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# *City Gods, Filiality, and Hegemony in Late Imperial China*

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## *CITY GODS AND THEIR MAGISTRATES*

When Wu Chong (fl. ca. 1740), magistrate of Wuqing County near Beijing, renovated the City God Temple, he left a memorial stele:

If one desires to unify *yin* and *yang*, the inner and outer, to put at ease all the little people, the Way of the Spirits should be established as a doctrine and then the commoners will be moved to their utmost and come forward.

When I first took office in this county, I went to pay my respects in the City God Temple. It was quite large and upon investigation turned out to have been built in 1557. It had already been some time since the last renovations had fallen again into disrepair. The main hall had a leaky roof and wet floor, the walls of the two side halls had fallen in and the statues were standing out in the open.

My heart thumped as I thought “This city in which I have just taken up a post, such decline and ruin that it seems impossible to clean it up! How to show my piety that by relying upon the spirits I will have neither complaints nor fears?”

Later, in a particularly fruitful year, I wished to gather materials and workmen. I thought it would be easy with the people who would come forth voluntarily like those in the poem in the *Shijing* to throw out the decrepit portions and set about restoring. So first

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I took some of my own salary and called upon the local bureaucrats, gentry and other good people of the city. They happily came forward in collective help. We began in 1740, the ninth month, and finished by the third month of 1741. It was one of the sights of the town [Shuntian fuzhi, 1886: 23. 26b].

This passage is remarkable only for its ordinariness; local gazetteers are replete with such records of renovation projects left by virtuous magistrates.<sup>1</sup> Their contents range from the deepest philosophical concerns to chatty descriptions of the magistrate's taste in interior decoration. But all point up the fundamental importance of the relationship between a magistrate and local deities.

In late imperial China, the *Chenghuang shen*, or "God of Walls and Moats," as the patron and tutelary of walled cities, was especially interesting in this regard. People turned to him out of communal concerns such as the need for rain and for personal requests such as recovery from illness (Shryock, 1931: 98). Every major locality had its temple to the City God, and the "annual sacrifices, celebrations and processions for this god were among the most impressive and widely observed public activities in traditional community life" (Yang, 1961: 156).

In the unseen world the City God occupied the same place held by the chief official of the city in this world. Yang describes a system of graded city gods, each with a rank dependent upon the size of his territory, corresponding to the temporal province, prefecture, or county (Yang, 1961: 156). The partnership between city gods and magistrates embodied the intersection of the invisible (*yu*) world of the spirits and the visible (*ming*) world of people.

Officials and people alike thought both realms to be fundamentally necessary to what we would term the social and natural orders. When he took up a new post, the magistrate visited the City God to enlist his help in governing the people of the district. And in case of natural disaster, both the people and the magistrate turned to the god for aid. The cult of the City God, shared between imperial ritualists and popular practitioners, was

claimed in different ways by each because its focus was this juncture of parallel worlds.

Magistrates, for example, called upon the City God to resolve judicial cases. Wang Huizu (1731-1807) left a detailed account of one such case. During a dispute over land rights, the Liu family sought to discredit the Zhengs by framing them for the death of an old member of the Liu clan. When the murder was presented to Wang for adjudication, he adjourned with all parties to the City God Temple, where he burned incense. There they were interrupted by the culprit, Liu's son, who burst in and confessed in a drunken babble that he had been lured there by a black demon. Magistrate Wang was grateful for the god's intervention and offered it as proof to other magistrates of the effectiveness of reliance upon the spirits. He marveled not at the god's active participation but at the timeliness of the service. Careful magistrates expected such assistance (Wang Huizu, 1816: v.2.37a-38a).

Common people too could benefit from the power of the City God. Those accused of some misdemeanor often appeared before the god to ask for a sign proving their innocence. If such a sign was not forthcoming, the outraged accused could take his complaint about the City God's failure to an even higher spiritual court (Shryock, 1931: 113-114).

The sources from the period rarely express such competing claims upon the City God directly. Whether legend, local history, handbooks for magistrates, or ritual prescription, they proceed from a consensus about the cultural constitution of both nature and society. Perhaps the most systematic explication of presuppositions about a cosmos that contained within it a hierarchically ordered humanity lies in *li* ("rites").

From the fourth century BC, *li* had been thought of as a set of principles for order and connection that was both cosmically dictated ("natural") and humanly maintained ("social"). As Feuchtwang puts it, "In the ideology of Chinese officials . . . the performance of correct ritual (*li*) was a vital part of man's function in the universe: that is to order what heaven had created and earth completed" (Feuchtwang, 1977: 539).

However, *li* was not merely part of official ideology. Because the existence of rites and the control of legitimate access to their symbols and performance were grounded in certain ideas about the nature of humanity and the cosmos, it may be more fruitful to use the concept of "hegemony," which goes beyond "ideology."

What is decisive is not only the conscious system of ideas and beliefs, but the whole lived social process as practically organized by specific meanings and values. . . . [The hegemonic] thus constitutes a sense of reality for most people in the society, a sense of absolute because experienced reality beyond which it is very difficult for most members of the society to move [Williams, 1977: 109-110].

Within the hegemony of *li*, the appropriateness of feeling and perception, the coincidence of affect and cognition generated a ground of "normality" or "naturalness." It is only within these categories of the declared "natural" or "real" that action is possible and conceptions of power and its legitimate use operate. The notion of "what is" dictates "what is possible."<sup>2</sup> *Li* summarized the way of being human that was necessary to the cosmos, the principle by which the interpenetration of the natural and social worlds was maintained through human intervention. From the Son of Heaven to the poorest of householders, there was a striking continuity of ritual practice, especially in ancestor worship.<sup>3</sup> Differing interpretations of this practice were mutually intelligible expressions of a hierarchical order that sought to position the interpreter vis-à-vis an imagined whole.

While we must first consider Chinese society as a whole before proceeding to understand the articulation of its parts, the relevant whole must be discerned among competing definitions. If "culture" (in its own concrete expressions, such as ritual or art) is a modelling system for people living within it (see Singer, 1968: 538; Segre, 1978), then the cultural models provided by imperial and community City God rites represented a mobilization of elements of a "social whole" selected to give an illusion of totality and coherence.

The sources reveal contention hidden within the hegemonic of *li*. They engage problems of articulating boundaries of correct behavior for members of the community (its parts), while at the same time they express abstract and theoretical principles about order for the community (as a whole). In other words, in sharing a discourse of social knowledge about the order and disorder, and thus about the margins so implied, sometimes the texts seem to stand together and sometimes they disagree.

This article approaches the cult of the City God as the negotiated result of discursive and ritual practice that yielded filiality (*xiao*) as an "authoritative solution" to certain paradoxes, particularly the paradox of sameness and difference. These social paradoxes were then resolved through ritual practice.

Hegemony takes seriously semiotic practices and situates them within the set of material practices through which society is produced but without reducing social consciousness to them.<sup>4</sup> Hence, it draws analytical attention toward two important effects: One is that "a lived system of meanings and values—constitutive and constituting—is experienced as practices [that] appear as reciprocally confirming" (Williams, 1977: 110). Another is that hegemony saturates the whole of life for *all* members of a society.

While the second effect stresses the totalizing aspect of hegemony, the first effect relieves this totalizing scenario by reminding the observer that domination is always a double-edged construction and not a matter of simple oppression. In a process of shifting differentiation and unity, the discourse upon the City God simultaneously revealed and concealed the terms of the hegemony of *li*. This article will analyze that hegemony in two stages: the first organized around texts and the second around ritual performances.

### THE CULT OF THE CITY GOD

Before discussing the texts, a few words must be said about why I deliberately eschew some familiar English translations. For

example, I translate *ziran* as “self-so” rather than “natural” (following A. C. Graham, 1958: 13). The English word “natural” immediately connotes an entire set of Western predispositions about the boundaries between the human and nonhuman, the biological and the artificial (Schneider, 1980). Since this article is investigating those very boundaries as the Chinese constructed them within *li*, it seemed wise not to import from the outset such a loaded term. It is a fundamental tenet of the cultural historian that there is nothing given or self-evident about the category “natural”; it will be construed in subtly different ways within different social formations.

