Chapter 4 — The Three Rites Canons


168 1 "…to return to ritual"—Analects 12/1(8); Waley, p. 162.

168 1 "…and the verbal phrasing"—LJ 32/2; Legge, II, 330; LJ 32/9; Legge, II, 337.

169 1 "…as is proper"—XZYD 71/19/27 (Knoblock, 60; Watson, 94). Ron Grimes (1982), chap. 3, argues that six dimensions overlap in most rituals: ritualization, magic, decorum, ceremony, celebration, and liturgy; thus the term "ritual" in modern anthropological parlance is just as complex as it was in early China.

169 1 "…the ancient Greeks"—Athens subsidized attendance at the drama, paying each citizen who attended the equivalent of a day laborer's wages, so that even the poor could attend. Xunzi's famous essay "On Ritual" argues that the just state will also reward men for adherence to ritual. See, e.g., XZYD 70/19/5-10.

169 1 "…the barbarian tribes"—The Eastern Han exegete He Xiu (129-82), for instance, in his subcommentary to Gongyang, Duke Zhao 23, wrote, "What distinguishes the people of the Central States from the barbarian tribes is that they are capable of honoring those who should be honored [through ritual]."

169 1 "…their dull routines"—LJ 21/42 (Legge, II, 167), which shows that certain rites were specifically designed to relieve commoners of their daily round of labor. One of the key rites, of course, is divination.

169 2 "…and as a country"—Li Tsung-jen, 1950 lecture, cited in Mary Wright (1962), p. 311. The same argument is made by the New Confucianists writing, for example, in Tang Junyi, cited in Mou Zongsan (1992), pp. 17-24.


169 3 "…rules of ritual"—Liji 10/22; Legge, I, 404. Not coincidentally, HS 30:1711, n. 3, equates the Zhouli with three hundred sections and the Yilii with three thousand, in a variant reading of this passage.

169 3 "…individuals' roles and relationships"—Zhongdang Pan (1994), p. 21, citing Liu 1987, Hu and Zheng 1987; Liang 1987. Bruce Brooks (WSWG) believes that the preoccupation with ritual propriety developed only several generations after Confucius. Brooks, however, tends to reduce ritual to rule making, ignoring the inner aspects of ritual that support ren.
There is ample support for this interpretation in the Rites canons. See, e.g., LJ 27/1; Legge, II, 261; LJ 26/3; Legge, II, 258; Legge, 32/9: Legge, II, 336: "desiring the common people to have unity." Cf. CQYD 414/Zhao 25/Zuo 2; Legge, 708-9, on li binding cosmic and social phenomena. Much later, in Zhu Xi's Family Rituals, identification of the clan's presiding householder (rather than the person, the village head, or the state) with the locus of ritual authority and strong injunctions to preserve strict hierarchy emphasize the use of ritual as discipline.


"…relationships through custom"—Analects 5/21; Waley, p. 115.

"…in Confucius's phrase"—Analects 5/21; Waley, p. 115.

"…of Oriental decadence"—E.g., Rey Chow (1991), pp. 84ff., seriously confuses the rites with "mere details" of fashion and of leisure.

"…dikes, barriers, or cinches"—For the first metaphors, see, e.g., LJ 26/4; Legge, II, 259; for the last, see TXJ 2/App. 4, in Michael Nylan (1993), p. 99.

"…time-consuming ceremonies"—Otherwise, it is difficult to explain contrary passages, such as that in LJ 9/28; Legge, I, 385, which says, "Thus it was that the ancient kings were troubled lest the rites not reach to those below." The Liji, of course, stems from the school of Xunzi, a thinker who insisted upon the need for meritocratic principles; certain passages are copied directly from the Xunzi, e.g., LJ 38 ("Sannian wen") and LJ 20 ("Yueji").

"…a great sacrifice"—Analects 12/2.

"…that is to say, his selfness"—LJ 10/17; Legge, I, 402; LJ 32/1, Legge, II, 300; LJ 42/1; Legge, II, 413. For a discussion of Maspero's correction of Leggee's translation of the Liji passages, see Riegel (1978), p. 87. The same phrase occurs in the Wuxing pian chapter found at Mawangdui and at Guodian (section 7). In those manuscripts Pang Pu (1980), p. 9, interprets shendu to mean "take care of what is singular to him," though he interprets the same phrase in the Liji according to the orthodox glosses upheld in late imperial China. Wm. Theodore de Bary (1991), p. xii, suggests that the late Cheng-Zhu interpretation of the phrase referred to discovering the meaning of a passage for oneself (zide). See de Bary (1991), p. xii.

