *Yili jingzhuan tongjie* to come.

Conclusion

- 41 The *Yili jingzhuan tongjie*, a posthumous oeuvre and the result of the collaborative efforts of around twenty scholars who worked under Zhu Xi's direction, is an extensive compilation directed at a learned public, dealing with all the aspects of rituality. Its text is arranged in the same order as that of the *Yili* chapters, to which have been added, as "explanatory texts," the other two major ancient ritual treatises, *Zhouli* and *Liji*.
- 42 As the title indicates, one of the aims of the *Yili jingzhuan tongjie* is to facilitate the reading of the *Yili*. In spite of the primacy granted to the *Yili*, the *Liji* occupies a no less important place. The *Liji*, as Zhu Xi tells us, "explains the *Yili*" and gives it an additional "moral meaning" (*yili* 義理).
- 43 The content of this book is classified in seven parts: "Familial Rites," "Cantonal Rites," "Rites pertaining to Learning," "State Rites," "Rites of the Royal Court," "Funeral Rites," "Sacrificial Rites." This classification aims at facilitating the reading and the use of the ritual thesaurus. It is, besides, in line with the thematic classification adopted in traditional Chinese encyclopaedias. This extensive compendium of the ancient ritual knowledge, annotated and arranged thematically, offers scholars a real reference encyclopaedia about ancient rituality.
- 44 The *Yili jingzhuan tongjie* has introduced the category of the "Rites pertaining to Learning" (*xueli* 學禮) which comprises eleven chapters divided into seventeen sub-chapters. This part includes not only the "Daxue" and "Zhongyong" 中庸 chapters of the *Liji*, but also all that is related to music, such as the "Quli" or the "Smaller Rules of Propriety." These "smaller rules of propriety" constitute the content of the first chapter of the *Liji*, but are entirely reorganised in the *Yili jingzhuan tongjie* and scattered throughout the book. In most cases, the *Liji* chapters are not quoted *in extenso* but are cut into segments and cited in the form of extracts and reorganised in a different order in the book. This fragment-like structure constitutes a striking characteristic of the *Yili jingzhuan tongjie* which is composed of a vast number of citations integrated and classified thematically.
- 45 It should be tempting to compare the *Yili jingzhuan tongjie* with Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*, but Zhu Xi and his collaborators did nothing more than quoting the texts and explaining them while staying essentially in the background. By compiling this book, Zhu Xi completed the work of a philologist and a commentator, of which the "Daxue" and "Zhongyong" chapters, commented "sentence by sentence and paragraph by paragraph" according to the *zhangju* (章句) model, is a striking example. The *Yili jingzhuan tongjie* quotes strictly word by word these two chapters of the *Liji* in the *zhangju* version, copying identically the text, including the annotations, while preserving all the reorganisation and division of paragraphs made by Zhu Xi without the least addition or removal.⁷⁷ In the same way, the famous addition in the fifth paragraph of the *Daxue* made by Zhu Xi is also copied identically in the *Yili jingzhuan tongjie*. It is worth mentioning that this added part is written in big characters, not in the same small format used for notes and commentaries. Zhu Xi's addition to the text of "Daxue" is thus promoted *ipso facto* to the rank of canonical text.⁷⁸
- 46 Compiled principally during the last years of Zhu Xi's life after he was driven away from the court, the book that Zhu Xi had wished to accomplish under the patronage of

the imperial court eventually remained a book compiled collaboratively in a confidential manner. Whereas the major part of the book had been achieved before Zhu Xi's death, its publication became possible only after the posthumous rehabilitation of Zhu Xi's reputation in 1202, two years after he died. It was only in 1217 that it was first published, thanks to Huang Gan's effort, and the entirety of the chapters appeared only in 1231, thirty-one years after Zhu Xi's death.

Annex 1. Tittles of the chapters in the *Yili* and the *Liji*

<p>YILI 儀禮 In bold are the sixteen chapters of the <i>Yili</i> whose titles are integrated in the <i>Yili jingzhuan tongjie</i> 儀禮經傳通解. The French translation of these chapters is by Séraphin Couvreur, the English by James Legge</p>	<p>LJI 禮記 In bold are the chapters of the <i>Liji</i> whose titles are integrated in the <i>Yili jingzhuan tongjie</i> 儀禮經傳通解. The chapters followed by an asterisk* have their commentaries in chapter 87 of <i>Zhuzi yulei</i> 朱子語類 (A Collection of Conversations of Master Zhu) The French translation of the chapters is by Séraphin Couvreur, the English by James Legge</p>	
<p>1. Shiguanli 士冠禮 Capping rites for a common officer</p>	<p>1. Quli* 曲禮 The Rules of Propriety</p>	<p>24. Aigongwen* 哀公問 Questions of Duke Ai</p>
<p>2. Shihunli 士昏禮 Wedding rites for a common officer</p>	<p>2. Tangong* 檀弓 “Tangong” [“Archery-in-Santal”]</p>	<p>25. Zhongni yanju* 仲尼燕居 Zhongni at Home at Ease</p>
<p>3. Shixiangjian 士相見 Rites pertaining to the meeting of common officers</p>	<p>3. Wangzhi* 王制 Royal Regulations</p>	<p>26. Zhongni xianju* 仲尼閒居 Zhongni at Home at Leisure</p>
<p>4. Xiangyinjiuli 鄉飲酒禮 Rites of the district symposium</p>	<p>4. Yueling* 月令 Proceedings of Government in the Different Months</p>	<p>27. Fangji 坊記 Record of Dykes</p>
<p>5. Xiangsheli 鄉射禮 Rites of the district archery meeting</p>	<p>5. Zengziwen 曾子問 Questions of Zengzi</p>	<p>28. Zhongyong 中庸 Doctrine of the Mean</p>
<p>6. Yanli 燕禮 Banquet rites (at state, not imperial, level)</p>	<p>6. Wenwangshizi* 文王世子 King Wen as Son and Heir</p>	<p>29. Biaoji* 表記 Record on Example</p>
<p>7. Dasheyi 大射儀 The great archery meeting</p>	<p>7. Liyun* 禮運 The Conveyance of Rites</p>	<p>30. Ziyi 緇衣 Black Robes</p>
<p>8. Pinli 聘禮 Rites of courtesy calls (state to state)</p>	<p>8. Liqi* 禮器 Utensils of Rites</p>	<p>31. Bensang 奔喪 Rules on Hurrying to Mourning Rites</p>
<p>9. Gongsidafuli 公食大夫禮 Rites of the prince feasting a great foreign officer</p>	<p>9. Jiaotesheng* 郊特牲 Single Victim at the Border Sacrifices</p>	<p>32. Wensang 問喪 Questions About Mourning Rites</p>

10. Jinli 覲禮 Rites of the (imperial) audience	10. Neize * 內則 Pattern of the Family	33. Fuwen 服問 Subjects For Questioning About the Mourning Dress
11. Sangfu 喪服 Mourning attire	11. Yuzao * 玉藻“Jade-Bead Pendants of the Royal Cap	34. Xianchuan 閒傳 Treatise on Subsidiary Points in Mourning Usages
12. Shisangli 士喪禮 Mourning rites for the common officer	12. Mingtangwei * 明堂位 Places in the Hall of Distinction	35. Sannianwen 三年問 Questions About Mourning for Three Years
13. Jixili 既夕禮 Rites following the evening lamentation	13. Sangfu xiaoji * 喪服小記 Record of Smaller Matters in the Dress of Mourning	36. Shenyi * 深衣 Long Dress in One Piece
14. Shiyuli 士虞禮 Post burial rites for a common officer	14. Dazhuan * 大傳 Great Treatise	37. Touhu 投壺 Game of Pitch-Pot
15. Teshengkuisili 特牲饋食禮 Rites of the single victim food offering	15. Shaoyi * 少儀 Smaller Rules of Demeanour	38. Ruxing 儒行 Conduct of the Scholar
16. Shaolaokuishili 少牢饋食禮 Rites of the secondary pen victim food offering	16. Xueji * 學記 Record on the Subject of Education	39. Daxue 大學 The Great Learning
17. Yousiche 有司徹 The servant clearing the way	17. Yueji * 樂記 Record on the Subject of Music	40. Guanyi 冠義 Meaning of the Ceremony of Capping
	18. Zaji 雜記 Miscellaneous Records	41. Hunyi 昏義 Meaning of the Wedding Ceremony
	19. Sangdaji 喪大記 Greater Record of Mourning Rites	42. Xiangyinjiuyi * 鄉 飲酒義 Meaning of the Drinking Festivity in the Districts
	20. Jifa * 祭法 Law of Sacrifices	43. Sheyi * 射義 Meaning of the Ceremony of Archery
	21. Jiyi * 祭義 Meaning of Sacrifices	44. Yanyi 燕義 Meaning of the Banquet
	22. Jitong 祭統 A Summary Account of Sacrifices	45. Pinyi 聘義 Meaning of Interchange of Missions twixt Different Courts
		46. Sangfu sizhi 喪服四 制

	23. Jingjie 經解 Different Teaching of the Different Kings	Four Principles Underlying the Dress of Mourning
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Annex 2. Titles of the chapters of *Yili jingzhuantongjie (jizhu)*

YILI JINGZHUAN TONGJIE 儀禮經傳通解 In bold are the titles integrated in the YILI 儀禮, in <i>italic</i> are the titles integrated in the LIJI 禮記		
Juan 1	1. Shiguan 士冠 2. <i>Guanyi</i> 冠義	Jiali 1 家禮 一
Juan 2	3. Shihunli 士昏禮 4. <i>Hunyi</i> 昏義	Jiali 2 家禮二
Juan 3	5. <i>Neize</i> 內則	Jiali 3 家禮三
Juan 4	6. <i>Neizhi</i> 內治	Jiali 4 家禮四
Juan 5	7. <i>Wuzong</i> 五宗 8. <i>Jinshu</i> 覲屬	Jiali 5-6 家禮 五-六
Juan 6	9. Shixiangjianli 士相見禮 10. <i>Shixiangjianyi</i> 士相見義 11. <i>ouhuli</i> 投壺禮	Xiangli 1-2 鄉禮一-二
Juan 7	12. Xiangyinjiuli 鄉飲酒禮 13. <i>Xiangyinjiuyi</i> 鄉飲酒義	Xiangli 3 鄉 禮三
Juan 8	14. Xiangsheli 鄉射禮 15. <i>Xiangsheyi</i> 鄉射義	Xiangli 4 鄉 禮四
Juan 9	16. <i>Xuezhi</i> 學制 17. <i>Xueyi</i> 學義	Xueli 1 學禮 一
Juan 10	18. <i>Dizizhi</i> 弟子職 19. <i>Shaoyi</i> 少儀	Xueli 2-3 學 禮二-三
Juan 11	20. <i>Quli</i> 曲禮	Xueli 4 學禮 四
Juan 12	21. <i>Chenli</i> 臣禮	Xueli 5 學禮 五
Juan 13	22. <i>Qianlü</i> 錢律 23. <i>Zhonglü</i> 鍾律	Xueli 6 學禮 六
Juan 14	24. <i>Shiyue</i> 詩樂 25. <i>Liyue</i> 禮樂	Xueli 7-8 學 禮七-八
Juan 15	26. <i>Shushu</i> 書數 (闕) manque	Xueli 9 學禮 九
Juan 16	27. <i>Xueji</i> 學記 28. <i>Daxue</i> 大學	Xueli 10-11 學禮十-十一
Juan 17	29. <i>Zhongyong</i> 中庸	

		Xueli 12 學禮 十二
Juan 18	30. Baofu 保傅 31. Jianzuo 踐阼	Xueli 13-14 學禮十三-十四
Juan 19	32. Wuxue 五學	Xueli 15 學禮 十五
Juan 20	33. Yanli 燕禮 34. Yanyi 燕義	Banguoli 1 邦國禮一
Juan 21	35. Dasheyi 大射儀 36. Dasheyi 大射義	Banguoli 2 邦國禮二
Juan 22	37. Pinli 聘禮 38. Pinyi 聘義	Banguoli 3 邦國禮三
Juan 23	39. Gongsidafuli 公食大夫禮 40. Gongsidafuyi 公食大夫義 41. Zhuhouxiangchaoli 諸侯相朝禮 42. Zhuhouxiangchaoyi 諸侯相朝義	Banguoli 4-5 邦國禮四-五
YILI JIZHUAN JIZHU 儀禮集傳集註 In bold are the titles integrated in the YILI 儀禮, in <i>italic</i> are the titles integrated in the LIJI 禮記		
Juan 24	43. Jinli 覲禮 44. Chaoshiyi 朝士義	Wangchaoli 1 王朝禮一
Juan 25	[45] Lishu 曆書 [46] Bushi 卜筮 (闕) manque	Wangchaoli 2 王朝禮二
Juan 26	[47] Xiaxiaozheng 夏小正 [48] Yueling 月令	Wangchaoli 3 王朝禮三
Juan 27	[49] Yuezhi 樂制 [50] Yueji 樂記	Wangchaoli 4 王朝禮四
Juan 28	[51] Wangzhi zhi jia: Fentu 王職之甲：分土	Wangchaoli 5 王朝禮五
Juan 29	[52] Wangzhi zhi yi : Zhiguo 王職之乙：制國	Wangchaoli 6 王朝禮六
Juan 30	[53] Wangzhi zhi bing : Wangli 王職之丙：王禮	Wangchaoli 7 王朝禮七
Juan 31	[54] Wangzhi zhi ding: Wangshi 王職之丁：王事	Wangchaoli 8 王朝禮八
Juan 32	[55] Wangzhi zhi wu: Sheguan 王職之戊：設官	Wangchaoli 9 王朝禮九
Juan 33	[56] Wangzhi zhi ji: Jianhou 王職之己：建侯	Wangchaoli 10 王朝禮十
Juan 34	[57] Wangzhi zhi geng: Mingqi shang 王職之庚：明器上	Wangchaoli 11 王朝禮十一

Juan 35	[58] <i>Wangzhi zhi xin</i> : Mingqi xia 王職之辛：明器下	Wangchaoli 12 王朝禮十二
Juan 36	[59] <i>Wangzhi zhi ren</i> : Shitian 王職之壬：師田	Wangchaoli 13 王朝禮十三
Juan 37	[60] <i>Wangzhi zhi gui</i> : Xingbi 王職之癸：刑辟	Wangchaoli 14 王朝禮十四

Annex 3. Titles of the chapters of the *Sequel to Yili jingzhuang tongjie*

YILI JINGZHUAN TONGJIE XU 儀禮經傳通解續 In bold are the titles of <i>Yili</i> 儀禮 chapters, in <i>italic</i> are the titles of <i>Liji</i> 禮記 chapters		
Juan 1	1. Sangfu 喪服	Sangli 1 喪禮一
Juan 2	2. Shisangli shang 士喪禮上	Sangli 2 shang 喪禮二上
Juan 3	3. Shisangli xia 士喪禮下	Sangli 2 xia 喪禮二下
Juan 4	4. Shiyuli 士虞禮	Sangli 3 喪禮三
Juan 5	5. <i>Sangdaji shang</i> 喪大記上	Sangli 4 shang 喪禮四上
Juan 6	6. <i>Sangdaji xia</i> 喪大記下	Sangli 4 xia 喪禮四下
Juan 7	7. Zukufulianxiangtanji (jiji jiri fu) 卒哭耐練祥禫記 (吉祭忌日附)	Sangli 5 喪禮五
Juan 8	8. Bufu 補服	Sangli 6 喪禮六
Juan 9	9. <i>Sangfu bianchu</i> 喪服變除	Sangli 7 喪禮七
Juan 10	10. <i>Sangfu zhidu</i> 喪服制度	Sangli 8 喪禮八
Juan 11	11. <i>Sangfu yi</i> 喪服義	Sangli 9 喪禮九
Juan 12	12. Sangtongli 喪通禮	Sangli 10 喪禮十
Juan 13	13. Sangbianli 喪變禮	Sangli 11 喪禮十一
Juan 14	14. Diaoli 弔禮	Sangli 12 喪禮十二
Juan 15	15. Sangliyi 喪禮義	Sangli 13 喪禮十三
Juan 16	[16] Sangfu tushi mulu 喪服圖式目錄 (illustrations)	此系喪禮外一卷
Juan 17	[17] Teshengkuisili yi 特牲饋食禮一	Jili 1 祭禮一
Juan 18	[18] Shaolaokuisili er 少牢饋食禮二	Jili 2 祭禮二
Juan 19	[19] Youxiche 有司徹	Jili 3 祭禮三

Juan 20	[20] Zhuhou qianmiao 諸侯遷廟 [21] Zhuhou xinmiao 諸侯鬯廟	Jili 4 祭禮四
Juan 21	[22] Jifa 祭法	Jili 5 祭禮五
Juan 22	[23] Tianshen 天神	Jili 6 祭禮六
Juan 23	[24] Dishì 地示	Jili 7 祭禮七
Juan 24	[25] Baishen 百神	Jili 8 祭禮八
Juan 25	[26] Zongmiao 宗廟	Jili 9 祭禮九
Juan 26	[27] Yinshizhiji 因事之祭	Jili 10 祭禮十
Juan 27	[28] Jitong 祭統	Jili 11 祭禮十一
Juan 28	[29] Jiwu 祭物	Jili 12 祭禮十二
Juan 29	[30] Jiyi 祭義	Jili 13 祭禮十三

Annex 4. Organisation of the chapters and the sub-chapters in the *Yili jingzhuān tōngjiě* 儀禮經傳通解

Title	Chapters	Parts	Number of chapters (卷)	Number of sub-chapters (篇)
<i>Yili jingzhuān tōngjiě</i> 儀禮經傳通解	1-5	JIALI 家禮	5	8
	6-8	XIANGLI 鄉禮	3	7
	9-19	XUELI 學禮	11	17
	20-23	BANGGUOLI 邦國禮	4	10
Total			23	42
<i>Yili jizhuān jizhu</i> 儀禮集傳集註	24-37	WANGCHAOLI 王朝禮	14	18
Total <i>Yili jingzhuān tōngjiě</i> 儀禮經傳通解 <i>Yili jizhuān jizhu</i> 儀禮集傳集註			37	60
<i>Yili jingzhuān tōngjiěxù</i> 儀禮經傳通解續	1-16	SANGLI 喪禮	16	16
	17-29	JILI 祭禮	13	14

Total		29	30
TOTAL			
<i>Yili jingzhuan tongjie</i> 儀禮經傳通解			
<i>Yili jizhuan jizhu</i> 儀禮集傳集註		66	90
<i>Yili jingzhuan tongjiexu</i> 儀禮經傳通解續			

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FOOTNOTES

1. *Jiali* 家禮 (Family Rituals), in Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 7, 857–958. About this book, see Ebrey 1991a. Translation in French, de Harlez 1889. American translation, Ebrey 1991b. Regarding the use of the *Liji* 禮記 in the *Jiali* 家禮 and its influence in Korea, see No 2000, 25–27.
2. In Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 13, 1–60. This book, prefaced in 1195, is dated to 1194 by Shu 2001, 1126–1127 & 1203.
3. *Yili jingzhuan tongjie* 儀禮經傳通解 (Comprehensive Explanations of the Text and Commentaries of the Ceremonial Rites), in Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 2–5, 1–3453.
4. *Hui'an xiansheng Zhu Wengong wenji* 晦庵先生朱文公文集 (Works of Master Hui'an, Zhu, Duke of Letters, hereafter *Wenji* or *Xuji* for *The Sequel of the Works*), chap. 68, in Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 23, 3290–3370. *Xiaoxue* 小學 (*The Elementary Learning*), in Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 13, 377–479.
5. *Zizhitongjian gangmu* 資治通鑒綱目 (Summary of the Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government), in Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 8–11, 1–3530.
6. Noted by Wang Defu 汪德輔, 1192, *Yulei* 87, in Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 17, 2940.
7. “Da Chen Caiqing” 答陳才卿 (Reply [8/16] to Chen Caiqing), 1197, *Wenji* 59, Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol 23, 2848.
8. Noted by Liao Deming 廖德明, after 1173, *Yulei* 87, in Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 17, 2941.
9. Noted by Huang Yigang 黃義剛, after 1193, *Yulei* 85, in Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 17, 2899.
10. Only the title of chapter 13 of the *Yili*: “Jixili” 既夕禮 (After Lamentations of Evening) is not included in the *Yili jingzhuan tongjie*.
11. Noted by Huang Yigang 黃義剛, after 1193, *Yulei* 85, in Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 17, 2899.
12. Noted by Liao Deming 廖德明, after 1173, *Yulei* 87, in Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 17, 2941.
13. Noted by Gan Jie 甘節, after 1193, *Yulei* 87, in Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 17, 2940.
14. Zhu Xi, “Jiali xu” 家禮序 (Preface to Family Rituals), in Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 7, 873. Ebrey 1991a, 102–144.
15. “Da Ying Renzhong” 答應仁仲 (Reply [4/6] to Ying Renzhong), 1197, *Wenji* 54, Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol 23, 2550. Shu 2001, 1288.
16. The original Chinese being: 朱子作通解於疏之文義未安者多爲刪潤。在朱子自成一家之書未爲不可,而明之刻注疏者一切惟通解之從,遂盡失賈氏之舊。Ruan 1980, 942.
17. “Da Chen Caiqing” 答陳才卿 (Reply [9/16] to Chen Caiqing), 1200, *Wenji* 59, Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol 23, 2848. See also “Da Chen Caiqing” 答陳才卿 (Reply to [10/16] to Chen Caiqing), 1200, *Wenji* 59, Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol 23, 2849.
18. “Wen Bo Gong Sanli bianci” 問[呂]伯恭[呂祖謙]三禮編次 (Question to [Lü] Bogong [Lü Zuqian] about the compilation of the Three Ritual Books [*Yili*, *Zhouli*, *Liji*]), ca. 1180, *Wenji* 74, Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol 24, 3579–3581. Shu 2001, p. 875.
19. “Da Pan Gongshu” 答潘恭恕 [潘友恭] (Reply [4/9] to Pan Gongshu [Pan Yougong]), 1186, *Wenji* 50, Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol 22, 2307. Shu 2001, 875.
20. “Da Pan Gongshu” (Reply [7/9] to Pan Gongshu), 1186, *Wenji* 50, Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol 22, 2312–2315. Shu 2001, 874–875.
21. “Da Lü Ziyue” 答呂子約 [呂祖儉] (Reply [3/20] to Lü Ziyue [Lü Zujian]), 13th day of the 9th month of the year *bing-wu*: 26 October 1186, *Wenji* 48, Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol 22, 2209. See Shu 2001, 842 & 875.

22. “Da Lü Ziyue” (Reply [6/20] to Lü Ziyue), 27th day of the 11th month [of the year *wu-shen*: 16 December] 1188, *Wenji* 48, Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol 22, 2211. The same letter is dated to 1192 by Shu 1992, 1009.
23. Wang Yiliang 王貽樑, *Yili jingzhuang tongjie* 儀禮經傳通解, “Jiaodian shuoming” 校點說明, in Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 2, 3.
24. Zhu Zai, Postface of 1217, in Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 2, 26.
25. 1131: the year *xin-mao* 辛卯 of the Shaoding 紹定 era (1228–1233).
26. Wang Yiliang 王貽樑, *Yili jingzhuang tongjie* 儀禮經傳通解, “Jiaodian shuoming” 校點說明, in Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 2, 3–7.
27. “Da Lü Ziyue” (Reply [6/20] to Lü Ziyue), 27th day of the 11th month [of the year *wu-shen*: 16 December] 1188, *Wenji* 48, Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol 22, 2211. The same letter is dated to 1192 by Shu 1992, 1009.
28. *Protocol and illustrations of the ceremonies carried out in memory of Confucius in prefectural and sub-prefectural schools in the Shaoxi era*, in Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 13, 1–60. This book was written in 1194, its preface was dated 1195, see Shu 2001, 1126 & 1203.
29. Zhu Xi arrived in Tanzhou 潭州 on the 25th of May 1194 (4th day of the 5th month of the 5th year of Shaoxi), Shu 2001, 1116.
30. Noted by Ye Hesun 葉賀孫, after 1194, *Yulei* 84, in Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 17, 2894.
31. Guangzong abdicated on the 7th day of the 5th month of the 5th year of Shaoxi (24 July 1194); four days later, Zhu Xi was convened to the capital at the instigation of the Chief Councillor Zhao Ruyu 趙汝愚, see Shu 2001, 1123.
32. “Jingyan jiangyi” 經筵講義 (Lectures on the Classics), 1194, *Wenji* 15, in Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 20, 691–793.
33. “Qi taolun sangfu zhazi” 乞討論喪服劄子, November 1194, *Wenji* 14, in Zhu *et al.* 2002 vol. 20, 685–687. Shu 2001, 1167–1168. Qian 2011, vol. 4, 153–154.
34. “Tiaomiao yizhuang. Bingtu” 祧廟議狀. 并圖 (Illustrated Report on the tablets in the ancestral temple), November 1194, *Wenji* 15, in Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 20, 713–725. See Shu 2001, 1167–1177. See also “Mianzou tiaomiao zhazi. bingtu” 面奏祧廟劄子. 并圖 (Oral report and illustrations on the tablets in the ancestral temple), November 1194, *Wenji* 15, in Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 20, 725–727; “Yi tiaomiao zhazi” 議祧廟劄子 (Discussion on the tablets in the ancestral temple), November 1194, *Wenji* 15, in Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 20, 727–728.
35. About the discussions on the future burial place of Xiaozong, see “Shanling yizhuang” 山陵議狀 (Report on the imperial burial places), 1194, *Wenji* 15, in Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 20, 729–733.
36. “Qi taolun sangfu zhazi” 乞討論喪服劄子 (Letter asking for launching a debate on funeral clothing), November 1194, *Wenji* 14, in Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 20, 686.
37. “Qi xiu Sanli zhazi” 乞脩三禮劄子 (Letter beseeching the revision of the Three Ritual Books), 1194, *Wenji* 14, in Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 20, 687–688. See Shu 2001, 1184.
38. “Jingyan liushen mianchen sishi zhazi” 經筵留身面陳四事劄子 (Four-Point Communication addressed in person to the emperor during a classic lecture), 19th day of the 10th intercalary month of the 5th year of Shaoxi: 3 December 1194, *Wenji* 14, in Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 20, 678–684. Shu 2001, 1184–1189.
39. The English translation is by James Legge. See Legge 1885, vol. III, 86. This sentence has been commented by Zhu Xi in *Yulei* 87, in Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 17, 2947.
40. About the place of the scholars and the school of Daoxue, see Yu 2004.
41. Noted by Shen Xian 沈僩, 1198, *Yulei* 84, in Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 17, 2894.
42. Zhu Zai, Postface of 1217, in Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 2, 26.
43. Shu 2001, 1239–1240.
44. The complete list of the twenty-three collaborators is given by Shu Jingnan. See Shu 1992, 1012, and Shu 2001, 1253.

45. Shu 1992, 1012; the text is slightly modified in Shu 2001, 1253.
46. See the remarks regarding Hu Yong in *Yulei* 84, in Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 17, 2894.
47. Noted by Hu Yong, 1188, *Yulei* 84, in Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 17, 2894.
48. Shu 2001, 1272 & 1280.
49. Zhao Ruyu died on the 20th day of the 1st month of the 2nd year of Qingyuan (20 February 1196), Shu 2001, 1238–1244.
50. “Luozhi bagongci xiebiao” 落職罷宮祠謝表 (Letter of thanks for my suspension and my dismissal from the post in the temple), 27th day of the 1st month of the 3rd year of Qingyuan (15 February 1197), *Wenji* 85, in Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 24, 4014–4415. Zhu Xi’s dismissal dates to the 26th day of the 12th month of the 2nd year of Qingyuan (16 January 1197), Shu 2001, 1272–1277 & 1280–1282.
51. Shu 2001, 1292–1294.
52. Shu 2001, 1313–1318.
53. “Da Huang Zhiqing” 答黃直卿 (Reply [21/97]) to Huang Zhiqing [Huang Gan], 1197, *Xuji* 1, Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol 25, 4650. Letter dated to 1196 by Shu 2001, 1250.
54. “Da Li Jizhang” (Reply [3/5] to Li Jizhang), 1197, *Wenji* 38, Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol 21, 1708.
55. “Da Huang Zhiqing” (Reply [21/97]) to Huang Zhiqing), 1197, *Xuji* 1, Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol 25, 4649. Letter dated to 1196 by Shu 2001, p. 1250.
56. “Da Huang Zhiqing” (Reply [7/7] to Huang Zhiqing), 1197, *Wenji* 46, Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol 22, 2158–2162. Letter dated to 1196 by Shu 2001, 1251.
57. “Da Wu Bofeng” 答吳伯豐 [吳必大] (Reply [22/24] to Wu Bofeng [Wu Bida]), 1196, *Wenji* 51, Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol 22, 2456–2459. See Shu 2001, 1251.
58. “Da Huang Zhiqing” (Reply [7/97] to Huang Zhiqing), 1197, *Xuji* 1, Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol 25, 4646.
59. “Da Wu Bofeng” (Reply [22/24] to Wu Bofeng [Wu Bida]), 1196, *Wenji* 51, Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol 22, 2457.
60. “Da Huang Zhiqing” (Reply [24/97] to Huang Zhiqing), 1197, *Xuji* 1, Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol 25, 4651. Letter dated to 1196 by Shu 2001, 1252. “Da Huang Zhiqing” (Reply [25/97]) to Huang Zhiqing), 1197, *Xuji* 1, Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol 25, 4652. Letter dated to 1196 by Shu 2001, 1252.
61. “Da Yu Zhengfu” 答余正甫 (Reply [4/5] to Yu Zhengfu), 1197, *Wenji* 63, Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol 23, 3078–3079. Letter dated to 1196 by Shu 2001, 1251.
62. “Da Yu Zhengfu” (Reply [5/5] to Yu Zhengfu), 1197, *Wenji* 63, Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol 23, 3079. Letter dated to 1196 in Shu 2001, 1252.
63. In the original Chinese: 所喻買書以備剪貼，恐亦不濟事。蓋嘗試爲之，大小高下既不齊等，不免又寫一番，不如只就正本籤記起止，直授筆吏寫成之爲快也。又脩書之式，只可作草卷，疏行大字（欲可添注）。每段空紙一行（以備剪貼）。只似公案摺疊成沓，逐卷各以紙索穿其腰背（史院脩書例如此，取其便於改易）。此其大略也，in “Da Yu Zhengfu” (Reply [5/5] to Yu Zhengfu), 1197, *Wenji* 63, Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol 23, 3079. Letter dated to 1196 in Shu 2001, 1252.
64. Shu 2001, 1287–1289.
65. “Da Li Jizhang” 答李季章 (Reply [3/5] to Li Jizhang), 1197, *Wenji* 38, Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol 21, 1707–1708.
66. “Ji Yongjia Yili wuzi” 記永嘉禮儀誤字 (Note on the erroneous characters in the Yongjia edition of the *Yili*), *Wenji* 70, in Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 23, 3390.
67. “Da Li Jizhang” (Reply [4/5] to Li Jizhang), 1198, *Wenji* 38, Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol 21, 1709.
68. Qian 2001, vol. 4, 151 & 153. Shu 2001, 1120–1125.
69. “Da Li Jizhang” (Reply [4/5] to Li Jizhang), 1198, *Wenji* 38, Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol 21, 1709; Qian 2011, vol. 4, 153.

70. He writes: “病日益衰，甚望賢者之來，了卻禮書”，in “Da Huang Zhiqing” (Reply [78/97] to Huang Zhiqing), 1198, *Xuji* 1, Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol 25, 4667.
71. “Da Huang Zhiqing” (Reply [56/97] to Huang Zhiqing [Huang Gan]), 1198, *Xuji* 1, Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol 25, 4661-4662. About the identification of Hu Yong, see Chen 1989, 482.
72. Huang Gan, [...] “Zhu xiansheng xingzhuang” 朱先生行狀 (Posthumous biography of Master Zhu), 1221 (14th year Jiading 嘉定), in Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 27, p. 558; text integrated in Nianpu, Shu 2001, p. 1486.
73. “Da Gong Zhongzhi” 答鞏仲至 (Reply [20/20] to Gong Zhongzhi [Gong Feng]), 1200, *Wenji* 64, Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol 23, 3113.
74. “Da Wang Yuanshi” 答王元石 (Reply [1/1] to Wang Yuanshi), 1200, *Wenji* 63, Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol 23, 3061.
75. “Da Yang Zizhi” 答楊子直 (Reply [5/5] to Yang Zizhi [Yang Fang]), 1200 (27th day of the 2nd intercalary month, of the year *geng-shen*: 12 April 1200), *Wenji* 45, Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol 22, 2075. Shu 2001, 1410.
76. “Da Huang Zhiqing” (Reply [1/1] to Huang Zhiqing [Huang Gan]), 22 April 1200, *Wenji* 29, Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol 21, 1285-1286. Shu 2001, 1411.
77. *Yili jingzhuan tongjie*, chap. 16, 學禮十一, “大學第二十八,” in Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 2, 544–557; *Daxue zhangju*, in Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 6, 13–31. *Yili jingzhuan tongjie*, chap. 17, 學禮十二, “中庸第二十九,” in Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 2, 558–585; *Zhongyong zhangju*, in Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 6, 32–60.
78. *Yili jingzhuan tongjie*, chap. 16, 學禮十一, “大學第二十八,” in Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 2, 549; *Daxue zhangju*, in Zhu *et al.* 2002, vol. 6, 20.

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Jia Bingwei

The role of the *Liji* in the formation of early Chosŏn society

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- 1 The transmission to Korea of the Chinese classics with the Song commentaries coincided with a time of crisis besetting the country's society. Or, to put it another way, the social and intellectual crisis that affected all aspects of life in late Koryŏ 高麗 (918–1392) provided a receptive field for the appealing picture of an ordered society the classics portrayed. The classics' elaboration of ritualism and morality promised to serve as a potent weapon against Buddhism and, at the same time, endowed early Confucian scholars with a vision of rehabilitating state and society on the model of Chinese antiquity. Based on their trust in the Chinese classics, the early Confucians delivered the intellectual and moral programme for a wide-ranging renovation of state and society and indeed laid the sociopolitical base of the new dynasty, Chosŏn 朝鮮 (1392–1910).¹
- 2 The Chinese classics had been studied in Korea since at least the seventh century. In 788, in imitation of the Tang system, a kind of examination system was instituted that made them mandatory study materials. Following the establishment of formal examinations in 958 with Chinese assistance, the classics were read with the Tang commentaries by Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574–648). Koryŏ being a Buddhist state, this literature had however little influence on the quality and conduct of everyday life before a few Koryŏ scholars sought an education in the Mongol capital, Beijing. There they came in contact with the Confucianism revived by the two Song Chinese scholars Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033–1107) and Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200). Usually termed Neo-Confucianism, Cheng-Zhu Confucianism was taught in Beijing by Xu Heng 許衡 (1209–1281), its major proselytiser in Mongol China. Xu's teachings, continued by his disciples, advocated an activist approach to public affairs as outlined in the *Great Learning* and stressed moral, intellectual, and political education. They were later implemented in the 1313 examination reform. This curriculum opened to the Koreans a completely new view on how Neo-Confucianism could be used to remedy the ills at home. After returning to Korea, these early students of Neo-Confucianism turned into fervent advocates of reform on the blueprint of the Chinese classics. In short, it was

through the Cheng-Zhu commentaries that the classics acquired for the Koreans their potential as guidebooks for far-reaching reforms.

- 3 The adoption of Neo-Confucianism in Korea had a highly political component in so far as it provided the momentum for the late Koryŏ elite to regain political power in the new dynasty. Although a few Confucians did not recognise the need for dynastic change, a group of energetic ideologues teamed up with military leaders to realise their vision of sociopolitical renovation. Among those who rallied around the founder of the Chosŏn dynasty, Yi Sŏng-gye 李成桂, later known by his temple name as King T'aejo 太祖 (r. 1392–98), were Chŏng To-jŏn 鄭道傳 (1337–1398) and Cho Chun 趙浚 (1346–1405), scholars who laid the intellectual foundation of a long process that transformed Korean society. Indeed, without the felicitous support of King T'aejo, a military man, it is doubtful that these scholar officials, who lacked their own power base, would have been able to institute a new dynasty built uniquely on Neo-Confucian premises.
- 4 The dynastic architects, who envisioned the reconstruction of an ideal human order on the example of the sage kings of Chinese antiquity, needed to fill in the ideological contours with practicable precepts that would help them to construct a “Confucian” society. The three rites canons that gave them the most authoritative approach to ancient society were the *Liji* 禮記 (Record of Rites), the *Yili* 儀禮 (Ceremonials), and the *Zhouli* 周禮 (Rites of Zhou). These books contained a vast amount of pre-Confucian lore and presented detailed descriptions of rites guiding family, community, and state.²

The *Liji* in Early Chosŏn

- 5 The *Liji* was a key text the early dynastic legislators studied to gain practicable guidelines for socio-ritual reform.³ They explored this intricate text with the commentaries written over the centuries in China. In Koryŏ, Kong Yingda's commentary on the *Liji*, the *Liji zhengyi* 禮記正義 (Correct Interpretations of the *Liji*), was presented to the king in 1045. It was probably consulted for instituting state rituals. Because Zhu Xi had not written commentaries on the *Liji* except for two chapters, *Daxue* 大學 and *Zhongyong* 中庸, he isolated to make parts of his Four Books, the Koreans in early Chosŏn consulted primarily the commentary by the Yuan scholar Chen Hao 陳澧 (1260–1341), the *Liji jishuo* 禮記集說 (Collected Remarks on the *Liji*) – a text completed in 1322 and made the standard interpretation for the civil service examinations in early Ming China in 1403.⁴
- 6 Chen Hao's *Liji jishuo* served as the basis of the first *Liji* commentary published in Korea: the *Yegi ch'ŏngyŏllok* 禮記淺見錄 (Superficial Views on the *Liji*) by the great scholar official and classicist, Kwŏn Kŭn 權近 (1392–1409). Kwŏn, who belonged to the first generation of Confucian scholars and teachers of Neo-Confucianism, reportedly studied the ritual canon all his life. He first earned fame with his introduction to Confucian learning, the *Iphak tosŏl* 入學圖說 (Diagrammatic Treatise upon Entering Learning). In this work, dated 1390, he sketched classical learning in forty diagrams, one of which characterised the structure and the application of each of the Five Classics.⁵ This programmatic outline of the core values of Neo-Confucian thinking aimed at presenting Confucian ritualism as its very foundation.⁶
- 7 With his *Yegi ch'ŏngyŏllok* Kwŏn apparently fulfilled a wish of his teacher, Yi Saek 李穡 (1328–1396), who opined that the rituals had been in disorder since Qin Shihuangdi's 秦

始皇帝 book burning (in 213 BC) and had not been restored fully by either the Cheng brothers or Zhu Xi. Considering the reconstruction of the rites a most urgent task, Yi apparently had intended to write a commentary himself, but old age prevented him from doing so. Kwŏn is likely to have received a copy of Chen Hao's commentaries from Chinese scholars he met in Beijing on one of his trips to China (he made the first in 1389). Kwŏn expressed his views on all Five Classics in *Ogyŏng ch'ŏngyŏllok* 五經淺見錄 (Superficial Views on the Five Classics), but his *Yegi ch'ŏngŏllok* is the most extensive product of his prolonged inquiries on rituals. This massive work in 26 *kwŏn* 卷 reproduces first the original *Liji* text, then adds Chen Hao's comments and, at the end, Kwŏn's editorial notes, marked by the mention "Kwŏn *an*" 權按. Kwŏn was often critical of Chen's textual rearrangements and suggested corrections of Chen's errors. In the early chapters Kwŏn's notes were quite extensive, but later, perhaps as he began to feel that his time was running out, they became considerably shorter. His commentaries seem to have been less concerned with initiating a new discourse on rites than with producing a correct text.⁷

- 8 Kwŏn Kŭn submitted the *Yegi ch'ŏngyŏllok* to King T'aejong 太宗 in 1406. The king appreciated the work so much that one year later, in 1407, he ordered its printing with movable type.⁸ Kwŏn's colleague, Ha Yun 河崙 (1347–1416), wrote in his preface that "the ritual classics (*yegyŏng* 禮經) are the great records through which the Sage [Confucius] established his teachings; they are pertinent to the everyday application of the human imperatives."⁹ Because the 1407 edition of the *Yegi* was limited to a few copies, Kwŏn's son, Kwŏn To 權滔 (n.d.), arranged for a second printing in 1418 that reportedly found wide distribution. The fact that only Kwŏn's *Yegi ch'ŏngyŏllok* is preserved in printed form is likely to be due to the circumstance that his notes on the other four classics were apparently less extensive and existed only as handwritten manuscripts which were eventually scattered and lost. After *Yegi*'s printing blocks were destroyed by fire, a third printing took place in 1705.¹⁰
- 9 Kwŏn's *Yegi* and *Iphak tosŏl*, praised as the "supportive wings of the sacred canon" (*uik sŏnggyŏng* 羽翼聖經), became key texts in early Chosŏn. While the *Iphak tosŏl* was intended to be an introductory text to Neo-Confucian thought for neophytes and as such became instructional material also for the king, the *Yegi* was often consulted as a ritual handbook during legislative processes in the early years of the dynasty. However, the demanding intellectual level of both works may have somewhat diminished their didactic value. Even Kwŏn Kŭn was ready to recommend the more practice-oriented *Xiaoxue* 小學 (*Elementary Learning*)¹¹ for familiarising the beginner with moral values and social leadership.¹² Likewise, he annotated the *Zhuzi Jiali* 朱子家禮 (Domestic Rites of Zhu Xi) in a shorter work entitled *Sangjŏl karye* 詳節家禮 (*Jiali* in Detailed Steps), that became required reading for lower-level officials to pass the civil service examinations in 1403.¹³ Although for practical reasons these shorter and more manageable texts may eventually have replaced Kwŏn's two philosophical works as instructional materials, they testify to the general intense search for ways to penetrate the wisdom of Neo-Confucian theory and practice and translate them into restorative legislation.
- 10 Before turning to the process of how Chinese canonical sources such as the *Liji* were used as guidebooks for renovating state and society, it is necessary to briefly sketch Korea's pre-Confucian society.

Fig. 1.



Iphak tosöl, Kwŏn Kun, 1352-1404 - p. 61.

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Korea's pre-Confucian past

- 11 Prior to the advent of Neo-Confucianism at the end of the fourteenth century Korean (elite) society¹⁴ was organised on the basis of *bilaterally* structured descent groups (that is, descent was traced through both male and female links). Such a descent group, which could be large and segmented in several branches, was a collectivity of kin focused on common ancestry. Ancestral empowerment formed the sociopolitical foundation of the elite, and elite status was consequently determined not legally but *socially*. A man needed impeccable bilateral descent credentials in order to claim access to top ranks in state and society. In other words: the *social*, that is birth and descent, determined the degree to which a man could hold *political* office.
- 12 During the Koryŏ period, a kinship group was inclusive: all members, male and female, of the same generation enjoyed equal rights and duties. Fraternal equality was an important condition for generational cohesion. Succession was flexible and non-linear. If there was no son, collaterals and even non-agnates could function as substitute heirs. Although the state tried to institute lineal succession rules for the transfer of prebendal land rights bestowed on government officials, Chinese-inspired linearity was in conflict with native bilateral tradition. The law in Korea therefore had to include non-agnatic grandsons among possible heirs. While succession to state benefits was state-controlled, the state had no power over the inheritance of private property. Its transmission from one generation to the next followed its own customary path: all of an owner's heirs, male and female, could expect a share of the "patrimonial land" –land accumulated over generations. Brothers and sisters thus were co-heirs in a double

sense: they each inherited a share of the patrimony, consisting of paternal and maternal portions, and, under certain circumstances, could expect to inherit from one another. Such expectations must have motivated siblings to hold together as long as possible, as documented by extant household registers.

- 13 Equal inheritance led to *marriage patterns* that did not necessarily disrupt a common household. On the contrary, uxorilocal marriages were common so that a sister did not inevitably leave the household upon marriage; if she died without offspring, her share was not allowed to pass into the hands of affines and was demanded back by her kin. As a member of his wife's household, an in-marrying man had for himself usufructuary rights over his spouse's property and also established his children as potential heirs of her group. At the beginning of the dynasty (late tenth and eleventh centuries), when times were unsettled, consanguineous marriages (for example between patrilateral and matrilateral cousins or even among siblings with different mothers) were widespread for keeping an estate intact.
- 14 Another specific aspect of Koryŏ marriages was the fact that a husband could have several wives ("visiting husband"), apparently all of more or less equal status.¹⁵ This was possible because these wives were economically independent. Since the wives often continued to live in their native households in which they were co-heirs, they did not depend on their husbands for their upkeep. The impartial treatment of a man's plural wives was decisive for their children: all were their father's rightful heirs and thus could also expect to inherit equal shares of his property.
- 15 Koryŏ was Korea's Buddhist age. Buddhism permeated every facet of social and religious life, in particular *mourning* and *funerals*. Buddhist temples and monasteries flourished because they were lavishly supported by the royal house and the elite. The most intimate rituals, especially those connected with death, were entrusted to the monks' care. Although the kings of early Koryŏ intended to give their dynasty the trappings of a civilised state, and consequently tried to introduce the Chinese mourning system (*wufu* 五服) as practised in Tang China, these rules were ill suited to native custom. According to ritual prescriptions, for instance, the mourning period for the mother had to be reduced while the father was still alive. With the woman's strong position within Koryŏ society, such a rule was ignored, and both the father and the mother were mourned for the mandatory three years. The Koryŏ adaptation of Tang law also had to take into account that a man could have several wives and thus different sets of parents-in-law: for each one he was granted leave of absence from office to fulfil his filial mourning duties. Most significant, however, is the fact that there is no mention of any ritual responsibilities of the wife toward her husband's kin. This is an important indication that the wife was typically not recognised as a full-fledged member of her husband's family and treated as an outsider.
- 16 Funeral rituals were profoundly influenced by Buddhist traditions. Evidence suggests that even elite officeholders, who were most under pressure to adopt Confucian culture, saw the deeper meaning of their existence in Buddhist terms and often awaited the end of their life in Buddhist temples. For this reason, cremation was a common way of disposing of the corpse. Furthermore, the cremated remains were often deposited in a Buddhist temple until they were finally buried.
- 17 In short, a Koryŏ elite man was foremost a member of an ancestor-focused descent group and acquired his social status from bilateral descent criteria. Thus, thinking cognatically, he could claim certain benefits or privileges on the basis of either a

patrilineal or matrilineal ancestor's prestige. He enjoyed equal status with his siblings, regardless of gender, and the sibling bond often stood in opposition to the conjugal bond. Siblings could be easily replaced by cousins, and cousins of either patrilineal or matrilineal extraction were marriageable. Attempts to adopt, according to Chinese law, a fixed line of succession for certain functions clashed with native laterality, as succession lines could run vertically as well as sideways, even crossing sex and generational boundaries. Bilateral kindred played a prime role in a man's life, and it was from this pool of consanguines that he chose his partners and allies in life –often even his wife. Clearly, the social organisation of Koryŏ society ran counter to the strictly patrilineal patterns laid down in the Chinese classics.¹⁶

The Challenge of Reform

- 18 When the late Koryŏ Neo-Confucians envisaged the founding of a new dynasty on the precepts they had discovered in China's classical literature, they had to deal with very complex societal and religious circumstances. They were surrounded by Buddhist believers and were themselves deeply imbued with that religious tradition. As such, they attempted to renovate a society of which they themselves were part. Yet, they diagnosed as the greatest evils of their time the grasp of power by non-elite elements, corruption, as well as moral and religious degeneration. The establishment of a new dynasty was therefore a moral and intellectual venture for which they believed they possessed the necessary authority as the interpreters of the Chinese classics that depicted the “ancient institutions” (*koje* 古制) created by the Chinese sage kings, Yao 堯 and Shun 舜. Moreover, in their view the adoption of the Chinese institutions was not an arbitrary measure to restore law and order because they were convinced that they already possessed a historical link to Chinese antiquity through Kija 箕子 (Chin. Qizi), the second outstanding ruler of ancient Korea,¹⁷ who had connected Korea to the civilised, that is, the Chinese world. This conviction provided them with an optimistic spirit to tackle the monumental task of transforming Koryŏ society into a renovated society on Confucian premises.¹⁸
- 19 The legislative process that laid the legal basis for the creation of a Confucian-style patrilineal society is illustrated below by considering first the development of the ancestral cult and the emergence of agnation and second, the consequences for women and the marriage institution.

The Introduction of the Lineal Principle and Ancestor Worship

- 20 It has long been an accepted view that ancestor worship is a religious domain in which kinship relations are indispensable. This is clear in the Neo-Confucians' strategy to make agnatic lineal descent groups the basic element of their socio-religious theory. In the thirteenth chapter of the *Liji*, “Sangfu xiaoji” 喪服小記 (“Record of Smaller Matters in the Dress of Mourning”), Zhu Xi and Cheng Yi found the “ideal type” of the agnatic descent group. This text laid out the differentiation between superordinate (Chin. *taizong*; Kor. *taejong* 大宗) and subordinate (Chin. *xiaozong*; Kor. *sojong* 小宗) descent lines within a descent group. The former was to become the socio-ritual backbone of

the descent group, headed by the eldest son who functioned as the ritual heir. The latter were headed by his younger brother(s) who did not have specific ritual obligations. The religious and social preeminence of the eldest son of the main line (Chin. *zongsun*; Kor. *chongson* 宗孫) was determined genealogically and therefore was inviolable and unchallengeable. Zhu Xi made this definition of the “agnatic principle” (Chin. *zongfa*; Kor. *chongpöp* 宗法) the fundamental concept of his *Jiali*. Without agnatic law, the Song thinkers believed, a descent group would disintegrate at the death of the lineal heir, and his line would therefore not be transmitted to the next generation. With the agnatic law established, the high officials of the land would preserve their houses, develop loyalty and righteousness, and make the state’s foundation firm. In short, the agnatic principle was not merely a device for sorting out a descent group; it was also an instrument for stabilising the sociopolitical foundation of the state.¹⁹

- 21 By consulting the Chinese classics, the early Chosŏn legislators gained the conviction that the Confucian sociopolitical ideology would restore the purportedly corrupt social and economic system of late Koryŏ and establish the “natural order” of Chinese antiquity as the new moral order of Chosŏn. The implementation of this new ideology, though on the surface deceptively simple, in reality introduced a completely new rule book of ritual thinking and practices. This necessitated fundamental changes in the social structure. Although the dynastic ideologues clearly underestimated the difficulties of implanting a lineal-agnatic system in their native bilateral society as well as the degree of resistance their new legislative measures would provoke, they did recognise early on that ancestor worship was a crucial ritual practice for inculcating agnatic consciousness and moulding a lineal society. The ritualist Cho Chun, who clearly understood the pivotal value of ancestor worship, demanded, as a first measure, that the government order the establishment of ancestral shrines (Chin. *citang*; Kor. *sadang* 祠堂). The first month of 1402 was given as deadline to comply. The liturgy was spelled out in *Liji*’s “Sangfu xiaoji”²⁰ and condensed in the *Jiali*. Ignorance and resistance were, however, widespread, and most officials in the capital –the principal target of this legislation– ignored the deadline, which had to be repeatedly extended. Ancestral shrines were thus rarely built in the first half of the fifteenth century.
- 22 By making allowances for the hierarchical structure of Korean society, Cho Chun introduced complications into the law when he graded the sacrificial obligations toward the ancestors on the basis of office-holding. A law to this effect, already enacted in 1390, ruled that the highest-ranked officials had to conduct rites for three generations of ancestral antecedents, while lower-ranked officials had a reduced programme. This rule, repeated in the new dynasty’s first law code, clearly deviated from the prescriptions displayed in the *Liji* and *Jiali*. Besides, by making ancestral obligations a matter of prestige, it gave rise to numerous disputes. How, for instance, should the ritual obligations be distributed among brothers who held offices of different ranks? As long as the most senior brother, who was the ritual heir (*chongson*), held a high enough office to continue the ancestral rites in the same manner as his father had done, the transfer of ritual obligations was clear. But if a younger brother attained a position higher in rank than his older brother, fraternal conflict over ritual rights was inevitable; this threatened to blur the clear delineation of superordinate and subordinate descent lines. Evidence for the inviolability of the eldest son’s ritual rights was sought in the *Liji*, but the chapter “The Questions of Zengzi [to Confucius]” (Zengzi wen 曾子問), which, according to Kwŏn Kŭn, “treats what is not ordinary and therefore

is difficult to understand except for a sage [i.e., Confucius],”²¹ provided an ambivalent solution: if the eldest son is too poor to build a shrine, his more affluent younger brother is permitted to conduct ancestral rites temporarily, but under no circumstance is he allowed to deprive his elder brother of his ritual prerogatives.²² Clearly, traditional perseverance of prestige and social prerogatives hindered the unequivocal acceptance of the agnatic rule that put the eldest son in exclusive charge of the ancestral rites.