The four texts chosen focus upon the cult of the City God as a nexus of mediation between the visible and invisible worlds, between order and disorder, and between levels of society. They provide different views of the cult, seeming to emphasize aspects relevant to the writers’ own positions within traditional society.

A popular legend from Taiwan provides one of the fullest explications of the cult, and introduces us to the cast of characters. A handbook on local government by district magistrates details the partnership of that official and the god. Finally, a pair of commemorative stele inscriptions from the Beijing City God Temple provides the imperial point of view.

#### A FOLK LEGEND

The legend from Xinzhu, Taiwan, recounts “how the local City God received his title from the Qing emperor.”<sup>5</sup> The emperor’s son (*taizi*) was playing by the seaside on some fisherboats with his wet nurse when a great wind came up and blew away their boat. They floated to a “lonely island in the southern sea,” and were rescued by the local chief. The wet nurse died, but the imperial son was adopted by the chief and grew up there, hunting and fishing.

One day he decided to fish in a northern sea, and departed. He came upon Taiwan, specifically, the coast of Xinzhu, and put up in a local Temple to Mazu, patroness of fishermen. Meanwhile, the district magistrate was visited in a dream by the City God of Xinzhu, who informed him of the prince’s arrival and ordered

him to make greetings. The magistrate hastened the next day to find the prince and invite him to the official residence. The imperial son was reluctant to trust the magistrate until he heard that it was the City God who had brought news of his arrival. He was then willing to depart in the palanquin the magistrate had provided.

Later, the magistrate escorted the imperial son back to the capital where he was welcomed with great surprise by a father who had thought he was dead. The magistrate was promoted and the City God given the title “Awesome and Numinous Duke.”

The legend provides a model of the rhythm of the ritual cycle of the cult of the City God. In the journey taken by the imperial son we can see the three stages of a classic rite of passage: separation, liminality, and reincorporation. The cycle of the rituals associated with the cult does not recapitulate exactly the temporal order of the three phases of the legend, but each phase is present during the year, both as the major theme of a certain rite, and within each ceremony. Since the details of the rituals themselves will be discussed in the next section, only the ceremonial year as a whole will be examined here.

The prince is separated from his home by a storm. He passes time on the “lonely” island where he becomes a commoner. No normal hierarchies of status apply there; even the normal respect due his surrogate father is ignored (although the chief “loved him dearly”) and he leaves. More important, during this period his father thinks him dead.

The prince’s period of liminality has its ceremonial correlate in the processions by the community on festivals associated with the dead and coinciding with the beginning of new seasons. These included Qingming, or the grave sweeping in the spring, the first day of summer, and the first day of winter (Ayscough, 1924: 152; Teng, 1935: 260). The winter—when the yin influence was waxing to culminate at the solstice and the Kitchen God was sent to report to Heaven, leaving people alone on earth to face ghosts without gods—seems to have been a particularly dangerous period. During that season, the City God presided at the feeding of hungry ghosts (Hsiao, 1960: 222-223). The god’s birthday was



also marked by procession, the precise date of which varied from place to place.

Descriptions make these processions (Doré, 1916: 884-890; Shryock, 1931: 103-105; Gu Lu, 1830: 3.9a-11b) sound carnivalesque. People mingled with little regard for everyday status; the unseen world of spirits became perceptible reality through people dressing up as ghosts. This parallels the prince's sojourn as a commoner who is also given up as dead.

Later, however, the imperial son is elevated from the underworld and commoner rank when he mounts the palanquin in the land of hierarchy in Taiwan. His return is also signalled by his consciousness of his *shenfen*, or "body portion." As this word for social position still used today indicates, that portion is part of a divided whole. Seasonal imperial sacrifices performed by the emperor or his official representative were also concerned with presenting a model of the universe as a hierarchy of mutually complementary parts.

The cast of the legend includes the imperial son, the wet nurse, the emperor and empress (she is mentioned once, then drops out), the chief, the district magistrate, and the City God. If they are grouped as follows: spirits, emperor, and officials and common people, all typical participants in the ceremonies of the cult are accounted for. Curiously missing is the main character of the legend: the imperial son.

"Princes" do not play a literal part in the everyday workings of the cult, but his role is assimilated by homology to others. His homology with the magistrate is marked in the following ways: First, the son travels far away from the imperial center (which is likewise his home), but never forgets where he owes his true allegiance. This resembles the situation of a loyal magistrate who is sent from the capital to govern the provinces and who, because of the rule of avoidance that never allowed him to govern his own locale, was simultaneously far from home.

Second, the City God mediates between the magistrate and the son, speaking first of the son to the magistrate in the dream, and later of the magistrate to the son as witness to his sincerity. Third, the son rides the palanquin when he reenters the world of status

difference, just as the magistrate and the City God do when in procession. If the imperial son is homologous to the magistrate, then a crucial set of relations is introduced:

emperor:prince :: emperor:magistrate :: father:son

The magistrate was an official son of the imperium.

Thus the legend introduces the pivotal concept of "sonship." Sons performed the rites of ancestor worship and therefore, according to the canons of filiality, were the mediators par excellence between the living and the dead. "Sonship" and filiality will be explored later.

The legend does not explicitly mention ceremonies, but it provides a model of the cult of the City God in two ways. First, it links the themes of marginality and reincorporation into hierarchy by its very plot, bridging the aspects of the cult usually thought of as "popular" and "imperial." Second, this connection is made through the imperial son, who, in his journey, presents us less with a model of a role than with a principle of transformation, applicable to rituals of mediation between the visible and invisible.

#### *A MAGISTRATE'S HANDBOOK*

Mediation is the main theme of the essay "Worshipping the City God" by Huang Lihong in his handbook for local government. It was effected through the partnership of the magistrate and the City God, each of whom had separate duties.

The district magistrate governs the visible, the City God the invisible. Generating benefit and warding off harm for the people are duties of the magistrate. Bringing down blessings and warding off natural disaster are the duties of the City God [Huang, 1879: 24.10b].

Every district magistrate in late imperial China had a full schedule of rituals. He burned incense at the new and full moon

each month to Confucius, the City God, the God of War, and the God of Literature. In the spring and autumn he sacrificed in the second and eighth months to Confucius, the Gods of Soil and Grain, the spirits of wind, clouds, thunder, rain, mountains, and streams, and the City God. In the third month he sacrificed to famous local officials, various local gentry, loyal righteous men, filial and brotherly men and chaste women: all categories of people recommended to the emperor to be included in the local sacrificial roster. Finally, the magistrate sacrificed to propitiate ghosts three times a year (Ch'u, 1962: 164-165).

The imperium backed its ritual prescriptions with money (Hsiao, 1960: 223) and with sanctions for remiss magistrates. They were subject to fines or impeachment for failure to visit temples or maintain the ritual schedule (Ch'u, 1962: 165).

According to Huang Luhong, the correct performance of one's duties is the foundation from which the connection between the visible and invisible worlds springs. Sacrifice (*si*) is the best means the magistrate has at his disposal for keeping up his end of the partnership.

Spirits are efficacious because of their connection with people. Sacrifice, through integrity (*cheng*)<sup>6</sup> leads to knowledge (*ge*). The invisible is made apparent [by means of effort in] the manifest world. Therefore, those who govern people of cities must pay their respects to the spirits, and the spirits will respond. They must be reverent in their sacrifice and then it will be accepted. They must exert themselves in doing their duties in this world so there will be forged a connection (*tong*) with the invisible world [Huang, 1879: 24.10b].

Huang's prescription is threefold: The magistrate should take note of the people's belief and desire to communicate with the gods. He must act with integrity, an inner motivation that guarantees correct action in the manifest world. Then the "invisible is made apparent" (*xian*). Compacted in the last statement is an enormously complex presupposition about the nature of the cosmos and the possibility of knowing it.

Li was a set of principles for ordering and connecting that was

both cosmically dictated and humanly maintained. A sage, whether creating writings, the trigrams of the *Yijing*, or music, discovered an already present order in the cosmos and devised a pattern for representing it (Cheng, 1982: 1-22; DeWoskin, 1982: 155-177). It is not quite correct to say that in the traditional Chinese cosmology man “occupied” the center of the world. Rather, he “centered” it through his rituals. He facilitated the signification of cosmic order by giving it voice through music, pattern through writing, and social order through *li*. Like a membrane or tympanum he mediated through total participation, an *immediate* boundary.