"…for personal adjustments"—Cf. Analects 4/10 (Waley, 104): "The gentleman in his dealings with the world has neither enmities nor affections; wherever he sees Right he ranges himself beside it." Cf. XZYD 104/29/6: "Follow Dao, not the ruler; the right, not your father [if there is a conflict]." The Rites canons are not the only classics to insist that one must sometimes bend the rules to attain the goal informing the rules. Li Xinlin, ch. 5, esp. pp. 192-201, gives a nuanced discussion of the Gongyang's promotion of chuan (weighing competing moral priorities). Also, many early classical masters (e.g., Xunzi, Shusun Tong, Fu Sheng, Jia Yi, and Dong Zhongshu) developed the ideas that the rites must change with the times and that sage-rulers should institute such changes. For modifications of (presumably) age-old rites at the lower levels of society, which continue even today, see Martha Ward, in He Liyi (1993), introduction, pp. vii-xvi, esp. x-xi.
"…return to the rites"—Early texts such as the Shiji (e.g., SJ 121:3122-23) show the Ru masters, rather than their rivals, as men willing to countenance dramatic political change. Like Wang Mang, Wang Anshi, and Kang Youwei, Zhong Changtong (179-219), Wang Gen (1483-1540), Huang Zongxi (1610-95), and Yan Yuan (1635-1704) saw the Zhouli and the Liji as sage blueprints for radical political reform predicated upon strong centralized rule. For Wang Mang, see Jin Chunfeng (1994), pp. 238-243; Gu Jiegang (1984), pp. 9-12. Hou Jiaju (1988), pp. 308ff., makes the case that the Taiping rebels were influenced by the Zhouli. For Liang Qichao's interest in the Liji, see Liang (1904). The Zhouli's discussion of the well-field system was used to justify the charitable estates set up by lineages or larger communities, according to Linda Walton (1993).

"…service to the state"—Originally the shi composed the lower ranks of the aristocracy, the knights. From at least the time of Confucius, and more markedly after 221 BC, the term evolved to comprise literate members (potential and actual) of the usually lower ranks of the state bureaucracy. See Hsü Cho-yun (1965) and Hans Bielenstein (1980).

"…for boundless change"—There exists no generally accepted definition of ritual or rites, but most studies of the subject generally assume that ritual must be about the transformation of one being or state into another. Indeed, according to most anthropologists, the transformative effect of ritual is what sets it apart from other social actions. James Watson (1988), p. 4, says, "Rituals change people and things; the ritual process is active, not merely passive." Cf. Ronald Grimes (1982), intro.; Tang Junyi (1947), p. 6; Hall and Ames (1995), p. 189; Mark Edward Lewis (1995).

"…"moralized' to the core"—The social body was ordered through performance and positioning of the physical body, as Analects, chap. 10, makes clear. The person and the ritual must be integrated processes, as in China the person is viewed primarily as the body. See Sun Lung-kee, (1991); Rappaport (1979), p. 192. For the phrase "moralizing the body" (xiushen), see LJ 31/14-16; Legge, II, 319ff. For one critique of the late orthodoxy averring that it disregarded the necessary physical basis for true nobility in the Confucian mode, see Yan Yuan, trans. in Freeman (1972).

"…practice or theory"—SJ 121:3126 says that Master Gaotang could explicate (yan) the rites, while Master Xu was expert at the visible gestures (rong); also, that Master Xu's sons and grandsons, specialists in the rites, "could not fully comprehend" (buneng tong) the text of the Rites Classic. Robert Eno (1990a) argues that for early Ru the performance aspect of ritual was much more important than the theoretical.

"…become mere habit"—LJ 26/6; Legge, II, 260: "The instructive and transforming power of the rites is subtle; the rites stop depravity before it takes form, causing men to daily move toward the Good and keep themselves from evil, without themselves being aware of it."

"…sets of instructions"—As John Guillory (1990) writes, "something just happens" when practice is converted to theory.