Linearity and Women

- 23 Emphasis on a clearly defined main descent line gave rise to equally difficult problems when the several wives of an early-Chosŏn elite man might have needed to be classified. Only one wife, the primary wife, could after all bear the legitimate lineal heir to the main line, a fact that degraded other wives to secondary status. While Koryŏ wives seem to have had similar social standing, in Chosŏn, then, the ranking of wives, legislated in 1413, introduced sharp social differentiations: while the primary wife henceforth had to belong to the elite in order to pass elite status on to her offspring, secondary wives were chosen from commoner or even slave background. The offspring of such minor unions were regarded as “illegitimate” or secondary and consequently suffered various forms of discrimination.
- 24 In short, although *descent* was henceforth reckoned exclusively through the patriline, i.e., the male descent line, *status* ascription continued to be determined bilaterally. Both parents of a man had to belong to a certified elite descent group for him to be considered a genuine member of elite society and a suitable servant of the state. This unique combination of patrilineality and bilaterality was expressed in the distinctively Korean formula of the “four ancestors” (*sajo* 四祖), which included a man’s three lineal agnatic ascendants and his *matrilateral* grandfather. Because secondary wives were perceived as lacking such social qualifications, their sons (Chin. *shuzi*; Kor. *sŏja* 庶子) were excluded from *bona fide* membership of their elite father’s descent group: as minor heirs they were not only barred from domestic ancestral rites but also disqualified from sitting the civil service examinations and, by extension, from political participation. Clearly, Confucian agnation and linearity led in Korea to discrimination against many women and their offspring –in contrast to Chinese tradition– and introduced strain and conflict into the descent group.
- 25 The legislators of early Chosŏn found it hard to define a primary wife’s proper position in a Confucian society. In the early days of the dynasty, profiting from the weak lineal consciousness and from women’s customary strong standing in domestic affairs, a primary wife played a limited role in ancestral rites and, after the death of her husband, could even succeed, though temporarily, to the ritual heirship of the latter’s line and designate his ritual heir. These were extraordinary privileges that led to severe tension among the descent group’s male members. Called “eldest daughter-in-law” (Chin. *zongfu*; Kor. *chongbu* 宗婦), a widow thus often delayed, for economic reasons, the choice of a male successor and, more seriously, clashed with her late husband’s younger brothers who, according to traditional fraternal equality, disputed her privileges and demanded ritual heirship. With the passage of time, however, lineal awareness gained strength, and the *chongbu*’s privileged role in ritual affairs, which hindered the successful implementation of the lineal principle, came under increasing

scrutiny. It was gradually curtailed, and later, in the mid-eighteenth century, completely abrogated. Nevertheless, after her death the widow was enshrined beside her late husband in the ancestral hall and thereby received the ultimate recognition of her status.²³

- 26 Confucian ancestor worship largely remained the privilege of the elite according to the dictum of the *Liji* that “rituals do not go down to the commoners.”²⁴ Although the ritual literature explaining the minutest details of the ritual process grew vast with time, the liturgies were never uniform, and a descent group might even pride itself on its own interpretation of ritual precepts.

Marriage Rules and Wedding Rites

- 27 As mentioned earlier, the classification of wives, introduced in 1413, demanded the singling out of one wife. This led to tension in the inner quarters because it went against tradition, and its consequences for the various wives and their respective sons were grave. Yet, the ranking of wives was intimately connected with clarifying social status and thus fixing the social boundaries of elite society.
- 28 During Koryŏ, marriages with close cognates had been customary. Although unions with patrilineal kin were, on the basis of Tang law, gradually outlawed, those with matrilineal relatives remained largely unaffected until the end of the dynasty. Another characteristic of Koryŏ was uxorilocal marriage with the husband moving, at least temporarily, into his wife’s house. These and other Koryŏ traditions hindered the timely introduction of agnation into Chosŏn society. The early Neo-Confucian legislators therefore demanded a rigorous reform of the marriage institution.
- 29 According to the *Liji*, “the ceremony of marriage is intended to be a bond of love between surnames, with a view, in its retrospective character, to securing the services in the ancestral temple, and in its prospective character, to securing the continuance of the family line.”²⁵ Marriage thus was to guarantee uninterrupted continuation of the descent group in two directions, taking the living as the starting point –toward the dead and toward the unborn.
- 30 Based on this insight, intermarriage between close kin was henceforth prohibited so that Confucian descent groups gradually became exogamous. This development was, however, very slow because the Confucian model not only went against sentimental values, but also raised economic problems since daughters had customarily shared land and other properties with their brothers. Moreover, during Koryŏ descent groups had not been clearly differentiated as the great familiarity with the mother’s relatives blurred kinship boundaries and led to marriages with matrilineal cousins. A law of 1471 legislated the immediate drawing of a clear line between marriageable and unmarried matrilineal kin, and shortly afterward an edict prohibited marriage within the radius of second cousins. By the end of the fifteenth century descent-group exogamy was no longer disputed, and marriage came to be regarded as an important way of establishing affinal relations with powerful descent groups. To the regret of Confucian purists, however, economic and political rather than moral criteria were then often critical for tying affinal ties.²⁶
- 31 No native ceremonial rite in Chosŏn Korea more persistently resisted Confucianisation than the wedding rite. The Confucian wedding ceremony, which found its permanent

form in the *Jiali*, was based on the *Liji* and the *Yili* and consisted of the so-called “six rites” –the six steps of the wedding procedure. The climax of the Confucian ceremony was the rite during which the bridegroom personally inducted the bride into his own home where the exchange of the nuptial cup took place. The main stumbling block for this scenario was the Korean custom of uxori-local marriage, which prevailed during Koryŏ and survived far into the new dynasty. The Confucian model demanded a reversal of the Korean custom so that the bride would be transferred to the bridegroom’s house to become a member of his descent group. Although the legislators were aware of the inertia of tradition and the practical difficulties of ritual innovation, they pressed ahead to make Zhu Xi’s *Jiali* the etiquette of the elite. No Confucian-style wedding among the elite is, however, reported during the fifteenth century, and the elite essentially maintained native tradition. Accordingly, the ritual conjoining of the bridal couple took place, contrary to Confucian prescription, in the bride’s house, thereby preserving the uxori-local tradition. After the ceremony, the groom stayed for three days and then left for home to visit again later. It was often after many years had passed that the bride entered the groom’s house and paid respect first to the groom’s parents and later to his ancestors. The presentation to the ancestors was the final rite of the wedding and confirmed the bride as a full member of her husband’s descent group.²⁷

- 32 Although the Korean wedding ceremony incorporated certain features of the Confucian ceremony, in essence it did not entail the Confucianisation of an indigenous custom, but rather the indigenisation of Confucian elements. Indeed, the locus of the wedding ceremony remained until recent times the wife’s home, validating the bride’s social status by evidencing her father’s elite background.

The Rise of Patriline in Korea

- 33 A prime result of Korea’s Confucianisation was the gradual development of patrilineages from the seventeenth century on. Zhu Xi’s *Jiali* provided the model for clearly structured, exclusive groups of agnates. The changing sociopolitical conditions, in particular the shortage of land, were additionally responsible for creating the conditions in which the narrowing of kin boundaries was a *sine qua non* of the elite’s social and economic survival. Indeed, Zhu’s paradigm, built on the domestic cult of near agnatic ancestors, offered an organisational framework for contracting kin boundaries to lineal descendants and keeping the land together with corporate ancestral trusts.
- 34 In the course of the sixteenth century, a small minority of educated elite leaders began to peruse the *Jiali* for their ritual performances. They recognised the pivotal role of the eldest son in his position as ritual heir (*chongson*) and bolstered his standing in the ancestral cult with special economic allowances. The Confucian emphasis on the senior line of descent as the central element of lineage ideology gained ever greater acceptance and was expedited by economic considerations. Because partible inheritance of land not only threatened the economic standing of the landed elite, the consolidation of land in corporately held lineage trusts, sanctioned by the ancestral cult, became a necessity for sustaining elite livelihood and social prestige. According to Zhu Xi, one fifth of the inheritable wealth was to be set aside for ancestor worship, and with time this proportion grew to the extent that most land was marked as “ancestral” and put into a corporately held trust. The eldest son’s elevation to primogeniture

heirship resulted in the disinheritance of his sisters and also decreased the inheritance portions of his younger brothers.

- 35 The Confucian-induced shift to primogeniture was a momentous event in the history of Korean descent groups. Because it violated traditional fraternal equality, it created intralineage conflicts: the younger sons saw themselves excluded from both ritual as well as economic benefits and consequently often resisted the introduction of Confucian-style ritualism. It is therefore likely that primogeniture would never have materialised if it had not been for the concomitant development of a more broadly conceived worshipping group called *munjung* 門中.²⁸ While the “ritual lineage” (Chin. *zongzu*; Kor. *chongjok* 宗族) grouped agnatic kinsmen in front of the domestic shrine according to fixed genealogical relationships, the *munjung* involved and benefited to an equal degree all agnatic male descendants of a chosen focal ancestor – usually an outstanding forbear no longer worshipped in the ancestral shrine – whose grave became the focus of their worship and the core of an eventually accrued landed trust. *Munjung* was uncanonical and had contractual traits – it dissolved when its members dispersed. While the ritual lineage, bound to a particular locality, emphasised vertical kin relationships dictated by the Confucian concept of lineal descent and thus embraced a rather small number of kinsmen, *munjung*, in contrast, satisfied horizontal aspects of kinship reminiscent of the native tradition of fraternal equality and thus was able to recruit large memberships. In the course of time, *munjung* grew into formidable socio-economic entities that acted, if necessary, as the ritual line’s protective umbrella and also represented the latter toward the outside world. In short, these two entities – the “religious lineage” and the *munjung* – reinforced each other and formed the mature lineage system that emerged in late Chosŏn.²⁹

Classic Controversies in Late Chosŏn

- 36 While the *Liji* was an inspirational source for remodelling Koryŏ’s bilateral society into a lineal society at the beginning of Chosŏn, it continued to be studied as one of the Chinese classics long after the Confucian transformation had become social reality. By the seventeenth century, “right learning” was defined as faithful adherence to the Way as spelled out by Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi. Indeed, the veneration of Zhu Xi went so far as to regard him as the only arbiter of truth. This inflexible and uncompromising approach was sustained by those in power and led to sharp divisions among intellectuals along factional lines. Anyone who dared to deviate from Zhu Xi’s thought was branded as heterodox (Chin. *yiduan*; Kor. *idan* 異端). Yet, there were a few scholars who questioned the “blind” following of Zhu Xi and strove to come to their own personal understanding of classical wisdom. “How is it that Zhu Xi alone knew the profound meaning of the classics and their commentaries, and we do not?”, they asked.
- 37 One of the notorious challengers of the right way was Ch’oe Sŏkchŏng 崔錫鼎 (1648–1715) who, as a high government official, pursued scholarly interests and, among other works, authored annotations to the *Liji*, the *Yegi yup’yŏn* 禮記類編 (Classifications of the *Liji*). Ch’oe divided the contents of the *Liji* into three major categories: “rites of the domestic realm” (Chin. *jiali*; Kor. *karye* 家禮); “state rites” (Chin. *bangguo li*; Kor. *panggungnye* 邦國禮); and “scholarly rites” (Chin. *xueli*; Kor. *hangnye* 學禮). The latter comprised the *Daxue*, the *Zhongyong*, and additional parts on rites, music, learning, and moral behaviour. Altogether the *Yup’yŏn* was made up of fifty sections (*p’yŏn* 編). Ch’oe

wrote that he chose this arrangement because Zhu Xi's commentaries and later Ming emendations were too complex and detailed for the beginner to grasp the work's essentials. Upon Ch'oe's initiative, the *Yup'yŏn* was printed and even used to teach the king. Ch'oe wrote that, although he had scrupulously followed Zhu Xi as his model, he had "corrected some mistakes and discussed some doubtful points." It took him some ten years to finish this work.

- 38 Later evidence suggests that Ch'oe's "emendations" and "corrections" were far more incisive than Ch'oe had admitted, and some years passed before he was accused of having intended with his work to upstage Zhu Xi, in particular by restoring the *Daxue* and the *Zhongyong* to their original (that is, pre-Zhu Xi) textual sequence. Although the king tried to shield Ch'oe from further accusers, and Ch'oe himself wrote a lengthy memorial defending his work, pressure on Ch'oe grew. He handed in his resignation, but it was not accepted. An accuser argued that the *Yegi yup'yŏn* had poisoned the scholarly atmosphere and excited Confucian opinion. Scathing attacks kept coming in even from the provinces, and some hotheaded students in the capital went as far as to demand the destruction of the *Yegi yup'yŏn*'s printing blocks and all printed copies. Despite the king's continued support for him, Ch'oe, who was under increasing fire, begged once more for relief from office, this time by citing illness. This was at last granted, and Ch'oe retired to the countryside. Clearly, the turmoil around Ch'oe was no longer a purely scholarly affair. It had turned into a political vendetta. The king himself finally felt the pressure of "public opinion," and in the spring of 1710 he stripped Ch'oe of his patent of office and had him expelled from the capital. This dramatic act was topped with a bonfire in which the printing blocks of the *Yegi yup'yŏn* and all the printed copies were reduced to ashes. This was the only book burning in Chosŏn.
- 39 Ch'oe Sŏkchŏng's case, and a few similar "deviations" from classical scholarship, epitomises the centrality of the Chinese classics, in particular of the *Liji*, in the life of the Korean Confucians. Ch'oe stood clearly at intellectual crossroads. On the one hand, he still subscribed to the Song Neo-Confucianism of Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi, but, on the other hand, he was unwilling to endorse the holistic and absolute admiration of Zhu Xi-centred Neo-Confucianism. He thus anticipated scholarly trends in the eighteenth century, when obtaining an understanding of the classics through one's own efforts presaged the notion of "genuine experience" as an important tool of classical scholarship.³⁰

Concluding Remarks

- 40 This article has aimed to show that the ancient Chinese ritual canons had a profound impact on the elite's life in Korea. The ritual canons, foremost among them the *Liji*, inspired the early Confucian scholars to found a new dynasty on Confucian premises. Critical in promoting this process was the ancestral cult as detailed in the ritual classics and concisely summarised in Zhu Xi's *Jiali*. Ancestral worship translated agnation from an ideological postulate into a lived reality. It clarified the lines of descent and also marked kinship boundaries. It fostered among the agnates rallied in front of the ancestral shrine consciousness of common descent and solidarity. Ancestral rites thus introduced a kind of ideological corporateness that functioned as the prime mover in the formation of patrilineal descent groups in Chosŏn Korea. This patrilineal contraction of the Koryŏ descent group led to the institution of primogeniture – a

feature that elevated the eldest son as the ritual heir above his brothers and thus laid greater emphasis on the continuation of the main descent line than that of collateral lines. This process, initiated during the first century of Chosŏn (fifteenth century), climaxed in the late seventeenth century with the building of patrilineal lineages. These were much more rigidly structured according to the ancient models than their counterparts in China, where primogeniture was practically unknown.

- 41 Although the Confucianisation of Korea was a unique socio-religious engineering feat that gave Korean society the reputation of being the most ritualised society in East Asia, its limitations should not be overlooked. Because Korean society remained a descent-based, hierarchical society with a long bilateral tradition, in certain aspects it did resist complete conformity to ancient rites and Zhu Xi's prescriptions. While Chinese canonical patterns were minutely followed in key rituals, particularly in the ancestral cult, the elite's status consciousness prevented the change of the wedding ceremony's locus to the groom's home.
- 42 In sum, patrilineality was the striking result of Korea's Confucianisation, but native bilaterality remained a very persistent social feature. Indeed, the combination of adopted patrilineality and native bilaterality typifies the socio-religious distinctiveness that set Chosŏn dynasty society clearly apart from Ming and Qing China.

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FOOTNOTES

1. For the details of the transition from Koryŏ to Chosŏn, see Deuchler 2015, 39–59.
2. For a detailed discussion of the three rites canons, see Nylan 2001, 168–181.
3. For a content overview, see Nylan 2001, 185–188.
4. A brief mention of Chen Hao may be found in Legge 1885, Preface xii. Another edition of the *Liji*, *Liji jishuo daquan* 禮記集說大全 (Great Compendium of the Collected Interpretations on the *Liji*), used in early Chosŏn, was by the Ming scholar Hu Guang 胡廣 (1370–1418). Regarding Zhu Xi's editorial work on the *Liji*, see the contribution by Roger Darrobers in the present volume.
5. The diagram can be consulted in the following digitalized document: <https://archive.org/details/iphaktoso008800/page/n60/mode/2up?ref=ol&view=theater> (consulted on June 30, 2021).
6. For a discussion of this work, see Kalton 1985 & 1987.
7. For information on the *Yegi ch'ŏngyŏllok*, I consulted Kim Sŏk-kŭn, "Yegi ch'ŏngyŏllok kwa Sejong ūi kukka kyŏngyŏng" (accessed on internet); Pak 1964.
8. *T'aejong sillok*, 10: 19a; 12: 35b.
9. Deuchler 1992, 112.
10. The text available to me is a reprint of the 1705 edition in two volumes undertaken by a direct descendant of Kwŏn Kŭn in 1982. For details on the 1418 and 1705 editions, see the postscripts at the end of vol. 2, and *Chōsen tosho kaidai* (Annotated Bibliography of Korean Books) 1919, 13–14.
11. The *Elementary Learning* is said to have been the work of Zhu Xi's disciple, Liu Qingzhi 劉清之 (1139–1195).
12. *T'aejo sillok*, 13: 14b (1407). For extensive sources, see Deuchler 1992, 339–340.
13. *T'aejong sillok*, 5: 27 (1403).
14. In this study "society" means elite society. Korea's society was highly stratified into elite and non-elite. Very little is known about the organisation of the lower classes as only the elite left written records.
15. For the details, see Deuchler, 1992, 69.
16. For a detailed analysis of Koryŏ society, see Deuchler 1992, 29–87.
17. Kija (n.d.) was, according to the *Shujing* 書經 (*Classic of Documents*), enfeoffed by the founder of the Zhou dynasty, King Wu 武王 (accession ca. 1045 BC), as the feudal lord of the first polity in Korean history called Chosŏn. He is reported to have devised a penal code of eight laws –a feat usually regarded as a civilisatory measure.
18. The above is a condensation of the first two chapters of Deuchler 1992.
19. For the details, see Deuchler 1992, 129–134.
20. Kwŏn Kŭn found this chapter of the *Liji* rather confusing and tried to clarify its structure by his own short annotations.

21. Kwŏn 1982, vol. 1, 473.
22. For more details and the sources, see Deuchler 1992, 136–139.
23. For the history of legislation regarding *chongbu*, see Deuchler 1992, 157–161.
24. *Liji*, “Summary of the Rules of Propriety” (Quli, shang 曲禮, 上), in Legge 1885 vol. 1, 90.
25. Legge 1885, vol. 2, 428.
26. For the details, see Deuchler 1992, 236–243.
27. For the details, see Deuchler 1992, 246–257.
28. The origin of *munjung*, which means literally “within the doors” (of the household), is uncertain. I leave it untranslated.
29. For the details of lineage formation, see Deuchler 2015, 197–199 & 280–289.
30. Ch’oe Sŏk-chŏng’s case is discussed in detail in Deuchler 1999, 121–128. The *Chōsen tosho kaidai*, p. 14, lists two more works related to *Liji* scholarship: Kim Sang-hŏn’s 金尚憲 (1570–1652), *Tongnye such’o* 讀禮隨鈔 (Notes on Reading the Rites); and Kim Chae-ro’s 金在魯 (1682–1759), *Yegi poju* 禮記補註 (Supplement to the Commentaries on the *Liji*). Both Kim were high officials. Kim Sang-hŏn apparently consulted the *Yegi* during a mourning period, while Kim Chae-ro supplemented “omissions” in Chen Hao’s commentary.

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Rituals and Confucian academies in Korea: practical applications of the *Liji*

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- 1 This paper sets out to identify strategies and constellations in which Korean scholars, during the Chosŏn period (1392–1910), used and relied on the *Record of Rites* or *Liji* 禮記. This study is mainly focused on Confucian academies (Chin. *shuyuan*, Kor. *sŏwŏn* 書院) and how Korean literati on their grounds studied and used the ritual classic. As privately established Confucian educational institutions, the academies were, on the one hand, bound by tradition and canon, and as such followed, to a certain degree, the general patterns of *Liji* reception in the Korean environment. However, on the other hand, as closed communities, the academies offered the freedom to experiment within this tradition. Confucian academies since their very beginning were established in an attempt to create an ideal institution of Confucian education and as a contrast to the state-controlled school system. Economically independent and self-governing, academies strove to put ideals into practice –something that was, outside of their world, difficult to accomplish. The community of the academies, in this sense, was an effort to form a collective exclusively driven and governed by the Learning of the Way (Chin. *daoxue*, Kor. *tohak* 道學).¹ Academies thus form an interesting testing ground to anatomise how Korean literati transferred, adapted, altered, or ignored existing understandings of the *Liji*.
- 2 As a ground clearing work for such an analysis, this paper begins with a survey regarding the physical presence of the *Liji*, as well as other ritual texts, in the academies. How were volumes of the *Liji*, if at all, stored, acquired, produced, commentated, and made available to students in the academies? Once the answers to this question are given, the study will move along and inquire into the usage of the ritual text. What was the place of the *Liji* within the academic curriculum of the academies and how was it actually used during lectures? And lastly, it will clarify how the rituals of the academies were influenced by the *Liji* and other ritual texts.

The *Liji* in Korea and the Rise of Confucian Academies

- 3 Firstly, it is important to take a look at earlier perceptions of the *Liji* in Korea because they were not without influence on the later use of the classic within the academies. Secondly, as Korean literati sought to emulate a pure Cheng-Zhu *Daoxue* in their teachings, a short investigation into the history of the White Deer Grotto Academy (*Bailudong shuyuan* 白鹿洞書院) of Song times will be required. Indeed, this institution acted as a blueprint for the developing Korean academies. However, despite the best efforts to create precise Korean copies of the White Deer Grotto Academy by Korean scholars, concrete descriptions detailing the educational process in Zhu Xi's 朱熹 (1130–1200) academy were not available in Korea. Therefore, founders and headmasters of Korean academies had to introduce their own conceptions and structures, which were often informed by practices already established on the Korean peninsula.
- 4 As part of the Five Classics (Chin. *wujing*, Kor. *ogyŏng* 五經), the *Liji* always played a role in intellectual discourses of the Chosŏn dynasty. It was featured, as Martina Deuchler has shown, as a ritual guide in the Confucianisation of Korean society.² Yet the *Liji* was also always regarded with some doubts due to the opaque history of its arrangement. Besides, it was often derided as a mere explanation to the *Etiquette and Rites* (*Yili* 儀禮), an idea put forward by Zhu Xi.³ Zhu Xi's understanding of the *Liji*, as well as his promotion and rearrangement of two of its chapters, the *Great Learning* (*Daxue* 大學) and the *Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhongyong* 中庸) to be part of the *Four Books* (*Sishu* 四書), was very significant for many Korean Confucian literati, who were close adherents to the Cheng-Zhu school. An evaluation of the *Liji*, following Zhu Xi's understanding of it, can be found in one of the earliest works of the Chosŏn period written on the ritual text by the scholar Kwŏn Kŭn 權近 (1352–1409). In the preface to his *Superficial Views on the Record of Rites* (*Yegi ch'ŏn'gyŏllok* 禮記淺見錄), Kwŏn shared his general views of the work and the goal of his own engagement with it.

愚嘗學禮於牧隱之門，先生命之日，禮經亡於秦火，漢儒掇拾煨燼之餘，隨其所得先後而錄之，故其文多失次而不全，程朱表章庸學，又整頓其錯亂之簡，而他未之及，予嘗欲以尊卑之等，吉凶之辯，與夫通言之例，分門類聚，以便私觀而未就，爾宜勉之。

I in my ignorance studied ritual in the school of Mogŭn [Yi Saek] and the master instructed: “*The Classic of Rites*⁴ was burned by Qin. The Confucians of the Han gathered what remained from the ashes and then recorded it in the order they had obtained it. Therefore, much was in disorder and the text incomplete. Cheng and Zhu took the *Doctrine of the Mean* and the *Great Learning* chapters and rearranged and corrected them, but did not get to the other parts. I have already tried to determine what is superior and what inferior, to distinguish what is good and what bad, to give examples to the people and to collect categories in order to shape private views, but have failed. This is where you should strive.”⁵

- 5 Kwŏn Kŭn's preface reveals a selective understanding of the *Liji*. His teacher Yi Saek 李穡 (1328–1396) had called upon him to assess the value of the different parts of the classic. Accordingly, Kwŏn rearranged and supplemented his comments with those of Chen Hao 陳澔 (1260–1341) and completed his work in 1404.⁶ A few later intellectuals also continued to focus their scholarly efforts on the *Liji*, e.g., Ch'oe Sŏkchŏng 崔錫鼎 (1646–1715) and his controversial *Classifications of the Record of Rites* (*Yegi yup'yŏn* 禮記類

篇) of which only the two prefaces remain⁷ or Kim Chaero's 金在魯 (1682–1759) *Supplement Commentary on the Record of Rites* (*Yegi poju* 禮記補註).⁸

- 6 Yet their discussions of the *Liji* often dealt with royal rituals and directly involved the court, as well as the king himself. However, as part of the Confucian canon, the *Liji* was also used in educational institutions outside of the capital where the practical application of its tenets and status as “classic” met with the existing suspicion toward its arrangement and the accusation of containing spurious elements. It is therefore interesting to look at the usage of the *Liji* in Confucian academies, because these educational institutions often reflected the views of individual teachers in their teaching curricula. It can consequently provide an insight into the perceptions of the ritual classic in Korea.
- 7 The first Korean academy was founded in 1542 in the southern province of Kyöngsang. However, as an institution, Confucian academies were already known much earlier in Chosön as their proliferation in Ming China is mentioned and discussed in the *Veritable Records of the Chosön Dynasty* (*Chosön wangjo sillok* 朝鮮王朝實錄).⁹ When the number of Confucian academies on the Korean peninsula expanded from the late 15th century onwards, they became widely scattered and were exposed to various local influences. It is therefore beyond reason to assume that all of them exhibited the same institutional patterns and followed the same practices. Yet, claiming adherence to similar models, Korean academies still displayed surprising homogeneity concerning their ideological profile. Unlike their Ming contemporaries, which became forerunners of new intellectual trends or turned into proxy government schools,¹⁰ all Korean academies until the beginning of modern times observed the strict interpretation of Zhu Xi's teachings. This included above all his arrangement of the Four Books (the *Great Learning*, the *Doctrine of the Mean*, the *Analects* [*Lunyu* 論語] and the *Mencius* [*Mengzi* 孟子]) and Five Classics (*The Book of Odes* [*Shijing* 詩經], *the Book of Documents* [*Shujing* 書經], *the Book of change* [*Yijing* 易經], *the Record of Rites*, and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* [*Chunqiu* 春秋]). On a practical level, this resulted in the fact that the classical texts, in this order, were often the main part of the reading curricula of the academies and accordingly were included in the academy libraries.

Book Collection and Production

- 8 The Korean scholar Yulgok 栗谷, Yi I 李珣 (1536–1584) summarised the importance of books for the study of Confucian tenets as follows:

故入道莫先於窮理，窮理莫先乎讀書，以聖賢用心之迹及善惡之可效可戒者，皆在於書故也。

In entering the Way nothing is more important than the investigation of principles to the utmost, and in the investigation of principles to the utmost nothing is more important than reading books, because traces of how sages and worthies used their minds, what we should imitate and admonish ourselves concerning the good and the bad are all contained in books.¹¹

- 9 The collection and storage of books were the basis of all other activities for Confucian academies. However, they also often proved to be among the most difficult tasks. Four methods existed to stock the library of an academy. The first was to purchase volumes on the book market. This was severely limited for buyers in provincial areas, where

most academies were located. The second method was to print and publish books within the academy itself. Such an approach was often used to promote the writings of the patron sage of the academy and simultaneously the institution's reputation. This method was incredibly costly and often required the participation and backing of large and wealthy descent groups –something that not every academy could muster. Only a few Korean academies had the facilities required to produce woodblocks and print books. Therefore, a third method proved quite popular –the borrowing of books between different academies. Volumes were often circulated between academies, where they were copied by hand, in exchange for volumes not available in other academies. The fourth method was the donation of books by scholars from their private collections or, even more prestigiously, from the royal court as an official acknowledgment of the academy.¹²

- 10 The bestowal of royal books followed the model of the White Deer Grotto Academy which had received books from the Chinese court more than once. Most famously Zhu Xi requested, or rather demanded, several volumes for his academy from Emperor Xiaozong 孝宗 (r. 1162–1192).

然則複修此洞，蓋未足為煩。於是始議，即其故基，度為小屋二十餘間，教養生徒一二十人，節縮經營，今已了畢。但其敕額、官書，皆已燒毀散失，無復存者，不敢擅行標榜收置。輒味萬死具奏以聞，欲望聖府賜鑒察，追述太宗皇帝、真宗皇帝聖神遺意，特降救命，仍舊以白鹿洞書院為額，仍詔國子監，仰摹光堯壽聖賢憲天體道性仁誠德經武緯文太上皇帝御書石經，及印版本九經疏、論語、孟子等書，給賜本洞奉守看讀。

Now, this Grotto has been restored and there is no more trouble with space. Discussions now can start here at the old foundations, where the small cabin measures around twenty bays and ten to twenty students can be educated. The time of miserly administration is over. However, the bestowed name board and official books are all burned or scattered and no longer extant, yet I do not dare to take up action to obtain them myself. Risking even ten thousand deaths, I prepare this memorial to be heard, hoping your August wisdom sees fit to consider a bestowal, which follows the sacred will of Emperor Taizong and Emperor Zhenzong who handed down an imperial edict, to continue as of old to give a name board to the White Deer Grotto Academy. And order the Directorate of Education to copy the imperial stone-engraved classics like the long-living highest ruler, who embodies in his nature the humaneness, authenticity, and virtue to govern the country with might and intellect. Then together with printed version of the Nine Classics (*jiu jing* 九經), the *Analects*, the *Mencius* and others bestow them to this Grotto for safekeeping and study.¹³

- 11 After a few demands and responses going back and forth, Zhu Xi's audacity and persistence paid off. In 1181 the academy obtained a set of the classics from the collection of the Directorate of Education (*Guozijian* 國子監) in the capital. This set had been inscribed in stone under Emperor Gaozong 高宗 (r. 1127–1129) and included the *Book of change*, the *Book of Odes*, the *Book of Documents*, *Zuo Commentary to the Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Zuozhuan* 左傳), the *Analects*, the *Mencius*, and five individual chapters of the *Liji*.¹⁴ These were the *Great Learning*, the *Doctrine of the Mean*, the *Record of Learning* (*Xueji* 學記), the *Conduct of the Scholar* (*Ruxing* 儒行), and the *Explanations of the Classics* (*Jingjie* 經解), which altogether reflected the educational focus of both institutions –the directorate in the capital, and the academy in the countryside.¹⁵

- 12 The founder of the first Korean academy, the local magistrate Chu Sebung 周世鵬 (1495–1554), directly linked his newly founded institution to the White Deer Grotto Academy. This is obvious not only because he chose the name “White Cloud Grotto Academy” (Paegundong sowŏn 白雲洞書院) for it, but also because he makes it quite clear in his own writing.

於一邑，不得不任其責，遂竭心力，乃敢立其廟而架其院，置其田而藏其書，一依白鹿洞故事。

In this one county seat, I must assume responsibility and exert myself to the utmost. I have dared to set up this shrine and construct this academy; to supply it with paddy fields and to collect books for it; all in accord with the example of the White Deer Grotto Academy.¹⁶

- 13 Thanks to close contact with the local elites, Chu had obtained large endowments of land to finance the academies’ activities and purchased versions of the Four Books and Five Classics, the *Complete Writings of the Cheng Brothers* (*Er Cheng quanshu* 二程全書), the *Complete Writings of Master Zhu* (*Zhuzi quanshu* 朱子全書), the *Extended Meanings of the Great Learning* (*Daxue yanyi* 大學衍義), and the *Outlines and Details of the Comprehensive Mirror* (*Tongjian gangmu* 通鑑綱目).¹⁷ Already by 1544, two years after the founding of the academy, its inventory included the *Complete Record of Rites* (*Liji daquan* 禮記大全) in sixteen volumes, an imported Chinese print of the *Liji* in ten volumes, as well as the *Rites of the Zhou* (*Zhouli* 周禮) in seven volumes.¹⁸ Chu Sebung’s successor as local magistrate, the well-known T’oegyŏ 退溪, Yi Hwang 李滉 (1501–1570), carried on his endeavour. In 1549, he not only requested books, but also a royal charter for the academy from the court of King Myŏngjong 明宗 (r. 1545–1567). His request was granted and the academy was renamed “Sosu Academy” 紹修書院 a year later. It further received a large royal bequest of books including three sets of the Four Books and Five Classics, which all included versions of the *Liji*.¹⁹
- 14 T’oegyŏ had also taught his disciples in Tosan Library 陶山書堂, which after his death was transformed into Tosan Academy 陶山書院 and received a royal charter in 1575. An inventory of its book holdings compiled in 1956 shows the large number of volumes the academy accumulated till the 20th century. It included several versions of the *Record of Rites* and other texts concerned with ritual.²⁰ Most interestingly, the catalogue shows the many Korean vernacular editions (*ŏnhaebon* 諺解本) available for the students of the academy. Such vernacular versions were an important teaching tool for giving interpretations of classical texts to the students in an easily accessible way.²¹ However, while the Korean vernacular editions of the Four Books (and therefore of the two former *Liji* chapters *Great Learning* and *Doctrine of the Mean*), most of the Five Classics (the *Book of Chang*, the *Book of Documents* and the *Book of Odes*) and other important texts, e.g., the *Elementary Learning* (*Xiaoxue* 小學) were widely distributed, the two existing vernacular versions of the *Liji* were not part of most academy libraries.²² Especially the *Elementary Learning* contains many selected quotes from the *Liji* in its so-called “inner chapters” (*neipian* 內篇) and many *ŏnhae* versions of the work can be found in the academies.²³ Similar library holdings can be found in academies located in south-eastern Kyŏngsang Province, the hotbed of Korean academies, and in other provinces as well. A catalogue of Musŏng Academy 武城書院 in Chŏlla, printed in 1936, displays the same vernacular editions as in Tosan Academy. It also indicates that the library of the academy owned versions of the *Liji* in ten volumes and the *Rites of the Zhou* in ten volumes.²⁴

- 15 Tonam Academy 遜巖書院 in Ch'ungch'ōng province was considered a centre of ritual studies. It was founded in 1634 to honour the scholar Kim Changsaeng 金長生 (1548–1631), who was well known for his writings on ritual matters. Later the spirit tablets of his son Kim Chip 金集 (1574–1656) and his disciples Song Chun'gil 宋浚吉 (1606–1672) and Song Siyōl 宋時烈 (1607–1689), who had used their political power and reputation to gain a royal charter for the academy in 1660, were added to its shrine for sacrifices. When the academy was built around Kim Changsaeng's own Yangsōng Hall 養性堂, the name chosen for the new lecture hall was Ŭngdo Hall 凝道堂, a reference to a passage from the *Doctrine of the Mean*.²⁵ Such allusions to classical texts were quite common for the names of the academies or specific buildings and halls. Geomantic explanations for the auspiciousness of the landscape around Tonam Academy, and often other academies as well, were also drawn from classical texts, including the *Liji*.²⁶ Tonam Academy was well known for its extensive holding of wooden printing blocks stored on academy grounds. In the 18th century, it was especially famous for its prints of Kim Changsaeng's *Essentials of Funerary Rites* (*Sangnye piyo* 喪禮備要). However, the list of stored plates included in the records of the academy shows that, besides the *Complete Writings of Sagye* (*Sagye chōnsō* 沙溪全書) and the *Exposition of Family Rites* (*Karye chimnam* 家禮輯覽), both compiled by Kim Changsaeng, no plates connected to the *Liji* were held in the academy.²⁷ This supports the idea that academies mostly used their printing facilities to disseminate the writings of patron worthies in order to enhance their reputation and status.
- 16 This was similar in Oksan Academy 玉山書院 located in the south-eastern part of Kyōngsan province, which was also heavily involved in the production of books. Although it chiefly disseminated the works of Yi Ōnjōk 李彦迪 (1491–1553), who was worshipped in the shrine of the academy, it sometimes also printed volumes for the local government located in the nearby city of Kyōngju or other academies. Furthermore, the academy borrowed books from families involved with the administration of the academy.²⁸ Over time, Oksan Academy accumulated an impressive inventory of books, the most prized of which were the Royal book donations versions (*naesabon* 內賜本), presented to the academy by the royal court in 1577. They included two sets of the Four Books and Five Classics, the ninety-five volumes of the *Complete Works of Master Zhu*, one hundred and forty volumes of the *Conversations of Master Zhu Arranged Topically* (*Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類), and four volumes of the *Record of Outstanding Confucians* (*Yusōnnok* 儒先錄). Beside Oksan Academy, other academies that also received such valuable donations of the Five Classics from the court include Namgye Academy 南溪書院, P'iram Academy 筆巖書院, Tongnak Academy 東洛書院, Ŭiam Academy 義巖書院, Todong Academy 道東書院, and the above-mentioned Tosan Academy.²⁹ A closer look at the inventory of Todong Academy reveals that it was also gifted a version of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. The library records of this academy also show that, while the larger part of the academy's book holdings were literary collections (*munjip* 文集) of Korean scholars, the books that were most often borrowed by students were the Four Books and Five Classics.³⁰
- 17 Can a more general pattern of the *Liji* presence in the academies book collections be derived from such selective references? In spite of a few obstacles, through a survey of extant collections, old academy book catalogues, and various other sources (records of purchase, donations, rental lists, surveys of book matrices kept in the academies, records of printing, etc.) a general picture emerges. The predominant form of the

classic within the libraries was Hu Guang's 胡廣 (1369–1418) *Complete Record of Rites* (often referred to as *Liji jishuo daquan* 禮記集說大全) edition. This version is listed in most collections. Several academies also only kept Chen Hao's version of the *Liji*. Interestingly, only the inventory of P'iram Academy held the *Explanations to the Record of Rites* (*Liji jishuo* 禮記集說) with the commentary by Song scholar, Wei Shi 衛湜 (n.d.).³¹ What raises questions about the status of the ritual classic is the almost complete absence of any Korean commentaries. In comparison, the second ritual classic, the *Etiquette and Rites*, shows very similar patterns in its appearance. In the catalogues a large number of *Etiquette and Rites* editions can be found, mostly Zhu Xi's *Comprehensive Explanations of the Text and Commentaries of the Etiquette and Rites* (*Yili jingzhuan tongjie* 儀禮經傳通解) and the *Supplement to Comprehensive Explanations of the Text and Commentaries of the Etiquette and Rites* (*Yili jingzhuan tongjie xu* 儀禮經典通解續) by Huang Gan 黃幹 (1152–1221), but there is no secondary Korean literature related to this text.³² This picture contrasts with the general idea of academy communities being motivated and ruled by ritual. However, a glance at the volumes of the *Family rites* (*Jiali* 家禮) stored in academy collections can correct this view. The large presence of the *Family rites* in the collections of academies itself is already a remarkable feature, but one should put special emphasis on the high number of *Family rites* commentaries and explanations available in the academies and the fact that they were mostly composed by Korean authors. Stored texts include the *Exposition of Family Rites*, the *Examination of the Family Rites* (*Karye kojŭng* 家禮考證), the *Augmented Explanation of the Family Rites* (*Karye chŭnghae* 家禮增解), the *Vernacular Explanation of the Family Rites* (*Karye ōnhae* 家禮諺解), and also Qiu Jun's 邱浚 (1421–1495) *Ceremonial Usage of Master Wengong's* [i.e. Zhu Xi's] *Family Rites* (*Wengong jiali yijie* 文公家禮儀節). Even more frequent are Korean ritual compendia focused on the four rituals, or one of them in particular. These were also often published in the academies, e.g., the *Questions and Answers on the Four Rituals* (*Sarye mundap* 四禮問答), the *Explanations to the Four Rituals Compendia* (*Sarye ch'ansŏl* 四禮纂說), *Collected Essentials of the Four Rituals* (*Sarye chibyŏ* 四禮輯要), and the *Essentials of Funerary Rites*.

- 18 Generally speaking, it is sensible to assume that it was possible for students and teachers in most academies to gain access to the *Liji*. This surely changed at the end of the 17th century when a growing number of new academies started to focus less on educational matters than on ritual worship of associated worthies in their shrines.³³ Academies with an educational focus, however, either stored the *Liji* within their own library or were able to borrow it from other academies or even private collections. Furthermore, the presence of the Four Books and the Five Classics was a basic requirement for the operation of lectures in any academy, as access to them was as a main attraction for students seeking success in the civil service examinations. After all, academies needed students to continue and legitimise their own existence.

Study and lecture

- 19 First contact for students with the *Liji* as well as other ritual works already took place during early childhood education. Basic educational primers like the *Thousand Character Classic* (*Qianziwen* 千字文) or the native Korean *First Primer for Young Children* (*Tongmong sŏnsŭp* 童蒙先習) both incorporated quotations from or allusions to passages of the *Record of Rites* and the *Etiquette and Rites*. For the academies, more concerned with a

later stage of education, the claimed adherence to Song Dynasty models and Zhu Xi proved problematic. Besides Zhu Xi's relatively abstract *White Deer Grotto Academy Articles for Learning* (*Bailudong shuyuan jieshi* 白鹿洞書院提示) and quite a few proceedings of lectures in the academy or other institutions,³⁴ no concrete lecture or reading curriculum existed for the White Deer Grotto Academy.³⁵ Therefore, Korean scholars had to establish a proper curriculum from Zhu Xi's other writings, e.g., his *Reading Methods* (*Dushufa* 讀書法), as well as their personal experience and preference.

- 20 An insight into how Korean scholars designed their reading curricula can be gained from the study of the regulations drawn up for their academies. These normative texts defined the purpose of the academy and often explained the concrete steps on how to attain it. Such regulations were usually set up by a famous scholar for a particular academy and later used in other academies with slight variations. One such set of regulations that became widespread in the south-eastern area of the peninsula were T'oegye, Yi Hwang's study regulations written in 1559 for Isan Academy 伊山書院. In their first point, they state that:

諸生讀書，以四書五經爲本原，小學、家禮爲門戶。遵國家作養之方，守聖賢親切之訓，知萬善本具於我，信古道可踐於今，皆務爲躬行心得明體適用之學。其諸史子集，文章科舉之業，亦不可不爲之旁務博通。[] 常自激昂，莫令墜墮。自餘邪誕妖異淫辭之書，竝不得入院近眼，以亂道惑志。

For all students, the Four Books and the Five Classics should be studied as the fundamental basis, while the *Elementary Learning* and the *Family rites* should be studied as the entrance door. While observing the state policy of nurturing talent, they should uphold the meticulous teachings of the sages and worthies. Aware that we are endowed with all the goodness, we firmly believe that the ancient Way can be realised today. [Therefore,] everyone should do his utmost to comprehend in his mind and heart the essence and usefulness of the learning. While it is necessary to study various histories, philosophies, collective writings, literary works, and prose and poems and also to prepare for the civil service examinations, these should be studied for secondary importance. [...] One should constantly exert oneself lest one becomes indolent. Books that are depraved, insidious, or licentious are not allowed into the academy lest one's pursuit of the Way may be disturbed and one's determination may be confused.³⁶

- 21 Another academy tradition that is often juxtaposed with T'oegye's is that of Yulgok, Yi I, whose reading curriculum can be found in his treatise *Essential Principles for Expelling Youthful Ignorance* (*Kyöngmong yogyöl* 擊蒙要訣).³⁷ Yulgok also focused on the Four Books and Five Classics, but added a few other titles to his list of required reading, e.g., the *Reflections on Things at Hand* (*Jinsilu* 近思錄), Zhen Dexiu's 真德秀 (1178-1235) *Classic of the Mind* (*Xinjing* 心經), the *Complete Writings of the Cheng Brothers*, the *Complete Works of Master Zhu* and the *Conversations of Master Zhu Arranged Topically*, which, as mentioned above, was important for its statements about the *Liji*.³⁸
- 22 Standing in Yulgok's tradition was Yun Ponggu 尹鳳九 (1683-1767). Yun's reading curriculum for Nogang Academy 老江書院 mostly followed the sequence laid out by Yulgok, but added some other texts. His lecture plan gives some insights into how the books were actually supposed to be read during the lectures, which included guidance by a headmaster or chief lecturer in the academy.

所講冊子，依程朱成法，以小學四書，次第開講，以及五經，而間以家禮、心經、近思、節要、輯要等書。爲宜見講冊子，必自首卷首章始之，而未畢之前，不可以他書錯雜。每講訖，卽定後次所講之限，絕勿貪多。

For the books during the lectures, follow the method of the Cheng Brothers and Zhu Xi. Use the *Elementary Learning* and the Four Books in sequence for the lectures. Then continue on to the Five Classics, but in between use books like the *Family rites*, the *Classic of the Mind*, the *Reflections on Things at Hand*, *The Abbreviated Essence of Master Zhu Xi's Letters* ([*Chujasŏ*] *chŏryo* 朱子書節要),³⁹ the *Collected Essentials of Learning to Be a Sage* ([*Sŏnghak*] *chibyŏ* 聖學輯要)⁴⁰ etc. For the correct reading of the lecture books, one must start from the first line of the first volume and must not mix in other books before one is finished. At the end of every lecture, the amount of the next lecture must be promptly decided. Do not be greedy.⁴¹

- 23 The use of the *Family rites* is again of interest here. While the *Liji* was available to academies as part of the Five Classics, the editions of the *Family rites* stored in the academies suggest that it was the most important ritual guide for Korean scholars. Not only was it succinct enough to help promote Confucian rituals in local society, but it also did not carry any of the problematic background of the *Liji*, and was still understood as a comprehensive collection of the most important ritual principles. The following is also a view shared by Yun Ponggu.

儀禮周公所制，而禮之全書也。禮記則雜出於漢儒記聖人之論禮，朱子謂儀禮經也，禮記解也者是也。若不讀儀禮而先讀禮記，禮記許多說，果附着在何地。[...] 惟朱子家禮之書，酌古通今，簡而不略，詳而不繁，正好先此而知四禮之綱領節目，然後進乎禮記。

The *Etiquette and Rites* was created by the Duke of Zhou and is the complete book on ritual. The *Liji* got mixed together out of the sage's discourses on ritual by the Confucians of the Han. Master Zhu called the *Etiquette and Rites* the classic and the *Liji* the explanation. If one does not read the *Etiquette and Rites* and first reads the *Liji*, then there are many explanations in the *Liji*, but [one knows not] where they apply? [...] Only Master Zhu's *Family rites* deliberates the old for the present. It is brief but not neglectful, detailed but not profuse. First, know the four rituals and then advance to the *Liji*.⁴²

- 24 Yi Chae 李緯 (1680–1746), a contemporary of Yun Ponggu, went a step further. While former headmasters of Korean Confucian academies still had conceived the Four Books and Five Classics as a fixed unit in their curricula, later study regulations abandoned this tradition and broke the classics apart, showing preference for certain works. One such regulation was composed by Yi Chae for Simgok Academy 深谷書院 (in the capital area) in 1737. A ritual expert, Yi had written the ritual guide, *Handbook for the Four Rituals* (*Sarye p'yŏllam* 四禮便覽) based on Zhu Xi's *Family Rites* and extensively studied the *Conversations of Master Zhu Arranged Topically*. In his regulations, he drew up a clear reading curriculum for the students of his academy.

讀書次第，先小學次大學，兼或問，次論語次孟子次中庸次詩經次書經次易經，而心經、近思錄、家禮諸書則或先或後，循環讀過。

In the sequence of learning, first comes the *Elementary Learning*, then the *Great Learning*, together with the *Several Questions on the Great Learning* (*Daxue huowen* 大學或問). Next come in order the *Analects*, the *Mencius*, the *Doctrine of the Mean*, the *Book of Odes*, the *Book of Documents* and the *Book of change*. The *Classic of the Mind*, the *Reflections on Things at Hand* and the *Family rites* can be read before or after this. The sequence is then repeated.⁴³

- 25 Both and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* and the *Liji* –the texts with the least number of commentaries or vernacular versions available in the academies– were taken out of the reading requirements. The exclusion of these two texts in the study regulations by itself certainly does not suggest a bias against the *Liji*. The regulations of Simgok Academy were also used in Ch’ungnyōl Academy 忠烈書院, Togi Academy 道基書院 and, in a somewhat different form, in Koam Academy 考巖書院, which were all clustered around the capital. Yi Chae, after retiring from official posts, mostly taught students and held lectures at his Cold Spring Hermitage (Hanch’ōn chōngsa 寒泉精舍).⁴⁴ The lecture plan of this retreat included parts of and the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. However none of the ritual works were dwelt upon, which seems to follow Yi Chae’s general convictions about the three books.⁴⁵ In a letter written in 1742 to Kwōn Sōkkyu 權錫揆 (1689–1754), Yi briefly shared his views about the origin of the three ritual classics.

三代時禮樂，同列於六經，秦火之後，禮樂先壞，漢儒辛勤補緝，竟未成全書，所存惟三禮（周禮儀禮禮記）而已。[...] 後人論六經者，多以周禮代之，論語固亦入於十三經，而周禮之說似勝矣。如何如何。近日做何工夫。似此發問，猶是好消息，千萬勤勵，無一味懦弱也。

In the time of the Three Dynasties, the *Rites* and *Music* were both part of the Six Classics 六經. During the Qin burning of the books, the *Rites* und *Music* were the first to be destroyed. The Confucians of the Han toiled hard to mend them, but in the end could never complete the entire books, so what we have now are only the three texts (the *Rites of the Zhou*, *Etiquette and Rites*, and *Liji*) and that is all. [...] When later people spoke of the Six Classics, most of them used the *Rites of the Zhou* [instead of the *Classic of Music* (*Yuejing* 樂經)]. And even though the *Analects* also gained a secure place among the Thirteen Classics, they believed the teachings of the *Rites of the Zhou* to be superior. How could that be? How could it be? How to study nowadays then? To this question, the right answer is, to exert oneself a hundredfold and not to cowardly ignore one bit.⁴⁶

- 26 In this letter, it is remarkable that Yi Chae not only referred to the “complete” *Rites* classic that had existed before the burning of books. However, it is even more interesting that he also viewed the *Etiquette and Rites* as being reconstructed by Han Confucians. This characterisation was usually only ascribed to the *Liji* or the *Rites of the Zhou*. His comment is certainly reflected in the reading sequence of his academy regulations, but it also has to be read in accord with the context of his time. The end of the 17th and beginning of the 18th century in Korea was marked by intense factional and political strife, often carried out through debates and controversies over ritual. Especially the complaint about those that rate the *Rites of the Zhou* higher than the teachings of Confucius appears rather like a charge directed toward an opposing faction than toward the ritual texts’ place within the canon. However, the conception of all three ritual classics as being fragmentary and imperfect remnants of a greater work was not often as clearly expressed as in the above statement.
- 27 Regulatory texts of the academies have to be understood as ideal projections of educational procedures. They did not necessarily reflect the reality within the academies. Headmasters and invited lecturers of the academies often changed and, with them, the character of the institution changed as well. These factors certainly had an impact on the actual proceedings of lecture gatherings. It is, however, difficult to find actual recordings of the contents of such gatherings, especially those concerned

with the *Liji*. One exception is a lecture given by Yang Ūngsu 楊應秀 (1700–1767) on an important passage of the “Ceremonial Usage” (*Liyun* 禮運) chapter in the *Liji*. Yang Ūngsu was a disciple of Yi Chae and known as a very active lecturer on the classics, who also lectured in Koam and Musōng Academy.⁴⁷

問，篇題謂大同小康之說，非夫子之言，敢問何以知其不為夫子之言也。
 曰，太古之時，風氣醇朴渾厚。後世，風氣漸開，聖人隨世迭興，順乎風氣之宜，不先天而開人，各因時而立政，故帝王之教，自有詳畧之異，民俗亦有質文之殊，而道未嘗不同。彼大同小康之說，乃以帝王為異道，則其不為聖人之言，可知也。其論小康之道，又謂禮義以為紀云云，而繼之日，謀用是作而兵由此起，此其說尤不成道理也。舜之命契也，曰百姓不親，五品不遜，汝作司徒，敬敷五教，此非以禮義以為紀，以正君臣，以篤父子，以睦兄弟，以和夫婦之教乎。若以此為謀作兵起之由，則是五帝之道，亦未得為大同也。且五帝之世，亦有涿鹿之戰，有苗之征，則此亦為小康，而不可謂之大同乎，此不過不識時勢，苟為大言者之緒論也。禮記之書，大抵多出於漢儒之傳會，有不可盡信者也，觀於此等處，可見矣。

Question: The passage called “Grand Unity, Lesser Prosperity” is not by the Master [Confucius]. May I ask how we know this is not by the Master?