Within this cosmos of transforming resonance, it remained vital for humanity not so much to “join” nature, for this implies a separation, as constantly to illustrate/show/display that there was not, and had never been, a gap (Zito, 1984: 50). Sacrifice in the visible *ming* world allows the invisible to “be made evident” (Zito, 1984: 75).<sup>7</sup>

There is a matter-of-fact tone to the essay; any magistrate can effect this access most necessary to the people under his care. Yet the burden is great and produces anxiety.

Although, being apprehensive, one is cautious in approach, the sufferings of the villages must be alleviated and happiness diligently sought. Having such a plan, one fearfully understands his humbleness because his power as an exemplar (*de*) may be so weak as to be insufficient to move Heaven [Huang 1879· 24.11a].

The good magistrate takes comfort, however, in the analogy that the powers of spirits are very like the power of the emperor to delegate people like himself to “emanate concern to the people below” (24.11a). It is up to him to turn his own privileged position as servant of the emperor to the community’s benefit and sacrifice on their behalf.

Huang’s essay is a testimonial to the pivotal position occupied by the district magistrate as the one upon whom the mediation of parallel worlds depends.<sup>8</sup> It introduces proper sacrifice by an imperial representative as the method of choice, but takes clear

account of the people's role in dealing with spirits. In mundane terms, it voices anxiety over responsibilities that include, but extend beyond, the maintenance of social order to the control of natural disorder as well.

#### IMPERIAL STELAE

The last set of texts to be analyzed is a pair of imperial stele inscriptions commemorating the renovation of the City God Temple of Beijing. The inscription by the Yongzheng emperor, dated 1726, elaborates on sacrifice as principle of transformation among disparate realms and gives the clearest image of the cosmos as it was imagined through Ru-ist or Neo-Confucian philosophy (Shuntian fuzhi, 1886: 6.19b-20a).<sup>9</sup>

For the harmony of yin and yang, for correct wind and seasonal rain, for a dense population, for a proliferation and luxuriance of growing things, for a glowing, a flowing, a growing, a showing and for help toward a lush begetting, there is only the protection of the spirits.

The language of this passage, with its preponderance of characters using radicals for "wood," "grain," "water," and "grass," places us immediately in the world of the "natural," or, as it would be put in Chinese, *ziran* or "self-so-ness" (see Note 6). The cosmic process upon which Huang Lihong's essay grounded itself is directly addressed. Here its metaphor is plant growth. Even the social order is analogized to the processes of "self-so-ness" as the request for "dense population" equates people with stalks of grain (*renmin zhouji*). The text nowhere grants "the people" initiative.

"The protection of the spirits" leads to the "harmony of yin and yang." Thus the main purpose of the cult of the City God (or any connection with spirits) is abstracted and presented as mediation between two separate categories that, while distinct, are also mutually necessary. Other bipolarities further illustrate the imagining of fundamental cosmic process.<sup>10</sup> Sacrifice gives simultaneous "knowledge of rising and falling, the high and the

low,” metaphors for spirits and people. In other words, sacrifice provides a principle for transcending difference, and it does so by accomplishing a similar unification for the sacrificer: “Let those temple officials who have duties in the courtyard read this stele that they should all know how to fix integrity [*cheng*] within and show respect without” (6.20a).

The interior motivation of integrity (see Huang’s essay) is here transformed and displayed as an exterior set of signs. The text explicitly details the appropriate signs of sacrifice, and treats sacrificial procedure as a metaphor for order itself:

An abundance extends, happiness is great. For a long span our well-being has been safe. Our wine is sweet and our victim whole. Our *feng* vessels are clean and all is prepared.

In Yongzheng’s inscription so much energy is spent repressing human agency, subordinating it to larger processes, that we must turn to deeper structures of signification to find it. The emperor enjoined officials to “read this stele that they should know.” When they looked, what did they see?

Stone inscriptions tended toward formality and terseness of language. Not only did the medium encourage brevity, stone also signalled a bid for eternal visibility; stelae were meant to last. Paradoxically, however, in projecting an endless future the texts usually used sparse classical construction, dense with references to the classics, and thus created a link to the past through grammar and allusion. By claiming all “time,” a stele did not so much declare itself eternal as situate itself in a present that intervened in cosmic continuity, that enacted the presence of eternity within time so as to make visible the connection between the two.

Besides its employment of the terse style imitative and emblematic of the classics, there is another formal feature of the stele that is telling. Luckily, the gazetteer in which the inscription appears preserves the original collocation of characters. According to this system, characters referring to the ancestors and Heaven are elevated three spaces, those referring to the reigning sovereign are raised two, and those referring to palaces, the court, and

attributes of the emperor (including his acts of speaking, and the like) are raised one space (Mayer, 1898: 129-137). In effect, the cosmic triad of heaven, man, and earth is displayed iconically.

In this text, the characters *tian* (heaven) and *shen* (spirits) rise to the top of the page. But since the text is written in the first person, the imperial *zhen* is not elevated at all, but remains down in the body of the text, beside “the people.” Thus the stele displays iconically what the emperor conveys in the message: “I now wish, together with the people, to rely happily upon this [sacrifice].”

By speaking directly the emperor pervades the entire text, but doing so means that there will be no iconic reference to himself as the point of mediation between heaven and earth, as is usually the case. Can this form serve another purpose?

Rounding out a picture of the cosmos as *ziran*, “self-so,” is the orthodox king who rules by nonrule, an absence at its center. Indeed, the other direct reference to the imperial presence is made in a metaphor of absence: Especially important spirits are “within the hub of the emperor’s chariot.”

So when an official “read” the stele that is what he “saw.” But the word used here for “read” is *du*, also meaning to chant aloud. Hence, the absent emperor is very much present on the tongues of his officials, who speak in his voice when they “read the stele” that “they might know.”

Another inscription, by the Qianlong emperor and dated 1763, likewise commemorates a renovation of the City God Temple. It evinces no interest in the metaphysics of the “self-so” outlined above, or with the psychological niceties that sacrifice entails (Shuntian fuzhi, 1886: 6.20b-21a). Such matters are so sublimated that their traces can only be discerned in the choice of certain metaphors. For instance:

We have ordered officials of the Board of Works to mend the walls and dredge the moats in order to raise to brimming the protection and safety of the inhabitants; to penetrate to the depths with a diffusion of moist beneficence [6.21a]

juxtaposes a set of terms for the “high” on one hand and the “low” on the other. They are brought into simultaneous play by the

emperor's order, another example of mediation of opposites.

This text differs from the previous one in almost every way. Instead of allusions to the classics, it begins with the history of the cult of the City God. Popular ceremonies are discussed seriously and the throne directly contests some practices, especially when it comes to the question of entitling City Gods and anthropomorphizing the cult, making it clear that all such initiatives should rest with the emperor.

In contrast to the Yongzheng emperor's "coy theology," to borrow Kenneth Burke's (1966: 46) phrase for the indirection of a metaphysics that refuses to name its first principle, the universe of the Qianlong emperor does not proceed automatically to encompass the social order. It gets a lot of help from the imperial self. As the emperor candidly states,

I have availed myself [the pronoun *zhen*] of the Grand Bestowal from the Blue Above, which extends to the entirety of the social and natural cosmos and beyond the wilds [Shuntian fuzhi, 1886: 6.21a].

The imperial mandate extends throughout the cosmos through "military control," and cities among nomads are the mark of its civilizing influence. The emperor twice alludes to the close fit between city gods and his own administrative divisions, noting with satisfaction that city gods "are often entitled and given imperial rank according to the differential system of relations between directors and subordinates." He approves of the statues of provincial city gods that adorn the temple in Beijing although they have no "canonical reality." "We do not think it is a mistake. Since it resembles the coming of district magistrates, departmental, prefectural officials and city governors to the capital for audience, we left it standing."