"…into multivocal traditions"—The term "multivocal" comes from Victor Turner (1974), pp. 23-59. It means that the symbolism of ritual actions speaks in many different voices, something Xunzi had noted already when he spoke of varying interpretations given the mourning rites by the noble man and by those of lesser understanding.
"...experiments"—Ch'ü T'ung-tsu (1972a), pp. 267ff., shows that the Confucianization of Chinese law was a slow process completed only with the Tang code of AD 653; cf. David McMullen (1988), pp. 123 ff. A.F.P. Hulsewé (1986), p. 543, shows that classical marriage practices were not mandated by Han law. And notwithstanding the Han's official promotion of filial piety, it was only in mid-Eastern Han that some few senior officials were required by law to observe the prescribed mourning period for parents, as stipulated in the Rites Classics. See DHHY 7:75-76.

"...then in process;"—For example, Zheng's commentary to LJ 15 remarks that the old Xia ritual system, no longer employed under the "new dispensatition" of Confucius derived from Zhou, was more egalitarian, a claim that tallies with the Liyun chapter of the Liji. See Yang Tianyu (1983), pp. 26ff..

"...mind and body"—The three texts were the (a) Great Learning and (b) Doctrine of the Mean chapters, two chapters extracted from their originaal context in the Liji and reinterpreted in such a way that the performing body nearly disappears; and (c) Zhu Xi's Family Rituals, a liturgy that emphasizes external expression over inner intent while adopting current practice as the basis for ritual order. As Patricia Ebrey (1991) writes, "None of the ceremonies described in Zhu Xi's Family Rituals departed very far from ordinary life" (p. xxxvi).

"...alter the rites"—E.g., LJ 5/24; Legge, I, 217: "When rites were altered [arbitrarily by the ruler], or music changed, it was seen as disobedience, and the disobedient ruler was banished." Even great King Wu of Zhou reportedly refused to change patterns set down by his father, King Wen. See LJ 8/1; Legge, I, 344. the term "classical rites" refers to rites specifically mentioned in the Five Classics or in accepted neocanonical works, such as Zhu Xi's Family Rituals. For the latter, see Ebrey (1991).

"...those very rites"—For the presumption that even the mourning rites in the rites systems must be changed "according to the time," see CIS, III., 59.

"...essentially new inventions"—The following are three examples: (1) in late Western Han, the ferocious debates attending changes in ritual service to the high gods, as reported in Loewe (1974), chaps. 5-6; (2) in early Ming, Zhu Yuanzhang's institution of modifications in mourning rituals and in the imperial schedule of sacrifices for ancestors and gods, against the objections of classicists, as reported in Edward Farmer (1990); and (3) the Rites Controversy involving the Jesuits. Cf. David McMullen (1988), pp. 124-32, 143-47, for rites controversies during the Tang. Such controversies often included controversies over "correct music." During the Song, between 966 and 1104, for example, there were six musical reforms, each prompting major court debates. See Song shi, juan 28.

"...reanimate the old"—The citation is from Analects 2/11; Waley, p. 90. No single system of rites ever prevailed throughout the geographic area noow known as China. In all probability, there were even more competing rites systems in early than in late China. Kimura Eiichi (1960), p. 245, points to the differences among the various pre-Han approaches to the rituals, as well as those among the Three Rites.

"...Old Confucian Curiosity Shop"—Hu Shi invented this gibe. See chapter 7 for further information. Paul Carus (1915) offered one of the few defenses on behallf of the Confucian ritual system.

"...Rites Records (Liji)"—Since it is clear that the Liji was initially regarded not as a canon proper but as a collection of expository writings on rritual complementary to the canon, Notes on Rites seems a more accurate translation, but I bow to the general expectation in using Rites Records.
"so-called 'Fourteen Classics"—HHS 79B:2576.

"…among the texts”—E.g., in the Liji, five bureaus assist the Son of Heaven, in Zhouli, six. See LJ 2/13; Legge, I, 109. Also, the land apportionment system outlined in LJ 5 fails to match the "well-field" system of the Zhouli.

"…Confucius was born”—The WJYY discusses such contradictions. For the Yili, see ECT, p. 237. As to the Liji, Wang Su (195-256), like Cai Yong, tended to treat the Liji as a compilation of ritual tracts written by the Duke of Zhou and other early Zhou figures. See R.P. Kramers (1949), pp. 73-86. The Zhouli (known in Han times as the Zhou kuan, or Officers of Zhou) appears in mid-Western Han, when it reportedly was included in the collection of Archaic Script texts in the library of Liu Xian, King of Hejian (r. 156-130 BC), an older contemporary of Han Wudi. Liu Xin (53 BC-AD 23) was the first scholar known to ascribe the Zhouli to the Duke of Zhou, but many Ru (zhongRu), Lin Xiaotun in mid-Western Han and He Xiu (129-82) among them, thought it a Warring States forgery. He Xiu, for example, stated that the Zhouli must be a "work of the Six Kingdoms" [i.e., the Warring States], since it contradicted other ritual and historical accounts of the period. Nonetheless, Zheng Xuan repeated Liu Xin's ascription of the text to the Duke of Zhou in his commentary to the Tian guan chapter, Dazai section. See Kaga Eiji (1990), pp. 6-12. By Tang and Song, some classicists were alleging that the Zhouli had been forged by Liu Xin, an argument taken up by the jinwen adherents at the end of the nineteenth century. A few holdouts in the scholarly community continue to insist on a Western Zhou date for these Rites classics but the majority, with good reason, follow Qian Mu (1932) and Gu Jiegang (1979) in ascribing them to late Warring States or even later.

"…the same end”—LJ 10/22; Legge, I, 404.

"…solemn affairs of the state”—Zheng Xuan's work on the "Sanli" theory is most succinctly summarized in Yang Tianyu (1983). For the importance of the Sanli theory, which overwhelmed all other theories, see Huang Kan (1980), p. 448.

"…is arguably incomplete”—For the requirement that classics be complete and comprehensive, see Michael Nylan (1993), p. 55. For the Rites canons as incomplete, see Gu Jiegang (1994), p. 3. To charges that the Yili text was somehow incomplete, Shao Yichen (1810-61) in his Lijing tonglun countered, "The Yili originally was not a deficient, incomplete text, but the two texts of the Elder and Younger Tai [the Da Dai Liji and the Liji] could both ... be added in to restore the rites to [their] Western Han [state]."

"…on the Yili"s ceremonials"—Many scholars, including Zhu Xi, have noted this.

"…evil "Qin court")”—LJZS 14b/1a. In contrast, Zheng's contemporary Cai Yong (133-192) attributed the Yue ling to the Duke of Zhou.

"…of the Mean (Zhongyong)”—LJ 31-34; the Zhongyong, the Biaoji, the Fangji, and Ziyi chapters.

"…Great Learning (Daxue)”—Shen Yue (441-513), cited in SS 13:288. Attribution of the "Daxue" chapter to Zengzi, a disciple of Confucius, began in Songg times; some earlier traditions attributed the chapter to Zisi. The Ziyi chapter (often ascribed to Zisi) in one early text is ascribed to Gongsun Nizi. See Yang Tianyu (1983), p. 21.
"...by Han court specialist"—Zhang Yi, third century AD author of the Guangya, attributed the compilation to Shusun Tong, in early Western Han. See Li Yuuegang (1981), p. 6. The Suishu, basing itself on the work of Chen Shao (late third century AD) and others, assumes that Liu Xiang, the Dai brothers (Dai De and Dai Sheng) and Ma Rong produced the received version of the text. ECT, pp. 293-96, suggests that the Liji had not been compiled by AD 79, though some of its contents were quoted during debates in 51 BC; ECT cites HHS 35A:1205, to the effect that Cao Bao (d. AD 102) transmitted the Liji text in 49 pian. MQL dates all three texts to a period after Mencius, in late Warring States or Qin.

"...much before Han"—In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Zhouli was often seen as a late Western Han forgery. Present-day scholars seem to be converging on the fourth-third centuries BC as the date of compilation of the Zhouli, some basing their hypothesis on a comparison of official titles in the text with extant bronze inscriptions, others on the knowledge of the Xia and Zhou calendars that appears implicit in the text. See Qian Mu (1932), Yang Xianggui (1980), and Jin Chunfeng (1994). Ikeda Suetoshi (1984) insists that references to a highly systematized Yin/yang Five Phases theory suggest Han period interpolations, at least. To this, Peng Lin (1991) adds that the Zhouli synthesis of Ru-Legalist thought did not occur prior to Western Han. Xu Xuguan (1980) is among the few who still insist that the Zhouli is a forgery by Liu Xin on behalf of Wang Mang. Cf. WSTK, I, 317. On the Liji, see Jeffrey Riegel (1978), esp. ch. 1. For early reservations about the text, see above. Zheng Xuan's commentary points out certain elements in the text are anachronistic for the Zhou period. According to William Hung (1936), p. xxxviii, the Liji may be a compilation by Eastern Han Academicians (boshi) of collected records (ji) that postdate Dai De and Dai Sheng of Western Han. From Liu Xiang's fairly detailed discussion in the Bielu, it is clear that the Liji has existed in something like its present form since Liu's time. Still, neither content nor linguistic analysis allow any chapter to be dated with real confidence. For example, certain scholars used to maintain the view that the Wangzhi (Kingly Regulations) chapter was composed by Han scholars in 164 BC by order of Emperor Wen (179-157 BC), but a closer reading of early Han history shows that the text specified by the same name detailed the "kingly regulations" on sacrifices; therefore it cannot be the Liji chapter. Still, the Chu state Guodian finds (ca. 300 BC) include one essay entitled "Black Robe" that corresponds with the received text of the Liji. See Wen wu 7 (1997), pp. 35-48. On the Yili: About 180 BC, Master Gaotang of Lu submitted to the throne seventeen chapters bearing the title "Shili" (Rituals for shi). This text eventually came to be known as the Yili. Han writers believed that the Yili, though written in Han-time Modern Script (jinwen), derived from pre-Qin traditions, so they sometimes called it the Ancient Ritual Classic (Gu Lijing).

"...of early Western Han"—SJ 121:3126: "The Rites (or rites?) in fact date from the time of Confucius but their canons were incomplete. When it came to the Qin 'Burning of the Books,' even more writings were scattered and lost, so that today there exists only the Shili [= Yili]." Cf. SJ 121:3128; HS 30:1710. See introduction, for more on the Qin Burning of the Books.

"...the early Zouh courts"—Even with the help of archaeology, we know little about the early Zhou ritual system. The most provocative analysis of it to date is that in Jessica Rawson (1989).

"...or innovate governance"—HS 30:1710.

"...simply rejecting them"—On this, see Waley (1934), introduction; Hsü Cho-yun (1965), esp. chap. 5. Mozi, for example, was accused of rejecting the conventional rites of mourning.

"...of key ritual terms"—Extant sources suggest that ritual was the main subject of debate in both the Shiqu Pavilion and White Tiger debates (51 BC and AD 79, respectively). For the first debates, see MGH, II, 1060-1-63; for the second, see the translation by Tjan.
"... most of Han"—Wang Guowei (1928), pp. 34-36. For accounts of the Rites Academicians, see SJ 121:3126 (in which the Yili is called both the Shili and Lijing); HS 88:3615; and HHS 79A:2576. The authority of an interpretive tradition derived from the Younger Dai, Dai Sheng, was acknowledged with an Academician's post, but that interpretation may not have been related to the received text of the Liji. Interpretive traditions by the Elder Dai, Dai De, and a Mr. Qing were also established in the Academy (HS 88:3615), but we do not know whether there was any relation between the Elder Dai's interpretive tradition and the received Da Dai Liji.

"...classics in the Han times"—Michael Loewe (1959) and (1977); Liu and Zheng (1985), pp. 24, 26. In 1959, in an old tomb in Wuwei (Kansu), 370 bamboo strips dating from late Western Han were found, containing seven sections of the original seventeen of the Yili. Chen and Chen (1983), pp. 56-57, reports an excavated Liji text in nine pian found in 1960, followed by a 1973 find at Dingxian of two chapters of the Liji. The tomb furnishings of a Chu state official (ca. 300 BC) included a work corresponding to the Black Robe chap. of the Liji. See note 49.

"...conferences, and such"—E.g., Liu An (d. 122 BC), King of Huainan, and Liu De, King of Hejian, were noted book collectors. The early Western Han emperors Wen, Jing, and Wu were known to require special literary exercises of their advisers. See HS 4:127; Dub, I, 259.

"...already been won"—This argument was put forth most eloquently in Jia Yi's "Guo Qin lun" (Faulting the Qin), included in XinS 1, but it is already present in Lu Jia's Xinyü. Gaozu and his immediate successors repeatedly insisted that they did "not wish to be a burden upon the people," that they "wished to do away with the [harsh] Qin laws," emphasizing "Heaven's ... appointment of rulers to care for and order them [the people]" See HS 1A:23; Dubs, I, 59; HS 4:116; Dubs, I, 240. For the classicists' utility, see SJ 99:2722; Watson (1971), I, 293.


"...of state law"—Both SJ 119; HS 59 characterize Wudi's (r. 140-87 BC) main interest in classicism in this way.

"...ceremonies at Mount Tai"—Thanks to imperial patronage, some "rediscovered" texts were certainly forged.

"...of moral accountability"—E.g., according to the Liji, rulers who do not fulfill their duties may find themselves reduced in rank or exiled. In the distant golden age, only when ruling elites "had done good service for the people, showing them exemplary virtue, did they receive an addition to their territory or rank." LJ 5/24; Legge, I, 217.

"...of the throne"—HHS 79B:2576. Followers of the ritual master Hou Zang, including Yi Feng, Xiao Wangzhi, and Kuang Heng, promoted massive reforms in the administration of the ancestral rites and court ceremonies. See HHS 88:3615; Michael Loewe (1974), chaps. 5-6. Note that several vocal proponents of the Zhouli, Liu Xin and Wang Mang among them, proved disloyal to the Han.

"...of Zhou and Han"—Of course, in mid-Zhou times, the two most important affairs of state were said to be sacrifice and war. By Han times, with the unification of the empire, it was in the state's interest to emphasize the civil virtues over the military, even as it undertook many campaigns against domestic and foreign enemies. On state-sponsored violence, see Mark Lewis (1990).

"...supreme ritual master"—The Chinese, unlike the early Greeks, tended to define perfection in terms of action, rather than stasis or pure Being. See., e.g., LJ 31/30; Legge, II, 321: "Total perfection is unresting; unresting, it continues long... it makes [the ritual actor] co-equal with Heaven; ... it makes him infinite." For the wider implications of this, see G.E.R. Lloyd (1996).
"...and for marriage"—Michael Nylan (1999).

"...chapters of the Yili"—In three early versions of the text, the content does not vary, although the sequence of chapters varies.

"...feudal and bureaucratic"—The Yili’s assumption that virtue, rather than birth, should determine social status is quite at odds with any feudal structures in the early Zhou dynastic order.

"...disciple of Confucius"—Two of the three ms. copies of the Sang fu chapter found in Han tombs at Wuwei reportedly include chuan passages.

"...his ancestral shrine"—YL 2, pp. 49-50; Steele, I, 22.

"...age and death"—YL 2, p. 64; Steele, I, 31. This change of generations is signified in the wedding ceremony by the parents' descent by the western steps (those of the guest) and bride's ascent by the eastern steps (those of the host).

"...upon his return"—Either these two short chapters are out of place, as they should come before the Notes, or they were appended later.<

"...order is inverted"—YL 2, p. 62; Steele, I, 30. As when the groom personally goes to meet his bride and the bride is offered food at the bridal feast before the groom.

"...gentlemen never compete"—Analects 3/7; Waley, p. 95.

"...culture to another"—Yunxiang Yan (1996), p. 2, reports that rural villagers feel that "you can't let your guest return home with an empty basket," when the guest has brought food. The same ritual precept was honored in Kentucky, where I grew up.

"...studying its text"—Readers may wish to consult Norbert Elias (1978) for European analogues.

"...years of Western Zhou"—Sven Broman (1961) attempts to judge the dating and authenticity of the Zhouli by the official titles it includes. He argues that the list of functionaries listed in the Zhouli is "congruent" with the "primary Zhou states" of Zheng, Lu, and Song, and "to a high degree" at odds with the states of Chu and Qin (p. 70). Yang Yuru was the first scholar to use the bronze inscriptions to study the Zhouli, but such studies have not proven very fruitful, given the relatively small number of extant inscribed bronzes relevant to this kind of study. Guo Moruo (1952) lists nineteen titles occurring in the Zhouli that fail to correspond with early bronze material.

"...menial functionaries altogether"—These numbers are given in Peng Lin (1991), p. 15, which cites the Qing scholar Li Ziran. Hans Bielenstein (1980), p. 156, gives 130,285 as the total number of the Western Han bureaucracy in 5 BC (as compared with a population of some 57.7 million in AD 2), though he notes that the number may have been smaller in Eastern Han times. Note that the king or emperor does not appear in the Zhouli as the activist chief of his own bureaucracy; he remains hidden and formless behind his active officials.

"...for imperial precedents"—As during the reign of Wang Mang (r. AD 9-23).

"...and market speculation"—See ZL 15/4a (Di guan, Quan fu).

"...of war department"—By mid-Han times, