Re-Presenting Sacrifice: Cosmology and the Editing of Texts
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Emperorship in traditional China included the fundamental idea that the ruler be the most effective and necessary human component of the cosmos. His actions were supposed, by his own Imperium and by his subjects, to constitute the universe within which all vied for relative status and power.* In this paper I would like to discuss the issue of how cosmological power is delineated and appropriated by considering the Emperor's symbolic means and resources for constituting kingdom and cosmos. For present purposes, these means are first Grand Sacrifice (dasi 大祭) <1> then, li or rites, and finally the editing process by which ritual texts were created.

This paper is a portion of a project on Grand Sacrifice in the eighteenth century. It is a cultural history and I have borrowed methods worked out by

*The original version of this paper was presented as part of a panel on "Cosmology and Power in China" at the 1983 Association for Asian Studies annual meeting.
anthropologists whose preserve "culture" has been for some one hundred years. During this period the nineteenth century view of culture grounded itself in imagined universals. In reality these were the standards of western Europeans. Recently the perspective has developed that "culture" is found only in specific historical circumstances. <2> Anthropological theory seemed compatible with the historian's attempt to explain the meaning of particular institutionalized structures of power, and able to contribute to the dialogue concerning the interplay of culture and society.<3> Particularly exciting was what Milton Singer described as "cultural theory's tilt toward semiotics" or the theory of signs.<4>

An early and clear statement of this theoretical shift can be found in Ward Goodenough's short essay "Cultural Anthropology and Linguistics." Goodenough writes that culture is not a material phenomenon but rather the organization of things, people, behavior and emotions as signs of something else.

It is the forms of things that people have in mind, their models for perceiving, relating, and otherwise interpreting them...To one who knows their culture, these things and events are also signs signifying the cultural forms or models of which they are the material representations.<5>

Yet, Goodenough is careful to point out that it is only through the materiality of signs that the abstraction of process which he calls culture is accessible to the analyst.<6> A sign is a particular material thing (a color, a pot, an animal, the weather) that, besides existing as
part of one reality, acquires meaning, that is, stands for something else, and so refracts or reflects another reality. Grand Sacrifice was a cultural performance, a display of signs in many media (visual, tactile, and auditory) and as such is susceptible to semiotic analysis.

Complicating this task, however, is the incontrovertible fact that the historian faces not a sacrifice itself, but rather texts that are guides to its performance. (Of course, strictly speaking, such is the problem in general for any historian who inevitably encounters not "events" but their record.) In this paper ritual texts themselves are treated as signs and the question of their production, as part of the creation of sacrifice within the discourse of li, is the portion of the problem that I address in detail.

I. GRAND SACRIFICE

In Imperial China, people thought the world included Heaven as well as all that was beneath. The common phrase tianxia, usually translated as "sub-celestial," meant, in popular usage, the world of humankind. Notice, however, that the phrase signifies the perceptible, ming, 明.
or earthly world by shifting our attention and naming the imperceptible Heaven (tian 天 ) and, by extension, the unseen (you 宇 ) world of spirits. The world of people is described using Heaven as its reference point. "Sub-celestial," while a literally correct translation, misses this important shift of attention and, paradoxically, excludes Heaven. The phrase would seem, actually, to indicate that the visible (ming 明 ) and invisible (you 宇 ) were conjoined in a single unity, and hints that Heaven was its most important component.

Not only from the vantage point of the Throne was Heaven thought to be most important. "The Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace" (Taiping tianguo 太平天国 ), a self-stylization of the utopia promised by the Taiping rebels of the mid-nineteenth century, is one example that comes to mind of a parallel claim. The Throne did, however, take the cliche of tianxia seriously and cast itself as the most fitting director of Heavenly reference, arbiter of what that phrase would signify. "Heaven and all that was beneath" was coterminous with the realm of the King. Imperial Grand Sacrifice was created to show most splendidly the unity of the realm as a perceptible reality, to make manifest a link already present.

In the Qing period, Grand Sacrifice was the foremost of three categories: The Grand (Da 大 ), Middling (Zhong 中 ), and the Miscellaneous (Jun 米 ). Their ceremonial procedure began with as many as five days of
preparation, including seclusion of participants, killing of animals, placement of people and things, followed by the ceremony itself. On the day of sacrifice, the Emperor himself offered each of the Three Presentations (Sanxian 三献) sequences of jade, silk, and cups of liquor to the accompaniment of music and dance, interspersed with the recitation of hymns.