Answer: In remote antiquity, the common practices were simple and unsophisticated. In later generations they gradually widened. As the sages successively appeared in the world they followed the proper practices, did not start things for men before they were outwardly necessary, but instituted governmental measures according to the time.⁴⁸ Therefore the teachings of the ancient emperors and kings had large or small deviations and the customs of the people also lost in quality and were not in line with the Way. In the passage “Grand Unity, Lesser Prosperity,” emperors and kings deviating from the Way and not following the sayings of the sages, is clearly marked as the way of “Lesser Prosperity.” It is also said that the rules of propriety and of what is right were regarded as threads and so forth. Then it continues to say that “thus it is that selfish schemes and enterprises constantly came about and men took up arms.” This passage criticises not adhering to the Way. Shun appointed Xie, saying “the people have no compassion, the five relations are not respected, you, be my minister of instruction and reverently set forth the five teachings. So that the rules of propriety and what is right are not regarded as threads, that the relation between ruler and minister is correct, the relation between father and son is in generous regard, the relation between brothers is in harmony, and the relation between husband and wife in a community of sentiment.” If this is the reason for selfish schemes and men taking up arms, then the way of the Five Emperors also did not attain the “Grand Unity .” Moreover, the age of the Five Emperors also saw the Battle of Zhuolu in which the Miao people attacked. Then this is also “Lesser Prosperity” and cannot be called “Grand Unity .” This not only misunderstands the circumstances of the time, but also makes forced grand statements. The book *Liji*, was in the most part interpreted and embellished by the Confucians of the Han and has parts that should not be believed word for word, which if you look at this part, can be seen.⁴⁹

- 28 In his reply to the question, Yang Ūngsu discusses the contradictions he sees in the *Liyun* chapter and explains the implausibility of the passage, based on the problematic background of the *Liji*. Interestingly, to demonstrate the irrational aspect of the narrative, he relies on the story of Sage king Shun 舜 appointing Xie 契 as minister to instruct the people of the right customs, a story which is found in the *Book of Documents* and, in more detail, in the *Mencius*. This, in essence, shows how Yang viewed the *Book of*

Documents and the *Mencius* as more trustworthy than the *Liji*, or at least this particular passage of the *Liji*.

- 29 By looking at the topics of lecture gatherings in other remaining records of the academies, a similar picture emerges. A list of lectures held in 1782 at Pyöngsan Academy 屏山書院 in the Kyöngsang Province shows that, out of the 45 lectures given that year, only one was dedicated to the *Liji*, while ten lectures were on the *Great Learning*, seven on the *Doctrine of the Mean*, six on *The Abbreviated Essence of Master Zhu Xi's Letters*, six on the *Book of Odes*, and five on the *Analects*. Interestingly, there was also only one lecture on the *Mencius*. However, a year later, three lectures were held on the *Mencius*, four on the *Great Learning*, five on the *Doctrine of the Mean*, and eighteen lectures on the *Analects*. None were concerned with the *Liji* that year and none given about the *Spring and Autumn Annals* in either year. Some of the lectures were attended by over one hundred people, especially when they dealt with popular topics like the *Great Learning*.⁵⁰ As a general pattern, the lectures prioritised the Four Books over the Five Classics, and the Three Classics (*the Book of Odes*, *the Book of Documents*, *the Book of Change*) over the *Liji* and the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. This corresponds to the order of priority given to the books in Zhu Xi's arrangement of the classics. In other words, the *Liji* and the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, as the last books in the sequence, were heavily overshadowed by the attention given to the Four Books and proportionally lagged behind the Three Classics.
- 30 In general, the *Liji* was not a priority text in the study curricula of the academies and not a very popular lecture topic either. Such treatment of the text could have been connected to it being viewed as a text of problematic history. However, other factors, like didactic reasons or the reliance on the *Family rites*, surely have also contributed to the rare practical use of the text within the academies.⁵¹ Still, as passages of the *Liji* were taught to students from a young age, for example through the *Elementary Learning*, and the text being a part of the Five Classics, multiple references to the *Liji* can be found in scholarly writing and arguments of the times. There are also examples of lecturers in the academies using passages of the *Liji* to interpret or explain other texts to students,⁵² showing that the *Liji* was still an important part in the intellectual world of Chosön Korea, even though it was not always overtly treated as such.

Sacrificial Rites

- 31 Ritual sacrifices were an important part of academy life and were deeply entangled with educational activities. When Zhu Xi instituted the sacrificial rites to Confucius and his disciples at the White Deer Grotto Academy, he modelled them after the sacrificial offerings rites (*shidian* 釋奠) mentioned in the *Liji*. The rites not only served to commemorate and honour the sages of the past, but also as a connection to local society by inviting official representatives to partake in the Spring and Autumn rites.⁵³ While the first Korean academy heavily relied on Zhu Xi's academy as a model, its founder Chu Sebung also introduced the new practice of worshipping locally connected worthies in the academy, instead of Confucius and the four Sages or other sages from the orthodox pantheon. In the case of the Sosu Academy, the object of worship was An Hyang 安珦 (1243–1306), often credited with being the first scholar who brought the writings of Zhu Xi to Korea. He was a native of the area where the academy was located and his affluent descendants widely supported the establishment of the academy. Most

Korean academies of the 16th and early 17th century chose distinguished Korean scholars, some also Zhu Xi and Confucius, as the object of their sacrifices. However, with the wide proliferation of academies from the latter half of the 17th century, less well-known scholars became venerated in the shrines of the academies. More frequently, sacrifices were offered to figures that were locally important for their descent groups.⁵⁴ This development was often decried as being a corruption of the original academy system, as it did not contribute to the spread of Confucian customs among students or the population, but only served to preserve the power and wealth of already influential local families. Another criticism raised in a memorial by Pak Tosang 朴道翔 (1728-?) in 1797 gives insight into the ritual practices of the academies.

其二日，書院之弊。國朝典禮，初無書院定制。蓋順興白雲洞書院，為書院創設之首，而事在《五禮儀》已成之後。《五禮儀》本不及書院祀享之禮，《大典通編》中，亦無指一定式。雖以嶺以南言之，一邑之內，或設六七書院，已不能無弊，俎豆之數，初無酌定。然而牲用剛鬣飯用二簋，概視文廟廡享之禮，而春秋必用篚幣。雖以文廟釋菜言之，只於五聖位用幣，十哲以下，未有獻幣之禮。凡八路院享八百餘處，春秋脯幣會減，厥數夥然。此等處，宜所節損。禮曰：‘庶羞不越牲’。牲用剛鬣，則雖用牛脯，必日鹿脯，概亦不越牲之義也。今院享牲用剛鬣，而輒殺數牛，以為供士之需，可謂輕重倒置。此後院享，勿許宰牛。

Second, the evil of Confucian academies: among the ritual customs of our time, at first there was no practice of academies. Then, when the White Cloud Grotto Academy was founded, the state rights were already established. However, they did not reference rites for the academies and there were no stipulations in the *Comprehensive National Code* (大典通編 *Taejŏn t'ongp'yŏn*) either. Although in the Yŏngnam area [Kyŏngsang Province], six or seven academies were built in one county, which already could not be stopped, there were no deliberations for their rites. As sacrifice a pig and two baskets (Chin. *gui*/Kor. *kwe* 簋) of rice were used, and, just like in the rituals of the Confucius Shrine 文廟 in Spring and Autumn rites, silk was offered. Although the ritual of the Confucius Shrine is called *sŏkch'ae* 釋菜, silk is only offered in front of the spirit tablets of the five sages, not for the ten disciples nor below. Now in the eight provinces, there are more than eight hundred academies in which the Spring and Autumn rites are held and dried meats and silk are offered. This must be reduced. The *Liji* states: “The various provisions (at a feast) did not go beyond the sacrificial victims killed.” A pig was sacrificed and although dried beef or venison was also used, it did not go past this. Now the academies, while sacrificing a pig, also kill several cows for their scholars. This shall be prohibited.⁵⁵

- 32 From the point of view of ritual hierarchy in the kingdom, Confucian academies deviated in ritual practice from their place. The extent of sacrifices for the rituals in the different institutions of the state had been decided on the basis of the “The meaning of sacrifice” (*Jiyi* 祭義) and “The single victim at the border sacrifice” (*Jiaotesheng* 郊特牲) chapters of the *Liji*.⁵⁶ However, the above memorial and other criticisms suggest that academies often used more resources for their rituals, which they misappropriated from the local community.⁵⁷
- 33 As the rituals of the academies developed along individual lines and their particular community, most academies began to produce records of their elaborate systems, the so-called ceremonial process records (*holgi* 笏記). Rituals in the academies were not only held for the large Spring and Autumn rites, but also as minor routines held before or after lectures. Such rituals were often accompanied by ceremonial readings or the chanting of passages meant to produce the right atmosphere and behaviour among the

participants. One particularly widespread text, which was sometimes hung as a constant reminder in the lecture halls of the academies, was the Nine Departments (*Jiurong* 九容) from the “The jade-bead pendants of the royal cap” (*Yuzao* 玉藻) chapter in the *Liji*, used for example in Söksil Academy 石室書院 (close to the capital) and Wölbong Academy 月峯書院 near Gwangju.

君子之容舒遲，見所尊者齊遯。足容重，手容恭，目容端，口容止，聲容靜，頭容直，氣容肅，立容德，色容莊，坐如尸，燕居告溫溫。

[The carriage of a man of rank was easy, but somewhat slow; grave and reserved when he saw any one whom he wished to honour.] He did not move his feet lightly, nor his hands irreverently. His eyes looked straightforward, and his mouth was kept quiet and composed. No sound from him broke the stillness, and his head was carried upright. His breath came without panting or stoppage, and his standing gave (the beholder) an impression of virtue. His looks were grave, and he sat like a impersonator of the dead. [When at leisure and at ease, and in conversation, he looked mild and bland].⁵⁸

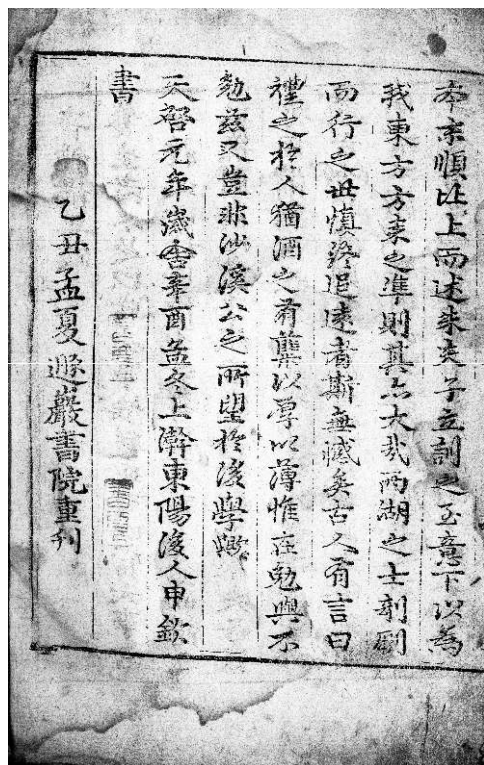
- 34 Besides being used as reference for the rituals itself, the *Liji* was also sometimes used to support arguments during ritual debates or controversies. A major argument erupted in 1620 between the descendants of Kim Söngil 金誠一 (1538–1593) and Yu Söngnyong 柳成龍 (1542–1607), both disciples of T’oegye, Yi Hwang, about the order of the spirit tablets of Kim and Yu in Yögang Academy 廬江書院 (later renamed Ho’gye Academy 虎溪書院), which was located close to the city of Andong, in Northern Kyöngsang Province.⁵⁹ During the dispute, both sides used the *Liji* to advance their arguments, but they also extensively relied on the ritual writings of their masters as well as the *Family rites*.⁶⁰ As already mentioned above, the *Family rites* had become the most important ritual guide for Korean Confucians. Many scholars continued to produce ritual works based on the *Family rites* in order to simplify or recontextualise its concepts for the Korean readership. Yu Chunggyo 柳重教 (1832–1893) summarised this development in the following way.

凡禮文當以朱子家禮爲正經。而文略禮闕處。參用沙溪先生喪禮備要，陶庵先生四禮便覽行之。

In general, the ritual texts of the time used Master Zhu’s *Family rites* as standard classic, while for versions reduced in text and simplified in rituals, they looked to Master Sagye’s [Kim Changsaeng] *Essentials of Mourning Rites* and Master Toam’s [Yi Chae] *Easy Guide to the Four Rites*.⁶¹

- 35 The continuous production of new texts concerned with ritual during the Chosön period, like the *Essentials of Funerary Rites* or *Handbook for the Four Rituals*, suggests a certain need to constantly adapt to or, rather, to keep up with the ritual practice of the times. As iteration breeds change, the emergence of ritual works can also be viewed as attempts to synthesise the manifold of existing ritual practices. Confucian academies, spread over the whole Korean peninsula, were surely no stranger to such diverse ritual realities.

Fig. 1.



A page of the *Sangnye piyo* showing images of funeral rites and bibliographic information displaying Tonam Academy as the place of printing

Source: private collection Vladimir Glomb, Prague

Fig. 2.



Another page of the *Sangnye piyo* showing images of funeral rites

Source: private collection Vladimir Glomb, Prague

Conclusion

- 36 A few ideas or suggestions concerning the usage of the *Liji* in Confucian academies in Korea can be derived from the small inquiry above. Firstly, by looking at the libraries and printing facilities of Confucian academies in Korea, it has become clear that, even though the *Liji* was either physically present or available by other means, such as borrowing or circulation of hand-written copies, only a few commentaries or vernacular versions were stored or produced in the academies. This also holds for the *Etiquette and Rites*. The ritual text with the largest number of volumes, and most commentaries, in the academies was the *Family rites*. Secondly, as part of the Five Classics, the *Liji* was included in most reading curricula, but not many lectures discussing its content were held on academy grounds. Some of the later 18th-century study regulations even excluded it together with and the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, while putting stronger emphasis on the *Family rites*. Thirdly, the rituals of Confucian academies were originally based on the “food offering rite” (*Shicai* 釋菜) and sacrificial offerings rites, but became more localised over time, as they adjusted to their respective audience. Ritual literature used in the academies relied on the *Family rites* and Korean ritual texts, which were based in essence on the *Liji*.
- 37 It can also be observed that outward conceptions about the *Liji* among Korean scholars generally followed Zhu Xi’s understanding of the text. When discussing it, many of them often repeated or elaborated on his statements about the *Liji*. This attitude seems to have been shared among Korean literati and was not challenged even in the somewhat free space of the Confucian academies. However, it did not lead to an increased interest in the *Etiquette and Rites*, which Zhu Xi had designated as the actual classic. The focus of Korean scholars fell onto the *Family rites*, which started being regarded as a summary of the three ritual works. Korean ritual scholars often likewise refined their own ritual works, while maintaining adherence to the *Family rites*, and much less overtly to the three ritual classics. This strong emphasis on the *Family rites*, however, can also be explained by the fact that academies were above all educational institutions. Their book collections and educational activities preferred easier to digest anthologies and compendia, often written by Korean authors with knowledge of local needs, over the bulky classic. Intensive schooling in ritual reasoning and practice was therefore based not on the *Liji* itself, but rather on its partial derivatives. One of the most prominent examples of such selective usage of the *Liji* in Korea is the *Elementary Learning*, which was held in very high regard by many Korean scholars.⁶² Its contents were used as a basic educational material, mostly for younger students, but were also continuously studied by accomplished scholars.
- 38 As one of the classics, the *Liji* had a set place in the Confucian canon and was also well known among scholars, yet its usage appears selective. Chapters or short passages were referenced in explanations of other texts or utilised in connection with rituals. The usage of the *Liji* in the academies seems to suggest that the text was viewed by some scholars as incomplete, and was therefore less used than the other classics in the educational context. Although scholarly debates on the value, the authenticity, or the importance of individual classics were, on an individual level, certainly present among

Korean scholars, this could not change the fact that the *Liji* remained a respected classic. Yet its existence as part of the compulsory curriculum did not alleviate the problem of its composition and content. In a certain way, one can say that, despite its large presence in libraries and firm position in the curriculum of the academies, the *Liji* was the most elusive of the classics. However, selective usage of passages from *Liji* was widespread and accepted, mainly because the text had pervaded Confucian practice for a long time and its individual parts still had once been part of the lost *Ritual Classic*.

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FOOTNOTES

1. A small, but important example of the implementation of Confucian ideas could be attempts to organise the academy community’s hierarchy solely based on the criteria of age and ignore social position or background. See *Yulgok chŏnsŏ*, vol. 33: 46a.
2. See Martina Deuchler’s contribution in this volume.
3. See Roger Darrobers’ contribution in this volume.
4. Here referred to as *Lijing* 禮經.
5. *Chasŏ* (Preface) in *Yegi ch’ŏn’gyŏllok*, vol. 1; see also Doh 1999, 120.
6. For more information in English on Kwŏn Kŭn, see Kalton 1985.
7. See Deuchler 1999.
8. See Lee 2009.
9. See *Sejong sillok*, vol. 86, 21/9/29#5 (1439) in *Chosŏn wangjo sillok*. This entry in particular discusses Zhu Xi’s White Deer Grotto Academy.
10. See Deng 2015 and for an English overview see Meskill 1982.
11. Translation from Glomb 2012, 316. Original text in *Yulgok chŏnsŏ*, vol. 27, 8a.
12. See Ok 2014. For a detailed look into the archival and librarian activities of Korean academies in English, see Glomb & Lee 2020.
13. “Qi ci Bailudong shuyuan chi’e (Request for a royal charter for the White Deer Grotto Academy),” in: *Bailudong shuyuan guzhi wuzhong*, vol. 1, 49.
14. Wu 2013, 126.
15. This story was conveyed to Korean literati through its inclusion in the *Complete Works of Master Zhu* (*Zhuzi daquan* 朱子大全).
16. “Chukkye chi sŏ (Introduction of the Bamboo Stream Records),” in: *Chukkye chi*, vol. 1, 2a. Quoted with small changes in Hejtmanek 2013, 260.
17. See Pae 2005, 268–269.
18. See “Paegundong sŏwŏn changsŏ (Stored books of the White Cloud Grotto Academy),” in: *Chukkye chi*, vol. 4, 7a.
19. See Yun 2005, 4.
20. See “Tosan sŏwŏn changsŏ mongnok.”
21. See Oh 2013, 156.
22. Both seem to be rather rudimentary compared to other *ŏnhae* editions and were either transcriptions of the original text or annotations for grammatical assistance. The *The Record of Rites with Vernacular Reading* (*Yegi taemun ŏndu* 禮記大文諺讀) following its name is rather a transcription of the *Liji*, that carries no large interpretive meaning, and *The Complete Explanations to the Record of Rites with Kugyŏl Marking* (*Yegi chipsŏl taejŏn kugyŏl* 禮記集說大全口訣) carries mostly grammatical annotations.
23. On the history and structure of the *Elementary Learning*, see Kelleher 1989, 219–251.
24. Interestingly both the *Liji* and the *Rites of the Zhou* are marked as lost in the catalogue, see “Musŏng sŏwŏn wŏnji (Record of Musŏng Academy),” in *Sŏwŏn chi ch’ongsŏ*, 2/142.
25. The corresponding part in the *Doctrine of the Mean* is 苟不至德，至道不凝焉. Translation by Legge: “Only by perfect virtue can the perfect path, in all its courses, be made a fact”. On this, see

Yangsongdang ki 養性堂記 (*Account of Yangsong Hall*), in *Sagye chönsö*, vol. 5:9a–10a. See also Yim 2018, 160–171.

26. However most commonly, geographical features were compared or named after important landscapes drawn from the life of Zhu Xi, e.g., the Nine Bends of Wuyi or Mt. Lu in Jiangxi Province.

27. See *Tonam söwön chi*, 16.

28. See Lee 2016.

29. See Yi 2016, 128–129.

30. Most probably for examination preparation, see Kim 2018, 24.

31. Of course, many academies also stored and used the *Conversations of Master Zhu Arranged Topically*, which articulated the notion of the *Etiquette and Rites* as classic and the *Liji* as explanation to it, see Darrobers in this volume.

32. The situation of the third ritual classic, the *Rites of the Zhou*, is even more striking: the book is almost impossible to find in the academy collections. The *Rites of the Zhou* played an enormous role in the political discourse of Chosön Korea, see Kim Haboush 2009. However, seen through the data of the library collections, the *Rites of the Zhou* played no important role in the academy curriculum.

33. It is impossible to imagine an academy without at least some ritual literature, which would guide scholars in their daily activities. Even the small Noktong Academy 鹿洞書院, in the Chölla province, which possessed only a dozen books (and only four of the Five Classics) had two detailed ritual compendia, the *Essentials of Funerary Rites* and the *Abbreviated Essentials of the Eight Rituals* (*P'allye chöryo* 八禮節要), see *Söwön chi ch'ongsö*, vol. 4, 3/114.

34. Most famously Zhu Xi invited Lu Jiuyuan 陸九淵 (1139–1193) to lecture on *Analects* IV, 16. Zhu himself lectured at the White Deer Grotto Academy and left a poem called “Poem in Verse about the Jianghui at the White Deer” (*Bailu jianghui cibi zhangyun* 白鹿講會次卜大韻), he also mentions lectures in letters to his friends more than once. See *Bailudong shuyuan guzhi wuzhong*, 131.

35. A text called “Policy examination question at the White Deer Book Hall” (*Bailu shutang cewen* 白鹿書堂策問) somewhat explains which texts should be excluded from reading in the lecture hall of the academy. These are notably the writings of Yang Zhu 楊朱 and Mozi 墨子 as well as Buddhist and Daoist texts, see *ibid.*, 62.

36. *Isan wön'gyu* 伊山院規 (*Isan Academy regulations*), *Chapchö* 雜著 (*Miscellaneous writings*), in *T'oebye sönsaeng munjip* 退溪先生文集, vol. 41, 51a, translation by Ch'oe 2008, 153. Academies that incorporated the Isan regulations into their own rules, were Oksan Academy, Söak Academy 西岳書院, Tosan Academy and Yöktong Academy 易東書院, all in Kyöngsang Province.

37. Isabelle Sancho has translated this work into French as *Principes essentiels pour éduquer les jeunes gens de Yulgok, Yi I*, see Sancho 2011.

38. See Glomb 2012, 324. Academies usually associated with the academy tradition of Yulgok Yi I are Sohyön Academy 紹賢書院, Munhön Academy 文憲書院 both now in North Korea, Tobong Academy 道峰書院 close to modern day Seoul, Tonam Academy and others.

39. *The Abbreviated Essence of Master Zhu Xi's Letters* is an epistolary anthology edited by T'oebye Yi Hwang out of the *Complete Works of Master Zhu*.

40. A text by Yulgok Yi I, [*Sönghak*] *chibyö* in Korean spelling.

41. *Nogang söwön kanghak kyumok* (*Lecture gathering regulations of Nogang Academy*), *Chapchö* (*Miscellaneous writings*), in *Pyönggye sönsaeng chip* (*Collected Writings of Master Pyönggye*), vol. 34, 26b. Also see Pak 2009, 73–74.

42. *So* 疏 (*Memorials*), in *Pyönggye sönsaeng chip*, vol. 8, 4b–5a.

43. *Simgok söwön hakkyu* 深谷書院學規 (*Study regulations of Simgok Academy*), *Chapchö* 雜著 (*Miscellaneous writings*), *Toam sönsaeng chip* 陶菴先生集, vol. 25, 19b. See also Pak 2009, 68.

44. Named, of course, after the Hanquan jingshe 寒泉精舍 where Zhu Xi lived and taught for some time. Hanch'ŏn was also one of Yi Chae's pen names.
45. See Choe 2001, 87.
46. *Tabyu Paek Ik* 答俞伯翼 (Answer to Paek Ik), *Sŏ 書* (Letters), in *Toam sŏnsaeng chip* 陶菴先生集, vol. 19, 39b–40a.
47. See *Paeksu sŏnsaeng nyŏnp'yo* 白水先生年譜 (Chronology of Master Paeksu), in *Paeksu sŏnsaeng munjip* 白水先生文集 (Collected Writings of Master Paeksu), *Nyŏnp'yo* 年譜 (Chronology), 30a.
48. This passage appears similarly in the *Reflections on Things at Hand*, see Zhu, Lü 1967, 114.
49. *Yeun p'yŏn kangŭi* 禮運篇講義 (Lecture on the *Liyun* chapter), *Chapchŏ* 雜著 (Miscellaneous Writings), in *Paeksu sŏnsaeng munjip* 白水先生文集, vol. 11, 1a–b. All translations of passages from the *Liji* are taken from James Legge's translation (slightly modified). An alternative translation of this particular passage can be found in Nylan 2001, 196.
50. See Pak 2008, 44–47.
51. The *Liji* is much larger in scope than the other classics, which could have contributed to it being an unpopular lecture topic, see Miyazaki 1981, 16.
52. See Choi 2012, 121.
53. See Wu 2013, 111–113.
54. See Ch'oe 2008, 172. This development is also connected to the increasing privatisation of academies in the latter half of the Chosŏn dynasty, described in detail in Deuchler 2015, 310–313 & 358–363.
55. See *Chŏngjo sillok*, vol. 47, 21/7/14#1 (1797) in *Chosŏn wangjo sillok*. Passage from the *Liji* following James Legge, *Wangzhi* 王制 (Royal Regulations) 32.
56. See Kwŏn 2001, 56.
57. See Ch'oe 2008, 168.
58. *Sŏksil sŏwŏn hakkyu* 石室書院學規 (Study regulations of Sŏksil Academy), *Chapchŏ* 雜著 (Miscellaneous writing), in *Miho Chip* 漢湖集 (Collected Writings of Miho), vol. 14, 30b. Translation by James Legge. Yulgok Yi I used the same passage in the regulations for his Ŭnbyŏng chŏngsa 隱屏精舍 (Ŭnbyŏng Study Hall), which was later transformed into Sohyŏn Academy. See Jung 2008, 116.
59. See Deuchler 2015, 312 & 368–369.
60. See Ko 1995, 157–169.
61. *Yussi kajŏn* 柳氏家典 (Yu family tenets), *Kaha Sanp'il* 柯下散筆 (Scribbling under the hardwood), in *Sŏngjae sŏnsaeng munjip* 省齋先生文集 (Collected Works of Master Sŏngjae), vol. 45, 8b.
62. See Kelleher 1989, 225.

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The *Book of Rites* and modernity

The “Liyun” 禮運 (Evolution of Ritual), from a chapter in a Han ritual compendium to a universal sacred text: Kang Youwei’s 康有爲 (1857–1927) hermeneutical techniques¹

Béatrice L’Haridon

- 1 Kang Youwei’s 康有爲 (1857–1927) commentary to the “Liyun” (Evolution of Ritual), ninth chapter of the *Record of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記), was written during the short but crucial period between the failed “Hundred days reform” of 1898 (*wuxu bianfa* 戊戌變法) and the Xinhai Revolution (*Xinhai geming* 辛亥革命, 1911), which ended the Qing dynasty (1644–1911).² It was published in 1913, in Kang’s own journal, *Buren* 不忍 (*Compassion*).
- 2 When reading the “Evolution of Ritual” chapter in the context of a collective work on the *Record of Rites*, I had the occasion to randomly refer to this modern commentary. I was struck by the refined mixture of traditional exegesis and bold new interpretations. It is especially remarkable that although Kang Youwei put equality (*pingdeng* 平等) at the centre of his political vision of the “Grand Unity” (*Datong* 大同, which may also be translated as “Grand Community” or “Great Concord”), he nonetheless developed this idea through a commentary of a text extracted from a ritual compendium whose leitmotiv was to magnify social and familial distinctions and hierarchies. This is a first paradox. Another one is that the final and programmatic ideal of *Datong* (as presented in the *Book of Grand Unity*, *Datong shu* 大同書) was regarded as too dangerous by Kang Youwei: to him, the time was not ripe for Grand Unity; hence he refused to publish his *Book of Grand Unity* during his lifetime. One may say that Kang developed the ideal of Grand Unity without propounding it. This is something that has to be linked to his

vision of the evolution of human societies, which is also a pervading theme throughout his commentary to the “Evolution of Ritual” chapter.

- 3 Kang Youwei explored many ways of doing politics. They range from political persuasion as a counsellor, and creation of political associations, to promotion of reform and even *coup d'état*. He also explored many ways of writing. He is the author of essays inspired by geometrical principles, critical examinations of the scriptural tradition, correspondence, memorials of remonstrance, political programmes, commentaries... As such, it should first be noted that among the various ways of expressing his philosophy, the commentary was a relatively neglected one. Moreover, the research on Kang Youwei has mostly been focused so far on his critical essays like the *Xinxue weijing kao* 新學偽經考 (*Examination of the Forged Classics of the Xin Dynasty Scholarship*, 1891), the *Kongzi gaizhi kao* 孔子改制考 (*On Confucius as a Reformer*, 1897) or on his most-debated political utopia, the *Datong shu*.³ Situated between the critical moment and the utopian moment, the hermeneutical moment has been quite overshadowed. More fundamentally, one may wonder whether the commentary as a literary genre was not quickly considered as outdated. In the following pages, I hope to shed some light on Kang's hermeneutical work and its specific way of developing revolutionary ideas⁴ between the lines of tradition.

The place of exegetical writing in the intellectual and political life of Kang Youwei and the particular case of the “Evolution of Ritual”

- 4 Kang Youwei received the complete education of a scholar. He extensively studied the Confucian Classics, as well as Buddhist philosophy. At the end of the 1870s, he developed a kind of disgust for textual scholarship, seeing it as a sheer tool to make use of with a view to pass official examinations. He retired for a while on a mountain to practise Buddhist meditation. In 1879, he later described this practice as motivated by universal compassion (and, we may add, by a great deal of self-confidence):

於時捨棄攷據帖括之學，專意養心，既念民生艱難，天與我聰明才力拯救之。乃哀物悼世，以經營天下為志，則時時取周禮王制、太平經國書、文獻通考、經世文編...

At that moment, I turned away from philological and exam-oriented scholarship, focused my attention and nurtured my mind, meditated about the suffering of the people, and about how Heaven gave me discernment, talents and strength for helping them. Full of compassion for the world, I therefore took it as my purpose to set in order all under Heaven, and would frequently turn to the chapter “Wangzhi” (Royal institutions) in the *Rituals of Zhou*,⁵ the *Book of Statecraft for Supreme Peace*,⁶ the *Comprehensive Examination of Documents*,⁷ the *Collected Essays about Statecraft*...⁸

- 5 It is significant to note that in his early years, Kang Youwei had a vested interest in the *Rituals of Zhou* (*Zhouli* 周禮). This text occupied a core position in the “Old Text” (*guwen* 古文) classical scholarship, of which Sun Yirang 孫詒讓 (1848–1908) was representative with his commentary on the *Rituals of Zhou*. At the same time, it also played an important role in successive attempts to political reform, the most recent being the Taiping rebellion, which took inspiration from passages of this classic.⁹ At this period of his life, Kang Youwei had not yet endorsed the “New Text” (*jinwen* 今文) classical

scholarship.¹⁰ This important turn happened around the year 1888. It was radical since Kang would then start to defend the idea that the *Zhouli* was a forgery by Liu Xin 劉歆 (46 BC–AD 23), which led to a deep misunderstanding of Confucius' message. Kang's later choice to comment the "Liyun" chapter is therefore to be understood within the context of the debate between the "Old Text" and the "New Text" traditions –a debate which found a new and profound development during the 19th century.¹¹ As far as ritual texts are concerned, the Old Text tradition referred to the *Zhouli* 周禮 whereas the New Text tradition considered it as a forgery. The opposition also pervaded classical historiography: the Old Text tradition read the *Chunqiu* through the *Zuozhuan* commentary, while the New Text sided with the *Gongyang zhuan*. The New Text tradition, through its specific reading of the *Chunqiu* –it claimed that the book contained Confucius' political blueprint for the future– nurtured a serious concern for the adaptation of institutions to the present times.

- 6 In the early 1880s, Kang began studying translations of Western works and travelled to Hong Kong and Shanghai, where he was deeply impressed by Western organisation. Around 1888, he wrote the *Shili gongfa quanshu* 實理公法全書 (*Complete Book of True Principles and Public Laws*). In this early work, he put forward several fundamental principles, among which one could mention "equality." He, moreover, expressed the idea that human institutions should be derivative of these principles. He laid out his arguments by relying on geometrical principles and did not use any reference to Confucius or to the Classics. Neither did he allude to an ideal state of Grand Unity.¹² Therefore, one may wonder whether the later defence of the same kind of ideas through the commentary of a classical text could have been motivated by a search for efficiency. Was Kang's use of the commentary genre an instrumental move to persuade a larger audience of literati? We observe the same evolution in his discussion of the important question of the calendar. In his *Shili gongfa quanshu*, Kang Youwei proposed to abandon the practice of dating time with reference to the years of a sovereign era, but at the same time, he excluded the possibility of following the Christian model and of counting time from the birth of one Chinese great Sage. He suggested counting from the "day" of formation of Earth, a date established according to the most reliable scientific research. However, he would later strongly promote the "Confucian calendar," *i.e.* starting to count time from the supposed birthday of Confucius.
- 7 From 1888 on, he became politically active at a local level, in Guangzhou. He also tried to contribute at the central level: he repeatedly tried to have a direct influence on the Emperor, by sending memoirs of remonstrance.¹³ He founded political associations, such as "the Society for Self-strengthening" (*Qiangxue hui* 強學會) in 1895, or "the Society to Protect the Emperor" (*Baohuang hui* 保皇會) in 1899. During the 1890s, he wrote his two major critical essays: the *Xinxue weijing kao* 新學偽經考 (*Examination of the Forged Classics of the Xin Dynasty Scholarship*, 1891) and the *Kongzi gaizhi kao* 孔子改制考 (*On Confucius as a Reformer*, 1897) which both marked his break with the Old Text tradition. He had the ideal opportunity to embody the principles of the Sage-reformer when the young emperor Guangxu 光緒 (r. 1875–1908), who was interested in his ideas and his programme, invited him to lead the reform of the imperial system in 1898. But a political coup followed shortly thereafter; the emperor was imprisoned by his aunt, the empress dowager Cixi 慈禧 (1835–1908), and the leaders of the reform were either executed,¹⁴ or exiled. For Kang, the exile would last 15 years, a time he would spend

travelling to various countries, such as Japan, Singapore, India, Great Britain, or the United States.

- 8 After the failure of the Hundred Days reform, a tragedy in his personal life, Kang Youwei resumed his work on classical texts –which he had most probably begun earlier in his life– and turned to hermeneutical writing. In a period of two years, he wrote five commentaries: in addition to the commentary on the “Evolution of Ritual” chapter, Kang Youwei also composed a commentary for each of the four texts which had been given the status of “Four Books” by Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) during the Song dynasty: the *Commentary on the Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhongyong zhu* 中庸注, 1901), the *Subtle meaning of the Mengzi* (*Mengzi wei* 孟子微, 1901), the *Commentary on the Analects* (*Lunyu zhu* 論語注, 1902), and the *Commentary on the Great Learning* (*Daxue zhu* 大學注, 1902, now lost). All these commentaries are preceded by a preface written by Kang himself and are clearly dated, except precisely the commentary of “Liyun.” That is unlucky but also interesting. In the preface, Kang gives the year 1884 (10th year of Guangxu era). This is often considered to be an error. But it is hard to imagine that it is a mere careless mistake, because the same date is also given in the new “Confucian” calendar: “2435th year after Confucius,” that is 1884... In his autobiography, the *Self-Composed Chronology of Kang Nanhai* (*Kang Nanhai zibian nianpu* 康南海自編年譜),¹⁵ which records Kang’s life events until 1898, the writing of a commentary of the “Liyun” is not mentioned. This contradicts what one can read in the preface. The only precise dating is that of its first publication, in 1913. According to Chang Chao 常超,¹⁶ the *Liyun zhu* was written at the same period as the other commentaries, when he was exiled in Singapore (檳榔嶼) and in India (大吉嶺), that is in 1901–1902.¹⁷
- 9 In this set of five commentaries, the commentary on the “Evolution of Ritual” occupies a specific place. In opposition to the *Lunyu*, which Kang considered as a partial transmission of Confucius’ teaching, intended for the most vulgar disciples, the “Evolution of Ritual” is exalted as the only “authentic transmission of Confucius’ subtle words, a precious Classic for the whole world and the divine method for having all the living beings rise again.” This commentary also epitomised a shift in Kang’s vision of Confucius who evolved from a reformer to a master of timely change. Kang sought a concept of evolution by bringing together the two stages of *Datong* and *Xiaokang*, as found in the chapter, and the representation of the Three Ages, which was developed by the Gongyang commentary 公羊傳 on another classic, the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu* 春秋): the Age of Disorder (*juluan shi* 據亂世), the Age of Rising Peace (*shengping shi* 升平世) and the Age of Supreme Peace (*taiping shi* 太平世). The development of the very idea of evolution, and of a utopian horizon appeared to him necessary in order to avoid remaining stuck in a mediocre Lesser Prosperity. Kang’s text strongly asserts that, even at its best moments in history, notably during the “Three Dynasties” (*sandai* 三代, Xia 夏, Yin 殷, and Zhou 周), China never knew anything other than Lesser Prosperity. This vision of the human evolution is in deep contradiction with the traditional conception which looks back to Antiquity as a Golden era to emulate. It is also to be related with a growing preoccupation for the different stages of human development and the necessity to know them better in order to avoid a catastrophic change which would not be adapted to the stage attained by humanity.
- 10 Although the commentaries, which seem to be exercises of pure scholarship, may have been written partly in reaction to the tragic failure of the “Hundred days Reform,” they do not represent a withdrawal from the political scene. Indeed, Kang Youwei never

abandoned his view of political reform. Shortly after the foundation of the Republic of China, in 1912, he founded a new association, the “Society of Confucian religion” (*Kongjiao hui* 孔教會) whose aim was to establish Confucianism as the official religion. As soon as he came back from his exile, in 1913, he tried to directly intervene in politics. He notably participated in a failed *coup d'état* in order to restore the deposed emperor Puyi 溥儀 (r. 1908–1912). The interconnection between his political activism and his commitment to scholarship may have been caused by his almost religious vision of the classical texts. The critical approach of these texts may have allowed Kang Youwei to become the prophet of Confucius’ real message, which is the message of a world saviour.

- 11 The pivotal importance of the reading of the “Evolution of Ritual” chapter in Kang’s life is explained in the preface to the commentary. This preface is, as a matter of fact, a kind of intellectual autobiography,¹⁸ where Kang presents the reading of this chapter as a form of enlightenment:

讀至《禮運》，乃浩然而嘆曰：孔子三世之變、大道之真，在是矣。大同小康之道，發之明而別之精，古今進化之故，神聖憫世之深，在是矣。[]是書也，孔氏之微言真傳，萬國之無上寶典，而天下群生之起死神方哉！

When my readings led me to the “Evolution of Ritual” chapter, I felt overwhelmed and sighed: “The transformation along the Three Ages and the truth of the Great Way once formulated by Confucius are all here. The clear expression and the refined distinction of the Way of Grand Unity and Lesser Prosperity, the causes behind the progress in ancient and modern times, the depth of the divine Sage’s compassion for the world, are all here. [...] This book is the authentic transmission of Confucius’ subtle words, the ultimate Classic for the whole world and the divine method for having all the living beings come back to life!”¹⁹

- 12 Thus, he may have antedated his commentary in order to highlight its fundamental status in his intellectual life, denying the fact that earlier in his life he was much more interested in another ritual classic, the *Rituals of Zhou*, or in the “Western science” (*xixue* 西學).

The “Liyun” chapter before Kang Youwei

- 13 As most chapters in the *Record of Rites*,²⁰ the “Liyun” presents quite a heterogeneous content. It starts with the famous two paragraphs on *Datong* and *Xiaokang*. This passage is introduced by a dialogue between Confucius and one of his disciples, a staging of deep significance as we will see below. It then continues with a broad description of the evolution of rituals. The chapter focuses on an analysis of sacrificial rituals in order to highlight the significance of their origins and their accomplishment. Far from representing mere chronological dimensions, origin and accomplishment are reactivated every time a sacrifice is correctly implemented. It also deals with some failures in ritual practices, and with the reasons behind their creation. Finally, the text presents the extension of rituals as the way to promote harmonious relationships, among humans in society, of course, but also between humans and animals. Like other chapters of the *Record of Rites*, the “Liyun” was commented, paragraph after paragraph, by Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200) and Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574–648), whose explanations and commentaries became fundamental for any later readings.

- 14 However, the successive perusals of this chapter were largely focused on its very beginning, that is the evocation of the two stages of *Datong* and *Xiaokang*. Readings were either oriented by admiration or by suspicion. The very notion of Grand Unity which may be considered as a blueprint for the ideal of modernisation in China is inseparable from the “Liyun” chapter, as in the Chinese context discussing the evolution of ritual entails discoursing on the evolution of civilisation. To better understand the status of this chapter during the historical turn between the Empire and the Republic, we need to situate it in the longer history of its reception. Although this chapter falls into the same category as the “Great Learning” 大學 and the “Doctrine of the Mean” 中庸 chapters –the category of “general discourse on the rituals” (*tonglun* 通論)– the history of their reception is far from comparable. Under the Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279), the “Great Learning” and the “Doctrine of the Mean” chapters were extracted from the *Liji* and integrated in the canonical corpus of the Four Books (*Si shu* 四書), whereas the “Liyun” chapter was strongly suspected of being heterodox. The main reason laid in its inflammatory opening paragraphs which ignore the role of ritual and thus smell like Taoist sulphur. To a question about the similarity of thought between the *Laozi* 老子 and the “Liyun” chapter, Zhu Xi gives the following answer in the *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類:

不是聖人書。胡明仲云：禮運是子游作，樂記是子貢作。計子游亦不至如此之淺。

This is not a book of the great Sage (Confucius). Hu Mingzhong²¹ said it was written by Ziyou, as the “Yueji” (another chapter of the *Liji*) was written by Zigong. But I suppose even Ziyou would not be superficial to this point.²²

- 15 The paragraph on the *Datong*, which delineates as a horizon an ideal state of human community called Grand Unity, does not refer to the role of ritual. As such, ritual may appear as a secondary theme. Even more problematic is the possible reading that ritual is associated with the degradation of this ideal order of Grand Unity –something that could be inferred from the following paragraph on the *Xiaokang*.
- 16 Consequently, a sheer number of commentators questioned here a surreptitious infiltration of Taoist or even Mohist ideas in Confucius’ mouth (it would not be the first time). Due to this suspicion, the very content of the “Liyun” chapter fell into a relative oblivion until the Qing dynasty. And from that time on, it was mainly its authenticity and its philosophical affiliation that were put under scrutiny.
- 17 In contrast with the traditional mistrust towards the Taoistic undertones of the first paragraphs of the chapter, the proximity between the evocation of the *Datong* in this chapter and some of the beautiful Taoist utopias is easily admitted by Kang Youwei in his introduction:

今者，中國已小康矣，而不求進化，泥守舊方，是失孔子之意，而大悖其道也，甚非所以安天下樂群生也，甚非所以崇孔子同大地也。且孔子之神聖，為人道之進化，豈止大同而已哉！莊子建德之國，列子飢餓之山，凡至人之所思，固不可測矣，而況孔子乎？

Nowadays, China has already attained the age of Lesser Prosperity; nevertheless, it does not aspire to progress, and instead stays stuck with old recipes. That is a misunderstanding of Confucius’ intention, and it is completely opposed to his Way. In so doing, it is completely impossible to bring peace to the world and happiness to the living beings. In so doing, it is absolutely not the way of revering Confucius and uniting the world.

Moreover, Confucius' holiness is in fact progress in the human way, so how could there be only this notion of *Datong* (as developed by Confucius)! The "Land of Virtue Established" from Zhuangzi and the "Mountain of the Pot" from Liezi represented the aspiration of supreme men and they were for sure infinitely deep. So much more so Confucius' (ideal of *Datong*)!²³

- 18 To illustrate his point that Confucius' *Datong* was not a completely isolated view, but rather the outcome of progress, Kang thus sees no difficulty in highlighting two Taoist utopias, the "Land of Virtue Established" and the "Mountain of the Pot." The first utopia is evoked by a certain Yiliao 宜僚²⁴ before a tired sovereign of Lu 魯, the land of rites:

南越有邑焉，為建德之國。其民愚而朴，少私而寡欲；知作而不知藏，與而不求其報；不知義之所適，不知禮之所將。猖狂妄，乃蹈乎大方。其生可樂，其死可葬。吾願君去國捐俗，與道相輔而行。

In Nan-Yüeh [Nanyue], there is a city and its name is the Land of Virtue Established. Its people are foolish and naive, few in thoughts of self, scant in desires. They know how to make, but not how to lay away; they give, but look for nothing in return. They do not know what accords with right, they do not know what conforms to ritual. Uncouth, uncaring, they move recklessly –and this way they tread the path of the Great Method. Their birth brings rejoicing, their death a fine funeral. So I would ask you to discard your state, break away from its customs, and, with the Way as your helper, journey there [says the Master from south of the Market to the ruler of Lu].²⁵

- 19 With its simple people who are more eager to give than to take, and whose virtue is solid precisely because they practise moderation without even knowing ritual rules, this "Land of Virtue Established" is for sure not so far away from the evocation of *Datong* in the "Liyun" chapter. In fact, these people are not completely devoid of rituals: they have some for birth and death. But these rituals are practised through emotion and not through order.
- 20 The "Mountain of the Pot," or more exactly the "Urn Peak," appeared to the Great Sage Yu 禹, when he got lost after draining the flood. Ironically enough, he made a huge geographical mistake, and came to a country "myriad of miles away from the Middle Kingdom":

其國名曰終北，不知際畔之所齊限 [] 四方悉平，周以喬陟。當國之中有山，山名壺領，狀若甌甄。頂有口，狀若員環，名曰滋穴。有水湧出，名曰神瀆，臭過蘭椒，味過醪醴。一源分為四埒，注於山下。經營一國，亡不悉遍。土氣和，亡札厲。人性婉而從物，不競不爭。柔心而弱骨，不驕不忌；長幼儕居。不君不臣；男女雜游，不媒不聘

The name of this country is Utmost North; I do not know where its borders lie. [...] The country is flat in all directions, with high ranges all around it; and right in the middle is a mountain named Urn Peak, shaped like a pot with a small mouth. On the summit there is an opening, round like a bracelet, which is named the Cave of Plenty. Waters bubble out of it, named the Divine Spring, which smell sweeter than orchids and spices, taste sweeter than wine and musk. Four streams divide from the one source, flow down the mountain and irrigate every corner of the country. The climate is mild, and there are no epidemics. The people are gentle and compliant by nature, do not quarrel or contend, have soft hearts and weak bones, are never proud or envious. Old and young live as equals, and no one is ruler or

subject; men and women mingle freely, without go-betweens and betrothal presents...²⁶

21 Although the sweet water irrigating all the country reminds us of the Bible's "milk and honey," this Cockaigne is not merely a land of plenty as its counterpart in the European medieval *imaginaire*. It is also a country blessed with equality between old and young, ruler and subject, and men and women. The three fundamental hierarchies in the ritual order do not exist. Building on the "Liyun" chapter, Kang Youwei tries to put this utopian ambition back in the centre of the Confucian tradition. What raised Kang Youwei's deep interest for this chapter was thus precisely these controversial opening paragraphs.

22 In order to get a preliminary understanding of the traditional reading of the first paragraphs, and of the hermeneutical renewal brought about by Kang Youwei, let us first go back to the very "staging" of the dialogue between Confucius and one of his youngest disciples, Ziyou,²⁷ and the different ways of interpreting it. The scene happens immediately after an important annual sacrifice: the sacrifice named *zha* 蜡 (sometimes confused with the sacrifice *la* 臘),²⁸ mentioned at the very beginning of the chapter, marks the end of the lunar year and is a way to express gratitude to the crowd of spirits and ancient sages who indirectly contributed to the harvest. It most probably included an orgiastic component, as indicated in another chapter of the *Liji*, "Zaji, xia" 雜記下 (Miscellaneous records, 2). Here again, the *zha* sacrifice provides the occasion for a dialogue between Confucius and a disciple (this time Zigong 子貢). This dialogue also reflects Confucius' concern with this particular sacrifice:

子貢觀於蜡。孔子曰：「賜也樂乎？」對曰：「一國之人皆若狂，賜未知其樂也！」子曰：「百日之蜡，一日之澤，非爾所知也。張而不弛，文武弗能也；弛而不張，文武弗為也。一張一弛，文武之道也。」

Zigong attended the *zha* sacrifice. Confucius asked him: "Zigong, did you enjoy it?" Zigong answered: "I really do not know how to enjoy seeing the whole country running amok!" Confucius said: "After hundreds of days of work, this day of rejoicing, this is something you do not understand. Tension without release, Kings Wen and Wu would not have been able to do that. Release without tension, Kings Wen and Wu would not do that. The way of kings Wen and Wu is the alternation of release and tension."²⁹

23 As usual, Confucius is much more open-minded than his followers:³⁰ he is able to appreciate the great signification behind the seemingly excessive ritual of the *zha* sacrifice.³¹ Thanks to this second evocation of the *zha* sacrifice in the *Record of Rites*, we know that for the compiler(s) of this book, it was a moment of festive communion. Nonetheless, in the "Evolution of Ritual" chapter, Confucius' reaction to his observation of the *zha* sacrifice is a mere sigh. This sigh, although a non-verbal expression, is the very foundation of the following dialogue: Ziyou does not understand why a gentleman such as Confucius should sigh after observing the sacrifice/festival. His question leads the Master to develop his reflection on Grand Unity, Lesser Prosperity, and evolution of ritual.

24 By considering the interpretations of this simple sigh, we can already identify a gap between two visions of the text:

Zheng Xuan:

孔子見魯君於祭禮有不備 [] 感而歎之。

Confucius saw that the Duke of Lu did not rightly perform the sacrifice rite [...],³² and reacting to that, he sighed.

Kang Youwei:

適遇蜡祭，諸侯大夫皆草笠野服，至平之服矣。飧農息民，下及禽獸昆虫，草木水土，以告歲功，至平無差等，乃太平之禮，至仁之義。故觸其大同之思。而時當亂世，魯雖用己，未能行己之大道，故觸事發嘆也。

Confucius attended the *zha* sacrifice. During the sacrifice, dukes and nobles wore straw hats and peasant clothes, that is the clothes of Supreme equilibrium. The farmers were nourished and people were given a rest, and (this nourishment) extended to animals and insects, plants and soils, in order to announce the meritorious end of the year. During Supreme equilibrium, there is no inequality. This is what the ritual of Great peace and the signification of accomplished humanity are all about. Hence, Confucius was struck by the longing for Grand Unity. However, his time was an age of disorder, and even if Lu had employed him, he was not able yet to put into practice his great Way. That is why he sighed when facing this ritual.³³

- 25 Zheng Xuan, and Kong Yingda after him, did not write much on Confucius' sigh in this precise context. To them, the reader is in presence of a classic case of ritual failure, to which Confucius is, as always, highly sensitive. Although we could have expected Confucius to explain his sigh by usual laments on the world falling apart, or to point at the bad state of ritual practice in his native realm of Lu, his answer describes an ideal state of Grand Unity. Kang Youwei gives an alternative interpretation of Confucius' sigh, which in a way better explains why it would be followed by an evocation of the *Datong*. This very moment of the carnival-like *zha* sacrifice reveals Confucius' authentic and deep intention: the state of Grand Unity, a state that Confucius himself recognises as impossible to realise. From the very beginning of Kang's commentary, the great "reformer" appears with the traits of a tragic figure; he tries to attain an ideal state of concord while being perfectly aware of its impossibility, at least in his own time. Accordingly, this reminds us of the well-known judgement on Confucius: "The one who keeps pursuing what he knows is impossible" (是知其不可而為之者與).³⁴
- 26 In his notice on Kang's *Commentary of the Liyun*, Hu Yujin 胡玉縉 (1859–1940), after analysing the questionable passages of the commentary, draws a meaningful distinction between the hermeneutical and the ideological dimensions of the text. He asserts that despite its rather heterodox hermeneutic techniques Kang's commentary managed to reveal the very meaning of the text:

要之，是書別有用意，不得以訓詁家律之，禮運鄭注已不盡得其旨，石梁王氏又以大同小康為老氏意，非孔子語，學者皆為所惑，康氏獨能發揮其義，推為孔氏之微言真傳，萬國之無上寶典，其識在漢以來諸儒之上。

In short, this book addresses another objective, and should not be judged according to the criteria of pure exegesis. Zheng Xuan's commentary did not completely grasp the meaning of the "Liyun" chapter, and in addition to this Master Wang from Shiliang considered the two paragraphs on "Datong" and "Xiaokang" as ideas coming from Laozi and not as words pronounced by Confucius.³⁵ All the later scholars were confused by that. Kang Youwei was the only one able to develop its profound meaning, and to support the idea that this chapter was the authentic transmission of Confucius' subtle message, and the most precious Classic for the world. His understanding was superior to all the literati's since the Han dynasty.³⁶

- 27 Contrary to what is here proposed by Hu Yujin, I would like to keep on focusing on the exegetical dimension of Kang’s commentary and to inquire into his hermeneutical work instead of focusing on the ideological message. This work is intertwined with a ritual text but what we would immediately associate with repetition and conservatism was for Kang Youwei a fertile ground for developing modernity. I will examine his exegetical work and its tools, each in association with one important intellectual thread of the commentary.