As the very different styles of the two imperial inscriptions show, the question of the representation of power (and the power of representation) remained an open one. In contrast to the Yongzheng inscription, the Qianlong emperor attacks directly the approximation of spiritual reality to an earthly one as a matter for



vigorous human intervention. The Yongzheng emperor does not omit the human element from his picture of cosmic order, but it is subordinated to cosmic "self-so-ness." A comparison of the four texts will expand upon this difference of emphasis.

*MEDIATION AND HUMAN AGENCY*

All four texts highlight the importance of the City God as mediator. In the legend, the City God reports the arrival of the imperial son to the district magistrate, leading to the prince's reunion with his father and to his reincorporation into the social hierarchy. Through the god, the imperial son and the magistrate are *identified* and recognize one another. But through him the magistrate also returns to the capital while the son returns to the father and the *differences* between emperor and official and among generations are simultaneously reaffirmed and shown to be homologous. The City God mediates along two axes: identification and separation.

In the handbook by Huang, the visible and invisible realms are mediated by the partnership of the City God and magistrate. Through their identification visible "people" and invisible "spirits" "communicate." In another idiom, the metaphorical identification of city gods and magistrates through similar titles, clothing, and residences links their respective contiguous realms.

Normally, "people" and "spirits" remained separate. The welfare of the community, however, depended upon their *tong* (interpretation, connection, communication).<sup>11</sup> Through the rituals of the City God a number of connected pairs of categories were mediated:

visible	———	invisible
people	———	spirits
sons	———	ancestors
low	———	high
earth	———	heaven

Thus in late imperial China, the performance of rituals of the sort we are examining promised control of cosmic process itself

through the intervention of human agency. Whether that process was imagined abstractly as yinyang interaction, or in more homely fashion as intergenerational connection through ancestor worship, it both contained and depended upon human artifice. Human intervention in the cosmic process of “self-so,” whereby all things develop correctly to their fullest potential, was enabled by *li*. *Li* provided the moments for sets of social and cosmological categories that were usually distinct (see above list) to connect. It did so by identifying them in terms of higher-level principles that provided their transcendental ground. (Turner, 1977, analyzes ritual in terms of this logic of hierarchy. If this “higher level” or “transcendental ground,” which is the whole itself, must be named, we can call it *dao* as the Chinese did.<sup>12</sup>) The four texts converge upon this position from different angles, varying in their conceptions of the role of human agency within cosmic process.

What is of interest here is how these perspectives mesh to invest the City God with meaning(s). Through the cult, the shifting and fluid boundaries of human and nonhuman were delimited. The person transmuted into “nature,” as historical, virtuous magistrates, became “Gods of Wall and Moats,” like protective natural forces in the environment; natural formations of mountains and streams acquired personae. The naming and disposing of the power (*ling*, “numinousness”) thought to inhere in this transforming landscape was an effort to crystalize and fix that power. But it was a constantly negotiated and living struggle with initiative sometimes resting with the community, which often proposed a certain local worthy for the position of City God and in turn contested by the throne, which periodically discouraged this personalizing trend (Taylor, 1977).

The two imperial inscriptions inscribe the edges of the field of possibility for ritual intervention. The Yongzheng stele ties human ritual so closely to cosmic “self-so-ness” that the emperor, the most necessary human component of correct cosmic order, himself “disappears.” He is visible only in the actions of his officials, actions analogized through the images of sacrifice to a preordained cosmic order. It would seem to the imperial advantage to embed the cult in a constructed “natural” cosmic process,

removing it beyond ordinary human reach. The Qianlong emperor, however, is aggressively interventionist in his inscription. He would have approved the feisty initiative of the Xinzhu City God, and claimed credit for the efforts of his magistrate-counterpart.

The legend and handbook likewise take a more "socially" accessible view of the City God. Although the legend depicts the environment and people's relationship to it, we are hardly distracted from the main theme of social disorder (being "lost" to hierarchy) and order (being reincorporated into it). In the handbook for magistrates, Huang is eloquent about the effects upon extrahuman factors (such as natural disaster) of human-ritual intervention, but finally writes more about sacrifice depending upon inner human motivation than upon its resonance with greater cosmic processes.

Much social anthropological effort has gone into elaborating that "the most important point to be made about Chinese religion is that it mirrors the social landscape of its adherents" (Wolf, 1974: 130). In fact, cults such as the one examined here are more a medium through which adherents created a social landscape. Infusing that landscape was an idea of power or *ling*. The classificatory distinctions brought to bear upon the City God have little to do with honoring empirically identifiable boundaries between human and nonhuman. Instead, they are modes of extending the reach of human agency, of garnering *ling*, the power inherent in the cosmic landscape *for human purposes*. The availability and control of such power depended upon "centering" the cosmos, that is, mediating its contradictions. That capability lay in ritual performance. Classification itself (in this case, the control over who or what *is* a city god) in such a world is the first of a series of actions that constructed *li* and within *li* the power of correct ritual performance.

#### THE RITUALS OF THE CITY GOD

I will examine two prescriptions for *jisi* (sacrifice) by a member of the imperium along with descriptions of popular celebrations

in which the entire community participated and that contained many elements not listed in the imperial ritual handbook. Because the texts just examined varied most widely in notions of human agency, the analysis of ritual performance will concentrate upon the roles of participants.

#### THE PRESCRIBED SACRIFICES

The sacrifices to be performed to the City God by members of the imperium are found in the "Auspicious Rites" section of the *Da Qing tongli* (1883). "Auspicious Rites" are one category in five and include all three types of *jisi*: the Grand, Middling, and Miscellaneous. Sacrifices to heaven and earth, the imperial ancestors, and the cult of Confucius share the same ceremonial format as those to lesser deities (see Zito, 1984).

The sacrifices to the City God share this ceremonial order. Their differences illustrate the throne's dual approach to the classification of the cult. The one performed on the emperor's birthday took place in a temple, before an image of the god. The sacrifice that includes the City God with spirits of cloud, wind, rain, and thunder was performed outside, on an open altar.

During the period of preparation, the careful research by members of the Ministry of Rites into proper ritual procedure materialized as the appropriate objects for sacrifice were assembled. A number of things happened to people, vessels, and victims. In the stables, oxen, sheep, and pigs were inspected by appropriate ritualists. They were killed "offstage" and their hair and blood removed (*Da Qing tongli*, 1883: "Sacrifice to heaven," ch. 1.1b-3b). Intricately decorated porcelain replicas of Shang and Zhou bronze ritual vessels were filled with a variety of foods, some cooked, some uncooked. These too were examined before the sacrifice.<sup>13</sup> The fasting participants, who had been literally emptying their stomachs and figuratively emptying their heart/minds, were also inspected.<sup>14</sup> These procedures established an homology between victims, participants, and vessels. Not only are all three subjected to the same ordering gaze, but they are divided into "inner" and "outer" portions and interrelated by a series of inversions. These are as follows:

	Inner ( <i>nei</i> )	Outer ( <i>wai</i> )
vessels are _____	filled _____	decorated _____
victims are _____	drained _____	shaved _____
participants are _____	void of heart _____	costumed _____

Vessels are “overfull” of food and patterns, while victims are conspicuously empty and blank. The people performing sacrifice, however, combine the traits of vessels and victims. The “Ritual Vessel” chapter of the *Classic of Rites* provided the theory for this practice:

The Ritual Vessel and thus, Grand Preparation (*Dabei*). The Grand Preparation is the heightening of exemplary power. *Commentary*: “Ritual Vessel” refers to li turning people into vessels [also meaning “instruments,” “the means whereby”].

A vessel is a boundary between its inside and outside. As such, it is indeed the perfect metaphor for *zhong*, “to center,” to mediate between two opposites. We have seen that the intervention promised by sacrifice was such mediation. If a man was a perfect vessel, then what he bore inside himself, his reverence (*jing*) and integrity (*cheng*), were the perfect gifts. In these rites, power was actualized in the giving rather than receiving.

The *Record of Rites* states that the disposition of sacrificial left overs (eating) was least important (“Jitong” chapter, 2b). The offerings are “left over” after the spirits have arrived and “inspired” their essence. Human participants ate the material leavings and the distinction between men and spirits was preserved. Identification lay in the acts of “oblation.” Hence, the celebrant, the one who makes the offerings, becomes extremely important in an analysis of sacrifice.<sup>15</sup> Many of the formal aspects of a rite depended upon who performed in this role. This becomes especially clear when we examine the second joint sacrifice to nature deities that included the City God.

That sacrifice was identical to the fourth Grand Sacrifice, on the Altars of Soil and Grain (*Sheji*), when it was performed in the provinces (Da Qing tongli, 1883: chap. 13.13b-14b). The rite was performed all over the empire in mid-spring and mid-fall: On the

same day the emperor sacrificed on the imperial altar in Beijing, governors were doing so in the provinces, heads of *fu* in their chief cities, and magistrates in their county seats. The sacrifice of the City God, then, articulated with imperial rituals in such a way as to connect with the central celebrant of that system: the emperor himself. Table 1 is a shorthand comparison of the three phases of the Grand Sacrifice to the Gods of Soil and Grain, and the two City God sacrifices.

Table 1 shows the ceremony to differ over the space of the realm in the activities of the celebrant. When the emperor or his delegate presided they did not offer the three oblations. Instead, salaried and ranked members of the imperium did so (the silk and *jiao* bearers). However, when a local official presided in the provinces, he himself offered the silk and wine cups because he too was salaried staff, unlike the emperor. His identification with the absent emperor remained ambiguous.

These distinctions point to peculiarities in the relationship between sacrificial and mundane authority, between the emperor and his imperium. In everyday administrative matters such as tax collection and adjudication, the district magistrate represented the emperor. He was a metaphorical equivalent to the emperor and like any good metaphor existed in one domain linked through similarity to another (Boon, 1972: 74-76). According to this logic, he should have been exactly equivalent in all aspects of governance, especially crucial ritual aspects.

He was not. In the Sacrifice to Soil and Grain the district magistrate was encompassed by the emperor, a bit player in the rite as a whole taken as physical expression of imperial authority. He was metonymically devalued: brought into the same domain, contiguous with the emperor while being displayed as an irrevocably different, and lesser, aspect of that domain. Built into the ritual was cognizance of the necessity for sharing some, but not all, of the emperor's sacrificial authority. Some things are performed by both the emperor and officials as celebrants: the incensing and offering of wine and meat of prosperity. Thus officials could play two roles, master and servant, in one rite, imitating the ultimate role of the emperor who mastered the

TABLE 1

	SACRIFICES TO GODS OF SOIL & GRAIN (sheji)			SACRIFICES TO CITY GOD (chenghuang)	
	IMPERIAL	SUBSTITUTE	PROVINCIAL	NATURE SPIRITS	BIRTHDAY
CELEBRANT	Emperor	Delegate	Salaried Official	Salaried Official	Delegate
VICTIMS	Ox, sheep, pig	Ox, sheep, pig	Sheep, pig	Sheep, pig	Ox, sheep, pig
INCENSING	Yes, by Emperor	Yes, by delegate	Yes, by salaried official	Yes, by salaried official	Yes, by delegate
MUSIC	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
DANCERS	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
PRINCES & DUKES	Yes	No	No	No	No
OFFERINGS	Not by Emperor	Not by delegate	Yes, by salaried official/celebrant	Yes, by salaried official/celebrant	Not by delegate
WINE & MEAT	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
KETOU	3 times	2 times	2 times	2 times	2 times
DISPOSAL OF OFFERINGS	Interred, viewed by Emperor	Interred, viewed by delegate	Interred, not viewed by salaried official/celebrant	Interred, not viewed	Burnt, viewed by delegate
FACINGS:					
CELEBRANT	North	North	North	North	North
ASSISTANTS	East-west	East-west	East-west	East-west	East-west

empire as servant of heaven. Imperial rituals did not provide a resolution for the paradox of the magistrate, the servant who is also master, but only embodied it as a necessary condition and compromise for imperial governance.<sup>16</sup>

Local rituals were enmeshed in the larger web of imperial li that sought to maintain the realm within the cosmos. In its totality, imperial li was an axis of power created to unite and control all parts of the realm, visible and invisible. The district magistrate was intimately connected to the center, the emperor. In the maintenance of this creative system, the authority to govern was parcelled out by the ritual itself.

*THE POPULAR CELEBRATIONS*

Westerners who lived in China in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries describe City God rituals primarily from the Yangzi River region: Anjing and Hezhou in central Anhui, Shanghai on the central coast, Suzhou in Jiangsu. However, evidence from Guangdong and Fuzhou in the south and Beijing in the north attest to city god temples and processions in most parts of the empire. Earlier celebrations, performed at the height of dynastic power and peace, may have surpassed these in regularity and intensity.<sup>17</sup>

Ayscough (1924) describes the City God Temple in Shanghai as divided into public and private sections, like the yamen's two outer and two inner divisions. In the outer two, the magistrate conducted public business; in the first of the inner chambers he did his private entertaining and correspondence and in the second lived with his family. The Shanghai Temple's main hall was open daily but only on the first and fifteenth (the days the magistrate presented incense in the temple) was there free access to the second court, where the City God sat. Behind this room were the quarters of his wife.

If cities were seats of multiple jurisdiction, they sometimes had more than one city god temple, as did the prefectural and county capital, Anjing (Shryock, 1931: 101). Shaoxingfu in Zhejiang had three (Watt, 1972: 354-355), indicating the efficacy of the City God's power extended beyond City walls. He also travelled in procession into the suburbs. In Fuzhou the god's procession lasted two days, including an overnight stay outside the walls in a private home. Anjing's temple housed two statues: one processed, while the other never left the temple (Shryock, 1931: 89).

The City God figured in community celebrations on at least five occasions: At the New Year people went privately to burn incense before his image and on four occasions he was carried in procession through the streets. These occurred in the third month of Qingming, when the spirits are fed, on the first day of the seventh month when he counted wandering spirits, and on the first day of the tenth month when men burned clothing and cast



food for "Hungry Ghosts" (Day, 1940: 70; Ayscough, 1924: 150-152; Teng, 1935: 261; Gu Lu, 1830: 3.9a). Finally, on the god's birthday, the dates of which varied from place to place, the temple hosted a great festival and procession.

Qin Huitian (1702-1764) graphically describes the community's reliance upon the City God:

Until this day the only place that heads of *fu* and counties go on the first and fifteenth of each month to pay their respects, aside from the Temple of Confucius, is to the City God. If on occasion there is drought and they are reduced in their extremity to kneeling and kow-towing, it will surely be to the City God. If there are festivities and exhibitions for welcoming the spirits, they will surely make their way to the City God. In cases of filing complaints and grievances illness, death, reprimands to be dealt to the official spirits in the underworld, protection to be sought under the law, there is no one who does not rush off to the City God. Look at the elegance of his associates' robes, the plenitude of sacrificial delicacies. All year from summer to winter, in cloud or sun, morning or evening there is a ceaseless babble of incantation [Qin Huitian, 1880: 45.35a].

The most detailed account of community celebration in a Western language is given by Doré, a French missionary, who describes five simultaneous processions in Hezhou, Anhui, with two long lines of "penitents," a procession of demons and ghosts, a parade of children, and finally, the God's cortege. The first group of over 100 silent men dressed in red, the color worn to execution by criminals, moved from gate to gate in the city walls wearing padlocked chains or cangues. Another group of "penitents" wore burning sticks of incense or hooks in their eyes, ears, faces, or arms. A drum called the citizens forth to "contemplate a spectacle of penitence." They walked with their arms folded (Doré, 1916: 884-885).

Five demons led the procession that was a "miniature of the profligacy of hell." Their hair wild, faces painted into frightful masks, they ran about, poking with tridents, followed by a Grand Demon wearing a gold mask. Behind came those with self-

inflicted wounds: hatchets and nails in the head, knives stuck in the chest, a “vase of flowers attached to the breast by iron prongs” (Doré, 1916: 886), threatening spectators with swords and knives. Then came the demons personifying the terrible ends people can come to through greed, drunkenness, and suicide. Among them is the demon whom Doré describes as the “feature attraction of this infernal troupe,” Wu Zang, or Five Viscera. He drags his “entrails” from each orifice, covered in blood so that Doré describes him as a “pig who is going to slaughter.” This rowdy group parades till dark, when they disperse “each to pursue his favorite passion, until the comedy degenerates into an orgy” (Doré, 1916: 887). Trying to herd along the demons are the City God’s chief subordinates, Master White and Master Black. They are the god’s eyes and ears in his district, the former during the day, the latter at night (Doré, 1916: 878; Maspero, 1981: 110).

Next, adolescents and children carried in their parents’ arms marched to deliver petitions to the City God. Sometimes they carried little flags like imperial runners (Doré, 1916: 887).

Finally came the City God himself, his cortege made up of heralds, flags, drummers, insignia, incense bearers, banners, and parasols, the God of the Locality (*tudi*), a vat of red vinegar sprinkled on the road, a mirror, tribunals with the seal of office, and at last the god himself riding in a palanquin (Doré, 1916: 889).

Gu Lu records a similar procession in Wuxian, near Suzhou. He mentions people in bondage to the god, manacled and cangued; handsome little children sitting on people’s shoulders or on horseback (1830: 3.9a). Shryock’s description of processions in Anjing, capital city of Anhui province situated north of the Yangzi, resembles Doré’s:

There were hundreds of ghosts like the wildest nightmare visions, their faces painted and lined with every color under heaven, their robes bright with embroidered silk . . . soldiers with gags in their mouth, lictors bearing staffs of office, secretaries, giants and dwarves passed two by two down the narrow street. . . The crowds jostle and talk, firecrackers and gongs and drums swell and din

and everything is wild and barbaric. Nothing could be further from the quiet and refinement of a Confucian sacrifice [Shryock, 1931. 105, 103].

The whole community, including officials and merchants, united to worship the City God. Members of various "societies" that cared for the images "belonged to the highest families and positions in them were coveted by social climbers" (Hodous, 1929: 149). In Guangzhou on the City God's birthday the prefect, in the name of the throne, presented a new suit of silk for the image. Wealthy families vied for the honor of supplying it. The prefect also produced the god's jade seal, which he had held for the year (Gray, 1878: 118-119).

But the question of participation should not be limited to the actual presence of persons. In the popular processions the people took part not only as spectators but also by becoming, in their ghostly masquerading, the very inhabitants of the unseen realm that the ritual was seeking to involve in everyday, earthly life. The district magistrate, himself closely linked to the City God, participated as his supernatural double. In the popular processions the mediating role of a celebrant of any kind was bypassed. Indeed, the usual celebrant himself (the district magistrate *as City God*) moved among the people, thus collapsing the mediated triad of people/celebrant/spirits that the prescribed sacrifices produced.

The double images in the Anjing temple can thus be explained. While one image stayed in the temple as the magistrate remained in his yamen, the other went out with the people. The City God participated in the ceremony, of which he was the object, as both pilgrim and patron. The paradoxical status of the magistrate as both master of the people and servant of the emperor was physically embodied in a split City God who remained in the temple, ready to receive homage at the same time that he travelled with those who gave it. He was coopted into the local ranks, brought "down" from "above," because he was not a perfect analogy or exact equivalent for the emperor whom he represented. He was also his servant as were the people themselves.

### SACRIFICE AND FILIALITY

In the close connection between sacrifice and filiality we can see important ramifications of the hegemony of *li* in social consciousness. The best method of concretizing *li* in practice was thought to lie in sacrifice. It originated in the worship of ancestors, or the socially particularized past. Sacrifice as filiality transformed the paradox of identity and difference. Here *li* is seen most clearly as hegemonic, as generative of the very grounds of normality, refracted into the narrower ideology of filiality.

The *Record of Rites*, or *Liji*, is one of the oldest sources on sacrifice. The extent to which an ancient classic such as the *Liji* affected life in late imperial China is difficult to gauge.<sup>18</sup> Among the *Three Ritual Classics*, only the *Liji* was not the object of intense philological scrutiny by *kaozheng* scholars, who did not appreciate its “philosophical” bent. It thus maintained its role of stable and unobtrusive resource for ritualists deciding questions of precedent.<sup>19</sup>

Chapters 23-25 deal with “Categories of Sacrifice,” “Meaning of Sacrifice,” and give an “Account of Sacrifice.” In chapter 23 we are told that men<sup>20</sup> sacrifice because they differ from other creatures, being cognizant of their own deaths (*Liji*, 1979: 24.15a). They do not disappear when they die but live on as *gui*, or ghosts. The king and his titled nobility were the only ones to have temples and altars with which to rescue their ancestors by rites. The common people (*shuren*) are left in their ghostly state.

It was only later that access through ancestral worship to the invisible portion of the realm became available to all.<sup>21</sup>

Although sacrifice was created to mark distinctions between groups of people, its effectiveness was achieved through a process of identification. Chapter 24 speaks in the idiom of kinship which, after all, is a set of elaborations and strategies to construct similarity. This discourse was not limited to the relations of living people, but was extended to embrace and coerce the dead from the past. Insofar as sacrifice was the central ceremony of *li* in general, the incorporeal world was incorporated, and the definition of “human” expanded.

The correct sentiments of filiality receive their fullest expression in sacrifice as they are objectified in it. The important oblations, music and dancing, are explained as “external representations” designed to amplify the (internal) purpose of the superior man (Liji, 1979: 25.2a; Legge, 1967: v.1, 241-242).

Chapter 24 describes in detail how a son should feel toward his parents, retaining such a memory of them that “as he gave full play to his love they seemed to live again and to his reverence they seemed to stand before him” (Liji, 1979: 14.18a; Legge, 1967: v. 1, 211). They should be his chief occupation:

The superior man, while his parents are alive reverently nourishes them; and when they are dead he reverently sacrifices to them. His chief thought is how, to the end of life, not to disgrace them.

Even his own body must be returned to them as their legacy:

Of all that heaven and earth produces there is none so great as man. His parents give birth to his person all complete, and to return it to them all complete may be called filial duty [Liji, 1979: 24.23b; Legge, 1967: v 1, 229].

In short, the entire chapter is a description of how a close identification with one’s parents in life should be continued even at great effort after death.

The vocabulary of filiality is extended to describe all social relationships. Disloyalty to rulers, insincerity with friends, cowardice in battle, are all stigmatized as unfiliality (Liji, 1979: 24.23a; Legge, 1967: v. 1, 226). Good government is a matter of the correct treatment of the virtuous, the noble and the old, the aging and the young: the last three analogized from the family (Liji, 1979: 24.19b; Legge, 1967: v. 1, 216). In fact, “one who is filial approximates to be king” (Liji, 1979: 24.20a; Legge, 1967: v. 1, 217). In the political hierarchy as well the familial, one was supposed to identify closely with the person directly superior:

Whatever good was possessed by the Son of Heaven he humbly ascribed the merit of it to Heaven; whatever good was possessed by

a feudal lord he ascribed it to the Son of Heaven; whatever good was possessed by the minister or Great Officer he attributed to the Prince of his state; whatever good was possessed by an officer or common man, he assigned the ground of it to his parents and the preservation of it to his elders [Liji, 1979: 24.25b; Legge, 1967: v. 1, 233].

In the constant upward displacement of individual actors' responsibility, the final word, so to speak, lay in heaven, in the invisible. Here rested the objective existence of filiality, an ultimate repository of authentication. The constant concern with that realm then becomes, in the Chinese case, not just worship or beseeching, but a matter of constituting and maintaining as well. Such was man's place in the cosmos, necessary to the very existence and maintenance of heaven and earth through his rituals. So sacrifice had both to generate the links, the steps toward the invisible realm that was the objectification of filiality, and loop back again, to reappropriate this objectification through sacrifice to ensure the continuance of cosmic life.

It is a moot point whether the invisible realm is better described in native terms as composed of entities that act of their own volition when invested with such responsibility, or in sociological ones such as the "collective representation" of an empire of filial sons. All agree upon the necessity for penetrating the ling or power that was there.

According to the *Liji*, the two key themes in ancestral sacrifice were the placement of the participants, particularly the "personator," and eating and drinking. The personator, or *shu* (which literally means corpse), was a living man who became the ancestor for the ceremony.

According to the rule in sacrifice, a grandson acts as the representative of his grandfather. Though employed to act the part of the personator, yet he was the son of the sacrificer. When his father, with his face to the north served him, he made clear how it is the way of a son to serve his father [Liji, 1979: 25.3b; Legge 1967: v.1, 246].

The paradoxical position of the magistrate who was both master and servant is recast in the terms of kinship in sacrifice: How can a man be, at the same time, both father and son? To put it another way, how can that which is different and separate (the self) yet constitute the only link of continuity between two others (the son and grandfather)?

The system of kin similarity envisioned here is not just a simple single stack of separate persons (in the words of Joyce "Every man his own father"), but a matter of interlocking sets; every man his own grandfather, so to speak. Such identity of alternate generations was expressed in the *zhao mu* order of name tablets in the ancestral temple. Starting the count from a single ancestor, second generation tablets were placed to the left (*zhao*), the third to the right (*mu*), the fourth to the left, and so on.<sup>22</sup>

The eating and drinking described in the *Liji* further mark and create this differentiation, as they do in the later Imperial sacrifices. "Leftovers" of the sacrifice were consumed in sequence: After the personator-as-ancestor had eaten and departed, groups ate according to their rank. As the eating proceeded through the ranks, there were more people consuming less (*Liji*, 1979: 25.2b; Legge, 1967: v. 1, 242-243). Ancestral sacrifice literally enacted traditional Chinese hierarchy. The whole, symbolized by a single ancestor eating all the food, preceded and contained an infinitely divisible number of parts.

It is a Chinese ritualist cliché that "li creates distinctions while music creates harmony." It is a cliché of another sort that one must have difference in order to have anything to unite. Sacrifice also marked distinctions in the nonhuman world:

They sacrificed to the sun on the altar, and to the moon in the hollow to mark the brightness of one and the gloom of the other and to show the difference of the upper and lower. The sun comes forth from the east, the moon appears in the west when the one ends the other begins in regularity: thus producing the harmony of all under the sky [*Liji*, 1979: 24.20b; Legge, 1967: v.1, 219].

We have seen how difference is created in sacrifice through the generational triad of grandfather/father/son. It should be clear to the reader by now that the lurking homology is:

grandfather	spirits	heaven	upper
father	sacrificer	man	center
son	participants	earth	lower

Yet identification must occur simultaneously with differentiation if sacrifice is to fulfill its role as central and best expression of filiality, for close identification with ancestors constituted *xiao*.

With great economy, the ritual provides for this close father/son identification by an inversion of son/personator/subject and father/sacrificer/ruler:

The ruler went to meet the victim, but not to meet the personator to avoid transgressing certain taboos. While the personator was outside the gate of the temple, he was regarded only as a subject; inside the temple he had the full character of a ruler. While the ruler was outside the temple gate he was the ruler; when he entered the gate, he had the full character of a subject or son [Liji, 1979: 25.3b; Legge, 1967 v.1, 245-246].

The ruler/sacrificer is here associated with the victim, as pointed out in the analysis above. Is this role reversal a temporary renunciation of the ruler/sacrificer's authority? It is tempting to see it as an example of the ritual inversion of authority that Turner (1969: 166-203) so aptly describes as a social and psychological necessity. Yet can we be sure that ritual is in all cases a tension-relieving reversal of everyday life? Can it not be rather that ritual tells us how the reality of power is possible at all? That underlying the ethos of *xiao* (the superiority of fathers) lies the superiority of sons?

Although fathers were structural necessities both biologically and as passive receivers of filial actions, it was in the role of son/sacrificer that (ritual) power resided. In his role as son of the father, a man was entitled to embody the grandfather/spirits. It was by becoming, in turn, the son of his own son that the father/sacrificer could "penetrate" (*tong*) the invisible through sacrifice. In sacrifice sons were grandfathers and fathers were sons, in other words, potential ancestors. Such an identification with the invisible world of ancestral spirits shot one "forward into



the past." Like a witnessing stele, a son did not so much mean eternity as enact its presence within time, continuity within constant change. In the end everyone had to become a son, because only as a son did one have access to the possibility of filial action, which included within itself the crucial act of sacrificial mediation.

Filiality was powerful because it was positive, active in its bestowal of authority upon fathers, and also because it had the potential for creating identification. A son was the perfect embodiment of social and physical continuity. It was to sons that authority passed while remaining in the same place: with the ancestors in the invisible portion of the realm. Sons (magistrates, subjects) simultaneously validated both this authority and their holding of it by being its creators and nourishers in sacrifice.

As an early Ming poem cut in a stele before the City God Temple of Anjing says:

Gods are necessary for the people. They are mighty and just, helping the virtuous. When the rebels neared Hsu the natives fought with them, winning many battles. The men of Hsu prayed not for themselves but for their fathers, the emperor and their elders. Therefore the god saved them [Shryock, 1931. 109].

## CONCLUSION

Discursive practices operated to neutralize the potential for conflict of interpretations of these varied texts.

First, the four texts can be reexamined as examples of genres of representation. The imperial stelae used the vocabularies of ritualist metaphysics and history, while the magistrate's handbook confined itself to the language of pragmatic concern with everyday administration. The legend was a narrative that purported neither to transcend nor to coerce the everyday, but rather to account for its form in the present. Although the texts differ in their representation of human agency, as generic forms they complement one another. This complementarity is double edged and reveals the dialectical possibilities inherent in a theory of

hegemony as continuously constructed by members of a society

On the one hand, by agreeing to disagree, texts clearly delimit and honor boundaries, keeping everyone in their places. In other words, *real* differences of emphasis on the crucial question of the form that ritual intervention could take were transformed through formal vocabularies into a diversity of genres that complement and reinforce one another discursively. On the other hand, a single, totalizing control of the cosmos so imagined was never imposed by those who ruled. The most complete picture of the cult of the City God as social practice comes from the popular legend, not the imperial stelae. Its inclusion of sonship identifies the most powerful and authoritative solution to the contradictions outlined in this article. A unity among heaven, earth, and man was maintained by the very act of sacrifice, and through it, power was held by the person occupying the “centering” position of son/celebrant.

Second, the fact that each text within its genre proceeded to make its points unselfconsciously through description rather than polemic likewise controls potential conflicting interpretation. A descriptive stance elided the double existence of *li* as culturally constructed *basis* for power *and thus* object of desire. Those who speak in/ with the voice of *li* have hidden their authority because this desire, which betrays their historicity, must be masked. The most obvious example was the Yongzheng stele that buried the imperial voice within cosmic self-so-ness. But just as powerfully hidden is the voice of the local community, which intruded into the magistrate’s dream as the City God to initiate the reestablishment of correct sonship, so necessary to authority at all.

To capture *li* was to collapse its doubleness as *basis for power* (culturally constructed as eternally available) and *object of desire* (locus of the motive for movement, with its tell-tale trace that the capturer, the constructor was not always there). To capture this doubleness was to cover over the desire and its quest.

Filiality has traditionally held great explanatory power when applied to any relation of superior/inferior. I have tried to show that this is so because its main ritual, sacrifice, created a “center” that separated higher (*shang*) from lower (*xia*) while allowing

close identification of that center with the superior or higher position. By the late traditional period (roughly Ming onward), this particular ritual was generally applied as a means of positioning the self vis-à-vis a cosmic whole. Sacrifice as an organized activity gave concrete existence to filiality within the larger construction of the cosmos as horizon of human agency. If the imperium generated its most complete form in Grand Sacrifice, it must be remembered that the hegemonic power of li lay in its *generalizability* to all men who were, after all, every one born a son.

In the homologies between sons and magistrates, filial sacrifice and magisterial participation in popular ritual, the oft-assumed parallel between the Chinese family and state was socially enacted and culturally constituted.<sup>23</sup> The “centering” of a world of demons, gods, and humans through the person of a magistrate who both governed and submitted to governance simultaneously controlled the inferior, honored the superior, and gave paradoxical place to the son/magistrate/human, whose enactment of li created the present out of the past.

## NOTES

1. The public worship of the City God began in the sixth (Johnson, 1985: 391) or seventh (Teng, 1935: 256-257) century. By the eighteenth century renovation of temples had become very popular. The same word used in the term “renovating a temple” (*xiu miao*) was also used in the term “editing a text” (*xiu wen*), another popular activity by the eighteenth century. The symbolic significance of the two activities may have been similar (see Zito, 1984: 54).

I have examined gazetteers from Hebei in the north, the Jiangxi-Yangzi region, and Guangzhou, from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The purpose here, however, is not interregional comparison, but rather, an analysis of features that connected the cult to an underlying model that may have conditioned the meaning of the City God cult wherever it appeared. This model may provide a basis for comparison of time and of place. For a full list of works consulted, see my dissertation (Zito, forthcoming).

2. Foucault’s later work is concerned with problems of hegemony. The following passage discusses the hegemonic in terms uncannily like a description of traditional Chinese society:

Between each point of a social body, between a man and a woman, in a family, between a teacher and pupil, between the one who knows and the one who doesn't, there pass relations of power which are not the pure and simple projection of the great sovereign power over individuals; rather they are the mobile and concrete ground upon which that power comes to be anchored, *they are the conditions of possibility for its function* [from an interview with Lucette Finas in 1977, in Morris and Patton, 1979: 70; italics mine].

3. Mao Qiling's (1623-1716) extensive work on *ji* as ancestral sacrifice examines practices from the imperial level to that of common people, stating that "the domain and the family are governed by one principle" (Mao Qiling, 1785: 1.9a).

4. My approach follows Volosinov in specifying social consciousness as the point of departure for identifying "community." He states "Consciousness takes shape and being in the material of signs created by an organized group in the process of its social organization" (Volosinov, 1973: 2).

See also Williams, who writes " 'Thinking' and 'imagining' are from the beginning social processes and they become accessible only in unarguably physical and material ways: in voices, in arranged pigments on canvas or plaster, in worked marble or stone" (Williams, 1977: 62).

5. From a collection of Taiwanese folktales edited by Jiang Xiaomei, 1955.

6. I follow A. C. Graham in translating *cheng* as "integrity" rather than "sincerity." His reasoning is both philological—the right side of the character is the word for "complete," or "perfect"—and philosophical—*cheng* is defined as *zicheng*, "self-completion." There are obvious resonances with *ziran* or "self-so-ness" in such a definition (Graham, 1958: 67). In *Ru*-ist (Neo-confucian) philosophy, *zicheng* and *ziran* were intimately connected; "integrity" thus means integrating with a larger whole by completing the self.

7. There are problems with translating *jisì* as "sacrifice." The character *ji*, two hands above a graph, the usages of which cluster around ideas of showing, manifesting, and displaying. There is a difference in emphasis between the Chinese case and the model of sacrifice outlined by Hubert and Mauss: "This procedure consists in establishing a means of communication between the sacred and profane worlds through the mediation of a victim" (Hubert and Mauss, 1964: 97).

In Vedic sacrifice fundamentally disparate realms are occasionally connected, while Chinese imperial rituals manifest or show a link thought to be always there.

8. A district magistrate was, in some sense, a "one man government" combining the duties of tax collector, administrator of justice, and educator (Ch'u, 1962: 195). His position made him both the "highest official in close contact with the lives of the people and the only local official whose power was of any immediate concern to them" (Watt, 1972: 11).

9. The shifting terminology of cosmological description is described in Henderson (1984). Here we are interested in the post-Song *Ru*-ist, or Neo-confucian synthesis.

10. One may define "the *yinyang* principle as the organization of bi-polarity such that one term contains the other as a necessary part of itself. The logic of encompassed asymmetries organizes other topographical metaphors into related pairs that mark spaces and objects" (Zito, 1984: 70-71).

11. The Yongzheng stele also outlines the process of *tong*:

It is only when the spirits have inspired (*xin* in all senses: to inhale, to infuse with life and animate) the offerings that we “know” (*ge*). The way to feeling this knowing lies only in integrity. When there is integrity then there is penetration/communication (*tong*). This penetration leads to knowledge of rising and falling, the high and low [Shuntian fuzhi, 1886: chap. 6.20a].

12. Put more abstractly:

The mediation of the relationship between categories comprising a given level of the structure of a situation . . . entails both dynamic interdependence and structural distinctness. The need for both contact (or mediation) and separation (or insulation) are thus inherent and correlated aspects of the hierarchical relationship between any system of relations and the higher level principles comprising its transcendental ground [T. Turner, 1977: 65].

13. For instance, an edict from 1806 (JQ 11) discusses which officials will go to inspect certain vessels where they are isolated, filled, in the “Spirit Stores” (*shenku*—Da Qing huidian shilu, 1899: 416.7b).

14. An edict from 1807 specifies that inspection should not be done just once, early in the morning, so that after the roll is taken people can leave. Instead, inspectors from the Ministry of Rites came at night and midday (Da Qing huidian shilu, 1899: 415.10a).

15. Mao Qiling devoted a long chapter in his work on ancestral sacrifice to detailed analysis of the relationship between ceremonial form and celebrant (Mao Qiling, 1785: 3).

16. Frederick Wakeman’s perceptive summary of the problem follows:

Local social organization therefore embodied contrary principles: integration into the imperial system and autonomy from it. The dynamic oscillation between these poles created the unity of Chinese society, not by eliminating the contradictions but by balancing them in such a way as to favor overall order [Wakeman, 1975: 4].

17. I have not taken up the issue of Daoist and Buddhist influence on the cult for two reasons: One, because I agree with Maspero (1981: 77-78) and Freedman, (1974) that, certainly by the Qing period, there was only one “religion,” or in our terms, a coherent (though infinitely variable in its details) map of the visible and invisible worlds of humanity and spirits shared by Chinese people of different stations of life. Second, emphasis upon such divisions becomes a red herring. Feuchtwang’s excellent article (1977) contrasts Daoist ritual performed in the City God Temple with Confucian sacrifices in the Wen Miao. Here I have tried to show how the imperium and local communities together constructed the set of practices that are the cult of the City God.

18. The *Liji* was compiled in the first century BC. It is reputed to be records of the pupils of the 7 original disciples of Confucius. Along with the *Zhouli* (Rites of Zhou) and the *Yili* (Ceremonial Rites), it forms the *Classic of Ritual* or *Lijing*. It must be kept in mind that the *Liji* is a reconstruction: During the Han, editors applied much energy to regaining their past. The preface to any subsequent ritual text recounts (usually in cryptic shorthand) the disaster of the book burning under the First Emperor Qin (221-207 BC) and adumbrates the high points of the painstaking reassembly of the tradition. As a resource for later ritualists, the text is more interesting as an entitlement of the future than as a description of a possible past.

19. “Agreement on the centrality of *li* (rituals) became the cardinal point that united Han Learning scholars throughout the Ch’ing dynasty. Their emphasis on decorum and

on institutions was a direct reaction against what they considered the Neo-Confucian misuse of *li* (principle) for abstract studies" (Elman, 1980: 221).

20. Throughout this article I have used the masculine "he" because the ramifications of filiality under discussion literally pertain to men, fathers, and sons in their relations with one another. This set of relations existed alongside relations between sons and mothers, and daughters and parents. There is no reason to assume that filiality should not be as conditioned by the gender roles of the participants as other aspects of Chinese life. What is pertinent to political consideration of these issues is that the model contained in the main ritual of male filiality, sacrifice, was a central, public, and very powerful spectacle, indicative and constitutive of male domination. Other enactments of filiality deserve separate consideration.

21. The *Jiali*, or Domestic Rites, attributed to Zhu Xi (1130-1200), was supposedly written to illustrate the immutable principles of *li* within every family (Harlez, 1889).

22. See K. C. Chang's analysis of alternating rule between pairs of Shang lineages. The ruler/sacrificer not only combined the roles of father and son, he also embodied the unity of two lineages (Chang, 1976: 84-85).

23. Emily Martin Ahern is startled when informants describe their relation with gods as most like that between parents and children instead of being comparable to subject and bureaucrat (Ahern, 1981: 99). Their resort to filiality as explanation is a perfect example of the hegemonic process I have tried to describe.

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