On scheduled occasions the most magnificent collection of people and things within the realm was assembled in service of the spirits. The syntagmatic (a term analogized from linguistics meaning "moving through time") sequence or ceremonial procedure of each sacrifice was the same (see Fig. One) and in their entirety they formed a larger syntagmatic set that took place in the course of one year. At the same time, certain paradigmatic elements within each ceremony differed and these substitutions served to identify each sacrifice as particularly appropriate to its season.<8>

Examination of these practices shows that they were felt to be highly efficacious sources of power for the Emperor because of the peculiar logic of Grand Sacrifice: a logic which is latent in the linked phenomena of editing ritual texts and ritual performance. (I call this text/performance). I identify this logic as a kind of deep-seated cultural discourse.<9> Within this discourse the contingent and actual are represented as the necessary and eternal through the proper performance of pre-ordained
acts. In Imperial China the most sustained claim to the ability to perform the necessary ritual acts in the proper manner was made by the Emperor. This was both his prerogative and his obligation. In return for bearing this supreme responsibility, he attained dominion for it was upon his performance that the interconnection of the cosmos depended. While these rituals constituted the cosmic cycle, they also became proof of the Emperor's fitness to rule as the man who could intensify the "real" and show the unity of Heaven and Earth. How was this accomplished?

Li in general, and Grand Sacrifice in particular, were especially suited to the Imperial task by virtue of their performative and discursive properties. They are performative in that they require or presuppose for their proper enactment the very totalities they appear to constitute. On the largest and most abstract level these were the cosmos and its human representative, the Emperor; on the small scale, the knowledge of the precise deployment of persons, objects, and actions in the performance of the rituals.

For all the awesome display of material wealth, the efficacy of the spectacle lay elsewhere than in kingly magnificence. Not all objects were present, after all, indeed, the ensemble of things chosen as appropriate implied the constitution of an order. Moreover, the Imperium did not only perform such rites, it prescribed them as well. The rites discussed were not the gift of
gods past, nor the demanded propitiation of gods present. They were the heart of the artifice called li; the creation of men who knew this action was the apotheosis of their role in a cosmos greater than themselves and yet one dependent upon their synechdochic bit.

Grand Sacrifice began in an exegesis and discussion of past ritual that culminated in descriptive texts. Performance, according to the text, was a re-presentation of the knowledge of past order coupled with the power of the Emperor to command the objects and people needed to demonstrate its reality in the present Qing reign. Texts such as the Complete Rites of the Qing (Da Qing tongli 大清通礼) were one set of representations created specifically for constructing another, the performance itself. Text and performance complemented one another, combining in an ever-changing whole. Only rituals according to the text were correct. Yet the text as synopsis (summarizing visualization) of the study of ritual was valid only when it also truly described and led to ritual performance that "accorded to circumstance." Models of a Chinese polity that was eternally fixed in stagnant equilibrium can be dismissed. The constant effort to sight change, cite precedent, and re-site ritual practice bespeaks a sensibility which was fine-tuned to transformation.
Hence, the act of editing texts can be seen as a centrally meaningful symbolic process. I am using "editing" here in its original sense, from the Latin EDITUS: "e-" out and"dare" to give; to bring forth or give out. In the vocabulary of the editor in the Qing period one term describing this activity of textual preparation occurs again and again. It is xiu 始, which means to embellish, correct, to repair or mend, to study, to cultivate or practice. In its last sense the word was used as "self-cultivation" (zixiu 自修) by devotees of Song learning. As xiudao 禪道 for Taoists and xiuxing 禪性 for Buddhists, it conveyed a similar sense of improvement, refashioning and restoration of the self through a specific practice. Perfect rites in the present reflected a perfect access to ritual past. Indeed, the editing of ritual texts displayed the process through which choices of language became a central element in ordering and representing that past. Through such choices the historical record could be subtly reordered by virtue of its linguistic presence and privilege upon the sacrificial altars of the Imperium.

II. LI AS DISCOURSE

Grand Sacrifice was only one part of the wider discourse upon li. Besides this set of ceremonial
prescriptions, *li* also exists in the textual evidence as object of exegesis (as in the encyclopedia *A Thorough Investigation of the Five Rites* [Wuli tongkao] and other evidential scholarship); as code for conduct (as in the Sacred Edict of the Kangxi Emperor and like promulgations and discussions of filial piety [*xiao*]); and as metaphorical resource, a reservoir of appropriate terminology and a grammar for the discussion of politics.