An examination of Kang’s hermeneutical methods

- 28 Three main tools can here be identified: the editing of the text, in the broadest sense, which I will examine in relation to the staging of Confucius as master of time; the philological glosses, which allow Kang Youwei, on a specific occasion, to give a feminist dimension to the text; and finally, the comparison with different civilisations, which must obviously be linked to Kang’s universalist aspiration.

Reorganisation of the classical text and the preeminence of “Grand Unity”

- 29 The composite nature of the *Liji* chapters allows for a certain plasticity of the text. Throughout history, some commentators did not hesitate to strengthen their hermeneutical perspective by transforming the text. Hence, as Zhu Xi already did with the “Daxue” chapter of the *Liji*,³⁷ Kang Youwei reorganises the “Liyun” text in order to foster his interpretation. More fundamentally, he transforms a single chapter into a Classic in its own right. This reorganisation primarily concerns the first paragraphs of the chapter and takes different forms: division of paragraphs (**D**), relocation of paragraphs (**R**) and suppression of paragraphs (**S**). The following table highlights the main transformations, and presents the arguments put forward by Kang Youwei in his commentary to justify them.

“Liyun” chapter (text as transmitted in the <i>Liji</i> , paragraphs as divided in Zheng Xuan’s commentary)	<i>Liyun</i> as commented by Kang Youwei Explanations by Kang Youwei
1. 昔者仲尼與於蜡賓...君子何嘆 而有志焉。 Once Confucius was taking part in the winter sacrifice... Why should a gentleman sigh?... But I have the determination.	1. sigh? 昔者仲尼與於蜡賓...君子何嘆 Once Confucius was taking part in the winter sacrifice... Why should a gentleman. D
2. 大道之行也。天下為公。 ...是謂大同。 When the Great Way was practised, the world was shared by all alike... This was the age of Grand Unity.	2. 孔子曰。大道之行也。 ...而有志焉。 大道之行也。 天下為公。 ...是謂大同。 Confucius replied: The practice of the Great Way,... But I have the determination. When the Great Way was practised, the world was shared by all alike... This was the age of Grand Unity. D

<p>3. 今大道既隱。天下為家。...是謂小康。 Now the Great Way has become hidden and the world is the possession of private families... This is the age of Lesser Prosperity.</p>	<p>3. 今大道既隱。天下為家。...是謂小康。 Now the Great Way has become hidden and the world is the possession of private families... This is the age of Lesser Prosperity. R In the previous editions, following this passage, we find the paragraph “Ziyou asked him again: 舊本此下有「言偃復問曰：如此乎禮之急」一節，上文未言禮急，文義不屬，故移於後。 Is the ritual therefore so necessary?” but as this necessity of the ritual has not yet been addressed, the text and its meaning are not in agreement, so I have moved this paragraph further.</p>
<p>4. 言偃復問曰。如此乎禮之急也。孔子曰。夫禮。先王以承天之道。...故天下國家可得而正也。 Ziyou asked him again: Is the ritual therefore so necessary? Confucius replied: By means of rituals, the ancient rulers assisted the action of heaven... Hence, the empire, the kingdoms and the families, everything could be well governed.</p>	<p>4. 言偃復問曰。夫子之極言禮也。可得而聞與。 Ziyou asked him again: Master, can we hear from you a complete speech about the ritual? R 子遊以孔子言大同之道為非常異義，故欲孔子極言之。其言禮者，以六君子皆謹於禮，以為大同亦自有禮也。孔子以未當太平時，未能行大同之道，雖蓄於心者，不能忍於一歎，而其詳則不欲言矣。故下只就三代之英言之。 Ziyou, aware of the exceptional dimension of Confucius' words on the Way of Grand Unity, wishes to hear from him a complete discourse about it. When Confucius spoke about the ritual, he mentioned how much the six gentlemen were attentive to the rites (in the state of Lesser Prosperity), so (Ziyou) thinks that the state of Grand Unity also has its own ritual. However, Confucius, considering that we have not yet reached the Great Peace, and that we are not yet able to realise the Way of Grand Unity, may maintain his purpose in his heart, without being able to hold his sigh, he does not wish to explain it in detail. Thus, he later developed only a discourse on the excellence of the Three Dynasties.</p>
<p>5. 言偃復問曰。夫子之極言禮也。可得而聞與。孔子曰。我欲觀夏道，是故之杞，而不足徵也。吾得夏時焉。我欲觀殷道，是故之宋，而不足徵也。吾得坤乾焉。坤乾之義，夏時之等，吾以是觀之。 Ziyou asked him again: Master, can we hear from you a complete speech about ritual? Confucius replied: I wanted to observe the rituals of the Xia dynasty, so I went to the country of Qi, but it has not preserved sufficient evidence. However, I found the <i>Xia Calendar</i> there. I wanted to observe the</p>	<p>5. 孔子曰。我欲觀夏道，是故之杞，而不足徵也。吾得夏時焉。我欲觀殷道，是故之宋，而不足徵也。吾得坤乾焉。坤乾之義，夏時之等，吾以是觀之。³⁸ Confucius replied: I wanted to observe the rituals of the Xia dynasty, so I went to the country of Qi, but it has not preserved sufficient evidence. However, I found the <i>Xia Calendar</i> there. I wanted to observe the rituals of the Yin dynasty, so I went to the country of Song, but it has not preserved sufficient evidence. However, I found the <i>Qian Kun</i> there. Hence, my observations come from the examination of the meaning of the <i>Qian Kun</i> and the order of the <i>Xia</i></p>

<p>rituals of the Yin dynasty, so I went to the country of Song, but it has not preserved sufficient evidence. However, I found the <i>Qian Kun</i> there. Hence, my observations come from the examination of the meaning of the <i>Qian Kun</i> and the order of the <i>Xia Calendar</i>.</p>	<p><i>Calendar</i>. R</p>
<p>6. 夫禮之初。始諸飲食。...猶若可以致其敬於鬼神。 The origins of the ritual go back to eating and drinking habits. ...in this way, they could still show their respect for ancestors and spirits.</p>	<p>6. 孔子曰。於呼哀哉。我觀周道。幽厲傷之。吾舍魯何適矣。 Confucius exclaimed: Alas! When I observe the Way of Zhou dynasty, I see that it has been degraded by kings You and Li. (But) if I leave Lu, where else should I go? S: the following fourteen paragraphs are not commented. 自此以下，發明制作之禮，不過為撥亂世。其志雖在大同，而其事只在小康也。 From this passage on, Confucius will highlight the rituals which were created (throughout history), for no other purpose than to get out of the chaos. Although his determination relied in the Grand Unity, his task nevertheless only concerned the Lesser Prosperity. 舊本「舍魯奚適」之下有此十四節，當為《郊特牲》文。按，《郊特牲》(...)記文錯簡甚多，不足為異，但亂入《禮運》，則文義不類。今改正之。 In the ancient edition, after the passage “If I leave Lu, where else should I go?”, there are 14 paragraphs which should originally be in the “Jiaotesheng” chapter. (...) The text in the record presents many problems with the order of the bamboo slips, so in a quite usual way, (these 14 paragraphs) were wrongly displaced in the “Evolution of Ritual” chapter. As a consequence, text and meaning do not correspond to each other. Here, I rectify this error.</p>
<p>7. 及其死也。...故死者北首。生者南鄉。皆從其初。 When someone died... Therefore the dead have their heads facing north, while the living are facing south. This follows the original ritual practices.</p>	<p>7. 夫禮之初。始諸飲食。...猶若可以致其敬於鬼神。及其死也。...故死者北首。生者南鄉。皆從其初。 The origins of the ritual go back to eating and drinking habits. ...in this way, they could still show their respect for ancestors and spirits. When someone died... Therefore the dead have their heads facing north, while the living are facing south. This follows the original ritual practices. R D</p>

- 30 The new division of the paragraphs particularly highlights the questions asked by Ziyou (see paragraphs 1 and 4). According to Kang's commentary, they show that the disciple was aware of the importance of Confucius' teaching on Grand Unity, thus supporting the idea that Ziyou was the repository of Confucius' esoteric teaching.
- 31 The isolation of paragraph 6 is also particularly noteworthy. Following the relocation of the whole passage, Confucius' tragic exclamation is now linked to the impossibility of practising the Way of Grand Unity. The theme of timeliness has become central in Kang's reflection. As a commentary to one of the last paragraphs of the "Liyun" chapter, Kang writes:

百王因時運而變，大禮亦因時運而遷，可以是推之。[] 拘者守舊，自謂得禮，豈知其阻塞進化，大悖聖人之時義哉！此特明禮是無定，隨時可起。

What we can infer from this is that, as the hundred kings changed with the passage of time, so the great rituals also moved with the passage of time. [...] Those who remain stuck in the ancient rules, and claim to understand ritual, how could they know that they are blocking any progress and are in complete contradiction with Confucius' sense of timeliness! This passage sheds light about the very absence of fixity for ritual; at any time, (new) rituals can arise.³⁹

- 32 According to Kang's reading, timeliness is precisely at the core of the Confucian philosophy of ritual. This reading is not particularly new; we find in the *Record of Ritual* itself powerful expressions of this idea, such as "timeliness gives ritual its greatness" (禮者時為大).⁴⁰ However, in Kang's dramatic epoch, this notion of timeliness became of particular importance. Thus, although the Grand Unity forms Confucius' core teaching and aspiration, it needs to be realised when times are ready. According to Kang Youwei, this explains why most of the chapter does not deal with Grand Unity but with rituals in times of Lesser Prosperity:

夫孔子哀生民之艱，拯斯人之溺，深心厚望，私欲高懷，其注於大同也至矣。但以生當亂世，道難躡等，雖默想太平，世猶未升，亂猶未撥，不能不盈科乃進，循序而行。故此篇餘論及它經所明，多為小康之論，而寡發大同之道，亦所謂知其不可而為之者耶！

Confucius felt compassion for the people's sufferings, and wanted to save them from drowning; his heart was full of great expectations and his personal desires were of very high standards. All of this finds its ultimate expression in the "Datong" paragraph. But because he was living in a time of disorder, he knew that it is most dangerous for the Way to jump over the steps. Even if he was silently desiring the Supreme Peace, this time obviously had not begun to ascend, disorder had not been pushed back, and thus it was necessary to first fill up the holes, and then advance⁴¹. A certain process was to be followed. That is the reason why the rest of the chapter touches on subjects which are also explained in other classics and generally deals with Lesser Prosperity, while rarely exposing the way of Grand Unity. "Isn't he the one who keeps pursuing what he knows is impossible!"⁴²

- 33 The "Datong" is not the object of the discourse but rather the object of the sigh. This reluctance to speak about Grand Unity attributed by Kang Youwei to Confucius may also reflect Kang's own reluctance to publish his *Book of Grand Unity* during his lifetime.
- 34 Thus, the silence about ritual under the Age of Grand Unity is linked to the fact that ritual is, first of all, associated with progress in the Age of Lesser Prosperity. The cumulative progress, which is the hallmark of Lesser Prosperity, has to be the object of

discourse since reform is needed in order not to fall again into disorder and to remain able to proceed further; whereas Grand Unity is a horizon.

Philological glosses and feminism

- 35 Kang Youwei regularly introduces philological glosses in his commentary. They are usually based on those of Zheng Xuan or Kong Yingda and are intended to clarify the meaning of terms that are rare or unusual in the text. But in a passage about men and women, Kang proposes a radically new gloss under the disguise of a philological note referring to an ancient edition. Kang borrows the Han commentary method, but the “ancient edition” he refers to only exists in his mind. It would be more apt to call it a “future edition”:

[Text of the “Evolution of Ritual” chapter]

男有分，女有歸。

Every man has his share, every woman has her haven.

[Kang’s philological note]

歸，舊本作歸。

“Haven”: An ancient edition gives “grand” (same character with the mountain graph).

[Kang’s commentary]

分者，限也。男子雖強，而各有權限，不得逾越。歸者，巍也。女子雖弱，而巍然自立，不得陵抑。各立和約而共守之，此夫婦之公理也。

“Share” signifies “limit.” Although men are physically stronger, their power should have limits not to be exceeded. “Grand” means “majesty.” Although women are physically weaker, they should stand up in majesty, and not be humiliated. Men and women should establish a contract that they would respect altogether; that is the general principle for husband and wife.⁴³

- 36 Although Kang Youwei is able to give a creative reading of men’s “share” as “limit” without transforming the text, he had a bigger difficulty to do the same with women’s “haven,” a term used commonly to refer to the woman’s new home after her marriage. Thus, he had to attempt a philological *coup*. Notwithstanding the fact that the equivalence between *gui* 歸 and *jia* 嫁 is perfectly established from ancient times, whereas the use of 歸 for 歸, despite the graphic proximity, was never seen before, he makes use of a graphic gloss. The result is a creative commentary on transcending biology, giving limits to men’s physical power while elevating women’s status in order to attain equality, as the indispensable basis for a contract. Later, in his *Datong shu*, Kang Youwei would go further by expanding on this contract: it was to be a renewable one-year contract.
- 37 The feminist perspective of the commentary is clear in another passage concerning a more technical aspect of the ritual. The text departs from the classical sentence “The lord and his wife alternate offerings” (君與夫人交獻):

君一獻，夫人再獻，君三獻，夫人四獻，故日交獻。古者大禮必夫婦親之。自陽侯殺繆侯而取其妻，而後大饗廢夫人之禮。此蓋偶因鑿懲而相沿成風，非禮之本也。天下無因嗜廢食者，則豈可廢夫婦交獻之禮哉？

The Lord makes the first offering, his wife the second, the Lord the third and his wife the fourth. That is what is called “alternating offerings.” In ancient

times, both husband and wife participated in important rites. But the wife's ritual participation in the Great offering was abandoned after Duke Yang killed Duke Mu in order to take away his wife (whom he had seen during the Great offering). This is most probably a circumstantial ban, which by being repeatedly followed becomes an established custom. It has never been seen in the world that people stop eating because some people have choked. Why should we therefore abandon the ritual of alternating between husband and wife?⁴⁴

- 38 Kang Youwei extends this equality in sharing ritual tasks to all couples. It is no longer an obligation exclusive to the lord and his wife. The gloss of “haven” as “grand” is without doubt a philological *coup*. But we may also underline that it allows Kang Youwei to develop a potential aspect of the *Record of Ritual*; he gives an important ritual role to the ruler's wife – a theme on which the “Signification of Sacrifice” chapter (“Jiyi” 祭義) dwells on by offering an in-depth reflection on the ritual role of the sovereign's wife.

Comparative commentaries in a universalist perspective

- 39 In his commentary to the classical paragraph on Lesser Prosperity, Kang Youwei provides a detailed reflection on each of the characteristics of this stage, namely hereditary transmission, national boundaries, hierarchy, and land distribution. The emergence of boundaries is described in the Classic in the following terms: “The powerful [...] consider that their strength lies in the depth of the moat and the height of the walls.”⁴⁵ Without departing far from the meaning of the text this time, Kang discusses the idea of boundaries: despite their primary function being security, they inevitably lead to disorder and violence.

國土互峙，上下相疑，於是築城鑿池以備不虞，而保民保境，較之野蠻，不知設險自衛者，自為少智矣。然因有國界，遂成殺禍，限禁人民，阻兵攻劫，至有屠灌全餓之慘。其傷民甚，其去道亦遠矣。

The territories stand facing each other, the superiors and the inferiors distrust each other: then, walls are built, ditches are dug, in order to protect themselves from the unpredictable. Regarding the protection of the people and the borders, it proves a certain sagacity – notably in comparison with the barbarians who are ignorant of any defence and self-protection. However, by the very fact that there are borders, this generates killings and disasters; it hinders the people; the use of armies causes invasions and raids; it leads to such cruel things as massacres and famines. This seriously harms the people and deviates far from the Way.⁴⁶

- 40 Here, it appears clear that, despite Kang's admiration for some aspects of European modernity, the nation-state model was not worth emulating. In a recent article, Federico Brusadelli has indeed explained how much Kang was attached to the Manchu empire because of its multi-ethnic character.⁴⁷ In the commentary on the “Evolution of Ritual” chapter, the desire to transcend boundaries takes the form of systematic comparisons: the commentary is filled with comparisons (in 57 instances). In discussing ritual, Kang benchmarks the evolution of material civilisation in China against other parts of the world, such as Egypt, Greece, India, or the United States.

- 41 In the short presentation of the whole chapter which forms the very beginning of the commentary, Kang Youwei already establishes a strong link between ritual in China and “law” in Greece:

禮者，猶希臘之言憲法，特兼該神道，較廣大耳。

The ritual is comparable to what is called “law” in Greece, but has the particularity of encompassing the sacred dimension, and in this regard, it is broader.⁴⁸

- 42 Although numerous, the diverse comparisons are not developed at all. They remain, throughout the commentary, more like very brief allusions. Their occurrences are particularly noteworthy in the commentary on the two paragraphs about the beginning of ritual, and its evolution following the progress in the material living conditions (paragraphs 7 and 8 in Kang’s division): the classical text describes how, in ancient times, people were able to show their respect to the spirits and the dead, despite their not even having vases to offer alcohol, nor instruments to play ritual music. Here, Kang’s comparison of China with other ancient civilisations such as “Egypt, Syria, India, or Persia” intends to show the universality of “the extreme importance given to the service to the ancestors and the spirits” (皆以事鬼神為至重).⁴⁹ He also insists on the anteriority of the “signification of ritual” (*li yi* 禮義) over the “instruments of ritual” (*li qi* 禮器) by referring to diverse indigenous peoples: “the tribes of Tengyue,⁵⁰ the ‘raw barbarian’ (*shengfan* 生番) in the islands of Taiwan, the South-Pacific or Borneo, and tribes in Africa” have a rich ritual life despite the lack of “instruments.” The eighth paragraph of the Classic highlights the material evolution which caused changes in the instruments of ritual. It concludes by reminding that the function of the rites resides in “nourishing the living and taking leave of the dead, serving the ancestors, the spirits and the supreme sovereign. (In that, the rites) all follow the early state (of ritual)” (以養生送死。以事鬼神上帝。皆從其朔). Kang Youwei’s commentary to this passage reads as follows:

凡一國之後，其飲食、衣服、宮室，所以養生送死，事鬼神上帝，皆從古人，但制作日精，文明日盛，而禮日密耳。事鬼神、上帝，乃大地生人之公理。印度婆羅門謂之大梵天王。[] 猶太謂之耶和華，迦南謂之碧綠，波斯謂之呵馬札，其為上帝則一也。

Each particular country follows what its ancient people used to do regarding diet, clothing style, architecture, and way of nourishing the living, taking leave of the dead, and of serving the ancestors, the spirits and the supreme sovereign. But production becomes more and more elaborate over time, civilisation more and more brilliant, and the rites more and more precise! Serving the ancestors, the spirits and the supreme sovereign is a universal principle among all men living on earth. Brahmins in India refer to Brahma. [...] Jews refer to Jehovah. Canaanites refer to Baal. Persians refer to Ahura Mazda. They are all one by their conception of the supreme sovereign.⁵²

- 43 Kang’s comparisons allow him to highlight the unceasing transformation of ritual. It changes through time and across space. And he finally asserts that if we go back to the origin of ritual (*i.e.* its fundamental meaning), we may discern the universality behind the apparent diversity.
- 44 Kang’s iterative use of comparisons sometimes leads to a renewal of traditional images. It is particularly the case at the end of the “Liyun” chapter, where we find a description of ritual harmony in which the animal world is included:

鳳皇麒麟。皆在郊。龜龍在宮沼。其餘鳥獸之卵胎。皆可俯而闕也。

Phoenixes and unicorns all gather in the grasslands around the cities, turtles and dragons in the lake of the imperial park; as for birds and beasts, humans only have to bend down to see their eggs or their babies all around.

Kang's commentary (conclusion):

今美之黃石園其馴熊可近，而豢獅可戲矣。衆生和同，故孳乳繁多也。極言大順之效，而皆由修禮之能體信達義，而致其順也。夫禮時為大，順次之。小康得其順，大同則因其時。此言小康為多，故大明順之義也。

Nowadays in Yellowstone Park in America, the trained bears can be approached and the domestic lions can be played with. All the living beings are together in harmony; hence they grow and multiply. This is the complete expression of the effect produced by accordance; and accordance is attained through the cultivation of rites, by which we can give substance to trust and grasp the appropriate meaning. The highest level in ritual is timeliness, and then accordance. When accordance is attained in time of Lesser Prosperity, then Grand Unity occurs in its own time. Here, the major part of the discourse deals with Lesser Prosperity, and thus sheds a great light on the signification of accordance.⁵³

- 45 Kang Youwei could have found in the Chinese tradition edifying accounts of how animals were attracted to the civilising virtue of righteous rulers, and how, in this sense, the boundaries between humans and animals could be crossed. Nonetheless, Kang's commentary did not evoke Chinese imperial parks, but the American Yellowstone Park (or at least some strange information he had about bears and lions in this park). By refusing to look for precedents in the past, and raising an example from abroad, Kang not only gave the ultimate image of accordance, or concord, the stage to be attained before Grand Unity, but he also outlined that it could be pursued in its own time.

Conclusion

- 46 One fundamental reason behind Kang's interest for this evocation of the Grand Unity in a ritual text may well have been his vision of a continuous evolution as well as his apprehensiveness toward the dangers of any "forced" transformation. To him, the only safe transformation was a transformation from within, hence from the classical tradition. The apparent opposition between the hierarchical order based on distinctions as cultivated and magnified by the rites and the ritual texts, and the equality which is at the centre of modernity according to Kang, was precisely overcome in the *Liyun* chapter. The text articulated both stages, of distinction and of equality. For many literati before Kang, this was the very proof of the composite, if not heterodox, nature of this chapter. But for Kang, it offered a possible and continuous way leading from disorder, to distinction and finally to concord. The *zha* sacrifice which constitutes the "stage" for Confucius' words, was precisely the moment when this continuity was put into practice, the concord being attained through the development of ritual.
- 47 This carefully crafted commentary extolled the profound need to anchor modernity in the classical corpus, in order to escape the accusation of simply adorning Western concepts with Chinese classical words. But the very content of the text, which stresses the necessity of overcoming the multiple boundaries and limits, shows that for Kang

Youwei, the commentary was not only instrumental, neither did it merely possess a rhetorical function; it was deeply linked to Kang's view of universality. His idea was probably that Confucian scholars would play a leading role in the reform, as it had been the case before. In general, Kang seemed to be simultaneously highly conscious of the profound crisis experienced by his country, and of the extreme urgency to act, and in a certain sense confident about the possibility of finding tools for modernisation in China's own intellectual and political tradition, thanks to classical texts, or by preserving the relationship between the Emperor and his counsellors.

- 48 This complex way of answering a tragic situation would, however, soon become impossible. The transformation of times took place far more quickly than he had expected. His project may have been a daring reform at the end of the 19th century, but twenty years later it was already considered as an ultraconservative project of restoration. The philosopher and historian Zhu Qianzhi 朱謙之 (1899–1972), an early anarchist and friend of Mao Zedong 毛澤東, considered that the distinction between Grand Unity and Lesser Prosperity was by itself, on the philological level, a forgery, and on the political level, a treason to revolution:

今人康長素全不問《禮運》原文是否可靠，還要分別甚麼「大同」「小康」，一面把「大同」一段認為孔子理想的社會制度，一面又甘心受古代作偽之人的欺瞞，拿「小康」一段，以完成他極右的復辟派的論潮。

Nowadays Kang Youwei does not raise any question about the authenticity of the "Liyun" chapter and, even worse, makes this distinction between Grand Unity and Lesser Prosperity. On the one side, he considers the paragraph about Grand Unity as the expression by Confucius of his ideal social system, and on the other side, he nevertheless meekly accepts to be cheated by forgers of the ancient times and uses the paragraph on Lesser Prosperity to complete his radical right theory of Restoration.⁵⁴

- 49 In his commentary, Kang Youwei had in a certain way already given an answer to this attack, with a sentence which could appear far-sighted to our eyes:

若未至其時，強行大同，強行公產，則道路未通，風俗為善，人種未良，且貽大害。

If it is not yet time, and you nevertheless forcibly put Grand Unity and Communism into practice, then it will provoke a great disaster, because the path is not yet opened, the customs are not yet refined, the human race has not yet improved.⁵⁵

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FOOTNOTES

1. A first version of this work was presented at the international colloquium “All about the Rites: from canonised ritual to ritualised society,” organised by Professors Anne Cheng and Stéphane Feuillas at the Collège de France (21–22 June 2018), but it was considerably enriched by the remarks and exchanges which followed this presentation and during a seminar given with Anne Cheng on Kang Youwei’s reading of the “Liyun” chapter (November 2018–January 2019). Thanks to the Institut Universitaire de France (IUF), I also benefited from considerable facilities for my documentary research on Kang Youwei during a study period at the National Library of Taiwan (May 2018). Many thanks are also due to Professor Rachel Juan (National Cheng-chi University) for kindly hosting me during this period, and to Doctor Joseph Ciaudo for his very judicious corrections and suggestions.
2. The question of the dating of this commentary, whose preface displays the wrong date of 1884, is discussed below.
3. See Brusadelli 2020.
4. According to Daniel Leese, Kang Youwei is most probably the first Chinese intellectual to use the expression *geming* 革命 to designate the idea of “revolution,” a complete structural change (and not a mere dynastic change, which is the traditional meaning of the compound), but he would then avoid using this notion. Hence, in his commentary about the “Evolution of Ritual,” the word *geming* is absent. Kang Youwei would later be strongly opposed, as a reformist, to revolutionaries such as Sun Yat-sen, but some ideas developed in his commentary can still be described as revolutionary, although he considers that their emergence can be attained through a gradual process, see Leese 2012.
5. The *Rituals of Zhou* (*Zhouli* 周禮), also known as the *Administration of Zhou* (*Zhouguan* 周官), is considered as an ideal representation of the political system of the Zhou dynasty. Except during the interregnum of Wang Mang (9–23 A.D.), the study of this Classic was not sponsored by the state.
6. This book was written by Zheng Boqian 鄭伯謙 (Song dynasty). It describes an ideal local government inspired by the institutions as presented in the *Rituals of Zhou*.
7. Compilation by Ma Duanlin 馬端臨, published at the beginning of the 14th century.
8. See Kang 1976, vol. 22, 11.
9. The “Taiping heavenly kingdom” (*Taiping Tianguo* 太平天國) was founded in South-East China in 1851 and set up institutions partly inspired by the *Zhouli*. It was defeated by the imperial army in 1864. About the *Zhouli* as a constant source of inspiration for political reforms in China, see Elman and Kern 2010.

10. As Benjamin Elman has it, “New Text advocates turned to the *Gongyang Commentary* (*Gongyang zhuan*) for Confucius’s *Spring and Autumn Annals*, one of the Five Classics, because it was the only New Text commentary on the Classics that had survived intact from the Former Han dynasty. Recorded in ‘contemporary-style script’ (...), the *Gongyang Commentary* provided textual support for the Former Han New Text school’s portrayal of Confucius as a visionary of institutional change, an ‘uncrowned king.’” See Elman 2015, 238.
11. See Cheng 1995.
12. Zhu 1998. In the introduction to his edition of the *Shili gongfa* and the *Datong shu*, Zhu Weizheng notes that in the entire *Shili gongfa* “there is not even one word about Confucius, nor about the *Liji* or any other Confucian Classic.” (p. 7).
13. His second memorial of remonstrance (*Gongche shangshu* 公車上書), written in reaction to the catastrophic treatise of Shimonoseki in 1895, was translated into French by Roger Darrobers: see Kang 2016.
14. Among them were Kang Youwei’s young brother, Kang Guangren 康廣仁 (1867–1898), and the philosopher Tan Sitong 譚嗣同 (1865–1898).
15. Kang 1976.
16. Chang 2015.
17. The dating of the *Liyun zhu* is discussed by Qian 1997, 772–775. See also Zhu 1998, 32: Zhu Weizheng considers that the commentary could not have been written before 1901, because it displays some concepts developed during this period. According to Tang Zhijun, the commentary was written around 1897, see Tang 1986.
18. Some parts of the Introduction were translated by Hsiao 1975, 47–48.
19. Kang 1987, 236.
20. *Ji* 記, here translated as “record,” originally refers to the notes accompanying the description of ritual practices from the Zhou dynasty or the preceding dynasties. See *Shiji*, j. 47, 1935–1936 for a first occurrence of the expression *Li ji* 禮記 attributed to Confucius. Later these notes would be considered to explain the signification of rituals or to complete some points which are not clear enough in the Classic (*Yili* 儀禮 or *Shili* 士禮) which is supposed to transmit the ancient ritual. From mere addenda, these notes would later be edited as such and developed, sometimes following threads which are absent from the classic. Even in Zheng Xuan’s commentary, *Liji* as a title is not systematically associated with the transmitted *Liji* and actually refers sometimes to a chapter of the *Yili*.
21. *Hu Yin* 胡寅 (1098–1156).
22. *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類, j. 87.4 (“*Li si*” 禮四): see Zhu 2010, vol. 17, 2958.
23. Kang 1987, 237.
24. This character also appears in chapters 24 and 25 of the *Zhuangzi*, where he is described as a minister of Chu 楚, versed in non-action, and deeply admired by Confucius, who meets him on a hypothetical journey to Chu.
25. *Zhuangzi* 莊子, chap. 20 (“Mountain Trees” 山木). English translation reproduced from Watson 1968, 211.
26. *Liezi* 列子, chap. 5 (“Questions of King Tang” 湯問). English translation reproduced from Graham 1960, 102.
27. If we follow Sima Qian’s chronology, Ziyou was 45 years younger than Confucius, see *Shiji*, j. 67 (“*Zhongni dizi liezhuan*” 仲尼弟子列傳), 2201. According to Qian Mu, this chronology demonstrates that the dialogue is a complete fiction: Qian Mu supposes that Confucius was then Minister of Justice (*sikou* 司寇) in the realm of Lu. Confucius left his native place when he was 55 years old, so it would mean that this dialogue took place when Ziyou was at best 10 years old... See Qian 1986, 72.
28. On the distinction between the *zha* and *la* sacrifices and their later confusion, see Bodde 1975, 72, which generally defines *zha* as a “communal outdoor festival,” while “the *la*, by

contrast, centers on the ancestors and the household gods; as such, it is a family indoor festival.” *Zha* and *la* sometimes coexisted, but in 584, the *zha* sacrifice was considered heterodox and was definitely abolished, see also Granet 1982, 173.

29. *Liji jijie* 1990, 1115.

30. According to Zheng Xuan, when Zigong says he does not understand, he in fact criticises the way of practicing this sacrifice (怪之也) and when Confucius retorts that indeed, he does not understand, he means that he is not able to understand the great signification (非汝所知, 言其義大).

31. Much later, Su Shi would also emphasise the carnival-like atmosphere of the sacrifice *zha/la*, highlighting that here also, like in the other sacrifices, impersonators are needed, not for the deceased ancestors, but for the spirits which cooperated for harvest. There should thus have been disguised buffoons participating in the festival. See Su Shi’s 蘇軾 “About Sacrifices” (*jisi* 祭祀) in Su 2003, 64: “The *zha* sacrifice to the eight spirits is a festival of the Three Dynasties. At the end of the year, people would gather together for the festival. This is a necessary dimension in human affects, and thus it was given a ritual expression. I would add this: it was not only a festival, it was also a sacrifice, and as such, impersonators were needed. Who would act as impersonators of cats and tigers (note of the translator: they were included among the ‘eight spirits’ which helped harvest, as killers of mice and boars)? [...] Who else but buffoons! [...] When Zigong expressed his distaste for the *zha* sacrifice, Confucius made the following comparison: ‘The way of kings Wen and Wu is the alternation of release and tension.’ This was the meaning of this sacrifice.” 八蠪，三代之戲禮也。歲終聚戲，此人情之所不免也，因附以禮義。亦曰：「不徒戲而已矣，祭必有屍，無屍日『奠』，始死之奠與釋奠是也。」今蠪謂之「祭」，蓋有尸也。貓虎之尸，誰當為之？[...] 非倡優而誰！[...] 子貢觀蠪而不悅，孔子譬之曰：「一張一弛，文、武之道。」蓋為是也。

32. Zheng Xuan also comments on Confucius’ location, a tower in the capital of the realm of Lu.

33. Kang 1987, 238-239.

34. *Lunyu* 論語, XIV.38. Translated by Simon Leys, see Nylan 2014, 44.

35. See Chen Hao 陳澧 of the Yuan dynasty who quotes a certain Wang from Shiliang: 石梁王氏曰：以五帝之世為大同，以禹、湯、文、武、成王、周公為小康，有老氏意 (*Liji jishuo* 2009, 120). In his general introduction to the chapter, Chen Hao follows this idea: “(This chapter) sometimes offers right adages, but the discourse on *Datong* and *Xiaokang* at the beginning of the chapter does not belong to Confucius.” 閒有格言，而篇首大同小康之說，則非夫子之言也。Another argument in favour of the “heterodox” character of the opening paragraphs remains the fact that the “Liyun” chapter in the *Kongzi jiaoyu* 孔子家語 does present numerous parallel passages with the “Liyun” in the *Liji*, but not with regard to the notion of *Xiaokang*, thus diminishing the opposition between the two stages.

36. This notice was originally written for the *Xuxiu Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* 續修四庫全書總目提要: Huang 2003, 453-456.

37. About Zhu Xi’s transformation of the “Daxue” chapter into a *Daxue* book, see Lee 2015.

38. See *Lunyu* III, 9.

39. Kang 1987, 263-264.

40. The expression is taken from the “Liqi” 禮器 chapter.

41. See *Mengzi*, “Li Lou, xia” 離婁下.

42. Kang 1987, 236. The final quote is from *Lunyu* 論語, XIV.38. Translated by Simon Leys, see Nylan 2014, 44.

43. Kang 1987, 240.

44. Kang 1987, 250.

45. Kang 1987, 242: 大人 [...] 城壑溝池以為固.

46. Kang 1987, 241.

47. See Brusadelli 2014, 151: “A multiethnic structure such as the Great Qing, once reformed and brought back to the domain of *gong*, is much closer to the ideal of Datong than a nation-state whose borders are brushed on racial premises, Kang suggests”.

48. Kang 1987, 238.

49. Kang 1987, 246.

50. Ancient administrative division, corresponding to present day Tengchong 騰沖, on the border with Myanmar.

51. Here Kang mentions a translation of Brahma by the expression *Baming* 八明, which he has found in a *Fei da jing* 費大經. I was not able to find out which work he refers to.

52. Kang 1987, 248.

53. Kang 1987, 266.

54. Zhu 2002, 515.

55. Kang 1987, 242.

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The evolution and adaptability of *li* in the philosophy of Kang Youwei

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- 1 When attempting to appraise the work of any thinker active over a prolonged period of time, one is inevitably faced with the task of how to account for the evolution of the system of thought he or she developed, along with the possible inconsistencies and apparent incoherences contained therein. This is particularly the case when it comes to the thought of Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858–1927), whose works span more than four decades of China’s tumultuous modern history. He has been decried both as a representative of “feudal society” and an iconoclastic figure who overturned “traditional” Confucian values; and it is at times somewhat arduous to navigate apparent changes in Kang’s philosophical stances over the years, which need to be understood before the backdrop of monumental changes taking place in China throughout his lifetime.¹
- 2 Kang’s most famous disciple Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929) once said that “humanness [*ren* 仁] was the sole guiding principle” of his teacher’s philosophy.² This would seem to be an invaluable key to help assess Kang’s philosophy as a whole, in such a way as to enable one to grasp the meaning of the individual notions and phases of which it consists. When one takes *ren* as the overriding guiding principle of Kang’s philosophical system, at the service of which all other notions function and evolve, his ideas indeed start to take on greater meaning both individually and interdependently, and one starts to take for granted the fact that any individual notion can be jettisoned at any given moment, so as to further the cause of *ren* in human society. One might even be justified in saying that Kang’s most “iconoclastic” vision of a future utopian world, the age of “Great Unity” (*datong* 大同) is characterised by the ultimate jettisoning of all values and concepts which hinder the advent of a world functioning as a pure expression of *ren*.³ Indeed, as Kang clearly claims, “The way of *datong* leads to equality, the common good and *ren*, and is the epitome of good governance.”⁴
- 3 In common with generations of Confucian philosophers before him, the notion *li* 禮 is central to Kang’s philosophy, in which it goes far beyond the original meaning of “rite/ritual,” and is used to depict structures through which *ren* can be achieved. One might

even say that *li* structurally reflect the very development of Kang's thought. They are depicted as being by nature –and vocation– subject to modifications, so as to accomplish their humanising function. Ironically, variation and malleability are in this way constant throughout Kang's works, in which the objective of humanistic development stands paramount as the sole unchanging and unchangeable aspiration.

- 4 The objective of this paper is to reflect upon how the idea of the adaptability of *li* is developed in Kang's philosophy. How does Kang define *li*, and how does he depict their fundamental nature and utility? In what way does he justify his vision of their necessary evolution, and what implications does this have for the world vision he seeks to develop? Ultimately, how does an appraisal of this help one to better understand his philosophy in particular, and possibly Confucian thought in general?
- 5 The notion *li* lies at the very heart of Confucian thought. Initially designating the ritual ceremonies around which political legitimacy was structured in the Zhou era,⁵ its use in Confucian discourse has encompassed wider dimensions related to a desired moral development. Gao Ming points out that “from Confucius onwards, all of [China's] institutions have existed within [the framework of] *li*. If there were no *li*, then the basis of every institution would be lost.”⁶ According to Roger T. Ames, the concept “is extremely broad, embracing everything from manners to mediums of communication to social and political institutions. It is the determinate fabric of Chinese culture and, further, defines sociopolitical order.”⁷ Translations of the term are numerous and varied, ranging, amongst others, from “rite,” “ritual practice” and “ceremonial” to “propriety,” “decorum,” “manners” and “civility.”⁸ However, as H. G. Creel already observed, at times “such translation not only fails to convey the sense of the Chinese, but even quite obscures its true meaning.”⁹ Ames also indicates that the notion “does not carry the pejorative connotations such as superficiality, formalism, and irrationality often associated with the Western understanding of ritual.”¹⁰
- 6 Variability is a key characteristic of *li*. According to Kurtis Hagen, “rather than strict rules, the formal aspect of *li* is better thought of as involving norms of varying specificity, grounded in tradition, yet necessarily evolving as a result of individual appropriation over time.”¹¹ Antonio Cua also tells us that “*li* is a rich and fluid notion with a long history of evolution,”¹² while Gao Ming argues that “*li* are not immutable – when the times change, *li* have to follow them and change as well.”¹³
- 7 In the historical context of Kang's philosophy, the idea of the constant evolution of *li* takes on particular meaning. It without doubt reflects an ongoing desire to respond to unprecedented historical challenges in creative ways, while at the same time seeking to establish these responses firmly within the framework of Confucian teachings. In the political sphere, this of course finds expression in Kang's theories on institutional reform, culminating in the failed reform movement of 1898. However, it would be misleading to limit our understanding of his views on the matter to simply their immediate relevance and practical application.
- 8 This paper does not purport to explore the question of Kang's institutional reforms. This has been done exhaustively elsewhere.¹⁴ By concentrating on Kang's ideas on *li*, the objective is rather to reflect upon the “philosophical” dimension of his approach to change; as opposed to any particular movement or political programme. Kang's philosophy will be considered as underpinning certain practical applications attempted over the course of his life, without ever being fully reflected therein. In other words, for what concerns the present article, it is clear that the question of *li*, which was a

constant intellectual preoccupation throughout Kang's life, precedes and survives his championing of institutional reform in 1898; the latter can be seen as simply the tangible expression of his ideas in a particular historical and political context.¹⁵

- 9 When it comes to understanding Kang's use of the term *li* nearly two and a half millennia after Confucius' first re-elaboration of it, caution is required. It is clear that across the large body of his writings, Kang does not posit the notion in terms of "rites" or "ritual behaviour" as such, but rather as a synonym of social, political and cultural institutions and practices which structure human society and humanistic development.¹⁶ Ultimately, the areas of human existence that this covers could be extremely far-reaching. For the purposes of the present paper, therefore, the term will be left untranslated, so as to avoid misleading interpretations which would limit our understanding of the implications Kang attaches to the concept.

- 10 Kang describes the basic functioning of *li* in the following way:

孔子曰：安上治民，莫善於禮。禮也者，人道之自然，物理所必著，上自太古狉獠之世，外至蠻夷蕃部之愚，未有能絕去之也。 [...] 人生而有飲食、衣服、宮室，則制度必有別焉。

Confucius said: 'To bring stability above and to govern the people, nothing is better than *li*.'¹⁷ *Li* are a natural part of the human way, whereby the principle of things necessarily becomes perceptible. Even in the remote past when there was no civilisation, and in the outer regions where there are but simple barbarian tribes, it has never been possible to do without them. [...] Food, clothing and shelter are needs of human existence, and institutions must necessarily make distinctions.¹⁸

- 11 For Kang, the most fundamental reason for the existence of *li* is that they give structure to the most essential requirements of human society, and respond to antagonisms which could potentially arise:

禮者，所以治人我對立。人我對立，則有條理，自然有尊卑、貴賤、大小、內外、遠近、新舊。禮者所以為其位級。言禮者，簡易直當莫尚於此。

Li are the means of dealing with divergences between oneself and others. As a result of such divergences there exists the need for an ordering principle, and naturally there exist differences between what is elevated and inferior, noble and lowly, large and small, internal and external, near and far, new and old. *Li* are the way to establish place and rank. This is the most concise and appropriate way of defining *li*.¹⁹

- 12 Of course, this "concise" definition does not exclude the ritualistic dimension of the earliest conceptualised forms of *li*. However, the capacity that *li* have to structure society –in such a way that conflicts are defused and the expression of human needs finds form– should arguably not be over-interpreted in terms of "ritualised" behaviour. In a purely prosaic manner, Kang writes:

立禮以為防，修義以為限，紀而綱之，進入道於修明，較之亂世，無禮無義，自為文明矣。

Li are established in order to prevent improper behaviour, and the idea of rightness is upheld in order to establish limits. They are instituted as guiding principles, leading humanity to honest and enlightened government. Compared to a world of disorder, in which there is neither *li* nor rightness, this is, of course, more civilised.²⁰

- 13 *Li* are thus understood as a fundamental building block enabling humans to coexist in society, whereby the interests of the individual are limited in such a way that the wellbeing of others is not impinged upon. They are synonymous with the processes which enable the survival of the group, originating, as already mentioned, in the rational organisation of the most basic requirements of human society –food, clothing and shelter. In this sense, Kang’s vision of *li* is essentially Xunzian.²¹ According to Kang:

如使一人獨生，則聽其自由可也，然人非獨生，禮為眾設。若聽一人之自由，必侵犯眾人之權限，不可行也，故不能不治之以節，飾之以文。

If one were the only person alive, then one would be free to do whatever one desired. However, that is not the case. *Li* are established for people living in society [lit. ‘the masses’]. If one does whatever one wishes, then one will necessarily encroach upon the rights of everyone else. That is not feasible. As a result, it is necessary to control this by means of restraints and embellish it with cultural forms.²²

- 14 Kang follows the definition of *li* given by Shusun Tong,²³ whereby they are seen as “ceremonies” or “restraints” (*jiewen* 節文) responding to the circumstances in which they are used.²⁴ In the context of his increasing espousal of “new text” Confucian paradigms, he believes that they consolidate political and social hierarchies in the imperfect stage of historical development known as the “Age of Minor Prosperity” (*xiaokang* 小康).²⁵ In his *Book of Great Unity*, he goes as far as associating *li* with injustices:

而亂世尊男，以女為屬，飾為禮義，崇為高節。

The age of disorder honours men, and treats women as mere dependents, embellishing this with *li* and ideas of what is right [*yi* 義], and giving high esteem to what is considered ethical conduct.²⁶

- 15 However, for Kang their fundamental role should be as a “remedy to advance the common good and eradicate misfortune” (*xing renli qu renhuan zhi fangyao* 興人利去人患之方藥),²⁷ being created to “bring peace to the people, not to embitter their lives.”²⁸ The key to understanding Kang’s interpretation of *li* lies therefore in the difference between their immediate structural functionality (and possible negative consequences) and the very purpose of their existence.

- 16 This contrast is best summed up in the opposition Kang sketches between the “implementation of *li*” (*liyun* 禮運) in their historical functionality, and the “implementation of humanness” (*renyun* 仁運)²⁹ as the overriding finality –a finality which is destined to ultimately supersede them and render them irrelevant. For Kang, it is therefore of the utmost importance to clearly differentiate between functionality and finality:

蓋人道全在仁、樂、順，而禮義乃其橋梁舟車也。但啟行前往，舍橋梁舟車無至到之日，而橋梁舟車雖當隨地制宜，亦非安居之所也。

The human way is entirely about *ren*, music [alternatively, ‘happiness’], and following [the order of things]. *Li* and rightness are the bridges and vehicles which lead there. Now, if before setting off one were to discard the bridges and vehicles, then one would never reach one’s destination. However, although bridges and vehicles need to correspond to the regions they cross, they are not permanent things in themselves.³⁰

- 17 *Li* thus serve to give form to a vision of the “right” way (*yi* 義) to achieve the development of humanness (*ren* 仁) in society. As Wong Wai-ying points out, “From a

Confucian point of view, the observance of *li* is a path to *ren*.³¹ Antonio Cua affirms that “*li*, in its generic sense, is connected with *ren*, the Confucian ideal of the good life.”³² Chang Hao declares that “according to [Kang], the advent of [*ren*] must be prepared by the practice of *li*.”³³ According to Fang Delin, “*ren* is Confucianism’s general principle for regulating human relationships, and *li* are the means by which they are normalised.”³⁴ The idea of “ceremonies” or “restraints” (*jiewen* 節文) used to define *li* can therefore also be understood more literally as the forms which enable the articulation of humanistic development. For Kang:

義為事宜，祇是空理，禮者乃行其節文也。無節文，則義不能見。然節文者，因時因地而制，非能永定。

Rightness corresponds to what is appropriate. However, this is just an empty principle. *Li* are what enable it to be articulated [in tangible form]. Without this, rightness would not be perceptible. However, the forms this takes vary according to time and place. They cannot remain forever permanent.³⁵

- 18 There thus arises the problem of the “substance” (*zhi* 質) and “form” or “decorative patterns” (*wen* 文) associated with *li*. Ames draws a parallel with the idea of embodiment: “*Li* [禮] is cognate with the character [*ti* 體], which means ‘to embody,’ ‘to constitute a shape,’ and, by extension, ‘organic form.’ Ritual practices, then, are ‘performances’: social practices that effect relationships through prescribed forms.”³⁶ In his analysis of *li*, Zhou He points out the complementary relationship between form and content: “Concrete forms are necessarily dependent upon ideas in order to maintain their value, while abstract ideas also have to rely on formal expressions in order to exist.”³⁷ This double dimension is central to Kang’s understanding of what *li* represent, and of their need to evolve.
- 19 According to Kang, Confucius –who by the time of the mid-1890s is referred to in “new text” fashion as the very creator of *li*, as opposed to the mere transmitter downplayed in “old text” accounts³⁸– was deeply concerned that the formal dimension of *li* had developed to the detriment of their humanising finality.

蓋夫子以周末人偽，以文滅質，有為言之。若時之有變，則觀其會通，以行其典禮。

Confucius, seeing people’s deceitfulness at the end of the Zhou dynasty, whereby form drowned substance, acted and spoke out against this. Just as times change, ‘one needs to fully understand [these changes], when putting *li* into practice.’³⁹

- 20 Historically speaking, Confucius was, of course, not the originator of *li*. However, Kang’s “reinvention” of him as their initiator and –in the practical context of his reformist agenda of the 1890s– their “reformer” should be understood in terms of the humanist interpretation and functionality which arguably characterise the moral paradigmatic legacy of the Confucian approach to the human condition. Kang associates Confucius with a secularisation of proto-religious ritual forms, which are thus channelled towards a more rationalised and ultimately moral direction:

孔子定禮，祭止天祖，其他皆為淫祀，妄祭以求福，是行諂媚也。蓋上古淫祀之鬼甚多，孔子乃一掃而空之。

When Confucius established the *li*, he limited sacrifices to five generations of ancestors. The others were all shameless sacrifices, recklessly performed to beg for good fortune. This was ingratiating behaviour. Sacrifices involved a

large number of spirits in ancient times. Confucius did away with all of them.

40

21 The Confucian moral paradigm thus follows the same line dividing “civilisation” and “barbarism” as that already celebrated by the political institutions of the time, but in terms of *ren*, and not simply of elaborate cultural forms. For if “Confucius [created the *li*] in response to human emotions and so as to regulate them; following [*li*] leads to civilisation, whereas turning one’s back on them leads to barbarism,”⁴¹ Kang nevertheless insists on the fact that “*ren* must necessarily come first, and then *li* can be put into practice... When creating the *li*, Confucius repeatedly stressed what their basis was, fearing that form would submerge substance, and that deceitfulness would be increasingly rampant.”⁴²

22 Commenting on *Analects* III, 3, in which Confucius declares that *li* and music are meaningless if devoid of *ren*,⁴³ Kang affirms:

蓋人者仁也，取仁於天，而仁也以博愛為本，故為善之長。有仁而後人道立，有仁而後文為生。苟人而不仁，則非人道。蓋禮者，仁之節，樂者，仁之和。不仁，則無其本，和節皆無所施。[]有其體式而無其精神，亦不足為禮樂也。

Ren is about human beings, and comes from Nature. The basis of *ren* is love for everyone, and hence therein lies the strength of goodness. When there is *ren*, then the human way can be established. When there is *ren*, then cultural forms can come about. If one lacks *ren*, then that is not the human way. *Li* are the structure [*jie* 節] of *ren*, and music is its harmonious expression. Without *ren*, the basis of this is lost, and structure and harmony have no way of being put into practice. [...] If forms exist without the corresponding spirit, then they cannot be referred to as *li* and music.⁴⁴

23 As a result, social structures and institutions, which exist for the sole purpose of canalising human energies towards the common good, must necessarily be understood in a dynamic manner. The capacity to grasp this is, according to Kang, a fundamental differentiating characteristic of the worthy person, of which Confucius is the ultimate embodiment; although across Kang’s works an autobiographical slant can also often be perceived in the celebration of sages. If Confucius is depicted as he who was capable of changing the formal contours of *li* in order to release their humanising potential, it is obvious that Kang saw himself as a modern representative of this ideal. The “reformist” or “revolutionary” Confucius –able to go against the conventions of his time– is inevitably largely a projection of a self-perceived “reformist” or “revolutionary” Kang;⁴⁵ both are seen as standing out against a background of mere conformism:

常人安於故俗，學者溺於所聞。[...] 智者作法，愚者制焉。賢者更禮，不肖者拘焉。

The ordinary person is content with old habits, whereas the learned person goes counter to what has simply been passed on. [...] The knowledgeable create models, whereas the simple merely follow what has been established. The worthy modify *li*, whereas the unworthy merely rigidly adhere to them.⁴⁶

24 Kang’s interpretation of *li* from a primarily transformative perspective evidently recalls Xunxi, and one would be tempted to understand his stance on the subject in Xunzian terms. This is also the idea of Xunzi that *li* not only serve to divert one from egocentric tendencies, but are also a means of “moral nurturing” (*yang* 養). According to Kang, “nothing in the human way is more important than nurturing. *Li* were established to

help people. That is why the rightness embodied in *li* is nothing else but nurturing people's [moral worth]."⁴⁷ Indeed, for Kang, to consider *li* as being merely structures of restraint is to lose sight of their humanising function. He is particularly critical of Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism in this regard:

禮論言禮者，養也，最包括。宋儒止言得一節字，未知聖人養人之義。

[Xunzi's] *Discourse on Li* says that 'li enable [moral] nurturing.' This is the most comprehensive definition. Neo-Confucianism [lit. 'Song Confucians'] stopped at the notion of restraint, and did not understand the sage's idea of nurturing people.⁴⁸

- 25 However, despite the numerous parallels between Xunzi's philosophy and his own, Kang considers the former as having only partially transmitted the teachings of Confucius, laying too much emphasis on the formal aspect of *li*. In contrast, Mencius is seen as being more "new text' compatible," his vision of human moral development going beyond the historical limitations of the age of disorder:

荀卿傳禮，孟子傳詩書及春秋。禮者，防檢於外，行於當時，故僅有小康據亂世之制，而大同以時未可，蓋難言之。

Xunzi handed down the teachings of the *Book of Rites*, whereas Mencius transmitted those of the *Book of Odes*, the *Book of Documents* and the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. *Li* prevent and restrain what arises externally; and were of use at that time. They therefore only correspond to the institutions of a world of disorder in the age of *xiaokang*, and not to the age of *datong*. It was difficult for Confucius to explain this.⁴⁹

- 26 Xunzi is in this way primarily associated with what *li* symbolise in terms of restraint – a role limited in time, before the advent of the *datong* – and as such is representative of an incomplete development of Confucian ideals:

故荀子以人性為惡，而待繫括之，傳小康據亂之道，蓋得孔子之粗末者也。

Therefore, Xunzi considered that human nature was bad, and merely aspired to straightening it out. He transmitted the way of a world of disorder in the age of *xiaokang*, and as such only grasped the less-sophisticated aspects of Confucius' teachings.⁵⁰

- 27 It is within the common binomial "li and music" (*liyue* 禮樂) that Kang finds a means of expressing the complementary and ultimately contradictory relationship between formalised structures and a humanising finality. Apparently inspired by an affirmation attributed to Confucius in the *Book of Later Han* (後漢書 *Hou Hanshu*) whereby "li cultivate what is external, and music cultivates what is internal",⁵¹ he argues:

禮者，所以治人之魄也；樂者，所以治人之魂也；魂魄治，則內外修，而聖人之能事畢矣。禮、樂為孔子之制作。

Li are what govern the part of the human soul attached to the body [*po* 魄], whereas music governs the part which is detached from it [*hun* 魂]. When both of these are governed, one's internal and external dimensions are both upheld, and what is in the power of the sage is accomplished. *Li* and music were both created by Confucius.⁵²

- 28 For Kang, the complementarity between the two reflects the contrasting purposes that they serve: *li* are the structural means to create order and restraint, whereas music

responds to the “spiritual” needs of the individual, and is what enables the transition towards *ren*. According to Kang:

禮者為異，樂者為同；禮為合敬，樂為合愛；禮為別宜，樂為敦和；禮為無爭，樂為無怨。

Li emphasise differences, whereas music emphasises likeness. *Li* unite forms of respect, whereas music unites expressions of human love. *Li* stress differences and what is appropriate, whereas music stresses magnanimity and harmony. *Li* exist so that conflict can be avoided, whereas music exists so that discontent can be avoided.⁵³

- 29 In this, there exists a certain dialectical tension between the two, in which each element has a controlling function over the other:

禮勝則離，必和之以樂，樂勝則流，必節之以禮。

When *li* have the upper hand, they stray from their original purpose, and need to be harmonised by means of music. When music gets the upper hand, it leads to dissolution, and needs to be restrained by means of *li*.⁵⁴

- 30 The dialectical dimension lies in the fact that the interaction between the two ultimately leads to the superseding of *li* –a process that Kang sees as an expression of the historical shift towards *ren* and the age of *datong*, and in which he seems to intentionally shift towards the other meaning of the character *yue* 樂 –happiness:

故禮樂並制，而小康之世尚禮，大同之世尚樂。

Li and music were instituted simultaneously, but the age of *xiaokang* attaches great importance to *li*, whereas the age of *datong* attaches great importance to [happiness].⁵⁵

- 31 Kang further confirms a certain blurring of the lines between the different interpretations of *yue*, and the ultimate objective of superseding the role of *li* in human society, by arguing that:

孔子禮樂並制，而歸本於樂。蓋人道以樂為主，無論如何立法，皆歸於使人樂而已。故小康之制尚禮，大同之世尚樂，令普天下人人皆敦和無怨，合愛尚同，百物皆化，禮運以為大道之行。

Confucius instituted *li* and music simultaneously, but they ultimately boil down to [happiness]. The human way is primarily a question of [happiness]. In whatever way laws are established, their ultimate objective is simply to bring [happiness] to people. Therefore, the institutions of the age of *xiaokang* attach great importance to *li*, whereas the age of *datong* attaches great importance to [happiness]; so as to enable everyone in the world to live in a state of magnanimity and harmony, and free of discontent; in which human love is developed and unity is stressed, and everything in the world is transformed. According to the “*Liyun*”, this is how the great way is carried out.⁵⁶

- 32 The variability and ultimate superseding of *li* are therefore, for Kang, structural characteristics of their purpose and functionality. Their effectiveness or relevance thus inevitably depend upon the contexts in which they operate –changing circumstances requiring varying formal structures. This view finds its full expression in the vision of historical evolution at the heart of “new text” Confucianism, but it is already present before Kang’s shift towards this in the 1890s. Very early in his intellectual development, and before developing a fully fledged theory on the matter, he already

considered the timeliness of the implementation of *li* was crucial to their effectiveness, going as far as paraphrasing Zhu Xi in this regard:

朱子曰：禮，時為大，使聖賢者有作，必不從古之禮。

Master Zhu said: ‘The timeliness of *li* is of great importance. If sages and worthies are to accomplish anything, then they must necessarily not just follow the *li* of the past.’⁵⁷

- 33 The plurality of “sages and worthies” is naturally reduced in the context of Kang’s increasingly “new text” approach. Confucius himself becomes not only the creator of *li*, but indeed the epitome of a full understanding of how their timeliness is structurally decisive. According to Kang, “Confucius was a sage in harmony with the changes of time.”⁵⁸ This is made possible by a deep understanding of all of the aspects which make up the human condition:

聖人之禮，無往非順乎天地，順乎人情，順乎時宜。

All of the *li* created by the Sage follow the natural order, human emotions, and what is appropriate at each moment in time.⁵⁹

- 34 In fact, Kang defines Confucianism in general as being determined by this capacity, implying that merely following formal structures without reflecting upon their accordance or not with objective conditions ultimately betrays the Confucian ideal:

今者，中國已小康矣，而不求進化，泥守舊方，是失孔子之意，而大悖其道也。

China is currently in the age of *xiaokang*. If it does not seek to evolve, and rather rigidly adheres to old ways, then it misses the meaning of Confucius’ teachings, and goes completely against his way.⁶⁰

- 35 A dimension of personal implication and reflection is therefore central to this vision, as opposed to a passive imitation of convention: “The Way of Confucius emphasises timeliness and depends on thoughtful evaluation.”⁶¹

- 36 Kang repeatedly stresses the idea that the adaptation of *li* to the circumstances in which they are used necessarily excludes blindly following form; the latter being synonymous with the incomplete development of Confucianism:

夫禮時為大，順次之。小康得其順，大同則因其時。

The timeliness of *li* is of the utmost importance –more so than simply following [what is already established]. In the age of *xiaokang* people only understand how to follow. In the age of *datong*, they are able to correspond to [the needs of] the times.⁶²

- 37 In this way, human civilisation is seen as a cumulative process of continual phases of change and adaptation, which is supposed to have already been the case before Confucius:

夫禮以時為大，易以變為宜。 [] 百王因時運而變，大禮亦因時運而遷，可以是推之。

The timeliness of *li* is of great importance, and it is appropriate that they change. [...] The hundred kings reformed in accordance with the times. It can thus be deduced that the great *li* also vary in accordance with the times.⁶³

- 38 The reference here to kings of ancient times is not accidental, since Kang considers China to have remained in a state of incomplete moral development despite the advent

of Confucius' teachings more than two millennia beforehand. Indeed, according to Kang, the "qualitative" level of human and moral development has stagnated as a result of the passive following of convention. This can only be overcome by means of a "qualitative" shift towards the age of *datong*, which in turn is only possible through an astute understanding of the need to adapt to changing circumstances:

蓋亂世人之資格，與太平世人之資格迥遠，聖人不得不因時世而節取之。

The level of people in the age of disorder is completely different from that in the age of universal peace. The sage must necessarily deal with this in accordance with the circumstances of the period at hand.⁶⁴

39 In order to achieve this, it is the very approach to comprehending the world around us which needs to be changed: "The timeliness of *li* is of great importance. Learning must therefore also adapt to the times."⁶⁵ Kang does not think that this change is to take place outside of the Confucian paradigm, even though this very paradigm will inevitably absorb the new realities which surround it. The "return" to the teachings of an arguably freely "reinvented" Confucius enables the incorporation of new features, without forsaking the humanistic ideals Kang associates with the Confucian way. With the finality of *ren* remaining the central objective of Kang's theories, new features in fact resemble new or adapted *li*-formal structures which enable an overriding goal, and which in turn can be replaced.

40 In this way, "timeliness" refers not only to the adaptation of *li* to the circumstances in which they are put into practice; it also includes the idea of an awareness of the appropriate phases of historical evolution through which *li* need to be adapted. According to Kang, the advancement of the Confucian agenda cannot be accomplished if the particularities of these different phases are not taken into account and respected. The desire to see the advent of the age of *datong* must therefore not induce one into directly skipping the historical phases leading to it. *Li* are to be adapted to the corresponding circumstances, and cannot be eliminated at once. This explanation allows Kang not only to argue in favour of such a process of adaptation; it also enables him to explain why, according to him, Confucius "created" *li* in the first place, even if his ultimate objective was for them to be replaced and superseded. According to Kang, Confucius knew that the age of *datong*-the stage of human history in which *ren* has been fully developed and no longer needs artificial structures (*li*) to give it formal expression- was impossible to bring about in the times in which he lived:

發明制作之禮，不過為撥亂世。其志雖在大同，而其事祇在小康也。

The invention and establishing of *li* was only done for an age of disorder. Although his aspiration was the *datong*, his acts were limited to the age of *xiaokang*.⁶⁶

41 Failure to respect the objective conditions of each age would thus not only hinder progress on the road towards *ren*, but could actually bring about calamitous consequences.

若未至其時，強行大同，強行公產，則道路未通，風俗未善，人種未良，且貽大害。故祇得因其俗，順其勢，整齊而優明之。

If the time has not yet come, and one forcefully puts into practice the *datong* and collective ownership, while the road which leads there is not yet connected, customs have not yet been improved and the human race has not yet been bettered, then this will have dire consequences. That is why one

may only respond to customs, following the circumstances of the time, correcting and enlightening them.⁶⁷

- 42 The advent of the age of *datong* is only possible when the finality of *li* –a society operating solely in accordance with *ren*– has been reached, thus making them no longer relevant as formalised structures. It is not simply synonymous with the elimination of these structures. According to Kang,

若夫天下為公，選賢與能，人人不獨親其親，不獨子其子，此須待大同之世。苟未至其時不易，妄行則致大亂生大禍。

The world as one great community, in which people are employed according to their worth and capabilities, and in which everyone no longer only cares for their own families, must wait until the age of *datong*. If change is not implemented at the right time, reckless action would lead to great disorder and bring about great misfortune.⁶⁸

- 43 One could say that Kang’s vision is inevitably based upon two invented extremes –a “reinvented” Confucius to whom this vision is essentially attributed, and an undetermined, idealised and abstract future– and a middle ground consisting of a problematic present entrenched in historical decline and crisis. As a result, it is arguably hardly surprising that Kang alienated tenants of sociopolitical agendas across the spectrum of Chinese responses to the calamities of the nineteenth century. His ideas ultimately convinced neither “conservatives” nor “revolutionaries”.
- 44 In the above-cited letter to Chinese merchants in the Americas written in 1902, Kang points out why he considers revolution to be an inadequate solution in the process of social and political change:

據亂則內其國，君主專制世也；升平則立憲法，定君民之權之世也；太平則民主，平等大同之世也。孔子豈不欲宜至太平大同哉？時未可則亂反甚也。今日為據亂之世，內其國則不能一超直至世界之大同也；為君主專制之舊風，亦不能一超至民主之世也。

In the age of disorder, everyone cares only for their own national interests. This is the age of autocratic monarchy. In the age of ascending peace, constitutional government is established. This is the age in which power is shared between monarchs and the people. In the age of universal peace, there exists democracy. This is the age of equality and *datong*. How could Confucius not have desired that one proceeds to the *datong* of the age of universal peace? When the times are not propitious, then on the contrary, great disorder is brought about. The present age is one of disorder. As people care only for their own national interests, they are unable to leap directly to *datong* in the world. As a result of the entrenched custom of autocratic monarchy, they are unable to leap directly to an age of democracy.⁶⁹

- 45 In the context of Kang’s agenda of institutional reform, the idea of the evolution of *li* naturally overlaps with the concrete objective of adapting China’s political and economic structures to the needs of the times. Two opposing examples are often used to highlight the consequences of timely change or not –the cases of India and Japan, and the way in which these two nations responded to similar dangers. If Japan is often cited as an example to follow –indeed, in 1898 Kang authored a text entirely dedicated to institutional change brought about during the Meiji era⁷⁰– India is a counter-example in Kang’s works which is often overlooked. In a text prepared in June 1898, Kang argues that:

禮以時為大，而孔子時聖；逆天不祥，違時必敗。若當變不變，必有代變之者矣。與其人為變之，何如己自變之之為安適。夫印度者，人代變者也；日本者，己自變者也。得失之故，可以鑒矣。

The timeliness of *li* is of the utmost importance, and Confucius was the timely Sage. To go against Nature is inauspicious; to go against timeliness necessarily leads to failure. If change is not implemented when it should be, others will necessarily change things [for us]. It would be preferable to implement change ourselves, rather than others doing it instead. In the case of India, others implemented change; whereas in the case of Japan, they implemented change themselves. The reasons for success and failure are there as a lesson.⁷¹

46 For Kang, the plight of India should serve as a warning for China, if the latter is to avoid widespread civilisational collapse. This idea is reinforced by Kang's experience in the country during the course of his exile following the debacle of 1898. His reflections are structured around the question of the timely adaptation of *li*, which is once again evidence that his stance on the subject encompasses, but is not solely limited to, the concrete agenda of institutional reform.

47 In his *India Travel Journal*, written in 1901, Kang states that:

婆羅門先哲心術至仁，而求之過速，以理想之論而早見實施，先行此數千年。而印人遂至極弱，蓋發義太先不應于時故也。未至寒而先衣襲，未至水而陸行舟，其誤害阻塞必甚矣！[...] 禮以時為大，今中國當內其國之時，亦未至太平之日，只能保國民而未能及大地之同胞，況于禽獸乎？苟失其時、亂其序，其害亦如印度而已。

The intentions of the great Brahman sages of the past were extremely humane. However, they sought to achieve them too rapidly. In terms of idealism, this was put into practice thousands of years ago. However, the Indian people were subsequently led to a state of extreme weakness. This is because ideas were developed too early, and did not correspond to the times. Putting on a coat before the winter arrives, or launching a boat on the shore before reaching the water must necessarily lead to great harm and drawbacks! [...] The timeliness of *li* is of the utmost importance. China is now at a point in time when it has to concentrate on its own affairs. The time has not arrived yet to enter into the age of universal peace. It is only possible for it to look after its own people. It is not possible to extend this to the rest of our fellow humans in the world. And even less so to animals. If one does not follow the timeliness of things and mixes up their order, then the harm that this would lead to would be similar to that of India.⁷²

48 This passage indicates how Kang places an understanding of non-Chinese realities within a Confucian interpretative paradigm. The capacity to incorporate a vision of the modern world into such a paradigm – in a way that neither rejects the validity of non-Chinese cultural realities nor discards China's own heritage on the road towards “modernity” – is without doubt one of the most interesting aspects of his system of thought in general. Depicting India's historical circumstances in terms of approaches to *li*, he also clearly draws parallels between the existence and evolution of *li* across differing cultural and historical contexts. Cultural differences are thus not portrayed as mutually incompatible phenomena based on essentialist criteria, but rather as responses to common existential challenges, albeit at differing stages of the evolution of respective forms of *li*. As Ames points out, “In the Chinese tradition humanity itself is not essentialistically defined. It is understood as a progressive cultural achievement.”⁷³

- 49 The lessons to be learnt from the experiences of other cultural contexts therefore serve not as a pretext to plead for the irrelevance of Confucian thought in the modern world, but rather as a means of extending the applicability of this thought to unprecedented historical and cultural circumstances. The very structures of this thought –in themselves ultimately a form of *li*– are adaptable in the same way that *li* in general are called upon to respond to the times and environment in which they exist. Such reinvented expressions of Confucianism are therefore arguably in no way synonymous with any form of “westernisation,” but are rather examples of how *li* can evolve.
- 50 One example of this is Kang’s call for a Confucian version of Christmas, whereby the objective is not to develop cultural forms befitting “modern” or “westernised” tastes, but rather to permit the evolution of Confucian *li* using the experiences of other contexts in which *li* have existed. According to Kang,

禮運曰：禮以義起。協於義而協，雖先王未之有，可以義起也。禮時為大，順次之，宣次之。今各教皆幸其教主之篤生，而人人歡慶之，豈可以吾教主篤生而不歡慶之乎？此所謂因時而起義者也。諸教未相通之時，無以相形，故昔者不舉行聖誕之典可也；今他教舉聖誕之典而我不舉，無乃謂我忘其教主乎？故今者不可不舉行聖誕典也。

The *Liyun* says: ‘*Li* emerge to serve the idea of rightness. They function to assist [the manifestation of] rightness. Even if they did not exist at the time of the kings of the past, they can still be created to serve the idea of rightness.’⁷⁴ The timeliness of *li* is of the utmost importance. Passive observance and conforming to circumstance are of secondary importance. Nowadays, every religion commemorates the birth of its respective founder, and everyone happily celebrates this. How could we not happily celebrate the birth of the founder of our religion? This is what is meant by ideas of what is right existing in accordance with the times. When there was no communication between the different religions, and when there was no way of comparing the forms [that their *li* took], then it was acceptable if people in the past did not perform a ceremony to commemorate the birth [of their religion’s founder]. Doesn’t the fact that we do not [commemorate the birth of Confucius], while other religions commemorate the births [of their founders], mean that we forget the founder of our religion? Therefore, we must necessarily commemorate the birth [of Confucius].⁷⁵

- 51 Confucianism’s ability to adapt the structural functionality of its *li*, so as to ensure the overriding finality of *ren*, is directly associated with China’s capacity to survive and develop in a constantly changing environment. Both dimensions are understood in an entirely non-essentialist way. The idea of “China” is not narrowly limited to its existence as a nation-state, as is clearly apparent in the *Book of Great Unity*; and Confucianism is not considered as being merely “Chinese” or “East Asian” in its ultimate implications. In this way, Kang not only interprets non-Chinese cultural realities in Confucian terms –enabling Confucianism to incorporate forms inspired by their experiences– but he also envisages the possibility of Confucian development in non-Chinese contexts. This is reflected in a remarkable affirmation in his *Commentary of the Analects*, according to which “the way of Confucius is being widely practised in Europe and the Americas, while, on the other hand, it is being lost in its native land” (*Kongzi zhi dao nai daxing yu Oumei, er fan shi yu guguo ye* 孔子之道乃大行于歐美，而反失于故國也).⁷⁶
- 52 The implications of this are manifold, and an in-depth analysis of them goes beyond the scope of what is possible in this paper. However, the idea that the Confucian ideal is not

necessarily limited to a particular geographical context opens up the possibility both of new forms of *li* enabling China's survival and progress, and of a universal framework in which to fully develop this very ideal. At the same time, it reminds one of the enormous potential of human moral development inherent in the full and timely evolution of *li*; and offers China –and, ultimately, any other cultural context– the freedom to search for this without being hindered by the fetters of the nation-state. The full dimension of the context in which *ren* is fully developed is thus possible to grasp not as a limited geographical, cultural and political phenomenon, but rather as a truly universal and non-nationalistic objective.

- 53 Kang's interpretation of the meaning and role of *li*, despite the arbitrariness inherent in some of his arguments, therefore offers one a possibility to reflect upon, from numerous different perspectives, the ultimate objectives of a humanist philosophy, and the means for these objectives to be attained. As we have seen, in Kang's philosophy, *li* are not understood in a purely "ritual" sense. Rather, they have a much wider reach, including all sorts of political, social and cultural structures whose vocation it is to bring about the advent of humanism in the world. As such, they exist only as a means to an end –the realisation of *ren* in society– and not in their own right.
- 54 It is this vision of the functionality of *li* which enables Kang to fully explore the implications of their adaptability, the extent of their reach, and the forms they could take. Paths leading to *ren*, they are vehicles of humanistic expression which lose their *raison d'être* if this finality is forgotten, and need to be adapted to the topography of human existence in order to retain their utility.
- 55 In the context of China's unprecedented challenges of the nineteenth century, this vision served not only as the basis of a project of institutional reform in Kang's time, but also as a means of imagining human society in the future. Kang's vision of *datong* – albeit ambiguously situated in an abstract future– functions as a direction towards which *li* need to proceed, and which gives meaning to their immediate utility and ultimate disappearance. And just as a path's usefulness is superseded when a destination is reached, *li* become superfluous when their finality is achieved. However, instead of depicting this as the end of a historical process, it might be more appropriate to consider such an advent of *ren* as the beginning of a new state of human existence.

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FOOTNOTES

1. Kang Youwei is mainly remembered as a reformist thinker at the end of the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), and for his attempts at institutional reform in 1898. The free and apparently arbitrary nature of his interpretations of Confucian teachings and texts, especially in the context of his espousal of “new text” (*jinwen* 今文) Confucianism and the subsequent elaboration of a utopian vision of a world without borders or institutions such as the family, has often been equated with a subversion of “traditional” Chinese thought. Close analysis of his thought offers insights into certain continuities of other strands of Qing philosophy. However, these aspects have often been largely overlooked, due to the historical importance of the failure of his reformist movement and the theoretical extravagance with which he is frequently associated. For more biographical information on Kang, see, amongst others: Hsiao 1975 and Chang 1987. For an insight into the debates on “new text” and “old text” interpretations of Confucian classics such as the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu* 春秋), see, for example, Nylan 1994, Van Ess 1994 & 1999.
2. Liang 2015, vol.3, 531; see also Chen 2014, 89.
3. See, for example, Qian 1997, 749: “Datong is the realm of *ren*” [大同即仁之境界].
4. Kang 2012a, 8 [大同之道，至平也，至公也，至仁也，治之至也].

5. See, for example, Slingerland 2009, 112: “By Zhou times, the scope of ritual had grown significantly, encompassing not only sacrificial offerings to the spirits, but also aspects of the Zhou kings’ daily lives that we might be tempted to label as ‘etiquette.’”
6. Gao 1963, 1.
7. Ames 1988, 199.
8. See, for example, Hall & Ames 1987, 85; Tan 2012, 157; Cua 2005, 39.
9. Creel 1951, 91.
10. See Ames 1988, 200.
11. Hagen 2003, 376.
12. Cua 2005, 39.
13. See Gao 1963, 5. Gao also cites (5-6) a number of examples showing that *li* have consistently been considered as changeable; such as “Yueji”: “The times of the five august emperors were different, and hence they did not follow the same music. The eras of the three kings were not the same, and hence they did not keep to the same *li*.” [五帝殊時，不相沿樂；三王異世，不相襲禮。]，see *Liji zhengyi* 禮記正義，in Ruan 1980, vol.2, 1530; *Shiji, Biographies of Liu Jing and Shusun Tong*: “Shusun Tong said: ‘The five august emperors had different types of music, and the three kings did not use the same *li*. *Li* are the [ceremonies/restraints] used in accordance with human life in different eras.’” [叔孫通曰：五帝異樂，三王不同禮。禮者，因時世人情為之節文者也。]，see Sima Qian 1959, 2722; Cheng Yi: “When practicing *li*, one cannot always stick to ancient ways. One must see that practices of different eras are necessarily not alike. The ways of dealing with them must thus necessarily be different to those of ancient times.” [行禮不可全泥古，須當視時之風氣自不同，故所處不得不與古異。]，see Cheng 2006, vol.1, 22; Zhu Xi: “The timeliness of *li* is of great importance. If sages and worthies are to accomplish anything, then they must necessarily not entirely follow the *li* of ancient times.” [禮，時為大，使聖賢者有作，必不一切從古之禮。] see also Zhu 2004, vol. 6, 2185.
14. See, for example, Kwong 2000 and Wong 1992.
15. It is beyond the scope of this article to explore in detail the relationship between Kang’s writings and his political activities; in other words, whether “Kang’s reinterpretation of Confucianism presupposed reform” as Wong Young-tsu argues (see Wong 2010, 83), or if reform was simply one expression of a multifaceted philosophy which existed also in other, unrelated forms. Tang Zhijun argues that “his scholarship was inseparably at the service of his reformist political objectives.” See Tang 1984, 103. However, this does not seem to take into account the numerous elements of Kang’s thought which are completely unconnected to tangible reformist agendas. Of course, Kang’s reformist ideas were an outcome of his philosophical reflections, which Kong Xiangji argues: “Kang Youwei clearly used his evolutionary vision as the basis of his advocacy of institutional reform.” See Kong 1988, 93. According to Hsiao Kung-chuan, “[Kang’s] study of the classics afforded him the basis of a general social philosophy and, at the same time, an ideological justification for his reform movement”; see Hsiao 1975, 97. Kang’s reformist ideas can arguably not be considered to be a necessary and exhaustive manifestation of his philosophy. As Chang Hao points out, “His patriotic concern is expressed as political reformism to be accomplished in the present age, and his moral, spiritual concern is given expression in the vision of history as a programmatic march towards a universal community in the future. Consequently, the articulation of his political aspirations no longer competes with his moral-spiritual yearning but has become a necessary step in the historical process leading up to the ultimate fulfilment of that yearning. Seen in this light, [Kang’s] evolutionary view of history is obviously not just an ideological instrument to justify political reformism, as it is often made out to be...” (Chang 1987, 53).
16. Kong Xiangji sums up Kang’s views on *li* as “a method of governing human society” (*renlei shehui de yizhong zhifa* 人類社會的一種治法); see Kong 1988, 94.

17. The quotation is from the “Jingjie” 經解 (Explanations of the Classics) chapter in the *Book of Rites*; see Ruan 1980, vol.2, 1610.
18. *Jiaoxue tongyi* 教學通義 (On the General Meaning of Learning) [1885], in Kang 2007, vol.1, 48.
19. Kang 2012f, 162. See also Fang 1992, 104.
20. See his *Commentary of the Liyun* [1901-2], in Kang 2012c, 241.
21. Fang Delin points out that even if *li* originally designated the ceremonies and utensils used in sacrifices to spirits, this was not their primary cause, which was “the need to allot living resources”; see Fang 1992, 103.
22. Kang 2012c, 251.
23. See above, note 12.
24. See Kang 2012d, 428 and Kang 2012e, 13.
25. See Kang 2012b, 182: “The implementation of *li* corresponds to the idea of what is right of the age of *xiaokang*, so as to set right the relationship between ruler and minister, and to strengthen the relationship between father and son.” [禮運小康之義，以正君臣，以篤父子是也] As has been well documented elsewhere, Kang’s vision of historical development in the 1890s involved the combination of the ideas of the ages of “Great Unity” (*datong* 大同) and “Minor Prosperity” (*xiaokang* 小康) as described in the “Liyun” chapter of the *Book of Rites*, and the theory of three ages developed by He Xiu 何休 (129–182) in his elucidation of the *Gongyang Commentary* to the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, namely the “Age of Disorder” (*luanshi* 亂世), the “Age of Ascending Peace” (*shengping* 升平) and the “Age of Universal Peace” (*taiping* 太平). See, amongst others, Chen 2014, 85; Tang 1984, 102; Fang 1992, 95. According to Chen (90), “The originality and genius of Kang Youwei’s thought was to combine the doctrine of *ren* and the *Gongyang* philosophy of history to produce a theory of human historical progress where the ideal of *ren* is realized in stages and the highest degree of its realization is associated with the ancient concept of *datong*.” Fang points out (95) that “When Kang combined *xiaokang*, *datong*, and the three ages, he changed the “Liyun”’s vision of history as returning to the ancients (*fuguzhuyi lishiguan* 復古主義歷史觀) into an evolutionary vision of history (*jinhua lishiguan* 進化歷史觀).
26. Kang 2012a, 28. See also 97: “Therefore, the more cultural forms there are, the more *li* and customs are established, and subsequently the more hardships there are [for the people].” [故文物愈多，禮俗愈設，則憂患愈隨之而生。]
27. Kang 2012c, 251
28. See Kang 2012g, 202. [禮者，聖人所以安人也，非苦人也。]
29. See Kang 2012c, 238: “The implementation of *ren* is the way of *datong*. The implementation of *li* is that of the age of *xiaokang*. *Li* are used to govern in a period of disorder. It is therefore possible to keep things together by means of *li*. They are similar to what the Greeks called ‘constitution’, only they have a broader meaning with a spiritual dimension to it.” [仁運者，大同之道；禮運者，小康之道。撥亂世以禮為治，故可以禮括之。禮者，猶希臘之言憲法，特兼該神道，較廣大耳。] Please note that although the notion *yun* 運 is often translated as “evolution” when referring to the *Liyun* chapter, it will be translated here as “implementation”, so as to emphasise Kang’s idea of the use or carrying out of *li* in the age of *xiaokang*, as opposed to a desired application of *ren* in the era of *datong*.
30. *Ibid.*, 264.
31. Wong 2017, 84.
32. Cua 2005, 43.
33. Chang 1987, 53.
34. Fang 1992, 130.
35. Kang 2012c, 263.
36. Ames 1988, 199; see also Hall & Ames 1987, 88: “The notion of formal *li* action overlaps with [*ti*], body, in that *li* actions are embodiments or formalisations of meaning and value that accumulate to constitute a cultural tradition.”

37. Zhou 1998, 20.
38. See also Wong 2010, 84: “What Kang really tried to establish was that Confucius was the founder of a great teaching, not transmitter of historical tradition, in his own time.”
39. Kang 2012b, 32. The allusion here is to the *Xici*; see the *Zhouyi zhengyi*, in Ruan 1980, vol.1, 79. For claims that Confucius was the inventor of *li*, see Kang 2012d, 165: “The Confucian institutions of *li* and moral standards were all established by Confucius.” [儒教禮制義理，皆孔子所制]; and Kang 2012e, 113–114: “The Six Classics were all written by Confucius. *Li* and music were established by Confucius. Teachings [in China] are entirely those of Confucius.” [六經筆削於孔子，禮、樂制作於孔子，天下皆孔子之學，孔子之教也。]
40. Kang 2012b, 29.
41. Kang 2012c, 260. [孔子因人情而飾之，從之則為文明；去之，則為野蠻，在此矣。]
42. Kang 2012b, 35. [必以仁為先，而後施禮。.... 孔子創禮，而再三言禮之本，恐人以文滅質，詐偽日滋也。]
43. See *Lunyu zhushu* 論語注疏, in Ruan 1980, vol.2, 2466.
44. Kang 2012b, 31.
45. According to Wong Young-tsu, “Kang made it quite clear that Confucius was good at using the ancients. It is clear to us that Kang used Confucius and Dong Zhongshu as well.” See Wong 2010, 87.
46. Kang 2012d, 45.
47. Kang 2012c, 260. [然人道莫大於養，禮為人設，故禮之義在養人而已。]
48. Kang 2012g, 191. See also Xunzi & Wang 1988, 346.
49. Kang 2012c, 1.
50. *Ibid.*, 2.
51. See Fan 1963, 1199.
52. Kang 2012d, 239.
53. Kang 2012b, 12.
54. *Ibid.*, 12.
55. *Ibid.*, 12.
56. *Ibid.*, 260.
57. Kang 2007, vol.1, 48; see above, note 13.
58. Kang 2012b, 157. [孔子為時中之聖]
59. Kang 2012c, 266.
60. *Ibid.*, 237.
61. Kang 2012b, 141. [故孔子之道，主于時，歸于權。]
62. Kang 2012c, 267.
63. *Ibid.*, 243. See also *Da nanbei Meizhou zhuhuashang lun Zhongguo zhike lixian buneng xing geming shu* 答南北美洲諸華商論中國只可行立憲不能行革命書 (*Letter in Response to Chinese Merchants in South and North America Stating that China Can Only Carry out Constitutional Government and Not a Revolution*) [1902], in Kang 2007, vol.6, 314: “The timeliness of *li* is of great importance, as are the circumstances of their implementation. Wherein lie timeliness and circumstances [also] lies principle. Universal principle always depends on timeliness and the circumstances to be practicable.” [故禮時為大，勢為大，時勢之所在，即理之所在，公理常與時勢相濟而後可行。]
64. Kang 2012b, 211.
65. *Ibid.*, 1. [禮時為大，故學亦必隨時而復適。]
66. Kang 2012c, 244.
67. *Ibid.*, 242.
68. Kang 2012b, 182.
69. See Kang 2007, 313. Kang’s objective here is to call for support of the Guangxu 光緒 (r. 1875-1908) emperor in attempts to still implement institutional reform; in the wake of the

disaster of 1898 and the context of rivalry with Sun Yat-sen's nationalist revolutionary movement, which also sought the support of Chinese communities around the world at this time. According to Kang [see 321], Guangxu was fundamental, since he would be pivotal in the gradual transfer of power away from monarchical structures to the people. It is extremely interesting to observe how, in the political and ideological context of the Great Leap Forward, Li Zehou found it necessary in 1958 to denounce in a clearly Maoist way Kang's refusal to skip historical phases on the path towards *datong*. See Li 1958, 97: "The particularity of this type of evolutionary outlook is its resolute refutation of the leaps, revolutions and discontinuities inherent in development"; and 98, where Li also refers to this letter written to Chinese merchants in the Americas: "In the same way that he acknowledged development but refuted leaps, Kang Youwei acknowledged contradictions but refuted the struggle between contradictions."

70. See *Riben bianzheng kao* 日本變政考 (A Study of Political Reform in Japan) in Kang 2007, vol.4, 101–294.

71. See *Qing gao tianzu shi qunchen yi bianfa dingguo shizhe* 請告天祖誓群臣以變法定國是折 ("A Request for a Ceremony Informing Heaven, with Ministers Swearing an Oath, for Reform Bringing National Stability") [1898], in Kang 2007, vol.4, 309.

72. *Yindu youji* 印度遊記 (India Travel Journal), in Kang 2007, vol.5, 532.

73. Ames 1988, 202.

74. This is a freely paraphrased quotation from the "Liyun"; see Ruan 1980, 1426.

75. *Qufu dachengjie juxing dianli xu* 曲阜大成節舉行典禮序 (Introduction to a Celebration of the Great Achievements of Confucius in Qufu) [1914], in Kang 2007, vol.10, 198.

76. Kang 2012b, 113. "I have observed schools in the West. According to which grade pupils are in, they necessarily learn poetry, *li*, and music. Everyone studies these during their childhood. Their poetry and songs are all about patriotism and love of their race, and permit kind-heartedness to bloom. Everyone is familiar with their *li*, be they eating manners, everyday behaviour, etiquette between guests and visitors or military *li*, which serve to strengthen their muscles and joints, so as to adequately deal with the ways of the world. As for their music, throughout the year everyone is familiar with the words, the melodies and the dances, and these serve to cultivate their temperament and develop the movements of their hands and feet. As a result, many a talented person is formed. All scientific disciplines are specialisations. Only poetry, *li* and music are standard forms of learning. Everyone learns them. The way of Confucius is being widely practised in Europe and the Americas, while, on the other hand, it is being lost in its native land. Today's scholars should all the more recover things from the past, so as to form people of talent." [愚觀泰西學校，必有詩、禮、樂三者，以為學級，人人童而習之。其詩歌，皆有愛國愛種，興起其仁心，其禮，自飲食、起居、賓客、軍國之禮皆熟習，而有以固其肌膚之會，筋骸之節，以應人接事；其樂，則凡歌詞、琴曲、跳舞，歲時皆習熟，而有以陶暢其性靈，舞蹈其手足，故人多成材。一切科學皆為專門，惟詩、禮、樂為普通之學，無人不習。孔子之道乃大行于歐美，而反失于故國也。今學者更當光復故物，以求成材矣。]

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Ritualisation and authentication – a ritual discourse in the *Book of Rites*¹

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- 1 Against the contemporary background of pseudo-ritualising practices, this article investigates how ritualisation is envisaged in the *Liji* 禮記 (the *Book of Rites*). It argues that ritualisation is carried out through a discourse on the origin, nature and function of rites which is developed through key terms such as *tiandi* 天地 (Heaven-Earth), *li* 禮 (ritual, rites, codes of conduct, propriety, etc.), *ben* 本 (the foundation, source, origin, to lay the foundation of), *shun* 順 (to follow or to be in accordance with, in agreement with), and *zhi* 制 (institutions/regulations, to institute, to make or to frame). The ritual discourse does not merely spell out the ontological importance of *tiandi* for establishing all sorts of rites and instituting codes of propriety for human activity. It also exposes the theoretical foundation for ritualising personal, familial, communal and social life. The questions I am seeking to answer include: does the ritualising of society require more than the political authority to be activated? Is it necessary for rituals to be placed in an interaction between humans and the ultimate power? What can we learn today from the ritual discourse engaged in the *Book of Rites*?
- 2 Starting with an analysis of the questions concerning ritualisation efforts in contemporary China, we associate current ritual practices with traditional views on rites and with the Confucian ritual texts. Our intention is to explore the resources within the *Book of Rites* for the contemporary rethinking of the problems that rise up with the process of ritualisation. Following this, we will focus on the multi-layered and multidimensional interactions between *tiandi* and *li*, to examine the metaphysical, teleological and ethical premises the canonised text has elaborated and to clarify the conditions for instituting a variety of rites in the Confucian classic. To illustrate how the text lays down the ontological foundation for human rites and how it facilitates the advent of the ritualistic society, we will examine in the second section the meanings and usages of two key characters, *ben* 本 and *shun* 順, as the required routes to harmonisation between the ultimate principles and secular practices. In the third section, we will investigate what is meant by *zhi* 制 and its applications, implications and requirements for instituting a justifiable system of rites. It will be argued that *zhi* is

not an arbitrary act to pronounce codes; rather it is one of the active components within the ritual discourse. It sets up conditions and criteria for ritualising political, social and family life. We will finally conclude that to be applied to social and personal life and to have a lasting effect on ritualising society, rituals or rites, however understood and interpreted in history or contemporary times, must be firmly established upon metaphysical foundations rather than being confined to secular power relations. They must be justified by a submissive attitude towards universality rather than by biased preferences for particularity. Additionally, any set of rites must satisfy the three conditions – virtue, timing and function– before being rightly instituted and widely accepted as a social value system.

From the “New Ritual” to the *Old Book of Rites*

- 3 In all the current political and propagandist manoeuvres at work in Mainland China, we have witnessed three ideological campaigns for political correctness and social stability, namely: the anti-corruption movement, the re-establishing of the authority of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in all social and personal fields, and the commanding of absolute political loyalty.² To facilitate these campaigns, certain ritual-like codes or rules are issued *via* top-down instructions or propaganda. These codes or rules are activated and implemented in ritual-like actions orchestrated by lower levels of the authority. These ritual-like codes and actions are not only magnified through official and officially controlled media but are also, by a variety of means, forced into everyone’s daily life. Although the *rationale* for the related measures was initially purely political, it has then extended into cultural and academic discourses which brainwash the people to accept them as necessary ways to prevent the so-called collapse of ethical bounds, irregularities of communicative and social relationships, and negligence of political and economic disciplines in the rush for riches that has been going on for decades since the 1980s. Acceptable or not, a set of broadly understood new “rituals” has been “manufactured,” instituted and promoted in political, economic, communal and personal life through waves of political campaigns in a very large scope.
- 4 It should be noted that new “rituals” are not only enforced on different levels of political institutions and on individual CCP members but are also being inserted into laws, regulations and instructions applicable to all social, educational and commercial activities. These new “rituals” are applied in the forms of codes of conduct, regulations, core values and ceremonies which are regarded more seriously than ever since the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). Party officials as well as commoners are being indoctrinated through official media and educational programmes. It seems apparent, at least to some, that a new ritualisation process is becoming the “new normal” (*xin changtai* 新常态) or one of the hallmarks for the so-called “New Era” (*xin shidai* 新时代). To many others, this has also raised serious interrogations concerning the justification, foundation and implications of social ritualisation. These practices and questions provide us with a contemporary background for intensive interests in the issues of ritual and ritualising the society.
- 5 The political and cultural implications of the new ritualisation in 21st century China are multidimensional. Whatever forms “new rituals” might refer to, one of their functions is said to enable a smooth transition from the “becoming rich” (*fu qilai* 富起

来) motto of the Deng era to the “becoming strong” (*qiang qilai* 强起来) one of the Xi era. In terms of social governance, it is said to be necessary for a transition from “disorder” or “bad order” (*wu xu* 无序 or *e xu* 恶序) to the orderly or good order (*you xu* 有序 or *liang xu* 良序) to regain political unity, social harmony, governing modernisation and national patriotism. Apart from politically coercive measures adopted to ensure the success of the process, new ritualisation takes inspiration from the past in order to gain legitimisation and to seek sources of authenticity. It is no surprise therefore that traditional customary rites, including rules of propriety, codes of conduct and proper manners (*liyi* 禮儀) guiding people’s communication, behaviour, interpersonal relations, personal integrity, family customs (*jia feng* 家風) and communal gatherings are “rediscovered,” “reformulated” or reinterpreted as new rites and as effective tools for reordering political and social life today.

- 6 In response to the needs for new ritualisation initiatives, the academic community has naturally turned its attention towards Confucian classics and has built up its discourse on ancient rituals, ceremonies and codes of conduct.³ Not only a good number of articles and books on rites and “ritual Classics” have been or are being published,⁴ but simultaneously various kinds of private academies (*shuyuan* 书院) providing rites training to pupils and ordinary people have been reopened. In the name of rejuvenating traditional culture and national learning (*guoxue* 国学), established universities have also set up new centres for rites studies (*lixue zhongxin* 礼学中心) with a strong practical orientation. Such “Centres for Rites Studies” can be found in universities like Tsinghua (2012), Beijing University (2014), Renmin University (2015), and Shandong University (2017).⁵ Apart from textual studies of historical and classical rites, these centres teach and train both students and lay people on various codes or manners, with respect to costume, dining, communicating, greeting, meeting and behaving. It seems reasonable to say that after one hundred years of defaming “old” customs and rituals, as well as many waves of contestation either revolutionary, republican, nationalist, socialist or capitalist, traditional rites are coming back to China as a “new” fashion.
- 7 Ritualisation must be contextualised against the background of a rapidly modernised, commercialised and globalised China. Taking into account the fact that “rites” or “Confucian ritualisation” has been considered a stained term since the beginning of the 20th century –being regarded as “obstacles to China’s progress,” “stifling free thought and innovation,” “reactionary feudalism,” “evil or backward institutions” that suppressed the people, or “anti-modernisation” tools for murdering people”– it seems odd that the current and deliberate process of ritualisation with its clear political agenda has not been resisted among the majority of intellectuals as strongly as we would otherwise expect. On the contrary, it is indeed even relatively uncritically welcomed by many who work in the field of Chinese learning (philosophy, history, education, etc.). A sheer number of scholars would indeed go so far as regarding it as an effective way to restore (good) traditional values and to enhance confidence in Chinese culture (*wenhua zixin* 文化自信).
- 8 Taking a look at history, it has been suggested that the current drive of ritualisation by synthesising Marxist and Confucian resources is reminiscent of a similar process that took place during the Western Han dynasty under Emperor Han Wudi 漢武帝 (r. 140-87 B.C.E.). Following the advice of leading Confucian scholars such as Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179-104 BCE), the emperor consolidated the Empire through ritualising society.

Authoritarian as he was, Han Wudi adopted an overall strategy promoting a form of eclectic Confucianism that soon became state ideology. Ritualisation was privileged as a tool to unify the country and the thought of its people, at the expense of “unorthodox” schools (*bachu baijia duzun rushu* 罷黜百家獨尊儒術). One of the pathways for the Han court to enforce order on society was precisely *via* compiling, manufacturing or reinterpreting past records to facilitate the canonisation of rites and the ritualisation of society.

- 9 While it might be politically justified for the current regime to ritualise political and social regulations as well as activities in order to impose a particular system of values to the people, interrogations remain for us. Indeed, philosophical and ethical questions still await answers: what is the foundation on which all these new rituals are to be established? Why should people follow or obey particular kinds of ceremonial rules and behavioural codes? How to justify them as a coherent system rather than random collections of temporary regulations? These three specific concerns point towards a fundamental issue: what is the underlying authority of socialisation, ritualisation, as well as authentication of rituals and codes? Unless these questions are properly examined and answered, there seems to be no good prospect for new ritualised rules to be accepted and adopted willingly by the people in an already very diverse and multicultural society, nor for these rules and codes to function effectively and to last long. To fully understand where this problem comes from and how it may be resolved, we could benefit from what Confucius taught in the *Analects*: “understand what is happening today by revisiting similar cases in the past” (*wengu er zhixin* 溫故而知新).⁶ In other words, the new ritualisation can be better understood if we come to study traditional ritual classics, in particular the *Liji* (禮記) or the *Book of Rites*. Of course, the study of the *Book of Rites* serves not only for reviewing the process of how a warring country progressively evolved into a ritualistic empire two thousand years ago and how the ancient Chinese ritualised all their social, familial and personal relations and activities, but it is also practical for us: it helps us learn what is required for ritual to consolidate cultural identities and what resources we can gain from the text compiled in different environments for the benefit of the people and society in the 21st century.⁷

A philosophical discourse on Rites

- 10 The *Book of Rites* was one of the key Confucian works that facilitated the empirical order and the ritualistic society in Han China.⁸ It used to be agreed among the majority of sinologists that the *Book of Rites* was a compilation of treatises regarding various kinds of *li* 禮, which was assembled or composed of earlier or later records, and that its dates of compilation might have been pinpointed as late as between the Qin (221-210 BCE) and the Western Han (206 BC - 8 CE).⁹ However, new evidence from the excavated texts suggests that attempts to ritualise society started much earlier. Some of the treatises or so-called chapters can be safely dated from the Warring States period (476-221 BCE) or earlier. It can therefore be reasonably affirmed that they displayed forms of ritualisation practices by early Confucian scholars. Although some parts of these treatises were produced in more recent times, they also contain portions of original ritual materials that had been transmitted down from the Western Zhou (1045?-771 BCE) and the Spring and Autumn period (770-479 BCE).¹⁰ Notwithstanding their dates and sources, we must not underestimate the importance of these treatises in enabling

the ritualised China, which has claimed to be the “land of rites and decorum” (*liyi zhi bang* 禮儀之邦) for more than two millennia. Despite the first impression that tens of treatises from various sources were simply tied together without structural logic, we find in the Han dynasty ritual *compendia* a coherent discourse. This discourse runs through most of the treatises and holds them together. It is this discourse that lays down the foundation of ritual and ritualisation, and that I will explore below.

- 11 One finds at the core of the discourse two concepts: ritual (*Li* 禮) and “Heaven-Earth” (*tiandi* 天地). They were central to the Han Chinese understanding of ritual, rites and codes, and to their views on ritualisation. This discourse is focused on several questions concerning what kind of metaphysical, teleological and ethical premises the canonised text has set up for rites to be accepted as part of human life. In other words, what is required for ritualisation to happen, to be accepted and to last long?
- 12 The character *li* (禮) not only entitles the *summa ritualistica* but also runs through all treatises of this massive compilation. It appears as many as 740 times in the whole text. In order for us to investigate the discourse on ritual and ritualisation, we will mainly pay attention to a number of key treatises of the extant version, such as “The Royal Regulations” (*Wangzhi* 王制), “Monthly Ordinances” (*Yueling* 月令), “Evolution of the Rites” (*Liyun* 禮運), and “Records of Music” (*Yueji* 樂記), while occasionally referring to other chapters. As we will see clearly in these treatises, rites and ritualisation are not taken as purely secular matters; they are rather conscientiously placed on the foundation of *Tiandi* (Heaven-Earth).
- 13 *Tian* 天 is one of the most frequent words in the text: it appears 675 times in total. *Tian* contains multiple and multi-layered meanings in the text ranging from the sky, nature, the source of life, the metaphysical ultimate or the supernatural power. Hence, “Heaven” as a conventional English translation adopted in this article is merely one of the convenient but not necessarily precise renderings of the Chinese term. As an independent concept, it is used 150 times; as part of the phrase “*tianzi*” 天子, the Son of Heaven, 313 times; in the phrase “*tianxia*” 天下, all under Heaven or the world, 126 times; while *di* 地, “Earth” appears 102 times. “Heaven-Earth” as a combined term in the *Book of Rites* appears as many as 84 times. Used together, the character for Heaven (*tia* 天) and the character for Earth (*di* 地) are representative of the metaphysical ultimate that is regarded as the origin of rites and that is to authenticate any kind of ritualisation in the human world. In other words, “Heaven-Earth” is taken as the ontological beginning and end of human rites, and is used to justify and sanction various kinds of rites. As the source or origin of rites, Heaven-Earth demands humans to follow and respect ritually signified codes of conduct or rules of propriety. This “requirement” is put into function by two key words, *ben* 本 the “foundation” or “root” or “to be rooted in” and *shun* 順 “to follow” or “to be subject to”.

Ben: ontological foundation of Rites

- 14 “Heaven-Earth” in the *Book of Rites* is established firmly as the ontological root or foundation (*ben* 本) to which humans owe their origins and by which social and moral orders can be rightly set up. Being the origin of humans, Heaven or “Heaven-Earth” is believed to be the ultimate measure for human thought and activity. It is only thanks to Heaven-Earth that humans can establish rites and ritualise society properly.

- 15 In the whole text of the Classic, *ben* appears 74 times, and in the majority of cases it can be translated as “the source,” “the origin,” “the root,” or “the foundation.” For example, in the treatise on the *Evolution of Rites*, it is stated clearly that “the government must have its origin in Heaven” (*zheng bi ben yu tian* 政必本於天),¹¹ “when the sages made rules (for men), they felt it necessary to find the origin (of all things) in Heaven and Earth” (*shengren zuo ze, bi yi tiandi wei ben* 聖人作則，必以天地為本).¹² On another occasion, it is said that “rites must trace their origin in the Grand Unity. This separated and became Heaven and Earth” (*fu li bi ben yu dayi, fen er wei tiandi* 夫禮必本於大一，分而為天地).¹³ In fact, it is part of this metaphysical speculation that not only rites but all things are originated from Heaven-Earth. It is stated in the treatise on *The Single Victim at the Border Sacrifice* (*Jiaotesheng* 郊特牲) that all things in the world are originated in Heaven and all the people are originated from their ancestors: 萬物本乎天，人本乎祖 “All things originate from Heaven; man originates from his (great) ancestor.”¹⁴
- 16 As far as the relation between rites and Heaven-Earth is concerned, the uses of the word *ben* imply two interlocked meanings. First, the *ben* (sources or origin) of rites is in Heaven-Earth, not in secular matters or powers. Heaven-Earth is believed to have provided the foundation for all human life, codes and activities. This has injected rich metaphysical and spiritual values into seemingly secular rites. Secondly, rites are in turn the foundation or source for all social institutions which are simply regarded as the expansion and application of rites. This ensures that social infrastructure and personal activities are guided by rites that are taken as the core of human life, and that all political institutions and regulations must be judged and measured by rites.
- 17 As the metaphysical foundation of the world and human beings, “Heaven-Earth” is referred to in two kinds of contexts; in one of them it refers to what we mean by “nature” or natural environment that surrounds us and provide conditions for our life, and in the other it refers to the religiously and/or metaphysically “ultimate power” or “Being” that stands above the human world and commands all humans’ allegiance. While the spiritual sense of “Heaven-Earth” is in general vague in tone in this text, there are a good number of contexts in which “Heaven-Earth” is referred to as a kind of supernatural power, law or being. For example, the treatise on the “Royal Regulations” specifies that only the King had the right and duty to offer sacrifices to “Heaven-Earth.” Officials of a lower rank could not do it: “The Son of Heaven sacrificed to Heaven-Earth; the princes of the states, to the (spirits of the) land and grain; great officers offered the five sacrifices (of the house).”¹⁵
- 18 As the metaphysical foundation or origin of all things, Heaven-Earth is understood as the producer or generator of myriads of things and beings. There is no indication that Heaven or Heaven-Earth is taken as the personal creator of the world as God in a theocentric tradition such as Judaism and Christianity. The *Book of Rites* adopts a natural genesis to explain how Heaven-Earth generates things and beings, and takes Heaven-Earth as the dual power that underlines the creation process responsible for all creatures, natural phenomena and changes: “By the united action of heaven and earth all things spring up.”¹⁶ In the treatise on “Monthly Ordinances” (*Yueling* 月令), it is explained that “the vapours of heaven descend and those of the earth ascend. Heaven and earth are in harmonious co-operation. All plants bud and grow.”¹⁷ The interaction between the forces of Heaven and Earth is said to be the true reason why we have myriads of things, and how all the sources of wealth are created. While individual

humans are engendered by their parents and educated by their teachers, these must not be separated from the creative power of Heaven and Earth. Heaven, Earth, Parent and Teacher are therefore taken as the four pillars that sustain the basic structure of the ritualised universe. These four pillars have become most venerable for the Chinese who believed that if these four were correctly followed and duly revered, there would be no errors in human activities: 故天生時而地生財，人其父生而師教之。四者，君以正用之，故君者立於無過之地也。 “Heaven produces the seasons. Earth produces all the sources of wealth. Man is begotten by his father, and instructed by his teacher. The ruler correctly uses these four agencies, and therefore he stands in the place where there is no error.”¹⁸ It is noted that unlike in later texts where the pillars are said to be five, here the *jun* 君 the ruler or emperor is placed as an executor and is required to make use of these four pillars correctly in order to make no error. It implies that human errors primarily come from the ruler who does not establish the four pillars in a right way.

- 19 On other occasions humans are said to be produced, symbolically, from the virtues or powers of Heaven-Earth, in the form of “the interaction of the dual forces of nature, the union of the animal and intelligent (souls), and the finest subtle matter of the five elements”.¹⁹ Therefore, the superiority of humans, either in terms of intelligence or moral excellence, should not be solely explained by human own existence or activity; it is endorsed and ensured by the creative power of Heaven-Earth. Only because of this can we appropriately understand why humans are said to be “the heart and mind (*x* 心) of Heaven and Earth and the beginning of the Five Agents.” (故人者，天地之心也，五行之端也)²⁰
- 20 From the statements listed above, we can logically conclude that as rules and codes governing the human world, rites must have their origin in Heaven-Earth or be placed on the foundation of Heaven-Earth. There is no alternative explanation that can be justified. It is confirmed in the treatise on the *Evolution of Rites* that “those rules are rooted in Heaven, have their correspondences in Earth, and are applicable to spiritual beings. They extend to funeral rites, sacrifices, archery, chariot-driving, capping, marriage, audiences, and friendly missions.” (夫禮，必本於天，殫於地，列於鬼神，達於喪祭、射御、冠昏、朝聘。)²¹

Shun: the right way for humans to respond to Heaven-Earth

- 21 Having established Heaven-Earth as the foundation and origin of rites, the ritual discourse of the text comes to justify rites as the guidance for social and personal life. The discourse places the justification in the interactive relationship between humans and Heaven-Earth. It not only highlights the underlying importance of rites for human life but also for the nature of rites in enabling harmonious life in the world. Having confirmed that the relation between Heaven-Earth and human beings is central to our understanding of where and how rites come from, the ritual discourse proceeds to examine what are appropriate responses (*ying* 應) humans must make to Heaven’s images or signs or patterns (*tian zhi xiang* 天之象),²² rules or laws (*tiandi ze* 天地則),²³ and the Way of Heaven and Earth (*tiandi zhi dao* 天地之道).²⁴ It is through these responses that humans learn how to behave, to treat each other, to act in their family, their community and the world. From these responses emerge the key word of *shun* in the ritual discourse.

- 22 *Shun* as an independent term appears 97 times in the text. Apart from its uses as a noun referring to the status of harmonious relations in the natural and human world, it is in the majority of cases a verb that can be translated as “acting in accordance with,” “being conformed to,” “following.” For example, “be conformed to the times” (*shun qi shi* 順其時, “Yueling”), acting in accordance with human feelings” (*shun ren qing* 順人情, “Liyun”), “be in accordance with the spirits” (*shun yu gui shen* 順於鬼神, “Liqi”), “act in accordance with the seasons” (*shun tian shi* 順天時, “Liqi”), and “following the right course” (*shun zheng* 順正, “Yueji”).
- 23 Just as rites are generated and determined by Heaven-Earth, *shun* also has its roots in Heaven-Earth, and the reason why *shun* is needed and important must be found in the Way of Heaven-Earth: “Heaven-Earth acted according to their own nature” (*tian di shun* 天地順). Ontologically, human beings, like all other kinds of beings, are inseparable from their origins (Heaven-Earth), but as the only conscious beings, humans are able to understand and appreciate their origins. They can in consciousness separate themselves from Heaven-Earth and respond to Heaven-Earth. This separation, however, is only a means to reach the unity with Heaven-Earth. In both separation and unity, what is at stake lies in the propriety of human responses. In separation, humans appreciate that Heaven-Earth is a *priori* existence, and is not only *prior* to all things and beings, but also responsible for their existences. This metaphysical priority determines that humans must respect and revere their “forebears.” As the most noble/valuable (*gui* 貴) creature from Heaven-Earth, humans are able to, and must, respond to what Heaven-Earth is and what happens in Heaven-Earth. In other words, human existence is made possible by Heaven-Earth, and human life is owned by Heaven-Earth. Therefore, it is natural that humans are expected to be in accordance with their producer and to follow the steps of their predecessor. However, humans are of consciousness, will, emotion and intelligence, their response to Heaven-Earth are not totally passive, but they are actively engaged in responses that are influenced by their own nature and character. This fact leads to two kinds of human tuning in with the regulations and requirements of Heaven-Earth. The first is to follow *prima facie* rules which are derived from Heaven-Earth’s own signs or images, and to act in accordance with them (*shun* 順) as conscious actions. The second is to act in contradiction with (*ni* 逆) the order of Heaven-Earth and violate the designated codes of heavenly and earthly movements and sequences. The former enables humans to acquire the virtues of Heaven-Earth (*tiandi zhi de* 天地之德) and to be the heart-mind of Heaven-Earth (*tiandi zhi xin* 天地之心), while the latter is the way to interruption of heavenly orders, to disasters in the human world, and to corruptions in human heart-mind and human nature.
- 24 *Shun* is not only the status and signs of harmony between humans and Heaven-Earth, but also the ways to achieve harmony in the natural and human worlds. According to the *Evolution of Rites*, the ancient rulers (*xian wang* 先王) achieved harmony and order by acting in complete accordance with the coding and timing of Heaven-Earth, by following all rites regulations in dealing with human matters and by employing people in accordance with their nature and wishes (*yong min bi shun* 用民必順). The discourse goes on to explain that making proper use of rites, ancient kings enabled a world without plague, flood, drought and famine, and “were blessed by Heaven-Earth with timely rain, dew, and symbols of harmony, happiness, and success,” and concluded: “For all this universal and mutual harmony, there were no other reasons but because the ancient kings were able to make proper use of rites to realise righteousness (*xiu li yi*

da yi (修禮以達義), and to embody trustfulness so that the full accordance with Heaven-Earth could be achieved (*ti xin yi da shun* 體信以達順). This was called the realisation of *shun*".²⁵

- 25 Different from the *Book of History* where the correspondence of human virtue with Heaven (*yi de pei tian* 以德配天) is highlighted as the only way to realise the right order of the human world, the *Book of Rites* stresses the importance of matching rites and music with Heaven-Earth (*li yue pei yu tiandi* 禮樂配於天地). Although Heaven-Earth does not appear to be a personal being or power, directly punishing human errors or awarding human virtues, humans are nevertheless demanded to follow the virtue of Heaven-Earth and to act in accordance with Heaven-Earth. Human rites cannot be justified unless they are in agreement with the law of Heaven-Earth. Seeking accordance with the laws or principles of Heaven-Earth is central to the ritualisation process and is the only justification human rites could possibly get. This is explained in the following passage: "All ceremonial usages looked at in their great characteristics are the embodiment of heaven and earth (*ti tiandi* 體天地); take their laws from the (changes of the) four seasons (*fa sishi* 法四時); imitate the (operation of the) contracting and developing movements in nature (*ze yinyang* 則陰陽); and are conformed to the feelings of men (*shun renqing* 順人情)." Here all the four characters (*ti* 體, *fa* 法, *ze* 則, *shun* 順) refer to the same or to similar intention and action as following or being conformed to Heaven-Earth.²⁶

Instituting Rites and ritualising Institutions

- 26 The ritual discourse traces and elevates the importance of rites to the origin of Heaven-Earth, and highlights the necessity that all kinds of rites be produced, enacted and enforced by the right agent and through a proper process. Recorded in the treatise on the *Evolution of Rites*, a conversation between Confucius and his disciple reveals to us the double significance of rites and ritualisation. The disciple asked, "Are the rules of propriety [*li*, rites] indeed of such urgent importance?" To this Confucius replied, "It was by those rules that the ancient kings sought to represent the ways of Heaven, and to regulate the feelings of men. Therefore he who neglects or violates them may be (spoken of) as dead, and he who observes them, as alive."²⁷ In this passage we read that rites or rules of propriety are not simple human inventions but are derived from the ways of Heaven-Earth. Their function is said to regulate human feelings and actions. Rites are said to be essential for human life. Without rituals humans would lose the meaning of being humans, and the world order would inevitably collapse. A similar idea can also be found in Chapter 19 of *Xunzi*, "A Discussion of Rites", where rites are said to "have three roots. Heaven and Earth are the root of life, the ancestors are the root of the human species, and rulers and teachers are the root of order"; correspondingly, rites are said to "serve Heaven above and Earth below," to "honour ancestors" and to "exalt rulers and teachers." With such importance ascribed to rites, it is affirmed that "one who turns his back upon rites will be lost," and "[w]hen they have been properly established and brought to the ultimate point, no one in the world can add to or subtract from them."²⁸
- 27 The genesis of rites in the *Book of Rites* is in accordance with the genesis of the world which is believed to begin with the interaction between Heaven and Earth. The power of Earth ascends, and the power of Heaven descends. These two powers thus come into

mutual contact, causing natural phenomena such as thunder, wind and rain, the four seasons, the sun and moon, by which all the processes of change and growth vigorously proceed²⁹ and all plants bud and grow.³⁰ However, if the rules governing, and orders inherent in the world are disrupted, disasters would come not only to the natural world but also to human life. In such an unfortunate situation, “the genial influences of earth will find vent, which might be called a throwing open of the house of heaven and earth. In this case all insects would die; and the people be sure to fall ill from pestilence, and various losses would ensue.”³¹

- 28 In the same vein, strong justifications are given to defend the idea that rites follow the universal principles and reflect the original harmony of Heaven and Earth. This explains how they guide human behaviour as well as ensure the world order. When coming from the issues of the natural world to those of the human world, it is necessary for the *Book of Rites* to employ a character, *zhi* 制 (institutions, regulations) to explain how rites came into existence and on what conditions rites should be instituted or framed. The character *zhi* appears 88 times in the text. As a noun it refers to regulations or codes, as seen in the title of the treatise on the *Royal Regulations* (*Wangzhi* 王制) or institutions of the sage-kings (*shengwang zhi zhi* 聖王之制) as seen in the treatise on *Methods of Sacrifices* (*Jifa* 祭法). As a verb, it means “to frame,” “to determine,” “to produce,” “to institute” or “to establish,” as in the phrases “ancient kings framing rites” (*xianwang zhi li* 先王制禮) in the treatise on *Tangong* (檀弓), and “instituting rites in correspondence with earth” (*zh ili yi pei di* 制禮以配地) in the treatise on the *Records of Music* (*Yueji* 樂記). The actual framing of rites is said to have been completed by ancient kings or former kings or sage kings.³²
- 29 The uses of *zhi* in the ritual discourse have three implications on the ritualisation and authentication of rites. First, there is a moral requirement for instituting rites in the human world. Rites depend on humans to be instituted and the inherent value of rites lies in human existence. Therefore, the nature of rites is the same as the human nature and its function is in agreement with human feelings. To reflect human nature, rites cannot be regarded as randomly man-made rules or ceremonies; they are rooted in the orders and laws of Heaven-Earth. Acknowledging that “Rites are the reflection of the orderly distinctions and sequences in Heaven and Earth” (*lizhe, tiandi zhi xu ye* 禮者天地之序也),³³ the author(s) of the text attributed the rites to sages or former kings who ruled the world in light of heavenly and earthly orders. It is clear in the ritual discourse that not all people are in the position to institute or produce rites. Rather, only those whose virtue and position match each other would have the authority and justification to cause rites to come into existence: “Although a man occupies the throne, if he has not the corresponding virtue, he may not dare to institute systems of music and ceremony [*zuo li yue* 作禮樂]. Although a man has the virtue, if he does not occupy the throne, he may not dare to institute systems of music and ceremony either.”³⁴
- 30 Secondly, there is a time requirement (*shi* 時) for instituting rites. Rites can only be made by sages or sage-kings at the right time. In history, “when ancient kings had established their government, they framed their ceremonies” (*zhi ding zhi li* 治定制禮).³⁵ In other words, only by the time when the kingdom was established could rites be made and would the rites be applied throughout the country. Despite multiple mentions of sages and ancient kings, throughout the text the Duke of Zhou was the only one who was clearly singled out and credited with this contribution. Recorded in the treatise on *The Places in the Hall of Distinction* (*Mingtang wei* 明堂位), it says that

“During six years, [the Duke of Zhou] gave audience to all the princes in the Hall of Distinction; instituted ceremonies (*zhi li* 制禮), made his instruments of music, gave out his (standard) weights and measures, and there was a grand submission throughout the kingdom” (*tian xia da fu* 天下大服).³⁶ The time requirement makes it clear that rites are both the production of the legitimate government and the way to bring about stability in the whole kingdom. With a proper ritual system, order would follow and all parts of the world would be in peace.

- 31 Thirdly, by using *zhi*, the ritual discourse spells out the requirement for the universality of rites and for ritualising the society. In other words, rites have a teleological end to achieve. Rites must be made known to the people in order to usher in social orders: “Thus the sages made known these rules, and it became possible for the kingdom, with its states and clans, to reach its correct condition.”³⁷ Instituting rites is itself not the end, but a means for and a way to the well-governed state. As stated in the treatise on *Records of Music*, “What the ancient kings intended in instituting rites and music was not to satisfy fully the desires of the mouth and the stomach, the ears and the eyes, but to teach people to moderate their likes and dislikes and return to the proper human Way (*rendao*).”³⁸ The ritual discourse claims that “rites were to regulate the people’s minds” and ensured that human beings not “be transformed into things” and the world not be brought to “great chaos” in which “the principle of Heaven is extinguished” and “the weak coerce the strong; the many oppress the few; the knowing deceive the unknowing; the bold abuse the timid; the ill are not nurtured; the old and the young, the orphaned and the solitary are neglected”.³⁹ Guided by rites rather than by penal laws, the society would not only be in stability and harmony but would also become ritualised –the society would run its course guided by universal values rather than by particular interests. Universality is deeply rooted in the Confucian view on the world order. Contrary to those who called for the order by penal enforcement, Confucius had already propagated a ritualistic society where the people are regulated by rites and guided by virtue: “Guide them by virtue, keep them in line with the rites, and they will, besides having a sense of shame, reform themselves”.⁴⁰
- 32 Ritualisation is more than instituting rites; it must be supported and ensured by political and social governance. For example, to authenticate rites, the treatise on the *Royal Regulations* provides two routes for social ritualisation, namely “cultivating the teachings” (*xiu qi jiao* 修其教), and “unifying governmental measures” (*qi qi zheng* 齊其政)⁴¹ by which rites or rules of propriety are applied to personal, familial, and communal life. Both routes involve intensive interaction between the perceived principles of Heaven-Earth and the codes for regulating human affairs, but what they tend to emphasise differs. The former highlights the importance of moral teachings and virtue education for rites and ritualisation, while the latter ensures the consistent governmental practices to guarantee the smooth ritualisation process. The ritual discourse insists that rites must not be taken dogmatically and exclusively, because they are by nature universal values and cannot be authenticated unless they are made applicable to all the people and all classes in the country. It has been stated clearly that rites are taken as one of the four universal measures, and only by enabling all these four to function well can we have the peaceful and harmonious world. These four means are “rites,” “music,” “law” and “punishment,” each of which has a different function and serves a different purpose: “Rites were to regulate the people’s minds; music was to harmonise the people’s voices; government was to promote their

performance; punishments were to protect them. When these four –rites, music, laws, and punishment– were made universal, the kingly Way was complete.”⁴² From this passage we can see that the ritual discourse is centred on rites but is not confined to rites. It is part of the systematic way to deal with governance and coordinates different elements into the whole of social ritualisation. The key for the ritual discourse is to enable a ritualised society in which the mind, will, action and security of the people are harmonised. This indicates that the ritual discourse is beyond rites as ceremonial rules themselves. What is aimed at here is one of the reasons why the ritual discourse of two thousand years ago is still relevant to the 21st century China.

Conclusion

- 33 At the beginning of this article, we raised three hypothetical questions: does the ritualising of society require more than the political authority to be activated? Is it necessary for rituals to be placed in an interaction between humans and the ultimate power? What can we learn today from the ritual discourse engaged in the *Book of Rites*? Having examined the ritual discourse in detail, we can now answer them positively. While rites are necessary for the state to be in good order and for the people to enjoy peaceful life, the ritual discourse does not claim that man-made rites would automatically lead to a ritualistic society, in which people are guided by customary rules and codes rather than restrained by penal laws. Social ritualisation is conditional on cultural, moral, and spiritual consensus. The ritual discourse as we have examined provides three consensuses for ritualisation and authentication: first, a strong faith in the power and law of Heaven-Earth as the spiritual foundation of secular rites; second, a great aspiration to be in accordance with the universal law and value represented by the order and operation of Heaven-Earth; and third, a morally and politically justified institution or agent to accommodate and moderate various rules and codes into a universal value system that fits in with the moral, time and functional requirements. All these conditions are taken seriously in the canonised *Book of Rites*, and are essential for a smooth transition from the war-torn and disordered world to a ritualistic and comparatively peaceful society.
- 34 With more than two millennia of history, the ritual discourse as constructed in the *Book of Rites* is still a treasure for us to explore in contemporary times. While we confirm one way or another the desirability of ritualisation in the 21st century and the necessity of more regulated social life, we must be fully aware that without satisfying the three conditions as given above, rites, ritual, codes or value systems of any kind would not be able to bring about social order. However instrumental for justifying a new set of rites, efforts in ritualisation and authentication would lead only to political authoritarianism rather than the willing submission of the people to the authority or the regime if they were simply utilised as part of temporal and coercive measures to consolidate the short-sighted grip on secular powers.

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FOOTNOTES

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2. Since the 18th Congress in November 2012, the CCP has utilised a number of cohesive measures to push forward these three political campaigns, the key of which is to ensure

ideological correctness in the Party and throughout the country, frequently in the name of the rejuvenation of traditional culture and the realisation of the “Chinese dream.”

3. See the Open Course of Tsinghua University on the Ritual Culture in Ancient China (清华大学公开课：中国古代礼仪文明), <http://open.163.com/special/cuvocw/liyiwenming.html>.
4. For example: Lü 2014; Peng 2015 and 2016; Peng *et al.* 2016; Wu 2014.
5. 山东亚太礼学文化研究院, <http://www.aprci.cn/a/gy/jj/>. Access on 2 May 2021.
6. Lunyu, II, 11. This passage is also translated as “One who reanimates the old so as to understand the new may become a teacher” in De Bary & Bloom 1999, 47.
7. Yao 2018, 56.
8. For textual and historical issues concerning the *Book of Rites*, see Loewe 1993. For an excellent summary of scholarly issues and approaches pertaining to the *Liji* in particular, see Ing 2012, 219-224.
9. See the entries: “*Li chi* 禮記” and “*Ta Tai Li chi* 大戴禮記” by Jeffrey K. Riegel; “*Chou li* 周禮” and “*I li* 儀禮” by William G. Boltz, in Loewe 1993, 293-297, 456-459, 24-32, 234-243.
10. For the dates and plausible authors of individual chapters in the *Book of Rites*, see Wang 2007.
11. Legge’s translation modified. The government “must have a fundamental connection with Heaven.” See Legge 1885, Part III, 376. All subsequent quotations from the *Book of Rites* are, unless otherwise stated, from James Legge, with my own modifications.
12. Legge 1885, Part III, 383.
13. Legge 1885, Part III, 386-387.
14. Legge 1885, Part III, 430.
15. Legge 1885, Part III, 225.
16. 天地合而后万物兴焉 (“禮記·郊特牲”). For an English translation see Legge 1885, Part III, 439.
17. Legge 1885, Part III, 255.
18. *Liji*, “*Liyun*”. For an English translation, see Legge 1885, Part III, 378.
19. *Ibid.* Legge 1885, Part III, 380-381.
20. *Ibid.* See Legge 1885, Part III, 382.
21. *Ibid.* See Legge 1885, Part III, 367.
22. “In heaven there are formed its visible signs, and earth produces its (endless variety of) things; and thus it was that ceremonies were framed after the distinction between heaven and earth.” Legge 1885, Part IV, 104. (在天成象，在地成形；如此，則禮者天地之別也。“禮記·樂記”).
23. “The interaction of heaven and earth has run its rounds; and the four seasons have gone through their changes. All things between heaven and earth begin their processes anew. The rules of mourning are intended to resemble this” 天地則已易矣，四時則已變矣，其在天地之中者，莫不更始焉，以是象之也。In *Liji* 禮記，“*Sannian wen*” [Questions about the mourning for three years] 三年問。See Legge 1885, Part IV, 393.
24. “The way of Heaven and Earth may be completely declared in one sentence. They are without any doubleness, and so they produce things in a manner that is unfathomable. The way of Heaven and Earth is extensive, deep, high, brilliant, infinite, and lasting.” Lau 1979, 109. (“天地之道，可壹言而盡也。其為物不貳，則其生物不測。天地之道，博也厚也，高也明也，悠也久也。” In *Liji* 禮記，“*Zhongyong*” 中庸).
25. Legge translated “*shun*” as “harmony” and “*shun zhi shi* 順之實” as “the realisation of harmony”: “All these resulted from no other cause but that the ancient kings were able to fashion their ceremonial usages so as to convey the underlying ideas of right, and embody their truthfulness so as to secure the universal and mutual harmony. This was the realisation of it.” (Legge 1885, Part III, 393).

26. 凡禮之大體，體天地，法四時，則陰陽，順人情，故謂之禮。 For an English translation, see Legge 1885, Part IV, 465.
27. 言偃復問曰：“如此乎禮之急也？”孔子曰：“夫禮，先王以承天之道，以治人之情。故失之者死，得之者生。” (“Liyun”). For an English translation see Legge 1885, Part III, 367.
28. “禮有三本 天地者，生之本也；先祖者，類之本也；君師者，治之本也。無天地，惡生？無先祖，惡出？無君師，惡治？三者偏亡，焉無安人。故禮、上事天，下事地，尊先祖，而降君師。是禮之三本也...貳之則喪也。禮豈不至矣哉！立隆以為極，而天下莫之能損益也。” (Xunzi 荀子, “Lilun” 禮論). For an English translation, see De Bary & Bloom 1999, 175.
29. For an alternative translation, see Legge 1885, Part IV, 104.
30. Legge 1885, Part III, 255.
31. Legge 1885, Part III, 303.
32. 是故先王本之情性，稽之度數，制之禮義。 In *Liji* 禮記, “Yueji” 樂記. “Therefore the ancient kings (in framing their music), laid its foundations in the feelings and nature of men; they examined (the notes) by the measures (for the length and quality of each); and adapted it to express the meaning of the ceremonies (in which it was to be used).” Legge 1885, Part IV, 108.
33. “Ceremonies reflect the orderly distinctions (in the operations of) heaven and earth.” (Legge 1885, Part IV, p. 100).
34. 雖有其位，苟無其德，不敢作禮樂焉；雖有其德，苟無其位，亦不敢作禮樂焉。 In *Liji* 禮記, “Zhongyong” 中庸) For English translation, see Chan 1963, 111.
35. Legge 1885, Part IV, 101-102.
36. 六年，朝諸侯於明堂，制禮作樂，頒度量，而天下大服。 (“Mingtang wei”). See Legge 1885, Part IV, 31.
37. 故聖人以禮示之，故天下國家可得而正也。 (“Liyun”). See Legge 1885, Part III, 367.
38. De Bary & Bloom 1999, 344.
39. *Ibid.*
40. Lau 1979, 63.
41. James Legge’s translation of the passage is as follows: “Their training was varied, without changing their customs; and the governmental arrangements were uniform, without changing the suitability (in each case).” Legge 1885, Part III, 229.
42. De Bary & Bloom 1999, 344.

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Rites in the world

Cérémonies de cour et rituels guerriers : les rites entre raison et précédents dans les cercles du pouvoir japonais (fin XVII^e-début XVIII^e siècle)

François Macé

- 1 Le 11 décembre 1711 (Shōtoku 正徳 1, 11, 1), une ambassade de Corée, *chōsen tsūshinshi* 朝鮮通信使, fut accueillie au château d'Edo. Cette huitième ambassade depuis le début de la prise de pouvoir par les Tokugawa n'avait *a priori* rien d'exceptionnel. Elle venait féliciter le *shōgun* Ienobu 家宣 (1662-1712, s. 1709-1712)¹ de son arrivée aux affaires (*shūhō shukuğa* 襲封祝賀)². Ce type d'ambassade était devenu d'usage depuis le troisième *shōgun* Iemitsu 家光 (1604-1651, s. 1623-1651). Elle fut suivie de quatre autres avant la fin du *bakufu* 幕府, le gouvernement shogunal. Cette ambassade de 1711 est pourtant restée dans les mémoires, car elle fut le symbole des bouleversements de l'étiquette, une des faces du rite, qui agitaient les cercles du pouvoir à cette époque. Ces bouleversements se faisaient dans ce cas précis au nom de la raison, mais allaient à l'encontre des précédents. Au moment de l'ambassade, ils mettaient en lumière la tension entre le pouvoir réel, celui du *shōgun* et des guerriers, et la source de la légitimité, l'empereur de Kyōto. Or il s'agissait d'une époque à laquelle toutes les élites – guerriers, nobles et lettrés – partageaient la même culture confucéenne du rite. Ce sont ces multiples enjeux que je voudrais mettre en lumière dans cet article.

La réforme par les rites

Arai Hakuseki 新井白石 (1657-1725) et Tokugawa Ienobu 徳川家宣 (1662-1712, s. 1709-1712)

- 2 Arai Hakuseki³, déjà conseiller d'Ienobu avant qu'il ne soit *shōgun*, fut le véritable inspirateur de sa politique. Guerrier formé par le confucianiste Kinoshita Jun'an 木下順庵 (1621-1699), il s'efforça de mettre en pratique l'enseignement de son maître. En s'appuyant sur les rites, il tenta une entreprise que Watanabe Hiroshi⁴ a qualifiée de réforme, *kaikaku* 改革. C'est là un terme souvent utilisé par les historiens à propos d'autres politiques de l'époque d'Edo comme celle de Kyōhō 享保 en 1716, mais qui n'est curieusement jamais employé pour celle menée par Hakuseki.
- 3 En bon confucianiste, celui-ci s'attacha, en premier lieu, à la rectification des noms (*seimei* 正名). Ce fut une des raisons de sa politique monétaire. En réaction contre l'altération de la monnaie durant l'ère Genroku 元禄 (1688-1704), il fit fondre des pièces de bon aloi⁵. Cette volonté de faire correspondre dénomination et réalité l'amena à faire changer 26 noms de lieux⁶ et à rectifier des noms de trois des cinq grands axes routiers (*go kaidō* 五街道)⁷. Ainsi celle qui menait à Nikkō 日光, le Nikkō kaidō 日光海道 (route maritime de Nikkō) comme on l'appelait depuis le début de l'époque d'Edo, devint Nikkō dōchū 日光道中 sous prétexte que cette voie était loin de la mer⁸. De la même façon, il changea le nom du bâtiment où l'on célébrait les précédents *shōgun* de Gobutsuden 御仏殿 en Mitamaya 御霊屋, passant d'une appellation bouddhique à une désignation autochtone neutre qui servait aussi à la lecture japonaise du temple funéraire chinois *miao* (byō) 廟.
- 4 Pour rendre manifeste que le centre du pouvoir se trouvait bien au château d'Edo, il voulut faire coïncider la topographie avec cette réalité. Le pouvoir se situant au nord, il fit construire au sud d'Edo une nouvelle porte Shibaguchi gomon 芝口御門, placée à l'arrivée dans la ville de la principale voie de communication de l'époque, le Tōkaidō 東海道. Elle était à l'image de la porte de Rashō 羅生 à l'entrée sud de l'ancienne capitale, Kyōto à l'époque de Heian. Dans le même ordre d'idée, il fit bâtir à l'entrée du palais de l'enceinte principale, Honmaru 本丸, du château d'Edo une porte magnifiquement décorée, Naka no mon 中の門 (la porte du Milieu) orientée au sud bien évidemment⁹.
- 5 Soucieux de faire clairement apparaître l'ordre hiérarchique, il réforma les tenues (formes et couleurs) que les *daimyō* et les *hatamoto* 旗本¹⁰ devaient porter lors des audiences solennelles devant le *shōgun*, *omemie* 御目見. Hakuseki était persuadé que l'exécution de ces audiences en conformité avec les rites exprimerait un ordre correct et l'affermirait.
- 6 C'est aussi dans cet esprit qu'il modifia les Règlements des maisons guerrières en précisant :

衣服居室の、く井宴饗の供、贈遺の物、或奢侈に及び、或節儉に過く、
皆是礼文の節にあらず、

Il ne faut en matière de vêtement, d'habitat, de banquet, de cadeaux, faire ni trop ni trop peu. Rien de cela ne se trouve prescrit dans les textes des rites¹¹.
- 7 Parmi les nombreuses modifications qu'il apporta au protocole d'accueil de l'ambassade coréenne, celle qui est le plus citée fut le changement de la titulature du *shōgun*. Il

exigea en effet que les Coréens s'adressent au *shōgun* en tant que prince¹², c'est-à-dire souverain, en employant le terme de *Nihonkoku ō* 日本国王, et non comme auparavant celui de *Nihonkoku taikun* 日本国大君¹³.

- 8 Au Japon, son titre officiel était bien entendu *sei.i taishōgun*, 征夷大將軍 (généralissime pour la pacification des barbares). Il désignait simplement à l'origine un chef militaire et non les souverains de fait que ses titulaires étaient devenus. Si ce titre ne posait pas de problème dans le cadre d'un usage interne, il n'en allait pas de même pour les relations diplomatiques.
- 9 À l'époque de Muromachi 室町, le *shōgun* Ashikaga Yoshimitsu 足利義満 (1358-1408, s. 1369-1395) n'avait pu renouer des relations diplomatiques et commerciales avec la Chine des Ming en 1404 qu'en utilisant le titre de *Nihonkoku ō* 日本国王. Celui-ci faisait de lui certes un souverain, mais aussi protocolairement parlant, un vassal de l'empereur chinois au grand dam de l'aristocratie de cour, les *kuge* 公家. Or, après la période de troubles des « Royaumes combattants », puis le double échec de Toyotomi Hideyoshi 豊臣秀吉 (1537-1598) dans son projet d'envahir la Corée, soutenue par la Chine, le nouveau pouvoir des Tokugawa décida de limiter ses relations diplomatiques aux royaumes des Ryūkyū et de Corée. Dans ce cadre, après quelques tâtonnements, les *shōgun* choisirent de se faire appeler *taikun* – une expression tirée du *Livre des mutations* où elle désigne le grand prince, c'est à dire l'empereur¹⁴.
- 10 Une des raisons qui poussa, dit-on, Hakuseki à remplacer *taikun* par *kokuō* était que le fils aîné légitime, *chakushi* 嫡子, des souverains coréens était désigné par ce même terme de *taikun*. De plus, il trouvait aussi que, comme *taikun* désignait l'empereur dans les Classiques chinois, il ne pouvait convenir au *shōgun*¹⁵.
- 11 Mais surtout, pour lui, le *shōgun* qui était le souverain de fait du Japon devait porter sans équivoque un titre de souverain. Dans la pensée de Hakuseki, le fondateur de la dynastie Tokugawa Ieyasu 徳川家康 (1543-1616, s. 1603-1605) avait reçu le mandat céleste en remportant la bataille décisive de Sekigahara en 1600¹⁶, devenant ainsi l'homme le plus puissant du Japon. L'empereur de Kyōto correspondait pour Hakuseki à celui de Chine, suzerain relativement lointain pour les rois coréens. Les lettrés japonais estimaient qu'à la différence de la Chine, la dynastie impériale japonaise n'avait jamais perdu son mandat ce qui n'était pas le cas des *shōgun*. Ieyasu avait fondé le troisième *bakufu* après ceux de Kamakura (1192-1333) et de Muromachi (1336-1573). Il semble que Hakuseki se soit inspiré d'un passage des *Entretiens* de Confucius où sont énumérées les compétences du Fils du Ciel :

孔子曰天下有道則禮樂征伐自天子出。

Confucius dit : La Voie règne sous le Ciel lorsque les cérémonies rituelles, la musique et les expéditions punitives sont dirigées par le Fils du Ciel en personne¹⁷.

- 12 Dans son esprit, le *tennō* avait gardé la responsabilité des rites et de la musique, mais depuis l'instauration du *bakufu* à Kamakura, ce sont les *shōgun* qui régnaient sur le domaine des armes. On se trouvait donc devant une souveraineté partagée (*kyōshu* 共主)¹⁸.
- 13 Cette demande souleva de nombreuses oppositions tout d'abord de la part de l'ambassade coréenne qui ne voyait pas la nécessité de changer le protocole¹⁹, mais aussi chez nombre de lettrés japonais pour qui le seul souverain du Japon était

l'empereur, quand bien même son pouvoir ne serait que nominatif. C'était l'avis des Hayashi 林, confucianistes, directeurs de l'école Shōheikō 昌平齋 du bakufu :

国王は天皇を指し、将軍が国王を名乗るべきではなく、無用の改変。平地に波風を立てるもの。

Kokuō désigne l'empereur *tennō*, le *shōgun* ne doit pas porter ce titre, ce changement est inutile. C'est soulever une tempête en plaine²⁰.

- 14 Cependant alors que certains allèrent jusqu'à demander son renvoi, Hakuseki put imposer ses vues grâce au soutien du *shōgun* : l'ambassade coréenne dut se plier à ses exigences.
- 15 Il veilla donc particulièrement au protocole lors de la réception de l'ambassade au château d'Edo tout en limitant les dépenses. Il en a laissé une description minutieuse²¹. On trouve notamment dans celle-ci le parcours depuis le lieu de résidence jusqu'au château, et des précisions sur l'emplacement de chacun lors des audiences ou la liste des cadeaux échangés. Il apporta une autre innovation importante. Jusqu'alors on offrait aux ambassades coréennes un spectacle de *nō*, art très prisé par les guerriers depuis sa création à la fin du *xiv*^e siècle. Mais Hakuseki imposa le *gagaku* 雅楽, la musique de cour.
- 16 Cette musique de cour avait été introduite au Japon au cours des *vii*^e et surtout *viii*^e siècles à partir de la Corée puis directement de la Chine des Tang. Pour Hakuseki, cette musique d'origine continentale était la seule en accord avec la solennité des rites. Pour ce concert dont son texte donne le programme, il fit appel aux musiciens de *gagaku* qui se trouvaient déjà à Edo pour les services bouddhiques en l'honneur du fondateur de la dynastie, Tokugawa Ieyasu. Cependant ces derniers n'étaient pas en nombre suffisant. Il fit donc venir des musiciens du Kansai, ceux des *Sanbō gakuso* 三方楽所, c'est-à-dire les trois lieux de musique, à savoir le temple Kōfukuji 興福寺 et le sanctuaire Kasuga 春日²² de Nara, ainsi que le temple Tennōji 天王寺 d'Ōsaka et le palais de Kyōto.
- 17 À la suite des guerres des *xv*^e et *xvi*^e siècles, la cour n'avait plus les moyens d'entretenir un orchestre et devait faire appel pour les événements importants aux musiciens rattachés à de grands établissements religieux particulièrement le Tennōji d'Ōsaka. Ce fut donc bien un spectacle de cour digne de ce qui pouvait se faire au palais de Kyōto qui fut offert à l'ambassade coréenne. Ses membres semblent l'avoir apprécié, tout particulièrement plusieurs pièces réputées d'origine coréenne qui avaient disparu dans la péninsule.
- 18 Cette volonté de présenter le *shōgun* comme le véritable souverain se retrouve dans la modification du protocole de la visite du *shōgun* au temple de Confucius, Kōshibyō 孔子廟 à Yushima. Hakuseki demanda au *shōgun* de frapper dans les mains conformément aux anciens usages chinois, démonstration selon lui que le *shōgun* était bien un souverain respectueux des rites²³.
- 19 Parmi les guerriers, mais aussi certains lettrés, ces nouveautés ne firent pas l'unanimité. Ils reprochaient à Hakuseki de les plier aux normes de l'étiquette de la cour de Kyōto. Ainsi Hattori Nankaku 服部南郭 (1683-1759) jugea que :

白石ハトカク江戸ヲ禁裏ノ如クスルツモリノヤウニ見ユ。武士ト云フ事キラヒ也。武備ユルミタレハ 乱起ルヘ シ。唯正名ト云フハ カリニテ経済ハ次ナルヘ シ。

Hakuseki eut, semble-t-il, l'intention de rendre Edo pareil au palais impérial. Il détestait les guerriers. En désorganisant les guerriers, il provoquerait le désordre. En ne parlant que de rectifier les noms, il faisait passer au second plan la conduite des affaires publiques²⁴.

- 20 Le reproche n'était pas infondé. Ce sont bien les rites du palais impérial, eux-mêmes fortement imprégnés par la tradition confucéenne, qui inspiraient les transformations voulues par Hakuseki.
- 21 Celui-ci songea même à modifier la cérémonie d'investiture des *shōgun* (*sei.i taishōgun senge* 宣下) sur le modèle d'un des rites d'avènement de la cour, le *sokui* 即位. Il était allé assister à Kyōto à celui de Nakamikado 中御門 (1702-1737), *tennō* de 1709 à 1735. Ce rite qui s'était maintenu malgré les aléas de la cour était le plus marqué par le modèle chinois. Il consistait avant tout en une apparition solennelle du nouveau souverain devant la cour. Le *tennō* revêtait alors un costume brodé avec le dragon impérial. Il portait aussi la coiffe au rideau de perles. Hakuseki avait aussi assisté à la cérémonie de la vêtue (*genpuku no gi* 元服の儀) du même Nakamikado en 1711, il s'en inspira pour celle du *shōgun* Ietsugu²⁵.
- 22 Ce souci constant de souligner la prééminence du *shōgun* se retrouve dans la maîtrise du temps. Depuis l'Antiquité, l'empereur décidait des changements d'ère. Toutefois, le processus de ce changement avait fait l'objet de l'article 8 des *Règlements relatifs à la cour et aux nobles*, *Kinchū narabini kuge shohatto* 禁中並公家諸法度²⁶. Il y était spécifié qu'il fallait choisir une dénomination parmi les noms d'ère chinois tout en suivant les précédents japonais²⁷. Les spécialistes de la cour de Kyōto établissaient une liste de noms possibles et l'envoyaient à Edo où le *bakufu* choisissait. Puis l'empereur proclamait la nouvelle ère.
- 23 Le gouvernement d'Ienobu et de Hakuseki se déroula principalement pendant l'ère Shōtoku 正徳 (1711-1716). Le choix du nom suivit le processus habituel²⁸, Hakuseki dut très probablement être consulté. Shōtoku reprenait un nom d'ère des Ming, Zhengde (1506-1521) sous l'empereur Wuzong 武宗²⁹.
- 24 L'ère Shōtoku avait été inaugurée avec près de deux ans de retard à l'occasion de l'avènement de l'empereur Nakamikado. Bien qu'il y ait eu des exceptions, particulièrement à la fin du XVI^e et au début du XVII^e siècles³⁰, l'avènement d'un nouvel empereur était le plus souvent marqué par un changement de nom d'ère – et ce, depuis que le système des noms d'ère fut appliqué de façon continue en 701. Cela le fut systématiquement depuis le père de Nakamikado, Higashiyama 東山 (1675-1710, t. 1687-1709). Cette pratique perdure jusqu'à nos jours. Comme le plus souvent depuis le début de l'époque de Heian, les deux caractères du nom d'ère furent choisis dans un ouvrage chinois, en l'occurrence le *Livre des Documents*³¹.
- 25 Pure coïncidence, le changement d'empereur et celui de *shōgun* eurent lieu la même année en 1709. Le changement d'ère correspondait donc à un double avènement. Rappelons que l'ambassade coréenne arriva au 11^e mois de cette nouvelle ère qui avait été promulguée le 25 du 4^e mois. Ce ne serait pas la première fois que le pouvoir shōgunal aurait ainsi voulu montrer sa maîtrise du temps. Ieyasu avait imposé le passage de Keichō 慶長 à Genna 元和 en 1615 pour inaugurer la paix acquise après la chute du château d'Osaka. Le début de l'ère Kan'ei 寛永 (1624-1645) correspondait à une année de révolution *kasshi* (lu aussi *kōshi*) *kakumei* 甲子革命, mais aussi à la prise de fonction du troisième *shōgun* Iemitsu 家光 (1604-1651, s. 1623-1651). Il en serait de

même de l'ère Jōō 承応 (1652-1655) pour son successeur Ietsuna 家綱 (1641-1680, s. 1651-1680). Enfin le changement d'ère en 1716 de Shōtoku à Kyōhō 享保 fut, semble-t-il, provoqué par la mort du septième *shōgun* Ietsugu 家継 (1709-1716, s. 1713-1716) alors que Hakuseki était encore aux affaires. Ce fut la dernière fois que les *shōgun* purent ainsi imposer leur marque au temps³².

- 26 Or en 1712, 2^e année de Shōtoku, en réponse à une demande adressée aux plus hautes instances du *bakufu*, les Anciens (*rōjū* 老中), Hakuseki rédigea un texte, le *Shōtoku nenjō ben* 正徳年號辨 (Discussion sur le nom de l'ère Shōtoku) dont le post-scriptum commence ainsi :

右一巻は正徳二年冬文昭廟薨御の後正徳之年號不吉の儀林家より申出即大學頭
信篤御老中迄書付を以改元有之可然と申立候()。

Le gouverneur de Chikugo écrivit ce texte à la suite de la demande faite après le décès de Bunshō byō, à l'hiver de l'an deux de Shōtoku. Cette demande parvenue jusqu'aux Anciens, venait de la famille Hayashi, c'est-à-dire de Nobuatsu, directeur des Études supérieures. Elle disait qu'il fallait changer de nom d'ère, car celui de Shōtoku était néfaste (...)³³.

- 27 Ce court texte sans grande ambition reflète indirectement tout un pan de la société d'Edo. Le gouverneur de Chikugo était le titre de cour que portait Hakuseki³⁴. Celui-ci était par ailleurs du 4^e rang inférieur mineur. Comme tous les guerriers importants de l'époque d'Edo à commencer par le *shōgun*, il avait reçu de la cour de Kyōto fonction et rang à titre honorifique³⁵. *Bunshōbyō* 文昭廟 renvoie à *Bunshō.in* 文昭院, l'appellation courante du sixième *shōgun*, Ienobu, après sa mort³⁶, *byō* comme *in* désigne d'abord un bâtiment, ici le temple funéraire de Bunshō. Le décès du *shōgun* est rendu par l'expression *kōgyo* 薨御. Cette dernière était réservée depuis l'époque de Heian aux princes, fils d'empereur (*shinnō* 親王), aux impératrices (*nyo.in* 女院), aux ministres (*daijin* 大臣), et enfin aux personnes d'un rang supérieur au troisième³⁷. La hiérarchie sociale, sur le modèle de la Chine, se répercutait sur la façon de désigner la mort d'un individu³⁸. Bien que souverain de fait, le *shōgun* était traité selon l'étiquette de la cour. Il n'avait pas droit au *hōgyo* 崩御 réservé au seul *tennō*. Ienobu avait commencé son *cursus honorum* au 3^e rang, au moment de son décès il était parvenu au 2^e rang supérieur. Il reçut à titre posthume, comme tous les *shōgun*, le 1^{er} rang supérieur et la fonction de ministre des Affaires suprêmes (*dajō daijin* 太政大臣). La hiérarchie guerrière se devait de revêtir des habits de cour pour tenir son rang.

- 28 L'auteur de la demande de changement d'ère, Hayashi Nobuatsu 林 信篤 (Hayashi Hōkō 林鳳岡, 1645-1732) avait été un des conseillers du 5^e *shōgun* Tsunayoshi 綱吉 (1646-1709, s. 1680-1709). Il était le petit-fils de Hayashi Razan 林羅山 (1583-1657), un des premiers propagateurs de la pensée de Shushi 朱子 (*Ch. Zhu Xi* 朱熹) au Japon et conseillé des trois premiers *shōgun*. Ce même Razan avait laissé pour ses descendants un curieux texte, une sorte de transmission secrète (*hiden* 秘伝) : le *Shintō denju* 神道伝授 (la transmission du *shintō*)³⁹. Il s'agit d'un des premiers exemples de syncrétisme *shintō*-confucéen. Autrement dit, la famille Hayashi était versée dans une certaine forme d'ésotérisme et cherchait surtout à ménager les dieux. Razan, encore lui, publia tout à fait ouvertement un texte intitulé : *Honchō jinja kō* 本朝神社考 (Réflexion sur les sanctuaires de notre pays) où il fait la part belle aux traditions syncrétiques. Aussi, tout confucéens qu'ils fussent, les Hayashi semblent avoir été sensibles à certaines croyances indigènes.

- 29 Cette controverse entre Arai Hakuseki et Hayashi Hōkō se déroula pendant la période que les historiens ont qualifiée de « gouvernement des lettrés » (*bunchi seiji* 文治政治). Ce furent en effet deux lettrés qui s'affrontèrent. Pourtant ils appartenaient tous les deux à la même mouvance du confucianisme – celle qui se réclamait de Shushi (*Shushigaku* 朱子学), et qui resta dominante pendant toute la période d'Edo. Dans son argumentaire, Hakuseki qui avait dû valider le choix de Shōtoku, réfutait toute idée d'influence faste ou néfaste des noms d'ère, en citant, à l'appui, des exemples aussi bien chinois que japonais⁴⁰. Esprit sceptique, il ne croyait guère au surnaturel. Ainsi pour lui les dieux de la tradition japonaise n'étaient que l'idéalisation d'hommes puissants de la haute antiquité⁴¹.
- 30 Le but de Hakuseki était clair :
- 萬代ノ禮式ヲ議定アルヘキハ、マコトニ百年ノ今日ヲ以テ、其期也。
- Il faut établir le protocole des rites pour dix mille générations, aujourd'hui que cent ans se sont écoulés, c'est vraiment le moment⁴².
- 31 Les rites qu'il souhaitait mettre en place devaient exprimer une vision idéale de la société. Ils étaient issus d'une logique claire. Mais ils parurent à beaucoup artificiels, car ne reposant pas sur des précédents. En voulant transposer certains usages de la cour de Kyōto au château d'Edo⁴³, Hakuseki allait à l'encontre d'autres usages, ceux des guerriers tout aussi contraignants que ceux des nobles de cour.

Le gouvernement des lettrés

Tsunayoshi 綱吉 (1646-1709, s. 1680-1709)

- 32 Le *shōgun* Ienobu, sur les conseils de Hakuseki, avait commencé son gouvernement en s'opposant frontalement à son prédécesseur Tsunayoshi. Dès son avènement, il abrogea sa législation la plus connue : les Décrets de compassion envers les êtres vivants (*Shōrui awaremi no rei* 生類哀れみの令)⁴⁴. Le choix du *gagaku* à la place du *nō* n'est pas non plus étranger à cette politique de réaction. Tsunayoshi était en effet connu pour son amour de ce spectacle. Cependant, malgré cette volonté de rupture, la politique d'Ienobu continua sous de multiples aspects celle de son prédécesseur, notamment en ce qui concerne la place accordée au confucianisme et les liens avec la famille impériale.
- 33 Tsunayoshi avait, comme tous les *shōgun*, renouvelé en 1683 (Tenna 天和 3) les décrets concernant les maisons guerrières (*Buke shohatto* 武家諸法度). Mais alors que les précédents décrets commençaient par la formule suivante « [les guerriers] doivent exclusivement cultiver les voies des lettres, des armes, de l'arc et du cheval » (文武弓馬の道、専ら相嗜むべき事)⁴⁵, il la remplaça par : « Ils doivent s'appliquer aux lettres et aux armes, à la fidélité et à la piété filiale ; ils doivent se conformer aux rites » (文武忠孝を励まし、礼儀を正すべき事)⁴⁶. Le changement est d'envergure : les armes ne sont plus qu'un devoir parmi d'autres. En revanche les rites gagnent en importance. Cette modification dans les décrets correspond aussi à un changement historique : le Japon était désormais en paix. La période des « Royaumes combattants » (*Sengoku jidai* 戦国時代), comme la nommaient les nobles de cour férus d'histoire chinoise, était définitivement close. La dernière campagne militaire, celle qui réprima la révolte de Shimabara (*Shimabara no ran* 島原の乱), trouva son dénouement en 1638. Les guerriers se devaient désormais de suivre les vertus confucéennes.

34 C'est dans cette perspective qu'il faut interpréter l'interruption par Tsunayoshi des visites au Tōshōgū 東照宮 de Nikkō, les *Nikkō shasan* 日光社参. Ces visites au sanctuaire où était vénéré Ieyasu, le fondateur divinisé du *bakufu* des Tokugawa⁴⁷, avaient été jusqu'à lors l'occasion de démontrer la puissance militaire du *shōgun*. Pour expliquer sa décision, Tsunayoshi avança, à juste titre, des arguments économiques et de bienveillance. Il s'agissait de soulager la population située le long du parcours qui devait supporter une grande partie des charges occasionnées par ces déplacements. Mais il est très probable que la nécessité symbolique de ces visites n'était plus perçue. Ces pèlerinages avaient commencé dès la fin des travaux du premier sanctuaire de Nikkō en 1617. Le troisième *shōgun*, Iemitsu, grand admirateur de son grand-père et responsable de l'embellissement du sanctuaire sous l'aspect qu'on lui connaît aujourd'hui, s'y rendit dix fois. Ces déplacements du *shōgun* accompagné des *daimyō* et de ses vassaux directs étaient une véritable démonstration de force. On raconte que lors du déplacement d'Ieharu 家治 (1737-1786, s. 1760-1786), dixième *shōgun* en 1776, la queue du cortège n'avait pas encore quitté Edo quand la tête était arrivée à Nikkō. Après une interruption pendant les règnes de Tsunayoshi, Ienobu et Ietsugu, Yoshimune 吉宗 (1684-1751, s. 1716-1745) renoua avec ce rite en 1728. Il en sera question un peu plus loin. Cependant il n'y eut plus que deux autres visites en 1776 et 1848, avant la chute du *bakufu*. La décision de Tsunayoshi de ne pas se rendre à Nikkō marque donc une date importante dans l'attitude des *shōgun* vis-à-vis de l'héritage guerrier et de ses coutumes.

La cour de Kyōto et la restauration des rites

- 35 Le confucianisme était loin d'être inconnu dans la capitale impériale. La tradition de l'étude des Classiques y était restée vivante parmi les familles spécialisées dans les études chinoises, même après la disparition du bureau des Études supérieures (*Daigakuryō* 大学寮), qu'avaient établi les Codes du VIII^e siècle.
- 36 Déjà l'empereur Gokōmyō 後光明天皇 (1633-1654, t. 1643-1654) avait montré un grand intérêt pour le confucianisme et les études chinoises. Il avait reçu la transmission (*denju* 伝授)⁴⁸ du commentaire du *Classique des mutations* par Fushihara Katatada 伏原賢忠 (1602-1666), héritier d'une famille spécialisée dans l'étude des Classiques, avant de se tourner vers l'enseignement de Shushi. En 1651, l'empereur préfaça un recueil de textes de Fujiwara Seika 藤原惺高 (1561-1619), lettré considéré comme le premier confucéen du Japon des temps modernes. Ce fut la première fois qu'un empereur daignait préfacier l'ouvrage d'un homme du peuple.
- 37 Gokōmyō s'efforça de restaurer les rites de cour à commencer par celui de l'envoi des offrandes de la cour aux sanctuaires d'Ise (*Jingū reihei no gi* 神宮 例幣の儀). En 1646, il rétablit aussi logiquement les cérémonies en l'honneur de Confucius (*Sekiten* 積奠) ainsi que l'office des études supérieures (*Daigakuryō*). Il envisagea également de réformer les costumes de la cour, mais n'eut pas le temps d'achever cette tâche.
- 38 Sous l'influence d'Asayama Irin.an 朝山意林庵 (1589-1664)⁴⁹ dont il avait écouté les conférences, il considérait le bouddhisme comme une étude inutile (*muyō no gaku* 無用の学). Esprit fort, il ouvrit la boîte contenant le miroir, un des trois insignes de la légitimité des empereurs japonais (*sanshu no jingi* 三種の神器) – boîte que l'on ne devait jamais ouvrir. Il y trouva des reliques bouddhiques qu'il fit jeter dans la cour en

- les traitant d'espèce de « bouddhieuseries » louches (*ayashi bussharime* 怪しい仏舎利め).
- 39 Ses funérailles eurent lieu comme pour ses prédécesseurs depuis Gomizunoo 後水尾 (1596-1680, t. 1611-1629), au monastère du Sennyūji 泉涌寺 à Kyōto. On raconte que sur les conseils d'un marchand de poisson qui avait ses entrées au palais, on ne procéda pas à la crémation bouddhique (*dabi* 荼毘) sous prétexte que c'était porter atteinte au précieux corps (*gyokutai* 玉體) du souverain. Sans les prises de position antibouddhiques du souverain – vraisemblablement partagées par de nombreux membres de la cour –, on imagine mal qu'un marchand de poisson ait pu modifier ainsi les funérailles. Bien qu'il y ait eu inhumation, le monument funéraire, une petite tour à neuf étages en pierre (*kujū no tō* 九重塔), ne diffère pas de ceux de ses prédécesseurs. Ces monuments relativement modestes contrastent avec la somptuosité des tombes et temples funéraires des *shōgun* dans les monastères d'Edo sans parler des mausolées d'Ieyasu et Iemitsu à Nikkō. Cette inhumation n'en constitue pas moins une rupture dans la longue série des crémations des souverains qui remontait à 703, pour les funérailles de l'impératrice Jitō 持統 (645-703, t. 686-697).
- 40 Reigen 靈元天皇 (1654-1732, t. 1663-1687) qui bénéficia d'une longévité assez exceptionnelle poursuivit la politique de restauration de son frère Gokōmyō. Moins tranché dans ses opinions religieuses, il fut le dernier empereur à porter le titre de souverain de la loi *hō* 法皇 après son entrée dans les ordres en 1713.
- 41 Jouant habilement des failles des *Règlements sur l'empereur et nobles de cour* établis en 1615 dès le début du *bakufu*⁵⁰, Reigen continua à contrôler la cour et ses rapports avec le *shōgun* en tant qu'empereur retiré. Après avoir reconstitué en 1683 le rite de nomination du prince héritier (*Rittaishi no rei* 立太子禮) – rite qui n'avait plus été célébré depuis 300 ans – il réussit surtout à organiser une première restauration d'un des plus importants rites d'avènement, celui de la Grande gustation, *Daijōe* 大嘗會⁵¹ en 1687 pour l'avènement de son fils Higashiyama⁵². Le rite n'avait plus été organisé depuis celui de Gotsuchimikado 後土御門天皇 (1442-1500, t. 1464-1500) en 1466 (Bunshō 文正 1) juste avant les troubles d'Ōnin (*Ōnin no ran* 応仁の乱, 1467-1477) qui ravagèrent la capitale et ruinèrent la famille impériale. Le rite fut donc interrompu pendant 220 ans. Neuf empereurs ne purent l'accomplir.
- 42 La cour et au premier chef l'empereur éprouvaient de la nostalgie envers la splendeur passée et la beauté des rites. Le père de Reigen, Gomizunoo, dans un ouvrage qu'il compila sur les rites du calendrier de son temps (*Tōji nenjūgyōji* 当時年中行事), regrettait l'interruption du rite de la Grande gustation, de celui du bain de purification (*misogi* 禊) et de tant d'autres rites sans espoir de restauration⁵³. Sous le règne de son fils Gokōmyō, Nakahara Morosada 中原師定 (*daigeki* 大外記, d.i.)⁵⁴ recopia en secret un livre qui ne devait pas sortir de la réserve. Il s'agissait du *Daijōe shinpisho* 大嘗會神秘書 (Livre sur les mystères de la Grande gustation) écrit par Yoshida Kanetomo 吉田兼俱 (1435-1511). Ce document daté de 1479 (Bunmei 文明 11) n'était donc postérieur que d'une douzaine d'années à ce qui allait devenir la dernière Grande gustation avant l'interruption. Comme son titre l'indique, il était fortement marqué par l'ésotérisme du *shintō* médiéval. Le fait que Nakahara ait dû le copier en cachette montre que la Grande gustation conservait son aura de mystère alors même qu'elle n'était plus célébrée.
- 43 Reigen pour mener à bien son projet fit effectuer des recherches sur les précédents (*senrei* 先例), les usages du passé (*kojitsu* 故実), et les anciens règlements (*kohō* 古法). Il

bénéficia finalement d'une sorte de neutralité de la part du shōgunat qui, au début, ne considérait pas d'un très bon œil cette velléité d'autonomie de la cour de Kyōto. Il ne voyait probablement pas non plus l'intérêt de la restauration de ce rite archaïque. Le *bakufu* accepta la restauration dans la mesure où les frais ne dépasseraient pas la somme déjà allouée pour la cérémonie d'avènement du *Sokui* que nous avons déjà rencontrée.

- 44 Ce fut au sein de la cour que les débats furent les plus vifs. S'opposaient les nobles proches du *bakufu* qui ne jugeaient pas utile de le provoquer en restaurant un rite qui renforçait le prestige de l'empereur (ils arguaient de plus que l'on manquait de moyens et de préparation), et ceux qui au contraire soutenaient l'empereur retiré. Les premiers étaient menés par Konoe Motohiro 近衛基熙 (1648-1742)⁵⁵, les derniers conduits par Ichijō Fuyutsune 一条冬経 (1652-1705)⁵⁶. L'opposition reposait aussi sur l'interprétation du rite. Konoe se référait à l'ancienne vision, celle du *shintō* de Yoshida, encore imprégnée de bouddhisme ésotérique, tandis qu'Ichijō suivait un nouveau courant : le *Suika shintō* 垂加神道, profondément marqué par le confucianisme⁵⁷. Ichijō avait reçu la transmission secrète du *Suika shintō* d'Ōgimachi Kinmichi 正親町公通 (1653-1733)⁵⁸. Il attribua des noms de dieu (*shingō* 神號) selon les rites du *Suika shintō* aux empereurs Reigen, Higashiyama et Nakamikado. Reigen, sous son influence, fit composer un *norito* 祝詞, une prière, où il demandait à être célébré à travers un miroir dans lequel il s'était réfléchi⁵⁹.
- 45 À la différence de rites comme l'investiture du prince héritier ou celui en l'honneur de Confucius, la Grande gustation fut restaurée dans un contexte que l'on doit bien qualifier de religieux. La cérémonie eut bien lieu malgré la faiblesse des moyens, ce qui entraîna quelques manques notamment en ce qui concernait les banquets qui devaient suivre le rite proprement dit. De plus, les problèmes ne furent pas que financiers. Les deux processions qui précédaient la Grande gustation à époque ancienne ne furent pas reconstituées. La première concernait l'empereur qui se rendait du palais à la rivière Kamo 鴨 pour procéder à la principale purification, un bain dans l'eau vive (*misogi* 禊). La purification eut bien lieu, mais elle se déroula dans l'enceinte du palais dans la cour du Seiryōden 清涼殿 (Pavillon de pureté et de fraîcheur)⁶⁰. La seconde était composée de porteurs d'offrandes venus des deux provinces choisies pour la culture du riz offert à l'occasion de la Gustation. Cette procession devait remonter la grande avenue centrale de la capitale. Mais cela fut impossible. D'une part, le centre de gravité de Kyōto s'était déplacé vers l'est et l'ancienne avenue centrale ne débouchait plus sur le palais. Mais, d'autre part, le *bakufu* ne pouvait tolérer cette publicité dont l'empereur eût pu tirer prestige⁶¹.
- 46 Cette première restauration ne servit pas immédiatement de précédent. Le successeur de Higashiyama, son fils Nakamikado ne célébra pas la Grande gustation. Étant donné son jeune âge au moment de son avènement – il n'avait que sept ans –, ce n'est bien évidemment pas lui qui prit la décision. Un malheureux concours de circonstances l'explique en grande partie. Tout d'abord, son père Higashiyama mourut à peine un an après son abdication. Le rite de *sokui* eut donc lieu en plein deuil. Le *bakufu* se montra aussi mesquin que par le passé en ne fournissant que du vieux riz de mauvaise qualité à cette occasion. Ensuite, on célébrait la même année le premier anniversaire de la mort du *shōgun* Ienobu. Aussi, ni la cour ni le *bakufu* n'avaient le cœur à la fête. De plus, la Grande gustation devait se tenir dans un contexte de pureté rituelle rigoureuse. Or la mort était considérée comme la souillure par excellence. En outre, Hakuseki ne semble

pas avoir porté un grand intérêt à ce rite dont la connotation religieuse ne devait pas lui échapper. Enfin à Kyōto, il ne se trouvait personne possédant une volonté aussi forte que Reigen. On n'en célébra pas moins le rite de la vêtue de l'empereur (*genpuku no gi* 元服の儀), son entrée dans l'âge adulte, rite qui n'avait pas été tenu pour un empereur depuis Gokomatsu 後小松天皇 (1377-1433, t. 1382-1412) en 1384 (Eitoku 永徳 4).

- 47 Nakamikado porta pourtant, pendant son règne, un grand intérêt aux anciennes cérémonies de la cour dont il dirigea une compilation, le *Kujiburui* 公事部類. Cependant la grande affaire de son règne semble avoir été la réception en 1729 d'un éléphant que le *shōgun* Yoshimune avait fait venir du Vietnam. Comme cet éléphant n'avait ni rang ni fonction, se posa la question du protocole pour qu'il puisse être mis en présence de l'empereur. On le nomma éléphant blanc du 4^e rang inférieur du Vietnam (*Kōnan jushii hakuzō* 広南従四位白象). Lors de l'audience, l'éléphant plia les pattes de devant et s'inclina devant l'empereur.
- 48 Peut-être plus important pour mon propos, sous son règne fut imprimé l'ouvrage d'Ichijō Kaneyoshi 一條兼良 (1402-1481) sur les rites de début de règne (*Miyo hajime shō* 御代始鈔) en quatre parties : l'abdication (*gojō'i no koto* 御讓位事), l'avènement (*gosokui no koto* 御即位事), la procession de la purification (*gokei gyōkō no koto* 御禊行幸事), la Grande gustation (*daijoe no koto* 大嘗會事). La Grande gustation restait donc bien présente dans l'esprit des nobles de Kyōto. Finalement, Nakamikado participa à sa nouvelle restauration pour son fils Sakuramachi 桜町 (1720-1750, t. 1735-1747).

Le retour des guerriers

Sakuramachi et Yoshimune 吉宗 (1684-1751, s.1716-1745)

- 49 À la mort d'Ietsugu, le nouveau *shōgun* Yoshimune s'empessa d'annuler toutes les réformes qu'avait imposées Arai Hakuseki. Ainsi, il promulgua de nouveaux *Règlements des guerriers* en sino-japonais alors que Hakuseki les avait donnés en pur japonais. Il proclama son attachement à l'œuvre et à la personnalité de Tsunayoshi tant décriés par Ienobu et Hakuseki, sans toutefois partager son amour des bêtes. Il fit détruire la porte du milieu dans le château d'Edo, et ne fit pas reconstruire la porte Shibaguchi à l'entrée de la ville après son incendie. Il abolit les réformes vestimentaires et revint à l'ancien protocole pour l'accueil de l'ambassade coréenne en rétablissant notamment le *nō* à la place du *gagaku*.
- 50 Après une période où les *shōgun* avaient été sous l'emprise de leurs conseillers, Yoshimune restaura l'autorité de la fonction. Ogyū Sorai 荻生徂徠 (1666-1728) put lui offrir ses *Seidan* 政談 (Propos politiques), mais n'occupa jamais une position aussi influente qu'avait été celle de Hakuseki. Yoshimune mit en avant les valeurs guerrières. Il restaura ainsi les chasses au faucon (*takagari* 鷹狩り), ce qui ne signifiait en rien un retour à la sauvagerie. D'une part, la situation sociale n'avait pas changé et les guerriers ne faisaient plus la guerre depuis longtemps. D'autre part, même dans les sociétés les plus guerrières, on a toujours observé des règles, suivi des usages. Le Japon ne fit pas exception. Très tôt, les guerriers, qui avaient toujours sous les yeux l'étiquette de la cour de Kyōto, se dotèrent de règles de conduite pour toutes les occasions. Ils se devaient de suivre une étiquette aussi rigoureuse que celle de la cour.

- 51 Ces questions d'étiquette étaient si importantes que le *bakufu* se dota de spécialistes parmi ses vassaux directs, les *kōke* 高家. Kira Yoshihisa 吉良 義央 (1641-1703), l'anti-héros de l'affaire d'Akō 赤穂⁶², était l'un d'eux. Bénéficiant de la protection de Tsunayoshi, il fut envoyé vingt-quatre fois à Kyōto en tant que messenger du *shōgun* auprès de l'empereur, notamment à l'occasion des vœux du Nouvel An. Il revenait d'une mission de ce genre quand il fut blessé au Château d'Edo.
- 52 Auparavant un autre *kōke*, Imagawa Naofusa 今川 直房 (1597-1662)⁶³ qui servit les *shōgun* Hidetada 秀忠 (1579-1632), Iemitsu, et Ietsuna, avait été chargé par Iemitsu de négocier avec la cour l'élévation du sanctuaire de Nikkō du rang de *sha* 社 à celui de *gū* 宮⁶⁴. Le succès de cette mission lui valut un doublement de sa pension.
- 53 Le rôle des *kōke* ne se limitait pas aux relations avec Kyōto. Grâce à leurs connaissances des usages de la cour, ils veillaient aussi au bon déroulement des rites chez les guerriers. Ceux-ci avaient été codifiés dès l'époque de Muromachi pendant le *bakufu* des Ashikaga 足利 qui, résidant dans la même ville, entretenaient des liens étroits avec la cour impériale. Les trois grands courants des usages guerriers de l'époque d'Edo remontent à cette période : Iseryū 伊勢流⁶⁵, Imakawa ryū 今川流 et le plus connu Ogasawararyū 小笠原流.
- 54 La réaction de Yoshimune contre les mesures de Hakuseki ne remit pas en cause la progression des rites dans la société. Comme nous l'avons vu, sa visite au sanctuaire de Nikkō resta isolée. Il n'y en eut que deux autres avant la chute du *bakufu*. S'il restaura un certain nombre d'événements à caractère guerrier, il le fit sous des formes très codifiées.
- 55 Au début de l'époque d'Edo, il était arrivé que le *shōgun* assistât à des tirs à l'arc, mais les formes ritualisées du tir à pied (*sharei* ou *jarai* 射礼) ou à cheval (*kisha* 騎射) ne s'étaient pas maintenues après la disparition du *bakufu* de Muromachi. Yoshimune les restaura alors qu'il était encore seigneur du fief de Kii. Devenu *shōgun*, il continua à faire rassembler textes et images pour reconstituer les différents rites : tir à l'arc à cheval (*yagusame* 流鏑馬), et sa variante (*kasagake* 笠懸), tir aux chiens (*inu o.u mono* 犬追物)⁶⁶, tir à la cible (*jarai* 射礼). Le tir à pied (*hosha* 歩射⁶⁷) fut confié à la branche de la famille Ogasawara qui avait le titre de cour *Nuidono no suke* 縫殿助 (Adjoint au bureau de la couture), les trois types de tir à cheval, à la branche Ogasawara Heibei 小笠原平兵衛家. Toutes les deux étaient des *hatamoto*.
- 56 Si au moment de leur élaboration, les cérémonies de tir à l'arc qui avaient été célébrées par les nobles de cour à l'époque de Heian pour le tir à pied purent avoir un lien direct avec l'activité guerrière, une sorte d'entraînement codifié, notamment l'*inu o.u mono*, au même titre que la chasse, ce n'était plus le cas après la diffusion des armes à feu dans la deuxième moitié du XVI^e siècle. Ce qui restait, c'était une attitude, un rite dont la finalité n'était plus directement pratique, mais le symbole de l'appartenance à la classe des guerriers.
- 57 Célèbre pour le tir à l'arc, Ogasawararyū comme les autres courants des usages guerriers étendit son influence sur tous les aspects de la vie. Le septième chef de la famille, Sadamune 小笠原貞宗 (1292-1347), alors qu'il était au service de l'empereur Godaigo 後醍醐 (1288-1339, t. 1318-1339), était non seulement fort habile au tir à l'arc et en équitation, mais aussi féru d'étiquette. Il établit les nouvelles règles dans les usages des guerriers. Les trois règles correctes (*kyūhō* 糾法), arc, équitation et rites (*kyūbarei* 弓馬禮), se diffusèrent largement au-delà même du monde des guerriers.

58 Ogyū Sorai les considérait de façon assez critique :

サテ今ノ世ニハ美ノ礼ト言ハナクテ、小笠原ト言物ヲ礼ノ様ニ覚ル也。小笠原ノ諸礼ニハ上下ノ差別ハナク、唯真草行ト云コトヲ立テ

Aujourd’hui, bien que ce ne soit pas un véritable rituel, il y a cette étiquette de l’école Ogasawara. Elle ressemble au système des rites et des lois, mais elle ne comporte pas de distinction entre les supérieurs et les inférieurs. Il n’y a que cette différence entre les trois styles : élaboré, ordinaire, cursif (...) ⁶⁸.

59 La diffusion de cette étiquette se fit notamment grâce à des personnages comme Mizushima Bokuya 水島卜也 (1607-1697). Ce dernier avait appris l’étiquette d’Ogasawara avant d’ouvrir sa propre école. Il se vit confier la cérémonie de la première coiffure (*kamioki no gi* 髪置の儀) du jeune fils du *shōgun* Tsunayoshi en 1681 (Tenna 1, 11, 15). Ce rite comme beaucoup d’autres était commun aux nobles de cour et aux guerriers. Les différences dans l’exécution étaient parfois minimes. Le *kamioki* avait lieu à deux ans pour les nobles, à trois dans les maisons guerrières. Ce serait l’origine de la coutume actuelle du *Shichi go san* 七五三, célébré le 15 novembre ⁶⁹.

60 Yoshimune, connu pour sa pratique des arts martiaux, ne se désintéressa pas pour autant des rites de la cour de Kyōto. Alors que son modèle Tsunayoshi avait eu une attitude passive au moment de la première restauration de la Grande gustation, il suivit de très près et soutint financièrement celle de Sakuramachi. Miki rapporte que l’histoire officielle des Tokugawa (*Tokugawa jikki* 徳川実紀) ne mentionne même pas la Grande gustation de Higashiyama, alors que celle de Sakuramachi est bien notée ⁷⁰. Il y est même précisé qu’il y avait eu une interruption de 51 ans. Yoshimune avait lui-même participé aux recherches sur les précédents et les anciens usages. Il envoya au moment de la Grande gustation deux observateurs Sumiyoshi Hiromori 住吉廣守 (1705-1777) ⁷¹ et Kada no Arimaro 荷田在満 (1706-1751) ⁷².

61 Hiromori était devenu peintre officiel du *shōgun* (*goyō eshi* 御用絵師) en 1734. Les peintures qu’il réalisa à l’occasion de la Grande gustation servirent longtemps de référence. Arimaro était le neveu, puis le fils adoptif de Kada no Azumamaro 荷田春満 (1669-1736). Cette filiation n’aurait guère d’importance si Azumamaro n’était pas considéré comme l’un des fondateurs des Études japonaises (*Kokugaku* 国学). Arimaro continua dans la même voie et étudia les anciennes règles et coutumes (*yūsoku kojitsu* 有職故実). C’est à ce titre qu’il entra au service de Tayasu Munetake 田安宗武 (1716-1771), un des fils du *shōgun* Yoshimune. Tayasu était aussi en contact avec l’autre grande figure des débuts des Études japonaises Kamo no Mabuchi 賀茂真淵 (1697-1769). C’est donc une personne particulièrement avertie qui fut chargée d’assister à la Grande gustation.

62 À son retour il fit un rapport détaillé au *shōgun* et rédigea le *Daijōe gishiki gushaku* 大嘗会儀式具積 (Commentaire complet de la cérémonie de la Grande gustation) en neuf livres. À la demande de ses nombreux disciples, il en fit imprimer un abrégé, le *Daijōe benmō* 大嘗会便蒙 (La Grande gustation facile à comprendre) ⁷³. Cette publication fut très mal prise par la cour de Kyōto qui lui reprochait de rendre publics les rites secrets de la cour. De plus, l’ouvrage avait été imprimé sans l’accord du *bakufu*. Arimaro fut condamné à cent jours d’assignation à résidence, portes et volets clos (*heimon* 閉門).

63 Ce qui pourrait paraître anecdotique révèle deux approches du rite. D’une part du côté de la cour, une vision fermée et probablement religieuse. Le rite doit être effectué, mais sa publicité n’est en rien nécessaire. Quand il s’agit de cérémonie mettant en scène

l'empereur, le secret est même de rigueur. D'autre part, pour Yoshimune et les lettrés, on observe une grande curiosité pour la restauration d'un rite ancien, un peu comme pour celle qu'on éprouve envers un monument célèbre relevé de sa ruine.

Des rites, pour quoi faire ?

- 64 L'importance du confucianisme à l'époque d'Edo est bien connue. On s'attendrait à ce que les rites aient été un facteur d'uniformisation. Ce ne fut pas directement le cas.
- 65 Hakuseki pensait pouvoir assurer la longévité du *bakufu* en instaurant une nouvelle étiquette, expression et support de la puissance des *shōgun*. Ces rites n'avaient pas de profondeur historique pour les guerriers. Ils se présentaient comme des rites à l'état pur, désincarnés en quelque sorte. Ce fut un échec.
- 66 Il avait agi en réaction contre la faiblesse supposée du gouvernement de Tsunayoshi. Ce dernier avait pourtant posé les bases du gouvernement des lettrés en consolidant la position des Hayashi, principaux propagateurs de l'enseignement de Shushi. Ce fut lui qui concrétisa par sa campagne de restauration l'intérêt nouveau pour les tertres impériaux⁷⁴, donnant aux lettrés confucéens un équivalent japonais aux antiques tombes chinoises. En même temps, il imposait aux guerriers de nouvelles règles de deuil.
- 67 Parallèlement à ces évolutions dans le milieu des guerriers, la cour de Kyōto, sous l'impulsion de Reigen, se lançait dans un vaste projet de restauration des anciens rites. Il n'était pas seulement question d'un simple retour au passé en faisant valoir les précédents. C'est la fonction impériale qui était en jeu. Si des rites comme ceux de la vêtue, ou de l'investiture du prince héritier ne posèrent pas de problèmes, celui de la Grande gustation avait une autre dimension. Le souverain en était le principal acteur. De plus, il partageait alors son repas avec la divinité. Autrement dit, c'est son caractère divin qui était mis en scène. Il y avait là en germe la restauration impériale qu'aucun acteur du temps ne semble avoir vraiment souhaitée.
- 68 Le retour d'un pouvoir fort avec Yoshimune fut marqué lui aussi par des restaurations, celles des rituels guerriers depuis la chasse jusqu'à la visite à Nikkō en passant par le tir à l'arc à cheval. Il favorisa pourtant de façon inattendue et en apparence contradictoire la restauration définitive de la Grande gustation. Alors qu'il avait détruit systématiquement le système rituel imaginé par Hakuseki, trop proche à son goût de celui de la cour, il observa avec bienveillance la restauration des rites de cette même cour.
- 69 En plus d'être un enjeu de pouvoir entre Edo et Kyōto, les guerriers et les nobles, les rites furent un enjeu intellectuel. Les *jusha* 儒者 (lettrés confucéens) rêvaient de suivre les rites chinois⁷⁵, mais s'intéressaient aussi à l'histoire japonaise et aux anciens usages. Enfin, derniers acteurs apparus, les savants des Études japonaises (*kokugakusha* 国学者) ne juraient que par le Japon de l'Antiquité tout en suivant la même démarche archéologique. On connaît la dette de Motoori Norinaga 本居 宣長 (1730-1801) envers Sorai et l'importance des rites pour la restauration de l'ancien *shintō* (*ko shintō* 古神道).
- 70 Guerriers, hommes de cour et lettrés, tous cherchèrent à restaurer les rites avec des succès divers. Les rites guerriers comme le *yabusame* ne subsistent plus que comme vestiges un peu folkloriques lors des fêtes *matsuri*. Les rites de cour sont toujours suivis,

mais ne concernent que le milieu très fermé du palais. C'est finalement l'étiquette chère à l'école Ogasawara qui eut l'impact le plus profond sur l'ensemble de la société.

Tableau récapitulatif des Tennō, Shōgun, et ères

Année	Tennō	Shōgun	Ère
1586	Goyōzei 後陽成		
1596			Keichō 慶長
1603		Ieyasu 家康	
1605		Hidetada 秀忠	
1611	Gomizuno.o 後水尾		
1615			Genna 元和
1623		Iemitsu 家光	
1624			Kan.ei 寛永
1630	Meishō 明正		
1643	Gokōmyō 後光明		
1644			Shōho 正保
1648			Kei.an 慶安
1651		Ietsuna 家綱	
1652			Jōō 承応
1654	Gosai 後西		
1655			Meireki 明暦
1658			Manji 万治
1661			Kanbun 寛文
1663	Reigen 靈元		
1673			Enpō 延宝
1680		Tsunayoshi 綱吉	
1681			Tenna 天和
1684			Jōkyō 貞享
1687	Higashiyama 東山		
1688			Genroku 元禄
1704			Hōei 宝永
1709	Nakamikado 中御門	Ienobu 家宣	
1711			Shōtoku 正徳
1713		Iestugu 家継	
1716		Yoshimune 吉宗	Kyōhō 享保
1735	Sakuramachi 桜町		

1736			Genbun 元文
1741			Kanpō 寛保
1744			Enkyō 延享
1745		Ieshige 家重	
1747	Momozono 桃園		
1748			Kan.en 寛延

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conception de l'État d'Arai Hakuseki – À partir de l'examen du rétablissement de la dénomination de *kokuō* et du système des rangs militaires dans les maisons guerrières), *Nihon shisō shigaku* (Histoire de la pensée japonaise) 34 日本思想史学 34 : 60-75.

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NOTES DE BAS DE PAGE

1. Pour distinguer les périodes où les *shōgun* étaient en fonction de celles des empereurs, j'indiquerai pour les premiers « s. » suivi des dates et « t. » pour *tennō* pour les seconds. Sur le conseil de Joseph Ciaudo, pour se repérer dans la chronologie des *shōgun*, des empereurs et des noms d'ère, j'ai ajouté un tableau chronologique en annexe.
2. Arai Hakuseki la nomme *Chōsen heirei* 朝鮮聘禮. Il parle d'une ambassade de congratulation pour le changement de titulaire (*miyokawari no goshūgi* 御代替之御祝儀).
3. C'est devenu l'usage courant de le nommer ainsi. Mais cette appellation combine le nom de famille Arai et le nom de lettré Hakuseki, ce que l'on ne faisait pas à l'époque d'Edo.
4. Watanabe 2005, 229-232. Cet article m'a été précieux pour mieux comprendre la politique de Hakuseki. Idée reprise un peu plus tard, Watanabe 2010, 165.
5. Cette mesure plus idéologique qu'économique n'eut pas le résultat escompté, voir Gravier 2004.
6. Il s'agissait surtout de problèmes de graphie.
7. *Kaidō koshō seibi* 街道呼称整備 (rectification de la dénomination des routes), voir Watanabe 2010, 164.
8. Les deux autres rectifications étant celle du *Kōshū kaidō* 甲州海道 et du *Ōshūkaidō* 奥州海道. « Il fallait rectifier ces erreurs du passé » (中古より誤り来りしを改むべし) cité par Watanabe 2005, 229.

9. Watanabe 2005, 229.
10. C'est-à-dire les hommes de la bannière ou les vassaux directs du *shōgun* sans fiefs. Hakuseki était devenu lui-même *hatamoto*.
11. Cité par Watanabe 2005, 230. Ce fut la seule fois où ces règlements furent rédigés en japonais et non en sino-japonais.
12. La traduction de *ō* 王 ou de *kokuō* 国王 est délicate. Selon les contextes, le terme peut désigner le roi, le souverain, le *tennō* dans le cas du Japon, ou un prince, membre de la famille impériale. J'ai choisi ici prince pour son ambiguïté car il peut désigner toute personne détentrice du pouvoir quel que soit son titre.
13. Hakuseki justifie le choix de *kokuō* dans le *Shugō jiryaku* 殊號事略 (Brève note sur l'abrogation d'une dénomination), texte inclus dans le recueil intitulé *Goji ryaku* 五事略 (Cinq brèves notes), cf. Arai 1906, vol. 3, 621-638.
14. *Yijing* (*Ekikyō*) 易經, 7^e hexagramme *shi* (*shi*) 師, six en haut : 大君有命, 開國承家. « Le grand prince donne des ordres, fonde des États, pourvoit les familles (en fiefs). » Ce qui correspond bien au rôle du *shōgun*. En lecture japonaise, 大君 se lit *ōkimi*, terme qui désignait le souverain japonais avant l'adoption du terme *tennō*. Cependant dans les textes du VIII^e siècle, *ōkimi* est toujours transcrit par 大王. À l'évidence, les *shōgun* du XVII^e siècle se référaient aux Classiques chinois et non à l'histoire japonaise.
15. Tsuji 1991, 210.
16. « Après la bataille de Sekigahara, le mandat céleste fut d'un coup régénéré » (関ヶ原の戦終って後、天命一たび改りて), avant-propos du *Hankanfu* 藩翰譜 (Généalogies des fiefs), rédigé par Hakuseki en 1702, cité par Tsuji 1991, 203, voir aussi Watanabe 2010, 166.
17. *Lunyu* XVI, 2, traduction française de Cheng 1981, 129.
18. C'est l'analyse développée par Ōgawa Makoto, Ōgawa 2002.
19. L'ambassade fut en cela soutenue par Amenomori Hōshū 雨森芳洲 (1668-1755), lettré au service du fief de Tsushima. Il avait été condisciple de Hakuseki à Kyōto et servait d'interprète auprès de l'ambassade. Il déclara : « La Corée de la dynastie Li a tout particulièrement horreur des changements brutaux. Je souhaite que l'on reconsidère cette proposition » (李氏朝鮮は急激な変革を特に嫌う。再考願いたい。), cité par Kawamura, 85.
20. Cité par Kawamura, 85.
21. Arai 1906, vol 4, 497-694.
22. Le temple du Kōfukuji et le sanctuaire de Kasuga appartenaient au même ensemble religieux jusqu'à l'époque de Meiji. Le *gagaku* s'est maintenu à Kasuga.
23. Watanabe 2005, 230, repris et développé dans Watanabe 2010, 163.
24. Hattori Nankaku avait été un disciple d'Ogyū Sorai. La citation provient de son *Bunkai zakki* 文会雜記 (cité dans Watanabe 2005, 232).
25. Watanabe 2010, 163.
26. Ces Règlements conçus par Ieyasu furent imposés à la cour en 1615 (Keichō 慶長 20, 7, 17). Il entendait ainsi contrôler complètement ce qui restait de pouvoir à Kyōto.
27. 第8条、改元、漢朝年號之内、以吉例可相定。但、重而於習禮相熟者、可爲本朝光規之作法事。Quelques jours avant la promulgation de ces règlements, le changement de nom d'ère en 1615 (Keichō 慶長 20, 7, 13) s'y confirmait. Genna 元和, la nouvelle ère, reprenait un nom d'ère des Tang, *Yuanhe* (806-820) sous l'empereur Xianzong 憲宗 (805-820).
28. Le projet avait été préparé par un certain Sugawara Sōchō 菅原總長 (? - ?), docteur dans la voie des lettres (*monjō hakase* 文章博士).
29. L'attribution d'un seul nom d'ère par règne ne fut adoptée au Japon qu'à partir de Meiji.
30. Avènements de Goyōzei 後陽成 (1571-1617) 1586, Gomizuno.o 1611, Meishō 明正 1630, Reigen 1663.

31. *Shujing* (*Shokyō*) 書經, « Da Yu Mo » 大禹謨 (Conseils de Yu le Grand) : 正徳利用厚生惟和。 « La réforme des mœurs, l'acquisition des objets nécessaires, les moyens de se procurer les commodités de la vie doivent être harmonieusement réglés » (traduction Couvreur, *Shu Jing* 1950, p. 35).
32. Watanabe 2010, 157-158.
33. Arai 1906, vol. 6, 151.
34. Il signe son texte « Chikugo no kami Minamoto no Kinmi » 筑後守源君美, c'est-à-dire avec son nom de clan Minamoto suivi de son nom personnel Kinmi. Rappelons que Hakuseki était son nom de lettré (*gō* 號) et Arai son nom de famille.
35. Le 4^e rang était toutefois exceptionnel pour un *hatamoto*.
36. Ce nom fut établi à partir de son nom posthume bouddhique (*hōmyō* 法名) : Bunshō.in dono junrensha seiyo kakuzen daikoji 文昭院殿順蓮社清譽廓然大居士. C'est celui qui figure sur sa tombe au Zōjōji 増上寺.
37. Le premier caractère était déjà réservé depuis les codes du début du VIII^e siècle aux princes et aux personnages de haut rang à partir du 3^e.
38. *Liji* (*Raiki*) 禮記, « Quli », 2 (*Kyokurai*, 2) 曲禮下 « En parlant du Fils du Ciel, pour dire qu'il est mort, on dit qu'il est tombé comme la cime d'une montagne ; en parlant d'un prince, on dit qu'il s'est écroulé avec fracas (comme un grand édifice) » (天子死日崩諸侯日薨) traduction française par Couvreur 1950b, tome 1, 1^{re} partie, 102. *Xin Tangshu* (*Shintōjo*) 新唐書 1975 tome 4, 1194. *juan* 46, « Zhi » 志 36, « Baiguan » 百官 1 : « À propos des décès, au-dessus du troisième rang on dit *hong* (*kō*), au-dessus du cinquième rang on dit *zu* (*sotsu*), à partir du sixième rang jusqu'au peuple on dit *si* (*shi*) » (凡喪、三品以上稱薨、五品以上稱卒、自六品達于庶民稱死). Codes : 律令卷第九喪葬令15 : « Quand un fonctionnaire décède, pour les princes fils du souverain et à partir du troisième rang on dit *kō*, à partir du cinquième rang et pour les membres des familles princières, on dit *sotsu* à partir du sixième rang et jusqu'au peuple on dit *shi* » (凡百官身亡者、親王及三位以上稱薨、五位以上及皇親稱卒、六位以下達於庶民稱死), *Ritsuryō*, 1976, 438.
39. Sous l'influence du bouddhisme ésotérique, le Japon a développé à partir de l'époque de Heian, un mode de transmission restreint des savoirs dans tous les domaines, de maître à disciple ou dans une famille. Sur cette question dans le cadre du *shintō*, voir Macé 2005.
40. Il y avait eu dans un passé proche un tel changement : celui de l'ère Shōho 正保 (1645-1648) qui avait été inaugurée pour l'avènement de l'empereur Gokōmyō mais qui fut changée en Keian 慶安 (1648-1652), car *shōho* rappelait le terme *shōbō* 燒亡 « disparaître dans les flammes ». Hayashi Gahō 林鷺峯 (1618-1680) dans son *Kaigen monogatari* 改元物語 (*Récit sur le changement d'ère*) explique que si les maisons nobles et les maisons guerrières conservaient (*ho*, *tamotsu* 保) un gouvernement correct (*shō*, *sei*, *tadashii* 正), il en résulterait un grand bonheur (*daikichi* 大吉). J'ignore qui imposa l'abandon de ce nom de si bon augure. Le *Kaigen monogatari* est reproduit dans Tokoro 1988.
41. C'est le thème de son *Koshitsū* 古史通 (Compréhension de l'histoire de l'Antiquité) où, en bon rationaliste, il évahémérise les récits du temps des dieux, voir à ce sujet Hérial 1993, 165-189.
42. *Buke kan.i sōsoku kō* 武家官位 装束考 in Arai 1907, vol. 6, 479.
43. Malgré sa volonté d'instaurer pour le *shōgun* des rites dignes d'un souverain, Hakuseki n'en dédaignait pas pour autant la cour de Kyōto qui restait la source ultime de la légitimité des *shōgun*. D'une part, sur le modèle des *gosanke* 御三家, les trois branches de la famille Tokugawa qui pouvaient fournir des successeurs au cas où la branche aînée n'aurait pas d'héritier, il œuvra à la création d'une nouvelle maison princière (*seshū shinnōke* 世襲親王家), en plus des trois qui existaient déjà – Arisugawa 有栖川宮 créée en 1625 pour Yoshihito 好仁, le septième fils de l'empereur Goyōzei, Katsura 桂宮, créée en 1589 par Toyotomi Hideyoshi pour le petit-fils de l'empereur Ogimachi 正親町, Fushimi 伏見, créée pour le fils aîné de l'empereur Sukō 崇光天皇

(1348-1351) de la cour du nord. Cette nouvelle maison fut appelée Kan.in (*Kan.in no miya* 閑院宮). D'autre part, il arrangea une union entre le *shōgun* Ietsugu 家継 (1709-1716) et une princesse fille d'empereur, Yoshiko *naishinnō* 吉子内親王 (1714-1758), treizième fille de l'empereur Reigen *tennō* 靈元天皇 (1654-1732, t.1663-1687), de son nom d'enfance Yaso no miya 八十宮. Mais la mort prématurée du *shōgun* à l'âge de sept ans mit fin à ce projet. Le *shōgun* mourut deux mois après la cérémonie d'engagement (*nōsai no gi* 納采の儀).

44. Il s'agit d'un ensemble de 135 décrets pris sur 24 ans, qui concernaient non seulement les animaux, mais aussi les enfants abandonnés et les malades laissés sans soins. La construction de refuges pour chiens valut au *shōgun* le surnom très péjoratif (*akumyō* 悪名) de « Messire le chien », Inu kubō 犬公方.

45. 文武弓馬之道、專可相嗜事.

46. Hakuseki poursuivra dans cette voie dans sa propre version des Règlements : « 文武之道を修め、人倫を明にし、風俗を正しくすべき事 Ils doivent cultiver les voies des lettres et des armes, rendre manifeste la morale, rectifier les mœurs » (cité par Watanabe 2010, 159).

47. Sous le nom de Tōshō daigongen 東照大権現 (le grand avatar qui illumine l'Est). La cour lui avait accordé directement en tant que dieu le 1^{er} rang supérieur (*shō ichi i* 正一位). En effet, les dieux comme les fonctionnaires suivaient une sorte de *cursus honorum*. De même que les personnes de bonnes familles, ils commençaient leur carrière au 5^e rang. Toyotomi Hideyoshi avait lui aussi été divinisé directement au 1^{er} rang sous le nom de Toyokuni daimyōjin 豊国大明神.

48. Tout comme les commentaires de l'anthologie poétique *Kokinshū* 古今集 (905), *Kokinshū denju* 古今集伝授, les Classiques chinois faisaient l'objet d'une transmission restreinte réservée à une famille ou un cercle de disciples.

49. Auteur d'un ouvrage anti-bouddhique, *Kiyomizu monogatari* 清水物語 (Récit de Kiyomizu).

50. Voir la note 26.

51. *Daijōe* était l'appellation en usage depuis l'époque de Heian. Le caractère 會 rappelait toutefois une terminologie employée pour les cérémonies bouddhiques. Aussi après la restauration Meiji, on parla plutôt de *Daijōsai* 大嘗祭 sous l'influence des Études japonaises (*Kokugaku* 国学) soucieuses de bien séparer bouddhisme et *shintō*. C'était là la reprise du terme utilisé dans les Codes du VIII^e siècle, et dans les *Règlements de l'ère Engi*, (*Engishiki* 延喜式) du X^e siècle. Dans ces *Règlements* la cérémonie est nommée *senso daijōsai* 踐祚大嘗祭. Elle y est présentée comme le rite le plus important de la cour, le seul à entrer dans la catégorie *daishi* 大祀 « grande célébration ».

52. Sur la question de la Grande gustation aux temps modernes voir Miki 1978, 319-349.

53. 御禊大嘗会其外の諸公事も次第に絶えて、今はあともなきが如くになれば、再興するにたよりなし。 Cité par Miki 1978, 331.

54. Sa famille occupait le poste de *daigeki* 大外記 depuis la fin de l'époque de Heian. Ces fonctionnaires rattachés au ministère des Affaires suprêmes étaient chargés de préparer les documents soumis à l'empereur, mais aussi les différentes cérémonies en faisant des recherches sur les précédents.

55. Sa fille aînée Konoe Hiroko 近衛 子 (1666-1737), de son nom posthume Ten.ei.in 天英院, deviendra l'épouse principale du *shōgun* Ienobu. Il finit par atteindre en 1709 la fonction de ministre des Affaires suprême, le couronnement de la carrière d'un homme de cour.

56. Proche de l'empereur Reigen, il fut nommé en 1682 grand chancelier (*kanpaku* 関白) alors que selon l'usage cela aurait dû être son rival Konoe Motohiro. En fin de compte, il dut lui céder le poste en 1690 sous la pression du *shōgun*.

57. Fondé par Yamazaki Ansai 山崎闇斎 (1619-1682), fervent confucéen avant de devenir un des principaux rénovateurs de la pensée *shintō* au cours de l'époque d'Edo. Il se fit célébrer comme dieu de son vivant, de même que les adeptes de son école.
58. Disciple direct de Yamazaki Ansai et propagateur du Suika *shintō* à la cour. Il avait occupé le poste important de *buke densō* 武家伝奏 (1693-1700), noble chargé de transmettre à l'empereur les demandes émises par les guerriers, une fonction au cœur des relations entre la cour de Kyōto et le *bakufu*. Il termina sa carrière au 1er rang inférieur.
59. Miki 1978, 327.
60. Seiryōden, pavillon du palais intérieur (*dairi* 内裏) où se trouvaient les appartements privés du souverain.
61. Même après la participation active du *bakufu* à partir de la Grande gustation de Sakuramachi, ces deux processions ne furent jamais restaurées, pas même après la restauration de Meiji.
62. Plus connue en Occident sous le nom d'histoire des 47 *rōnin*.
63. Son grand-père Imakawa Ujizane 今川氏真 (1538-1615) avait reçu la protection d'Ieyasu.
64. *Sha* et *gū* désignent les sanctuaires *shintō*. Toutefois *gū* (*miya*) était réservé aux sanctuaires les plus prestigieux, ceux d'Ise ou d'Iwashimizu hachiman.
65. À l'époque d'Edo, un de ses représentants, Ise Teijō 伊勢貞丈 (1717-1784), compila ces rites et usages. Ses papiers furent publiés par un de ses descendants en 1843, *Teijō zakki* 貞丈雜記 (Ise 1985-1986). Il y aborde aussi bien le maniement de l'éventail dans la partie intitulée *Reihō no bu* 禮法の部 que l'histoire du *seppuku* 切腹 à la fin de l'ouvrage. La famille Ise était entrée au service des Tokugawa sous Iemitsu. Elle faisait partie des hommes de la bannière (*hatamoto*).
66. Un chien était entouré d'un cercle de douze cavaliers qui devaient l'atteindre.
67. *Jarai* et *hosha* renvoient à la même technique de tir. *Jarai* se réfère à sa pratique ritualisée, *hosha* à sa réalisation technique.
68. Ogyū 1973, 314, cité in Ansart 1998, 102.
69. Visite aux sanctuaires *shintō* des enfants de sept, cinq et trois ans.
70. Miki 1978, 340-341.
71. Il appartenait à une famille de peintres depuis au moins trois générations. Il réalisa des paravents qui furent offerts au roi de Corée.
72. Il est aussi connu sous le nom de Hanekura Tōnosuke Arimaro 羽倉藤之助在満. Auteur entre autres d'un *Honchō dosei ryakukō* 本朝度制略考 (Abrégé sur les mesures de notre pays), et des *Kokka hachiron* 国歌八論 (Huit thèses sur la poésie japonaise) dans lesquelles il ne voyait aucune utilité à la poésie japonaise, simple amusement avec de belles expressions.
73. Kada 1898.
74. Macé 1999.
75. Tominaga Nakamoto 富永仲基 (1715-1746) s'est moqué dans son *Okina no fumi* 翁能文 (Prose d'un vieillard) de ces lettrés japonais qui ne jurent que par la Chine et croient que les rites sont de la même veine que le Ciel et la Terre. Ils élèvent du bétail pour manger de la viande et se vêtent comme des Chinois. Tominaga 1966, 549, 559.

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The exegesis of Vedic ritual: a note on *Arthavāda*¹

Charles Malamoud

- 1 Before stating anything on the exegesis of Vedic ritual, I would like to thank Professor Anne Cheng for her invitation to present a paper at the symposium “All about the Rites: from canonised ritual to ritualised society” she organised with Professor Stéphane Feuillas, and now for having this short text integrated in these proceedings. I was very honoured and grateful to take part in this intellectual endeavour. However, I also felt a little embarrassed, for I was to speak in front of an audience mainly composed of sinologists. This meant that I was at the risk of being somewhat dogmatic and obscure and at the same time to repeat what is common knowledge to Indologists. I hope that this synthesis on the topic at hand has overcome both these pitfalls.
- 2 All we know of Vedic India, a period comprised roughly between 1500 and 500 BC, comes from texts called Veda²: there are neither other textual materials, nor data coming from other sources. There are indeed almost no archaeological remains. Another term for Veda, in the Indian or, more specifically, the Vedic tradition, is *śruti*, literally “what is heard” or “the process of hearing.” This refers to the fact that one has to learn the Veda by listening to a master while he recites the text and by repeating what he says. Even today it is forbidden, in principle, to learn the Veda by grasping it from a written or printed copy. This rule may find a partial explanation in the fact that the Vedic “texts” were composed long before writing came into use in India. As such, there is no mention of writing in the Vedic texts.
- 3 The Veda, or *Śruti*, is a set of texts and layers of texts. It is a corpus. Let us briefly characterise the elements of this corpus. There are four Vedas. The most ancient layer of each of these Vedas consists in collections, *samhitā*: collections of poems for the *Ṛgveda*, the Veda of verses, and the *Atharvaveda*; collections of sacrificial formulas for the *Yajurveda*. The *Sāmaveda* is a selection of poems from the *Ṛgveda* arranged to be sung. A second layer for each of these Vedas consists in treatises in prose, the *Brāhmaṇa*. These offer a full and profuse doctrine of ritual and more specifically of sacrifice, *yajña*.

- 4 Could we compare the corpus of Vedic texts to a body? This question, which could sound strange or even presumptuous in other traditions, makes sense here because one finds in this literature the following turn of phrase: *veda-aṅga*, “limbs of the Veda.”³ Actually, these “limbs” are not made of the same content as the Veda proper nor do they have the same status. They consist in treatises meant to highlight certain aspects of the Vedic text. There are six of these “limbs”: grammar (*vyākaraṇa*), phonetics (*śikṣā*), meter (*chandas*), etymology (*nirukta*), astronomy (*jyotiṣa*) and ritual (*kalpa*). Now, the science of Vedic ritual is the subject matter of the “limb of the Veda” called *kalpa-sūtra* “aphorisms on the (Vedic) ritual.”⁴ More precisely there are two groups of *kalpa-sūtra*, because there are two groups of rituals: the *śrauta-sūtra* for the solemn rites and the *grhya-sūtra* for the domestic rituals. Furthermore, the *kalpa-sūtra* whose subject matter is the ritual of the Vedic texts are called *śrauta* because *śrauta* is an adjective derived from the name *śruti*, a synonym of Veda in the Brahmanic tradition. People who are entitled to learn the Veda have to acquire this knowledge by listening to a master and repeating what they hear.
- 5 Despite this precise classification, the most orthodox view concerning the origin and nature of the Veda (but not the only one in Indian tradition) is that the Veda text is eternal and therefore has no author. The authorlessness and eternity of the Veda is a major argument for the most orthodox exponents of the Vedic creed: “We have to believe what the Veda says, it is true precisely because it is totally free from any kind of bias.” Some men in the remote past endowed with supernatural power of vision, the *ṛṣi*, “saw” various parts of the Veda. That does not mean that they saw a text but that they had the direct intuition of the realities that are the subject matter of the Veda. They then transposed their vision in sequences of words and sentences.⁵
- 6 Distinct from the *śruti*, that is of the Veda, is the loose ended set of texts called *smṛti* “memory.” The *smṛti* texts have individual authors, although they can be mythical. They include such texts as the Laws of Manu (also called *manu-smṛti*) and the Epics. The Vedic *śruti* and the post-Vedic *smṛti* are the two sources of Brahmanic orthodoxy. The *veda-aṅga*, members added to the Veda but not parts of the Veda itself, belong to the *smṛti*. Before turning to those *kalpa-sūtra* that bear on the ritual teachings of the Vedic *śruti*, that is the *śrauta-sūtra*, it could be useful to give some information on the structure of the Veda.
- 7 The Veda (or *śruti*) is made of two layers of texts. The first layer consists of collections (*saṃhitā*) of prose formulas (*yajus*) and of verses (*ṛc*) arranged into poems. Some of the verses can also be sung; they are then provided with a melody (*sāman*). The second layer is made of treatises in prose, the *Brāhmaṇas*, the subject matter of which is a complete (but not methodically arranged) exposition of the Vedic doctrine of ritual, more specifically of “sacrifice” (*yajña*).⁶
- 8 Not all the rituals in the Vedic text are “sacrifices,” nor all the *yajñas* entail the killing of an animal or a human victim: plants can also be assimilated to victims because they have to be crushed in the process of being transformed into offering. Moreover, the sacrificial model is so strong that even domestic rituals, discussed in the *grhya-sūtras*, especially those that are called *saṃskāras*, “making perfect or complete,” actually *rites de passage*, are interpreted in terms of “sacrifice.” The Brahmanic scheme of sacrifice rests on notions expressed by derivatives of the verbal root *yaj-*. The sacrificer, the man who offers the sacrifice and hopes to benefit from it is the *yajamāna*: this word is the present participle of the “middle” voice of the verbal root *yaj*; his action is rendered by

the verb *yajate* “he sacrifices for himself.” The “middle voice” is used when the result of the action affects the doer directly. The sacrificer is affected or transformed by his action. Normally the *yajamāna* is one person (a man, with his wife present on the sacrificial ground). Of course, he must be entitled by his birth in one of the three upper *varṇas* or “classes” since only men born in these *varṇas* are entitled to learn the Veda. Therefore, they are the only one who can become sacrificers in the *śrauta* rituals for they imply the recitation of Vedic verses and formulas. Sacrifices offered by a group of sacrificers or sacrificial “sessions” (*sattras*) are exceptions. Yet the presence of officiating “priests” (*ṛtvij*) is required in the *śrauta* rituals: there are four teams of them, each specialised in one of the four Vedas and the performance of a specific set of gestures. Their action is rendered by the verb *yājayati*, the “causative” of the verb *yaj*: “he makes the sacrificer sacrifice.” They are experts hired by the sacrificer.⁸

- 9 The *Brāhmaṇa* layer of the Veda is made of instructions on the various types of solemn sacrifices and of speculations regarding those. These instructions are not given in a systematic way, they are interspersed with speculations on the meaning and the form of the verses or *mantras* (taken from the *saṃhitās*) that are to be recited (or sung) at each phase of the performance. There is a special stress on metrics, that is on the symbolism of the number of lines in each stanza and the number of syllables in each line. These speculations are in turn interspersed with narratives on the origin of such and such ritual: how the gods discovered it, how men got hold of it, and so on. The origin of a ritual is quite often connected to the etymology of its name or the name of the divine persona involved in it.
- 10 Let us now turn to the *vedāṅga* called *kalpa-sūtra*, that is the rules of ritual, and among them, the rules of Vedic solemn ritual, the *śrauta-sūtra*. In principle, the subject matter of the *śrauta-sūtra* is ritual as it is dealt with in the *Brāhmaṇas*: the *śrauta-sūtras* are authoritative because they are just reformulations or selections of what is said in the *brāhmaṇa* part of the Veda. However, the *śrauta-sūtras* provide some information that does not come from the *Brāhmaṇas* as we know them. Now the main feature of the *śrauta-sūtras* is precisely their *sūtra* style, made of short dry sentences. Each of these sentences is like a thread (this is the original meaning of *sūtra*) in the fabric (*tantra*) of one specific ritual. This ordered succession of *sūtras* results in a thorough and dry description of the ritual process, step by step. And there is nothing else aside this description.⁹ This runs counter to the *Brāhmaṇas*, in which the elements of the description can be scattered and interrupted by sentences regarding other subject matters dedicated, for instance, to the value, the “meaning,” the origin or the history of the particular phase or aspect of the ritual which is being enjoined. This has had an effect on the methods used by modern scholars to investigate Vedic rituals. To study a particular ritual, they had to begin with an analysis of what is said in the relevant *kalpa-sūtra* before turning to the text of the Veda proper (mostly the *Brāhmaṇa* section of the Veda) where this ritual is enjoined, “explained” and praised.¹⁰
- 11 One remarkable feature of the *śrauta-sūtras* is that some of them also contain a set of meta-rules and basic definitions, called *paribhāṣā*, “discourse surrounding the text.”¹¹ The *paribhāṣā* provide also instructions on the procedure of ritual that are not given in the *Brāhmaṇa* source. For instance, it is in the *paribhāṣā* section of the *Āpastamba-Śrauta-sūtra* (XXIV 1-14) that we learn that in the recitation of some mantra, the speed of pronunciation is connected with the volume of the voice: “the voice moves quickly

when the words are to be pronounced high; slowly when low; and measuredly, when neither loud nor low.”¹²

- 12 One of the items dealt with in the *paribhāṣā* of Āpastamba is called *arthavāda*, a term I propose to translate by “discourse on purpose” or, alternatively, by “discourse with purpose.”¹³ We find statements such as *brāhmaṇaśeṣo’rthavādo nindā praśaṃsā parakṛtiḥ purakalpaś ca, ato’nye mantrāḥ* (XXIV 1, 33 sq.), “the rest of the Brahmanas, that which does not contain precepts, consists of explanations, *i.e.*,¹⁴ reproof, praise, stories and traditions. All the rest are mantras” (Max Muller), or, more accurately translated by Caland in German: “Der übrige Teil der Brāhmaṇas (d. h. sofern die Brāhmaṇas nicht eine Handlung angeben) ist Exegese, nl. Tadel, Lob, Beispiel anderer, Geschehnis aus der Vorzeit. Alles übrige (in die Brāhmaṇas) ist Mantra.”
- 13 As such, for the authors of the *Śrauta-sūtra*, the source of our knowledge of solemn Vedic ritual (that is of *yajña*) is the *Brāhmaṇa* layer of the Veda. The *Brāhmaṇas* contain instructions (*vidhi*) on the performance of the ritual along with the text of the *mantra*, verses and formulas taken from the *saṃhitā* layer of the Veda that are to be recited as a part of the performance, and then *arthavāda*, that is various types of exegetical explanations or comments. Here are several examples:
- 14 For *nindā*, “reproof,” “Tadel”: “one should not give silver as a sacrificial fee because silver is born from a tear shed by the god Agni” (TS I 5, 1, 1 sq.).¹⁵
- 15 For *praśaṃsa*, “praise”: “by pouring the oblation into fire the officiating priest makes the sacrificer go to heaven” (TS VI, 3, 2, 1).
- 16 For “example,” (taken from what has been done by others), *parakṛti* (TB I 3, 10, 1): in the ritual of the new moon (*amavasya*), men follow the example of what was negotiated between gods, the ancestors and sacrifice (*yajna*) as a person: the offerings to the ancestors are given first (on the eve of the day), prior to the offerings to the gods.
- 17 For “tradition,” stories from the past: “Sarvaseni Sauceya desired: ‘May I be rich in cattle’. He grasped this five-night rite and sacrificed with it. Then indeed he obtained a thousand cattle. He who knowing thus offers the five-night rite obtains a thousand cattle.”
- 18 One can see here that all the varieties of *arthavāda* are in fact narratives. This is the great divide in the *Brāhmaṇa* texts: on the one hand, prescription of rituals (often in the guise of description of action), on the other hand, narratives and also descriptions. This is a brief summary of what can be said of the exegesis of rituals in the Veda and the “limbs of the Veda.”¹⁶ Let us now consider the later periods.
- 19 Several centuries after the end of the Vedic period, in the first centuries of the common era, the *sūtra* style was used as a device for a new kind of text: the treatises of what is traditionally called *darśana*, “views,” that is philosophical systems. Some of these “views” are deemed orthodox in as much as they consider the Veda authoritative. They include the Vedic text among the sources of valid knowledge. The pattern of these orthodox *darśana* is: first a set of *sūtras*, very brief, dense sentences hardly understandable by themselves; then a *bhāṣya*, a basic and fundamental explanation of each *sūtra*; then the superposition of secondary commentaries in which conflicting interpretations of the *sūtra* and the *bhāṣya* can be expressed.
- 20 One of these orthodox “views” is the system called *mīmāṃsā*,¹⁷ “endeavour to think.” The *mīmāṃsā* is primarily a philosophy of language. But it is also a philosophy of ritual, since the specimens of language that are used as examples are excerpts of Veda, more

precisely of the *Brāhmaṇa*. Actually, the aim of the “endeavour to think” as it is defined in the first *sūtra* of the fundamental text, the *mīmāṃsā-sūtra* attributed to Jaimini,¹⁸ is: *athāto dharmajijñāsā*, “now, therefore, the endeavour to know the *dharma*.” The basic commentary by Śabara (the *Śabarabhāṣya*) explains that “now therefore” means the following: once the Vedic student has learnt how to recite and memorised the Vedic text he must (have the desire to) study it in order to understand it, that is to understand what it teaches as far as duty is concerned – “duty” indeed being the most appropriate translation of *dharma* in this context. It appears that “duty” in the texts of the *Mīmāṃsā* is nothing else than the obligation to perform rituals although the definition of *dharma* given in the second *sūtra* of Jaimini seems to be more comprehensive: *codanalakṣaṇo'rtho dharmah*, literally “*dharma* is *artha* as it is indicated by injunctions.” Actually, the commentary by Śabara implies another analysis: *dharma* is indicated by injunctions. These injunctions, *codana*, are to be followed because they are given in the text of the Veda, and the fact is that all the Vedic injunctions taken into account by the *Mīmāṃsā* texts belong to the sphere of ritual. It is conducive to *artha*, which is the bliss, more generally the “good” the sacrificer desires when he undertakes the ritual.

- 21 What is the meaning of *artha* in the compound *arthavāda*? The *arthavāda* that accompanies an injunction is not supposed to be a discourse on its meaning, but a discourse destined to make it pleasant, desirable, mostly by describing as beautiful or remarkable in some way or another such and such item of the ritual prescribed in the injunction. Several of these *arthavāda* are closely connected to the injunction itself. For instance, in *Taittirīya-Saṃhitā* II 1, 1, 1 the injunction “he who desires prosperity should offer a white (beast) to Vāyu (the god Wind)” is immediately followed by the *arthavāda*: “Vāyu is the swiftest deity.”¹⁹ Another example is the sentence “The sacrificer is the sacrificial post,” commented upon in Śabara’s *bhāṣya* ad Jaimini 1 4, 22. This sentence in *Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa* II 1, 5, 2 is supposed to be a eulogy of the sacrificer who is tall and bright, just like the sacrificial post.²⁰ Elaborate myths of origin, such as the story (in TS II 1, 1, 10) of the cosmogonic god Prajāpati cutting his own fat in order to create cattle is described by Śabara I 2, 1, 10 as an *arthavāda* to encourage the sacrificer to perform the rituals meant to bring what he desires, namely cattle. Śabara does not hesitate to declare that this myth is just a myth, it does not refer to what Prajāpati really did, but it produces an effect on the sacrificer’s mind, it is a statement (*vāda*) whose purpose (*artha*) is to create a feeling of attraction in the sacrificer’s mind.
- 22 Myths in the *Brāhmaṇa* part of the Veda are mostly narratives on the origin of rituals: they tell us how gods discovered (rather than created) such and such ritual, how men, in turn, acquired the knowledge of these rituals and by performing them established their relation to the gods.
- 23 So great is the importance of rituals in the shaping of gods that sacrifice, the ritual par excellence, is itself thought of as a deity: there is a god Sacrifice, Yajña. Besides, we can find myths that describe a kind of rivalry between this god and the other personae of the Vedic pantheon. There is, first of all, Indra, whose feats as a warrior, a magician and as a drinker of the *soma* liquor are the subject matter of many poems in the *R̥gveda*. Another deity involved is Vāk, that is Speech, the sum of all the verbal devices and utterances of the Veda. We read this story (this myth) in *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* III 2, 1, 25–28:

That Yajña (sacrifice) lusted after Vāk (speech), thinking, “May I pair with her!” He united with her. Indra then thought within himself, “Surely a great monster will spring from this union of Yajña and Vāk. I must take care lest it should get the better of me.” Indra himself then became an embryo and entered into that union. Now when he was born after a year’s time, he thought within himself, “Verily of great vigour is this womb which has contained me: I must take care that no great monster shall be born from it after me, lest it should get the better of me!” Having seized and pressed it tightly, he tore it off...²¹

- 24 Other versions of this myth are told in *Taittirīya-Saṃhitā* VI 1, 3, 1 sq.; *Maitrāyaṇi-Saṃhitā* III 6, 8; *Kāṭhaka-Saṃhitā* XXIII 4. They do not differ from the version of the *Śatapatha-Brahmaṇa* except on one point: the female partner of Sacrifice is not Speech but the *dakṣiṇā*, that remuneration, the fee which the sacrificer must give to the officiating priests. In both versions the rape of the female partner of Sacrifice by the god Indra and the trick by which Indra manages to be reborn from her womb can be interpreted as an *arthavāda* meant to explain a tiny detail of the rule the sacrificer has to observe in the preliminary phase of the sacrifice, the *dīkṣā*, “consecration,” during which he is supposed to get rid of his profane body and become the embryo of a new self that will enable him to go on with his ritual endeavour.

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FOOTNOTES

1. The following text is based on the transcription kindly made by Mr. Sanchit Kumar of Professor Malamoud’s oral presentation at the “All about the Rites” conference in June 2018. The editors would like to express their thanks for this valuable effort which allows the reader to have at least an insight into Vedic ritual.
2. A convenient presentation of the Veda is Staal 2017.
3. The various texts the Veda consists of compose the body of a mysterious “person” described in *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* II 3: “verily other than and within that one that consists of breath is a self that consists of mind (*manomaya*)... This, verily, has the form of a person (*puruṣavidha*). The *Yajurveda* is its head; the *Ṛgveda*, the right side; the *Sāmaveda*, the left side, teaching (*ādeśa*), the body (*ātman*); the hymns of the Atharvan and Angirases, the lower part, the foundation (*puccha, pratiṣṭhā*.” Cf. Hume 1975, 285. The fundamental meaning of *aṅga* is limb of the body as distinct from its central part. In classical sanskrit poetry *aṅga* is sometimes used also as a synonym for “body”: the god of love, once he was deprived of his body, became *an-aṅga*, “bodyless.” In the terminology of ritual, *yajña-aṅga*, “limb of the sacrifice,” refers to a secondary rite attached to another one, considered as the main part of the performance. Cf. Renou 1954, s.v.
4. The word *kalpa* means primarily “(mental) construction.” On the *kalpasūtras*, cf. Gonda 1977. The *vedāṅgas*, especially the science of grammar, are the most ancient examples of what is called the *sūtra* style. Cf. Renou 1963.
5. *Nirukta* (the *vedāṅga* of etymology) is masterfully presented in Kahrs 1998.
6. The most illuminating exposition of the Vedic sacrifice as it is the subject matter of the *Brāhmaṇas* is still Levi 1966 (originally published in 1898).
7. In the grammatical terminology, what we translate by “middle” is *ātmanepada*, “word for oneself.”
8. On the relationship of sacrificer and officiating priests, a major topic in the Veda itself and in the exegesis of the Veda, see Malamoud 1976.

9. There are a few exceptions. For instance, ĀpŚS VI, 19, 4 sq., cf. TS I 5, 9, 5 sq., quoted in Gonda 1977, 498.
10. See for instance, Krick 1982.
11. Gonda 1977, 508–513.
12. Max Müller's summary-commentary of Āp ŚS XXIV 1, 11–15, in his translation of Āpastamba's *Yajña-paribhāṣa-sūtras*, published as an appendix to Oldenberg's translation of the *Gṛhya-sūtras*, (Oldenberg 1964, 311–364). For a German translation of the whole *Āpastamba-Śrauta-sūtra* (including the *paribhāṣa* section), see Caland 1928, 385–399.
13. The Sanskrit word *artha* means “object”: the real thing or the subject matter as opposed to *śabda*, the word that designates it; the “meaning” of a word or a sentence as opposed to their form; the “aim” or “purpose,” as opposed to the means; and also “wealth.” The compound *puruṣārtha* refers to the “aims” of human life: one of these “aims” is *artha* in the sense of “wealth.” The *Arthaśāstra*, a treatise ascribed to Kauṭilya, deals with the “purposes” of the king's action and also with what is beneficial to the kingdom.
14. According to Oberhammer 1991, *arthavāda* in the *Śrauta-sūtra* is not the encompassing term, it is an item on par with the other terms of the list.
15. Krick 1982, 512. This sentence actually contains two parts: a (negative) injunction in the form of prohibition and a statement on the reason for it, that is its purpose.
16. In *Bṛhad-devatā* III 104, *arthavāda*, according to Bloomfield, means “statement of an object.”
17. The word *mīmāṃsā* appears in the *Brāhmaṇas*, where it means “discussion.” For instance ŚB I 3, 5, 12. Cf. Minard 1949, I, § 325. The noun *mīmāṃsā* is built on the “desiderative” form of the verb *man-* “to think,” therefore it literally means “desire to think,” just as *jijñāsā* is built on the “desiderative” form of the verb *jñā-* “to know.” For a detailed survey of texts belonging to this school, see Verpoorten 1987.
18. Jaimini is the name of a mythical “seer” who “saw” the *Jaiminiya-Brāhmaṇa*. This holds for what is called *pūrva-mīmāṃsā* “first *mīmāṃsā*” as opposed to *uttara-mīmāṃsā*, “next *mīmāṃsā*,” also called *vedānta* “end and final aim of the Veda,” which starts with the *sūtra athāto brahmajijñāsā*, “now therefore, the endeavour to know the *brahman*,” that is the “absolute,” a notion dealt with in the *Upaniṣads*.
19. This *arthavāda* is commented upon in *Śabarabhāṣya* I 2, 1, 10. Cf. also Āpadevī, str. 364–367.
20. Actually, the genuine text of *Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa* is different. Cf. Garge 1952.
21. Translation by Eggeling 1885.

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Archives of piety: ritual norms and authority between Greece and Rome

Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge and John Scheid

- 1 The premise of this paper is a self-evident statement: neither Greek nor Roman religion can be considered as a “religion of the Book.” In the common sense, they are not systems based on a sacred scripture encapsulating a revelation and giving birth to dogmas. But this premise must be immediately qualified because writings related to religion were not absent in these cultures. Orality coexisted with writing during centuries: sanctuaries were full of inscriptions and graffiti, while written ritual norms are attested in Greece and priestly books in Rome. We will respectively focus on the ritual prescriptions preserved on stone in Greek sanctuaries, and in the so-called “books of the priests” in Rome. The shared background of both parts of our study is the question of religious authority and “codification” with regard to ritual performance.

About Greek ritual norms (V. P.-D.)

- 2 In ancient Greece, there is nothing comparable to the priestly books or *commentarii* of ancient Rome, which John Scheid addresses below, and such writings do not seem to have ever been the rule. Some “books” are mentioned in connection with the so-called “Orphic” rituals but the issue is much discussed and scarcely evidenced.¹ The religion of the Greeks was definitely not a religion of the book. Nevertheless, with the adoption of alphabetic writing in early archaic times (eighth century BCE), the Greek city-states progressively used this tool in order to endorse their decisions and publicly display them when necessary. Among the wide range of measures adopted by the cities, one finds decisions related to gods, sanctuaries, or rituals, made for the well-being of the community.
- 3 Unfortunately, official Greek archives are almost completely lost but we know that some of them contained a section devoted to regulations concerning “sacred issues.”² What is now left of the measures taken in the area of religion is a very small part of the decisions once written down: those inscribed on durable materials, such as stone, more

rarely metal, and found by chance in excavations. In addition, inscribed ritual norms were never considered as “practical guides” for concrete cult performance. Had we access to all the Greek civic archives related to rituals, we would still not grasp most details of ritual processes. I will return to this point below.

- 4 Does this mean that “practical guides” for rituals did not exist in ancient Greece? Absolute certainty is impossible, but no evidence of this kind has been preserved. We do know that treatises about rituals were composed during the Hellenistic period. Some titles and the names of authors are known, but not a single work of this kind has been safeguarded. Only scattered pieces are available. They were gathered by Aloïs Tresp in 1914 in a book significantly entitled *Die Fragmente der griechischen Kultschriftsteller*. When reading these fragments, we can observe that the treatises to which they originally belonged were the products of learned inquiries rooted in scholarly erudition. As they were not prescriptive, they probably did not serve as “practical guides” to be used for a proper performance of rituals. They were descriptive and expository. We do not know their sources of information. Any *Quellenforschung* is impossible to carry out since almost everything is lost. We can always dream of a manuscript or papyrus still to be uncovered which would provide such an *exegetikon*, but this hope is unreasonable and unwise.
- 5 Epigraphic prescriptions related to rituals give us a rare opportunity to collect pieces of information, which would otherwise have completely vanished. However, epigraphic documents referring to rituals can have many different objectives, depending on the kind of text we have to deal with. The material gathered in the study of Greek ritual norms is embedded in documents as varied as civic decrees regarding cult, sacrificial calendars, sales of priesthoods, familial foundations, funerary laws, oracles or even boundary stones and dedications. The authorities issuing these documents can be cities and their subgroups, families, associations, or even individuals, in some cases where a brief cult regulation is connected to the dedication of an altar.³ Accordingly, we must be conscious that our knowledge of Greek rituals, as they were effectively performed by local communities, is partial and severely limited –as is also the case for Rome, even though other types of evidence are available. We can therefore return to the question raised earlier: what kind of information is given in epigraphic ritual norms and why was it written down?
- 6 Due consideration must be given to the oral and unwritten character of Greek ritual tradition. What is recorded in the epigraphic evidence is what is exceptional or at least noteworthy and worth writing down,⁴ even if we are often unable to reconstruct the background of such a need. When the evidence gives some keys to understanding what happened, political transformations impacting the religious life of groups can be identified (for example, the foundation of a new city by gathering former ones in a process of synecism), or financial pressures necessitating the cost-sharing of sacrifices. For instance, in the case of a civic decree issued by the city of Kos, on the eponym island, containing the codification of various rules of purity for priests and priestesses, the text itself states that it is inscribed, “so that the purifications and cleansings are performed according to the sacred and ancestral customs (or traditions).”⁵ These sacred norms to which the text refers were previously recorded in archives, but we do not know exactly why the inhabitants of Kos felt the necessity to publicise them on several stelae, erected in conspicuous places of worship. The extant stele recording such purity rules is heavily damaged, but what is readable shows that the rules it

contained were more precise than many other documents referring to rituals, perhaps because purity became a sensitive issue on the island at some point during the Hellenistic period.⁶

- 7 Purity rituals are well attested in our evidence, but the main ritual performed by Greek communities for over a millennium was undoubtedly animal sacrifice: *thusia*. As far as *thusia* is concerned, Greek ritual norms clearly confirm that a range of actions to be performed were not made explicit because, at a fundamental level, this kind of sacrifice involved a basic series of actions that were part of common knowledge and did not need to be spelled out. The possibility for private individuals to offer sacrifices in sanctuaries without need of a ritual expert or a priest is a strong confirmation of this basic level of knowledge.⁷ When new configurations emerged in a group, then the necessity of specifying at some level of detail what had to be done in ritual context arose: for example, gathering several settlements in one city required that the religious life of the new city be organised in such a way as to provide the same degree of information and knowledge to all its inhabitants. However, the basic elements presumed to be known by *all* the members of the previous communities were left implicit.⁸
- 8 An interesting question, as far as Greek ritual norms are concerned, is the scale of the common knowledge presupposed by these documents: can we identify local, regional or even Pan-Hellenic levels of shared knowledge? In other words, is it possible to recognise something typically “Greek” in the sacrificial ritual performed by Greek groups, beyond the ritual specificities of these particular groups on a local or a regional level? A linguistic metaphor will help to clarify the issue even further: does a common Hellenic sacrificial language exist in parallel with its multiple dialectal expressions?⁹
- 9 An inscription newly discovered in ancient Thessaly, in central Greece, gives a good opportunity to briefly address this issue. The text, dated from the third or second century BCE, belongs to the category of “epigraphic ritual norms” insofar as it prescribes a range of sacrifices to be offered to various gods. The authority issuing the document, if any was mentioned, is now lost in the damaged parts of the stele, but a vast majority of the prescribed sacrifices and some of the gods mentioned are so exotic that we can reasonably attribute this regulation to an association mixing together Syrian –or other Near Eastern people– and Greek members.¹⁰
- 10 For the first time in epigraphic evidence written in Greek, we find the expression: “to sacrifice according to the Greek norm” (or tradition, or custom), depending on the translation chosen for the Greek expression: *thuein... Hellenikōi nomōi*.¹¹ The expression is unique in epigraphy and exceptional in other textual evidence. The procedure is described in detail: any sacrificial animal can be offered except a pig (an exception which is actually not Greek); some cakes are to be deposited on the table, as well as olive oil for a lamp, wine, the boiled breast and one raw leg of the animal. Some of the innards are cooked for the priestess (liver, lungs, diaphragm, left kidney and tongue), while the right kidney, right “extremities” (we do not know what is implied), heart, *omentum*, the front leg, and a part of the tail must go into the fire, on the altar.¹² The same ritual process seems to be followed, at least on some points, when sacrificing sheep, as well as bovines.
- 11 In other inscriptions including elements related to sacrifice, issued by Greek groups such as cities, families, associations, etc., one of the main objectives of writing down prescriptions is to guarantee that each participant in the ritual –whether a divine

recipient or human agent– is to receive his or her due. In the case of the “hybrid” Thessalian group, the same preoccupation probably underlies the regulation, but we also have to take into account the necessity of informing people who do not share the same level of ritual knowledge, which is at the heart of this investigation.

- 12 One last point must be addressed before moving on to Rome. What is specifically “Greek” in the “Greek way of sacrificing” prescribed in this text? Some interpreters consider that it refers to sacrifices of sheep, bovines, and larger animals in general, in contrast with the sacrifice of birds or goats more common in the various Near Eastern offerings documented in the text.¹³ This is perhaps partly the case. But a close comparison between all the sacrifices mentioned on the stele shows a major difference in this case: cutting of portions from the animal carcass and putting some of them into the burning fire of the altar for the gods. The other sacrifices mentioned on the stele imply either the deposition of portions on a table without burning, or complete burning of the animal, what is called a holocaust. The “Greek way of sacrificing”, in this text, is a middle ground between these two types of sacrifice. Of course, we know that holocaustic sacrifices were also performed in Greek cult, but they were very rare¹⁴ and, in the present text, they are not considered as “a Greek way” of performing a sacrificial ritual.
- 13 In any case, the necessity to label this ritual as typically “Greek” emerges from the mixed composition of the association, which probably lies behind the regulation. We would be in a better position to assess the situation if we had other sacrificial regulations issued by the city in whose territory the sanctuary of the association was built. Unfortunately, this is not the case and the comparison can only be made with sacrificial rules issued in other regions of the Greek world.¹⁵ The outstanding character of the Thessalian document lies in the level of detail achieved by the description of the divine part burnt onto the altar. Nowhere else in our evidence do we attain such a degree of precision, probably because the composition of the divine part to be given to a deity in its sanctuary normally belongs to the shared knowledge of the community offering sacrifices.
- 14 *Libri sacerdotum* or *commentarii* of some sort would have been wonderful tools for scholars trying to understand the sacrifices offered in the various Greek cities, but, as mentioned above, this kind of book probably never existed in the Greek world. Rome is not Greece, even if, at some point, Greece became part of Rome, to which we now turn.

The books of the Roman priests (J. S.)

- 15 As mentioned in the introduction of this paper, the traditional religion of the Romans was a religion of the written word, without being a “religion of the Book.” There were nevertheless books of some kind, which are known as the books of the priests (*libri sacerdotum*). But even if modern historians have for a long time dreamed, like their Roman colleagues, that the books of the priests would reveal rare facts about archaic Rome, or help us discover arguments for a representation of the religion of the Romans, which would not be very far from that of a religion of the Book. But the relation of Roman religion with writing has in itself attracted very few modern historians. Only a handful of relatively recent studies have been devoted to this question.¹⁶

16 The problems posed by the relations between writing and religion are manifold, and there is no question of examining them all. By examining the Roman priestly books, I do not intend to question their existence or the few elements that are preserved, but rather to question their essence and their *raison d'être*. Current studies simply take up traditional positions, examine the problem globally, or, finally, explain the evolution of a single type of writing (for example, the so-called *commentarii*¹⁷ of the arvals, the annual reports kept by these twelve priests who celebrated a State cult in the honour of an agrarian goddess, Dea Dia). It is therefore recommended to face these formidable questions with the necessary caution. Priestly books are not the only written documents concerning religion, but as they were at the centre of the Roman religious and scholarly tradition, it seems reasonable to begin the investigation with them.

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17 The existence of these books, attested by many sources, is beyond doubt; what is less assured, however, are the reconstructions that we want to make of them. What was a Roman sacerdotal book? Two opinions confront each other since the beginning of the nineteenth century at least: some consider the books of the priests as normative books expressing among others the rules of worship;¹⁸ others regard them as accounts of the activities and decisions of the colleges.¹⁹ In fact, recent studies have proved that this kind of “*Urbücher*” or “*Ritualtexte*” actually have never existed, and are largely an invention of modern historians. Now that conjures up new questions: why do the Romans mention *libri sacerdotum*, “books of the priests,” and what is a Roman sacerdotal book? The most logical and reliable way is to start from evidence, including direct sources, which have generally been excluded from the survey, collections like the *commentarii*, “the reports,” of the arval brothers, and the two *commentarii* of the Games, that were miraculously preserved.²⁰

18 These exceptional documents are commonly referred to as the *commentarii* (or acts) of the arvals or of the *quindecimviri*. Although the inscriptions of the quindecimvirs have retained the title of *Commentarium ludorum saecularium*, and *commentarii* are attested on the reports of the *arvales*, this conception, without being wrong, is too sketchy. Epigraphic documents are only transcripts and should not be considered *a priori* as complete versions of the priestly commentaries concerned.

19 The two *commentarii* (“records”) of the Secular Games clearly show this. The college of the *quindecimviri*, the “Fifteen men for the consultations of the Sibylline oracle,” was responsible for managing and executing the oracles delivered by the Sibylline Books. This means that besides the consultation of the Books, the preparation of the oracles and the eventual celebration of the prescribed rituals, this college was also in charge of supervising the execution of the recommendations made by the oracles and accepted by the Roman senate. As a result, the daily tasks of the quindecimvirs far exceeded the celebration of the Secular Games, and it is evident that the documents of 17 BC and AD 204 are only excerpts from their *commentarii*: this is also what their title explicitly says –at least in the case of the 204 reference, since it speaks of the “*commentarium* on the Seventh Secular Games” and not “*commentarium quindecimvirum*.” Nevertheless, it is undeniable that the extract itself is complete. Besides the documents give the reason for this transcription on perennial media of the extract concerned: the reason invoked is the conservation of memory. In 17 BC, a special decision of the Roman senate decided

that the “record of the *ludi saeculares* should be written on a marble and a bronze stele and ordered that [the two stelae be erected] on the place where the Games would be celebrated to keep in the future the memory of the event...].”²¹

20 The records of the *arvales* brothers –established since around the years 21/27 AD– consist in a more or less complete transcription of the activities of the brotherhood; but before these years the arvals only transcribed relatively short summaries. Certain rubrics describing rituals that have probably been celebrated since the creation of this cult were included in the copy only a century later: thus, the expiatory sacrifices (*piacula*) concerning the introduction of iron tools in the grove of Dea Dia for the engraving of the inscriptions, and their exportation once the work accomplished, appear on the epigraphic reports only from the year 81 on. The reasons which determined the annual transcription of the commentary of the arvals on the walls of the grove were different from those concerning the Secular Games. An examination of the records of the first decades of the Empire shows that the decisions leading to the result we know were gradually taken. The first series of transcriptions of the *commentarii* remained in line with what was found in most of the public sanctuaries of the time, that is to say, *fasti*, a calendar. The festive calendar of the Julian year was displayed in most of the sanctuaries with the list of the consuls and the praetors, in order to give the date of the ritual duty to be celebrated in the sanctuary. Now, as the date of arval sacrifice to Dea Dia was mobile, it could not appear on a festive calendar; this is why the *arvales* decided to complete each year the calendar by an extract of their *commentarii* giving, year after year, the date of the sacrifice. The formula chosen then compelled them to include in the extract of the *commentarii* the report on the election of new members of the priesthood; and, of course, the name of the annual president of the college, thus saving the creation of one or two other complementary lists of priests elected and the sequence of the presidents. Once put in place, this custom developed. The transcript progressively comprised decrees of the brotherhood, the date of the public vows in January which, at the beginning of the Empire, was not inscribed on the regular calendar either. Finally, the transcription was so complete that from the end of the principate of Tiberius (AD 14–37), there was no reason to omit the other rituals celebrated by the arvals. From that date on, there were variations in the drafting – sometimes succinct, sometimes prolix– of these annual *commentarii*, depending on the mood of the secretary, or the period,²² but the general structure of the documents remained the same until the third century AD.

21 The epigraphic transcripts of the records of the arvals nevertheless provide details regarding how the *commentarii* were kept. We know that the support of the annual commentary was a *codex*, held by the president or by the *commentariensis*, the secretary. These *codices* were obviously archived and deposited in the sanctuary of Dea Dia, or in a room located in the grove. Since AD 134 (and probably already once in 109) during an interruption of the circus races, the arvals questioned business concerning their *liberti* or public slaves. To find answers, they consulted these *codices* and even read them entirely (*perlectis codicibus*) on the spot.²³ It is obvious that the verifications were not made by consulting the wall inscriptions, as they could not be called *codices*. These passages thus show without any ambiguity that the *arvales* had in the sanctuary of Dia a *tabularium*, a library of *codices*, which constituted the only possible reference for the priests. In other words, the *codices* of this archive, “on which the decisions of the previous *fratres arvales* were recorded,” formed the

commentarii of the arvals. The inscriptions probably did not give an exact representation of these *codices*, since they were each year formatted for their “publication,” whereas the waxed tablets (then bound in *codices*) were written day by day and in cursive form (hence including transcription errors of the scribe when making copies on marble), but we can assume that the *commentarii* are closely related to the text of the *codices*.

- 22 It should be added that the arvals records show that the colleges also used prayer books, and perhaps a booklet with a list of members or a formula recording the election of the annual president of the brotherhood.²⁴ But it is not appropriate to equate these booklets with the priestly “*Ritualtexte*” as G. Rohde imagined. These prayer texts are in fact instruments of worship, allowing the recitation without error of the prayer or election formulas.
- 23 There is no reason to consider that only the arvals had *commentarii*, and, of course, prayer books. The *quindecimviri*, as we have seen, also possessed them. This proves that it was not an exceptional practice linked to the Augustan “restoration” of the relatively obscure *fratres arvales*, but of a traditional procedure of all sacerdotal *collegia*. This deduction is confirmed by the existence of a *commentariensis sacerdoti(i) septemviorum*, “a secretary of the priesthood of *septemviri epulonum*,” one of the major Roman priesthoods.²⁵
- 24 Despite the differences in the functions of the two priesthoods concerned, the content of the *commentarii* of the arvals and the *quindecimviri* is similar. Under a title including the consular dates and the indication of the annual presidencies are displayed descriptions of the rituals performed, attesting the execution of the duties on the day prescribed by custom, the *sententiae*, “decisions” –to use the term employed by the *commentariensis*– voted by the priests on all matters falling within their jurisdiction, or documents communicated to the college. Thus, the beginning of the *commentarii* of the Secular Games is formed by a succession of *senatus-consulta* relating to the organisation of the Games;²⁶ the inscriptions of the *arvales* record at least one decree of the pontifical college²⁷ as well as a communication of the *praefectus annonae* of the year AD 80 attributing to the arvals places in the Colosseum.
- 25 But if one examines the known excerpts of the other priestly books,²⁸ one realises that they all could find a place in the *commentarii* of the arvals or the *quindecimviri*. Most may be excerpts from a decree or a *responsum*; some formulas may have been borrowed from prayer texts recorded in religious service records, or copied from prayer booklets. Most of these fragments were extracted from their context by the Roman antiquaries, who quoted only the rule or expression that interested them, ignoring the proper elements of the priestly decree. One can, of course, imagine that antiquaries exploited decrees that enacted sets of religious rules, in short, great rituals. But nothing proves it, and above all nothing allows us to establish that this kind of text would be older than the other documents. In Rome religious regulations that contain all the prescriptions for the cult of a god or goddess are very rare, if not non-existent. As such, the Books of the Roman priest were not a collection of norms.
- 26 Let us take two examples. The first is provided by the list of prohibitions and taboos of the *flamen* of Jupiter, which one finds in Aulus Gellius:²⁹ Georg Rohde proved that, contrary to what one might believe, the ritual obligations (*caerimoniae*) imposed on the *flamen* were not extracted from a priestly book, but from an antiquary, most likely Masurius Sabinus, quoting himself the Augustan jurist Ateius Capito; the latter had

collected a set of customs and prescriptions from his personal observations, or found in specific decrees, such as those that Augustus took in 11 BC about this priest. In any case, we have no evidence of the existence of a priestly document containing all the prescriptions that had to be observed by the *flamen* of Jupiter and his wife.

- 27 A second example is the famous document on the Argei (objects that resembled a human form that were first exposed in a certain number of stations in the centre of Rome, then eventually thrown in the Tiber) which seems to give proof of the existence of great liturgical texts.³⁰ This document cannot be older than the third century BC, because of the buildings it mentions.³¹ As the rituals in question mobilised the Vestals, the *flaminica Dialis*, and “the most eminent priests” (ἱερέων οἱ διαφανέστατοι), which were all members of the pontifical college, modern scholars supposed that the document of the Argei came from the archives of the pontiffs. Though not in itself objectionable, this deduction gives no clue as to the precise nature of this document. Noting that Varro had not given the name of the document, but speaks either of “the sacrifices of the Argei” (*Argeorum sacrificia*, or *sacra Argeorum*), Rohde concluded that the text had no title; to his mind, all that could be said was that the pontifical text dealt with the *sacra Argeorum*, the “rituals of the Argei,” and even defined them as sacrificial. Therefore, he considered that the list of Argei came from a *commentarius sacrorum Argeorum*, a “record of the rituals of the Argei,” held by the pontiffs. If it is likely that the document goes back to the pontifical archives, there is no evidence that it was a particular *commentarius* about the Argei, which would ultimately be a recent form of the old “*Ritualtext*” sought by Rohde. It is much simpler to consider it as an excerpt from the annual *commentarii* of the pontiffs. This hypothesis can be supported –once again– thanks to the parallel provided by the comments of the *quindecimviri*, more precisely by the *commentarius* of the Secular Games of 204, which describes in the following terms the drawing by lots of the places where the priests were supposed to distribute the *suffimenta*, purification substances, to the citizens: “on 25 May, on the Palatine, the college (of the *quindecimviri*) convened in the temple of Apollo, in order to draw by lot on which places they should distribute from platforms to the people purifying substances: (list). After having inspected the lots and put them in an urn, they draw lots: on the Palatine, on the platform of our Augusti, which is in the square of the temple of Apollo (names of the priests drawn by lot)”, etc.³² Imagine that a scholar wanting to study the topography of Rome would have only this document to do so: he would quote this passage from the *Commentarius* of the Secular Games by deleting (or mentioning in the general presentation) all that concerns the drawing of lots and the names of the priests. In short, his text would specify that “purifying substances were distributed on the Palatine on the platform that is in the square in front of the temple of Apollo” and so on (*suffimenta distributa sunt ‘in Palatio in tribunali, quod est in area aedis Apollinis, in tribunali, quod est ad Romam quadratam’*). It should be noted that the excerpt does not affect the text of the *commentarii*, and that the use of the present tense, as in the Argei document, would well fit in the prescription of the *quindecimviri*. Our antiquary would, of course, have also been able to exploit the same lines II, 22 sq. of our *commentarium*, to deal with the distribution of *suffimenta*, “purification substances.”
- 28 I therefore consider that for a given reason, perhaps marginal, the pontiffs were asked to define –or redefine– certain elements of the *Sacra Argeorum*, and recalled briefly all the stations of the procession on this occasion. Georg Wissowa and Georg Rohde imagined that Varro’s document concerned the very birth of the ritual. It is possible,

but not necessary. The decrees of the pontiffs were often formulated only when new problems or circumstances had to be taken into account; in the absence of other evidence, the “late” date of the Varronian document does not prove that the custom itself is not anterior.

- 29 In any case, the parallel provided by the *Commentarium* of the Secular Games of 204 seems to support the hypothesis that this list comes from priestly records rather than from a general *commentarius sacrorum Argeorum* –a title invented by modern scholars. Moreover, despite its title, the document of the Secular Games of AD 204 does not offer any proof that the priestly colleges possessed *commentarii* classified by cults. The *Commentarius* of the Secular Games is, in fact, a compilation of excerpts from the annual records of the *quindecimviri*, which were to include many reports and decrees other than those concerning these Games. As this was a very special holiday, the Senate prescribed the *quindecimviri* to compose this “*commentarius*” and to preserve it from destruction by transcribing it on bronze and marble. But this does not prove that the *quindecimviri* had isolated in their own *commentarii* the decrees and accounts related to the games. The testimony of the *commentarii* of the arvals even impel us to conclude in this sense: because the arvals apparently did not separate in their comments the *commentarius* of the sacrifice to Dea Dia, which represented their main obligation, from other decisions and descriptions, or legal documents received by the college. Finally, it is obvious that the *Commentarium* of the Secular Games is in any case far distant from the concept of priestly book as imagined by Ambrosch and his followers.
- 30 Accordingly, the so-called *commentarius sacrorum Argeorum* is a decree of the pontiffs (or decemvirs if it was related to a Sibylline oracle) concerning the foundation or a modification of the tradition, which Varro or his source could find in the acts of the Senate as well as in the books of priests, if not in a scholarly book *De sacris* (or *sacrificiis*) *Argeorum*, that would have already exploited the above-mentioned sources.
- 31 Therefore, the body of writings, which is sometimes called “archives of the priests,” consisted essentially of commentaries, that is to say, annual reports recording all the decisions taken by the college concerned in the context of their regular duties, or in response to a public or private interrogation, as well as reports on the rituals celebrated during the past year. Moreover, in the hands of the priests –but also in the hands of the magistrates– there were prayer books or some books containing oracles. We are therefore far from the pontifical or augural “Bibles” imagined by the historians of the nineteenth century. It emerges, however, from our limited survey of public priestly colleges that religious practice produced a very large number of “administrative” documents, preserved by the priests and, in some case also by the magistrates or the Senate. Very few are preserved, either more or less directly by copies on stone, or indirectly by the extracts made by Roman scholars. The disappearance of these “archives,” and, even of most of the essays that the Roman antiquaries had consecrated to them, represent an incommensurable loss. To illustrate the importance of this vanished treasure, not only for the knowledge of the public religious life, but for the whole Roman history, it is enough to convoke again the example of the *commentarii* of the aruales. Judging by the annual volume of these documents (about 4 000 characters), the magnitude of the *commentarii* of the four major priestly colleges can lead to us to dream or despair. Moreover, without the discovery, between 1865 and 1869, of nine well-preserved records of the arvals, the Mommsenian theory on the imperial power would have been different, and without the *commentarii*

of the *arvales* as a whole, the knowledge of the political life under the Empire would often be thin, superficial and strongly marked by the *topoi* of ancient historiography.

- 32 The loss is no less irreparable for the knowledge of the Roman religion. In fact, in this religion without a founding book, this vast group of *commentarii* and descriptions of rituals represented, with the priestly jurisdiction, the religious tradition: religion was oral tradition plus the annual *commentarii* of priests. Or rather, the religious tradition existed and was transmitted only through the annual archiving of practice and jurisdiction.

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- 33 In conclusion, types of documents from Greek and Roman culture relating to rituals cannot be superimposed, as can be seen from the comparison of the evidence discussed here above, be they the Greek ritual prescriptions or the Roman *commentarii*. Moreover, the difference is profound between the political background of Rome, notably the importance of the *Urbs*, the “city” *par excellence*, and the political background of Greece, where a thousand of independent city-states in the Aegean Basin regulated their own religious life during centuries. Beyond these “structural” differences, however, interesting similarities can be identified. On both sides, there were no “normative” ritual books for a cult, a temple or –even less conceivable– for the whole system. There were only archives, unfortunately almost entirely lost to us. Scattered pieces of evidence of this vast complex have been preserved, because it was recorded on stelae publicly displayed, which were uncovered by excavations, for the greatest benefit of modern scholars. Such records mainly attest the great flexibility of rituals in various places and circumstances, like a language able to express in various forms a message to the gods. A large range of possibilities, culturally determined by ritual performances that were particularly “Roman” or specifically “Greek,” were also attested *within* both cultures, from place to place, from time to time. Such flexibility is definitely one of the main characteristics of ancient polytheism.

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FOOTNOTES

1. On the question of writing in sacred context in ancient Greece, see Henrichs 2003, with previous bibliography and the remark “...as far as Greek religion is concerned, texts are infinitely more ubiquitous, and more important, than books” (p. 210). On “Orphic books,” see the cautious remarks of Nilsson 1952, 631 and n. 6, as well as Parker 1995.
2. E.g., Parker 2004; Georgoudi 2010; Carbon & Pirenne-Delforge 2012 and 2017.
3. The website entitled *Collection of Greek Ritual Norms (CGRN)*, available since 2017 in open access (<http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be>), gives a broad overview of the different types of inscriptions formerly called “sacred laws” which we propose, in the context of the research project at the origin of this *Collection*, to qualify as “ritual norms.”
4. Carbon & Pirenne-Delforge 2017, 143.
5. *IG XII 4, 72/CGRN 148*, line 5. Cf. Carbon & Pirenne-Delforge 2017, p. 147.
6. On this document, see Paul 2013, 77–79. On various forms of purity in ancient Greek religion, see especially Parker 1983, Petrovic & Petrovic 2016, and the collection of papers in Carbon & Peels-Matthey 2018.
7. See Parker 2011, 40–63.
8. On these various levels of knowledge and “clarifying” in epigraphic ritual norms, see Carbon & Pirenne-Delforge 2017, with previous bibliography.
9. In 2010, Fritz Graf asked the same question about the gods (Graf 2010, 57). All dimensions of the ancient Greek religion are likely to be questioned in this way.
10. Two successive editions of this text are available: Decourt & Tziaphalias 2015; Bouchon & Decourt 2017. The inscription will soon be integrated into the *Collection of Greek Ritual Norms* under number 225. A whole series of publications have already appeared on this remarkable document: Carbon 2016; Parker 2016; Parker & Scullion 2016; Carbon 2017; Pirenne-Delforge forthcoming.
11. *CGRN 225*, lines B34-35.
12. *Ibid.*, lines B34-42: ἔὰν δὲ τις θύειν βούληται τῇ θεῶι ἑλληνικῶι νόμωι, ἔξεστι ὃ τι ἂν βούληται πλὴν χοίρου. ἐπὶ δὲ τῆ[ι] | θυσίαι, φέρειν δεῖ ἐπὶ τὴν τραπέζαν τὰ ἐπιτιθέμενα χοίνικα λαγάνων, | ὄμορας χοίνικα, καὶ τριώβολον εἰς θησαυρὸν καὶ ἐλαίου ἐπὶ λύχνον κοτύλην καὶ εἰς κρατῆρα οἴνου χοῶ. ἀπὸ τοῦ ἱεροῦ, τὸ στήθος ἐφθὸν ἐπὶ τὴν | τραπέζαν καὶ τὸ σκέλος ὠμόν. τῇ ἱερείαι τὰ σπλάγχνα ἔψειν, ἦπαρ καὶ | πνεύμονα καὶ φρενᾶς καὶ νεφρὸν ἀρίστερον καὶ γλώσσαν· τὸν δὲ δεξιὸν | νεφρὸν καὶ ἀκροκόλιον δεξιὸν καὶ καρδίαν καὶ ἐπίπλουν καὶ τὸ σκέλο[ς] | τὸ ἀπὸ τοῦ στήθους καὶ τῆς κέρκου τὸ νομιζόμενον εἰς ἱερὰ ἐπὶ τὸ πῦρ, “If anyone wishes to sacrifice to the goddess by the Greek rite, it is permitted (to sacrifice) whatever he likes except pig. To accompany the sacrifice, one must bring to the table as the deposited offerings: a *choinix* of *lagana*, a *choinix* of *homora*, and three obols for the collecting box and a *kotyle* of olive oil for the lamp and for the mixing-bowl a *kotyle* of wine; from the sacrificial animal to the table: the breast boiled and the leg raw. Bring the entrails to the priestess, the liver and lungs and diaphragm and left kidney and tongue. The right kidney and right *akrokolion* and heart and

omentum and the leg from the breast and the portion of the tail customary for sacred offerings onto the fire” (trans. Parker & Scullion 2016, slightly adapted).

13. On the different problems posed by the application of the *Hellenikos nomos* according to the type of animal sacrificed, see Parker & Scullion 2016, 242–247, and Pirenne-Delforge forthcoming.

14. See Ekroth 2017 and 2018.

15. This is done in Pirenne-Delforge forthcoming.

16. Beard 1985 and 1991; Gordon 1990; Scheid 1990; Valette-Cagnac 2000.

17. I refer to the usual term *commentarius*. The *quindecimviri* used the form *commentarium* on the records of the Secular Games.

18. See for these opinions Niebuhr 1846, 10 sq.; Ambrosch 1840 and 1843; Becker 1843, 10–12; Schwegler 1853, 32–34; Lange 1856–1871, 27; 337 sq.; 347–350 and Marquardt 1878, 287–290; 384–385, followed this theory. Ambrosch’s work was continued by Peter 1886 and Rowoldt 1906. Cf. Rohde 1936, and Sini 1983, for a comprehensive description of these theories.

19. The distinction between normative priestly books and the records (*commentarii*) was questioned by Bouché-Leclercq 1871, 21 sq.; Preibisch 1874 and 1878; Regell 1878 and 1893. Wissowa 1912, 6, is cautious and eludes the problem without giving his opinion, noting only that the pontiffs did keep the calendar, the *indigitamenta* (“invocations”), the *carmina* (“prayer-texts”), the *leges templorum*, the *Ius Papirianum* as well as their own decrees and *responsa* (“answers”).

20. *Commentarium* of 17 BC, lines 58 sq.: ...*commentarium ludorum*] | *saecularium in colum[n]am aheneam et marmoream inscribi Eodemque die ibidem sc(ribundo) [id]em adfuer(unt) et senatus consultum factum es[t : ---]*; *Commentarium* of 204 AD, I, line 1: [*Comme*]ntarium [*ludorum saecu*]lar[*iu*]m [*se*]ptim[*orum*, qui facti sunt] | [*Imp(eratore Caes(are) L. S]eptimio Seu[ero Pio] Pertina[ce]*], etc.

21. *Commentarium* of 17 BC, lines 58 sq.: *Eodemque die ibidem sc(ribundo) [id]em adfuer(unt) et senatus consultum factum es[t : ---]* | *Quod C. Silanus co(n)s(ul) u(erba) f(ecit) pe[r]ti[n]ere ad conseruandam memoriam tantae b[eneuolentiae] --- deorum commentarium ludorum] | 60 saecularium in colum[n]am aheneam et marmoream inscribi, s[tatu]ique ad futuram rei memoriam --- utramque] | eo loco, ubi ludi futuri [s]int, q[ui]d d(e) e(a) r(e) f(ieri) p(laceret), d(e) e(a) r(e) i(ta) c(ensuere): uti co(n)s(ul) a(lter) a(mboue) ad f[uturam rei memoriam] --- columnam] | *aheneam et alteram marmoream, in quibus commentari[um ludorum]—inscriptum sit, eo loco statuunt et id opus] | locent praetoribusque q(ui) [a(erario)] p(ublico) inperent, uti redemptoribus ea[m] summam—qua locauerint soluant].* —Dionysius of Halicarnassus 4, 26, 5 mentions the same intention for inscribing the decrees of the counsel of the Latin Ligue on bronze pillars erected in the temple of Diana on the Aventine (ἵνα δὲ μηδεὶς χρόνος αὐτοῦς [= τοῦς νόμους] ἀφανίσῃ, στήλῃν κατασκευάσας χαλκῆν ἔγραψεν ἐν ταύτῃ τά τε δόξαντα τοῖς συνέδροις καὶ τὰς μετεχούσας τῆς συνόδου πόλεις).*

22. Under Augustus, the indications of the records were very short (see *infra*), then from Tiberius to Domitian becoming longer. Under Domitian, the summaries become more substantial, though we do not know if this greater precision was based on a decision of the *fratres*, or just on the technique of the secretaries. Then, from Commodus-Caracalla on, the records become even longer. This evolution could have depended on the administrative system of that time, when the secretaries were no longer permanent personnel of the college, but promoted to another service every three years or so: obviously they were not necessarily familiar with the complex rituals they had to summarise, and made very long descriptions, *i.e.*, bad summaries –for our greatest pleasure.

23. The most important testimony is the record of 134, which is very fragmentary. It is however clear enough for our purpose: “after having read the *codices* on which the decisions of the previous *fratres aruales* were recorded” (Scheid 1998, Nr. 75, l. 8–14: [*I]sdem co(n)s(ulibus) (ante diem quartum) k(alendas) Iun(ias) (vacat) / [---, Iul(ius) Alexander] Iulianus, Antonius Albus, Valerius Iunianus / [--- publicis s]uis* postulantibus, ut ex sententiis fratr(um) aru(alium) / [--- ? i]n portionibus apud ipsos etulitum (!) Eutychem / [--- per]lectis codicibus, quibus sententiae priorum /*

[fratr(um) aru(alium) relatae sunt, collegium decreu]it*: (vacat) “Ex decretis prioribus nihil / [immutamus, -- port]io circi concessum a collegio nostro public(is?). * Ego: Paribeni ser]VIS Huelsen Manuskript b DAI Rome kalatoribus s]VIS. ** Ego decreu]it.).

24. Prayer-booklets: Scheid 1998, Nr. 100, lines 31 sq. (AD 218): “the priests... after having received booklets recited the hymn” (*et aedes clusa e(st); omnes for[a]s exierunt. Ibi sacerdotes clusi, succincti, libellis acceptis, carmen descendentes tripodauerunt in uerba haec : Enos Lases iuuate, [e]nos Lases iuuate, enos Lases iuuate!* etc., similar text without the text of the *carmen* in 219 and 240). For the use of *libelli* for prayers cf. Cic. *dom.* 139 (*libri*); Val. Max. 4, 1, 1 (*publicae tabulae*); Plin. *nat.* 28, 11 (*de scripto praeire*); Stat. *silv.* 4, 3, 140 sq. (*chartae*); Suet. *Aug.* 97, 1 (*tabulae*). In 204 the magister of the *quindecimviri* reads his *sententia* in the Senate *a libello*, “from a booklet” (Pighi 1965, 140, column I, lines 5 sq.: *Prid(ie) [...]ias in comitio in curia Iulia XVu[ir]i s(acris) f(aciundis) an[te] suggestum a[m]plissim[orum] con[/sulum... consti]terunt, ex q[ui]bus... Manilius Fus[us] mag(ister) collegii ex libello [l]egit : [Cum... denu]o tempore sa[e]cul[i] ueteris, etc.]. — *Libellus* for the election of the annual magister, Scheid 1998, Nr. 114, AD 240, column II, lines 41 sq.): ‘they read the booklet and made for the following year... president’– *deinde libellum legent (!) et in annum prox(imum)... mag(istrum) f(ecerunt?)...**

25. *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* VI, 2319 relates to a *comme[n]tariis sa]cerdoti VIIuirum epulonu[m]*.

26. *Ludi saeculares* of 17 BC: Moretti 1982–1984; Pighi 1967, 108; 111 sq.; *Ludi saeculares* of AD 204: Pighi 1967, 140–143.

27. Decree of the pontiffs: Scheid 1988, Nr. 9; Scheid 1998, Nr. 48, lines 20–34 (AD 80).

28. List in Rohde 1936, 14.

29. Gellius 10, 15. Rohde 1936, 28–30; for the *flamen* of Jupiter, see also Dio 54, 36, 1, and mainly Tac. *ann.* 3, 58 and 4,16.

30. Varr., *ling.* 5, 47–54. This text has mainly been commented by Wissowa 1904 and Rohde 1936, 59–61; cf. also Latte 1960, 412–414.

31. Cf. Wissowa, *ll.* The Aedes Salutis and the aedes Quirini (in colle), in § 52, have been dedicated respectively in 302 and 293. The dedication of the Mineruium on the Caelius does not necessarily date from 241, cf. Ziółkowski 1992, 112–115. The linguistic form of the documents refers to a later date, but Zinzow 1866, 47 and Jordan 1876, 270 have supposed that the Varronian document is not an original version, but a “modernized” version of an older text. I follow Wissowa in considering that this postulate cannot give a proof for the age of the rules.

32. II, 7 [–a. d. VIII k.] *Iun. in Palatio in aede Apollinis collegium conuenit ad sortiendum, qui quibus locis in tribunalibus su[ffimenta] populo – – – distribuere deberent* | (follows a presence list) ; ¹¹ (...) [*Tesseris*] *inspectis et in urnam missis sors habita est : in Palatio in tribunali Augustorum nn., qu[od est in area aedis Apollinis – – –]* | ¹² [...] *Saluius Tuscus applicit[i] – – – in tribunali, quod es]t ad Romam quadratam, Nonius Mucianus, Aiocius Modestus, Atul[e]nus [Ru]f[i]nus [– – –]*.

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