Both 17th and 18th century ritualists and twentieth century analysts generally agree that *li* is about order, specifically a hierarchically formed, cosmically constructive order in which all things and people have a place of relative importance. A description of *li* in any of its representations yields this information, but especially pertinent are sets of ceremonial prescriptions and exegetical studies. *Li* as code for conduct and reservoir of metaphors for political discussion shows that "somehow" it also provides the framework for and outlines the place of power in society as it is connected within the cosmos. (Not using the term loosely but following Waley's translation of *de*, the power to act as an exemplar.) Combining these two lines of reasoning, modern analysts of *li* often merely describe a synchronic model for the exercise of a certain kind of power. Such "analyses" surrender to *li*’s own myth of eternality and unity as the once-and-always order by objectifying it through description.
I propose instead an analysis of li which explains how the Chinese repeatedly arrived at this proposition in discursive practice; how, in other words, li was produced as meaningful and thus important, and specifically as politically important. (They follow one from the other.) What does it mean to call li a discourse?

Hayden White writes:

...discourse is intended to constitute the ground whereon to decide what shall count as a fact in the matter under consideration and to determine what mode of comprehension is best suited to the understanding of the facts thus constituted. (Emphasis in the original).<16>

Discourse, then, is a constitutive practice whose traces we find in its productions. Each type of textual production listed above contributed to the discourse upon li. Yet, conceived as a totality, li was always of a different logical order than any of its representations or reproductions. As a discourse li is the ground of possibility that enables the existence of such representations as "code for conduct" or "set of ceremonial prescriptions." At the same time, it is created by them in the same way, as Goodenough pointed out, that the materiality of its signs provides the only access to "culture" as a model. This reciprocal relation is like that of a carpet to its woven strands. In such a way the ensemble of practices that composes li as a discourse is also like a cosmological scheme. A cosmology is also cast
as a whole of wholes, the ground upon which all else figures. The power of cosmology and the power of li are both primarily that of taken-for-granted discursive ground.

The problem is then to understand the production of this ground. We approach Grand Sacrifice not to read what it says symbolically but rather to investigate how it does so by virtue of its form as text/performance. To return to carpet weaving: Each of many strands has its being as part of the carpet through relation to the whole, which is, in that sense, prior to the strands. If a strand wears out, it may be replaced, a substitute employed, without jeopardy to the integrity of the whole. In text/performance, the Emperor and his editors were in the best position to see the totality of li. This envisioned totality determined in advance each Imperial act, and these acts in turn constituted the whole by re-presenting it in the prescribed manner. In pre-scribing (=writing in advance) the Emperor shows his own rule to be prescribed.

Thinking of li as a discourse means focusing not only upon sets of logically conceivable transformations that yield cultural meaning. It means focusing also on both institutional and rhetorical strategies for the appropriation of this logic as it is produced. What, in short, did li explain so well? How was this explanation constructed and fashioned to further the purposes of rulership?
III. EDITING CHOICES AND RITUAL LOGIC

Let us examine two texts that expand upon ritual material presented as well in the more general Statutes of the Qing (Da Qing Huidian 大清會典). Both were designed to aid ritual performance. The first text does so through narrative, the second through diagrams. Both, however, pre-figure by their own internal arrangement the logic of the rites they contain.

The first text is the Complete Rites of the Qing (Da Qing tongli), a ritual manual called for by the Qianlong Emperor in the first year of his reign (1736). Editors drew upon the Statutes and past ritual classics to produce, twenty years later, a handbook that narrated ritual procedures. According to the preface ascribed to the Emperor, the book would assist people in putting the Statutes into practice. During its re-editing in the early 1820's for circulation among provincial officials, those editors lamented that such a useful book had been kept in the palace where few could see it. (I here used an 1883 reprint of that 1824 edition.)

The original Imperial preface calls the manual a detailed yet still comprehensible format for the Five Rites it contains: the Auspicious (吉 吉), Felicitous (嘉 嘉), Military (军 军), Guest (賓 宾), and Funerary (凶 凶). The Auspicious Rites section opens with the
four Grand Sacrifices listed in the following order: first the Southern extra-mural Sacrifice to Heaven at the Round Mound, next the Northern extra-mural one to Earth at the Square Pool, followed by the one at the Grand Temple to the Imperial Ancestors, and finally that at the Altar of Soil and Grain. Together, these four ceremonies form a set that moved the Emperor out of his palace in each of the cardinal directions around the capital: south to worship Heaven at the winter solstice, north to sacrifice to Earth at the summer solstice, east to the Ancestral Temple in spring and autumn, and west to the Altar of Soil and Grain, again every spring and fall, in a year-long cycle.

The listing of the sacrifices in the text expresses their relative importance.\(^{17}\) The first two sacrifices to Heaven and Earth, are identical in ceremonial order and contain the full range of sections. The second two, Ancestral Sacrifice and the Sacrifice to Soil and Grain, preserve this order but leave out certain sections such as "Bringing forward the flesh of the victims" or a separate presentation of the jade and silk. (See Fig. One) At the level of ceremonial order, the north-south axis is listed first and more completely while the east-west axis follows like a reprise.

Yet according to the ritual manual, the Sacrifice to Heaven is the "most complete and detailed" instance of sacrifice.\(^{18}\) The editors meant this literally and symbolically. In its textual treatment of the format of
### CEREMONIAL ORDER OF GRAND SACRIFICE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day(s)</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Heaven</th>
<th>Earth</th>
<th>Ancestors</th>
<th>Soil &amp; Grain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-5 days</td>
<td>Viewing victims</td>
<td>Heaven*</td>
<td>Earth*</td>
<td>no</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-3 days</td>
<td>Achieving seclusion</td>
<td>Heaven</td>
<td>Heaven</td>
<td>Earth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-2 days</td>
<td>Inspecting victim</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-1 day</td>
<td>Writing prayerboards</td>
<td>Heaven</td>
<td>Heaven</td>
<td>Earth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Viewing killing of victims</td>
<td>Heaven</td>
<td>Heaven</td>
<td>Earth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Standing spirit thrones, pitching tent, displaying victims' containers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>before dawn</td>
<td>Reviewing prayerboards</td>
<td>Heaven</td>
<td>Earth</td>
<td>Earth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dawn</td>
<td>Phoenix carriage leaves palace</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>night</td>
<td>Arranging and Standing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inspection of filled vessels</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Differentiating places</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FIGURE ONE**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HEAVEN</th>
<th>EARTH</th>
<th>ANCESTORS</th>
<th>SOIL &amp; GRAIN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>That day (before dawn)</td>
<td>Inviting spirits to take places</td>
<td>请祅位</td>
<td>无</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approaching the Order, washing, taking place</td>
<td>起次塞洗就位</td>
<td>无</td>
<td>无</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcoming the spirits</td>
<td>迎神</td>
<td>无</td>
<td>无</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presenting jade and silk</td>
<td>呈玉帛</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bringing forward flesh of victims</td>
<td>进俎</td>
<td>无</td>
<td>无</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial Oblation</td>
<td>初献</td>
<td>无</td>
<td>无</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Oblation</td>
<td>亚献</td>
<td>无</td>
<td>无</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Oblation</td>
<td>终献</td>
<td>无</td>
<td>无</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving felicitous (liquor) &amp; flesh, clearing dishes</td>
<td>受福胙撤嫌</td>
<td>无</td>
<td>无</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sending off the spirits</td>
<td>送神</td>
<td>无</td>
<td>无</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watching burning/interring</td>
<td>望燎望瘗</td>
<td>无</td>
<td>无</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Returning spirits thrones</td>
<td>神位祅祅</td>
<td>无</td>
<td>无</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Returning in Phoenix Carriage</td>
<td>回銮</td>
<td>无</td>
<td>无</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: If nothing is marked in the space, it means the sacrifice has its own text on procedures.

* 'Heaven' and 'Earth': A note in such sections refers the reader back to the appropriate sacrifice for procedural details.

@ "Presenting jade and silk" is combined with the Initial Oblation.
each section, the Sacrifice to Heaven is completely detailed. The second Earth sacrifice, although identical in order, refers the ritualist back to the Sacrifice to Heaven for format details when the action within the section is the same. In other words, although the two are identical in ceremonial order, a distinction is clear at the level of the format. (See Fig. One.)

The reason for this difference becomes clearer when it is recalled that the Sacrifice to Heaven was performed at the winter solstice in order to tip the cosmos into yang at the moment when yin had reached its maximum influence. Listing Heaven first expresses the superiority of yang over yin, but not just by giving it pride of place. The structure of the text shows by its completeness that this "superiority" is a relation of encompassing-encompassed. By this I mean that the distinction itself is encompassed by one of its terms, in this case by yang.

The same asymmetry obtains in the east-west axis. Ancestral Sacrifice, with its referrals to Heaven, is marked as yang. The Sacrifice to Soil and Grain is an yin rite, a subset of Earth's. It is so marked by the vessels used on its altar and its yellow color scheme. Its notes refer backward to the Earth Sacrifice (even though four times out of six we only encounter further referral to the Sacrifice to Heaven) as though to make this subordination clear.
We are left, it seems, with an encompassed assymetry. I have tried to show this in Figure Two. In the logic of yin-yang (perhaps more appropriately yang-yin) north-Earth is inferior to south-Heaven and west-Soil and Grain inferior to east-Ancestral. On the figure, the four sacrifices and their directions are arranged in staggered columns beneath their yin-yang designations along a scale of relative superiority in each pair. (See Fig. Two)

Yet the north-south (Heaven-Earth) axis as a whole takes precedence over the east-west. In the figure I have drawn circles to show how the paired assymetries are placed into a whole-part relationship through two forms of editing: at the level of ceremonial order, north-south (Heaven-Earth) encompasses east-west; at the level of detail of format, the Sacrifice to Heaven encompasses all sacrifices, is indeed their recursive definition.

An analysis of the order of Grand Sacrifice (N, S, E, W) shows a logic of hierarchical encompassment (a ranking of elements in relation to a whole). The text does not tell us this, but rather accomplishes it in and through its structure and narrative sequence. The literal conveys the symbolic and all Grand Sacrifices are displayed as varying subsets of the Southern extra-mural Sacrifice to Heaven.

This order of directions arranged hierarchically in turn provides a model for arrangement within each sacrifice. We can make reasonable inferences about the
CEREMONIAL ORDER

The N/S axis of Heaven and Earth encompasses the E/W axis of Ancestral and Soil and Grain sacrifices.

TEXTUAL TREATMENT

The Sacrifice to Heaven encompasses the other three.

FIGURE TWO
relative importance of people at the sacrifice by drawing upon the logic of axial directionality embodied in the order of the text. For instance, the Emperor-celebrant, nobility and participating members of the Imperium face north or south toward the spirits, while assisting staff (from the Ministry of Rites, the Court of Grand Constancy etc.) face east or west.

To further demonstrate the ritual logic embodied in text we need only turn to the Illustrations for the Statutes of the Qing (Da Qing Huidian tu 大清會典圖 ). This very late (1899), and perforce definitive, edition drew upon past editions of the Statutes and a Qianlong pictorial Dynastic Illustrations of Ritual Objects (Huang Chao ligi tushi 皇朝孔器圖式, 1766). The Illustrations includes clothing, vessels, astronomical equipment, star charts, and earth maps. All information on ritual is arranged in the sequence of the sacrificial canon described above.

Under "Ritual construction" (Lizhi 礼製 ), we find three diagrams, with explanatory texts, for each sacrifice. "Preparing" of the altar, people, and things took up five of the six days recorded in the Complete Rites. From these diagrams we learn how this spatial preparation was organized.

Figure Three is a composite of the three diagrams for the sacrifice at the Altar of Soil and Grain. Moving inward, we are presented with shrinking concentric areas.
ILLUSTRATIONS TO THE REGULATIONS OF THE QING (10.2a-3b)

FIGURE THREE
FIGURE THREE
The accompanying texts make the over-arching organization of contexts even clearer.

Within Figure Three, Diagram One illustrates (and its text describes) the entire altar complex: the height and length of walls, tile colors, names of gates and buildings.

Diagram Two situates itself visually within this context by illustrating a part of Diagram One (altar and wall) but describes in the text the places of tables and stands and then participants. We note that they are all standing directly on the altar. This diagram is called the "Order of Places" (weici 放次).

Diagram Three is an illustration of the places of vessels upon the tables and stands before one of the spirit tablets. It is called the "Standing of Arrangements" (chenshe 堂設).

The diagrams show a sequence of ever-narrowing encompassed spaces. Once again, reminding us of the Sacrifice to Heaven expressed as first and most complete text, the sequence is from the largest, most encompassing to smaller, encompassed.

The temporal narrative of the Complete Rites manual demonstrates that such is indeed the case. It uses the four terms above: place (wei), order (ci), arrangement (chen), and stand (she) in sequences that indicate movement from the encompassing to the encompassed. For example, before dawn on the day of a Grand Sacrifice the Emperor "Approaches the order, washes, then takes his place (jiu ci
And in its descriptions of preparation of the altars, first tables and stands are stood (she) upon the altar, then vessels are arranged (she) upon them. Just as the "Order of Places" (weici) provides the encompassing context for "Standing of Arrangements" (chenshe)—Diagram Two to Diagram Three—so within each of these pairs, one is prior and contextualizing of the other.

Once again this artifact of editing points us inward to an understanding of the rites themselves. The objects of this hierarchical placement were the participants and the vessels used to hold food and drink offerings. In the narrative of the Complete Rites, people seem to be isomorphic with vessels. During the preparation phase, both vessels in their storerooms and participants in Halls of Seclusion were inspected. Attention was paid to their internal states: Food went into vessels but participants fasted and were enjoined to concentrate upon emptying their minds (xin < ). Exterior decoration was prescribed for both. The decoration took the form of patterns upon vessels and elaborate court dress worn by participants. Finally, how can Confucius' high compliment to Zigong be forgotten? He called him a hulian, a jade vessel once used in ancestral sacrifice to hold glutinous, paniced millet.
Yet in the *Illustrations* both people and stands are prescribed for placement directly upon the altar. (See Diagram Two, part of the "Order of Places.") In other words, here participants are marked as isomorphic to the stands and tables that hold vessels. According to the logic of hierarchy embodied in the textual arrangement, participant were featured at both levels: They were both encompassed like vessels and encompassing like stands. As the offerers carried the jade cups of liquor to the spirits, were they at the same time container and thing contained?

These two short analyses give only a fleeting sense of the logic displayed by this text editing. I would like to recapitulate both on a somewhat more abstract level to give a clearer idea of precisely how the text as an artifact of editing partook of the logic of Grand Sacrifice at the same time that it determined it.

On the evidence of the order of the four Grand Sacrifices in the *Complete Rites* we defined the yin-yang principle as the organization of bi-polarity such that one term contains the other as a necessary part of itself. For example, the *yang* sacrifice contains the *yin* sacrifice by virtue of its more complete treatment.

This point cannot be made lightly. The implication is that, at least in this aspect of Imperial Sacrifice, the cliche relation of *yin-yang* as eternally oscillating and evenly supplementary poles is actually weighted and skewed
favor 阳. In ritual practice, in other words, the perfect symmetry of the logic so often described by Chinese metaphysicians and philosophers was constantly overloaded in certain of its terms. Thus an equipoised set of propositions was shifted to highlight, in this instance, the specificity of the power of the sacrificing king within the "orderly" hierarchy of interrelated parts and forces that are all equally essential for the total process.<sup>22</sup>

This logic of encompassed asymmetries organizes other topographical metaphors into related pairs that mark spaces and objects: north/south, east/west, the inside and outside of people or vessels, or the relation of the sovereign above and the people below. This sort of Chinese structuring is generally familiar. But the texts we examined do not stop there. They arrange these pairs of bi-polarities into relations. For instance, we have mentioned the descriptive hints in the period of preparation that point to the isomorphism of participants and vessels. Even more important than this substantive analogy is their relation to each other as mediated by their places within the whole of the rite, i.e. the relation of their relations.

Hence the importance of the levels of encompassment is shown by the arrangement of contexts in the Illustration. By arranging pairs of bi-polarities in relations of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>encompassing</th>
<th>encompassed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Order of Places</td>
<td>Standing of Arrangements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weici</td>
<td>chenshe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the texts creates a possibility of dynamic ambiguity between levels. This ambiguity is resolved through action in performance as when, for instance, participants who carry up an offering seem to be isomorphic to both vessels and stands. In this manner, the most important participant in Sacrifice is shown to be the Emperor himself.

Once again an asymmetry interrupts the posited harmony of eternally oscillating poles. There is a possibility of movement within the rite, toward a statement of specificity: Li is not just about "order in the abstract"; through sacrifice it is constituted as a particular order with the Emperor at its center. The logic is something like this: Kingly sacrifice was necessary to continue the cosmic cycle. Such necessity seems to presuppose a 'King' who existed prior to the rites. Yet within itself the rite produced the "King who is co-equal with Heaven" in Dong Zhongshu's phrase. It produced and placed him as cosmic constructor in a perfect redundancy that insured at one and the same time the renewal of the year and his own control. For the Imperium, the constitution of the cosmos and the King were simultaneous.

The editing choices of the Complete Rites and the Illustrations prefigure by their own configurations the Sacrifice: They partake of its logic at the same time that they fix it. At this level then, of signifying practice,
of the production of form, the relationship posited by the text/performance of Grand Sacrifice between the text and the rest of the action was one of interconnecting levels of structural homology. Hence it provided a model for the activity of contextualizing, a metaphor for wholeness and totality in general. But what does this model look like?

We saw that the combination of the structure and narrative sequence of the two texts provided a model for a hierarchy of encompassment: ranking elements in relation to an ever shifting whole. In so doing the metaphor for wholeness in general is seen, at the level of ritual form itself, to yield a very specifically chosen, carefully edited whole. Certain of its elements are definitely indicated as more important than others.

Lest it should be thought that text/performance as I have outlined it here is a figment of an imagination confined to written evidence and deprived forever of observation of performance, there is something more. The act of writing itself was part of the described ceremonial procedure.

Although the rite did not employ upon the altar the physical texts we have examined (insofar as I know), it did contain a sequence for the production of a text. Two days before the ceremony, hymn boards (zhuban 见板) were written. The day before, they were reviewed, during the ceremony incense was burned before them and they were offered and burned or buried like other offerings. Nothing
else was produced, used, and destroyed within the six days narrated by the Complete Rites. Text, the medium that indicated, described, and contained the rite, was at the same time contained by it.

Grand Sacrifice draws attention to the production of text as a privileged part of the world, creator of the contexts that contain it—much as the Emperor constituted the cosmos that contained him as one of its most essential elements. We are at the heart of the question of discursive production. Within the Imperium Grand Sacrifice as text/performance posited a seamless fit between the Emperor's word and action. The signifying practice of the editing of ritual texts imitated as it constituted the form of its signified. Perhaps no more powerful bid for discursive domination can be made than the melding of signifier and signified. For it is in the gap between them that doubt, hesitation, and difference of interpretation reside.

NOTES

1. My use of the word "sacrifice" is a poor compromise. In ritual matters English lacks the lexical fineness of Chinese. As with Eskimo words for "snow" the detail the language conveys cannot be duplicated easily.

While certain elements of the ceremony recall sacrifice as it has appeared in anthropological description (see especially Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, Sacrifice, W. D. Hall, trans.[Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964]) the fit is not perfect. In Vedic sacrifice fundamentally disparate realms are occasionally connected, but Chinese Imperial rituals manifest a link that was thought to be always there.

Specifically, the character  jobject consists of two hands above a graph whose early meaning was "omen" and whose later usages center upon ideals of showing,
manifesting, and displaying. The etymology of the character si (司) is unknown (Bernard Karlgren, "Grammata Serica Recensa," Bulletin of Far Eastern Antiquities, XXXIX [1957], 255). By the Qing period si was virtually synonymous with ji. The two were linked as the compound jisi in reference to "all sacrifices, major and minor" by Eastern Zhou times (Lester Bilsky, The State Religion of China [Taipei: Chinese Association for Folklore, 1975], V. 1, p. 25).

Bilsky sidesteps the issue of meaning, calling everything he discusses "sacrifice" in English while providing careful analyses of the changing usages of various terms throughout the Han and pre-Han periods. (See volume I, pp. 233-29.) I too use the term "sacrifice" here although perhaps "display" would be a translation less burdened by misplaced analogy.

2. Milton Singer's essay "Culture" in the International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, 1968, touches upon this shift. In referring to "culture" as the preserve of anthropologists I am considering the English-speaking world and omitting the question of German historical scholarship, especially Dilthey.


7. In my own work I have found it extremely important to take seriously the textual nature of the evidence. In doing so I have found literary criticism, especially when it takes a semiological approach, very helpful. Readers who wish an introduction to such theories should consult Terence Hawkes, Structuralism and Semiotics (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977). A summary that takes a "value-free" and non-political approach is Irene Portis Winner and Thomas Winner, "The Semiotics of Cultural Texts," Semiotica 18:2 (1976), 101-56. I have been more influenced by writers who have used semiotic analysis to develop theories of the ideological dynamics of power in society. See particularly V. N. Volosinov, Marxism and the Philosophy of Language (New York: Seminar Press, 1973), a translation of a work first published in the Soviet Union in 1930, and Rosalind Coward and John Ellis, Language and Materialism (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977).
8. The question of paradigmatic substitution of an entire sacrifice within the yearly cyclical set is taken up in my forthcoming dissertation. The following chart gives some idea of the types of substitutions that occur:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Season</th>
<th>Celebrant faces</th>
<th>Vessel color</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HEAVEN Winter</td>
<td>North</td>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>Yang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EARTH Summer</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>Yin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANCESTORS Spring/Fall</td>
<td>North</td>
<td>X*</td>
<td>Yang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOIL&amp;GRAIN same</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>Yin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Vessels are the same in form as for other sacrifices, but there are special wine vessels used which are not found in others.

9. The definition of discourse will be taken up at some length later in the paper. The writer who has done perhaps most to advance "discourse" as an analytical concept is Michel Foucault. His histories are actually histories of discursive practices which he describes as:

the delineation of a field of objects, the definition of a legitimate perspective for the agent of knowledge, and the fixing of norms for the elaboration of concepts and theories. Thus, each discursive practice implies a play of prescriptions that designate its exclusions and choices.


Hayden White's writing on the subject is also illuminating and has the advantage of appearing originally in accessible English. See his Tropics of Discourse (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).


11. Da Qing tongli (Complete Rites of the Qing 大清通礼), Mukodengo, chief compiler; 1883 reprint of 1824 edition, itself a re-edited version of the original 1756 work. Here I use a reprint contained in the Siku chuanshu zhenben 四库全书总本, 8th set, vols. 125-29 unless otherwise indicated.

12. People were present at each of the four Grand Sacrifices to record the proceeding, especially any errors. On the altar were the Censorate's Chief Imperial Archivist of the Left 副都御史, and an Assistant Chief Imperial Archivist 右都御史. Off the altar were
four recorders from the Hanlin Academy (Complete Rites 1.18a; 2:14a; 3:b-9a; 6:4a-b). For a brief mention of the Censorate's role in rituals see Zhang Deyi, Qingdai guojia jiguan kaolue (Peking, 1981), p. 117.

13. See the "Flow of Memorials" (zouliu jie) preface to the Complete Rites. In 1818, over sixty years after its compilation, the Emperor ordered that the Complete Rites be taken out of storage and reprinted for general distribution. A censor thereupon pointed out that in the intervening years "as people did what was suitable to the occasion everything from the various canons of Court Sacrifice to the regulations for Examinations has changed and no longer completely tallies with the original book." Complete Rites, first page of the "Flow of Memorials" preface.

14. In being so attuned, editors were acting according to the Chinese cosmological truism that the dao is never fixed but always in flux. Hence I would not want to reduce their re-alignment of elements that had been transformed into a "merely" rhetorical project of fixing change and transforming history into cosmology for their own purposes. The point is that for these men history was cosmology, encompassed by its very laws. Qing Emperors could explain how it came to be that they sat on the Throne rather than the Ming.

15. Wuli tongkao (A Thorough Investigation of the Five Rites), edited by Qin Huitian, 1761.

16. White, p. 3.

17. In discussing the form of the rite I will use certain terms in the following manner: "Ceremonial Order" refers to the sequence of headings of sections in the sacrifice, for instance "Viewing victims" followed by Achieving seclusion", etc. (See Fig. One). "Format" refers to the description of the action within each section. "Elements" are items or actions that make up the sections. When"Format" changes, it is because "elements" differ or are left out. Hence the description refers to ceremonial order of sections, each of whose format contains varying elements.

18. Complete Rites 1:1a.

19. Da Qing huidian tu (Illustrations for the Statutes of the Qing) compiled in 1899.

20. Complete Rites 1.22b The word ci also denotes the tents that stand (she) upon the altar. "Order" is not a mistranslation, however, I have merely used one of its senses to make my point. Actually since the tents (sometimes referred to as wo) are pitched first and contain, variously, spirit thrones and tablets,
participants and vessels, they are a substantialization of the abstraction of *ci* meaning "order" in the terms I have discussed here.
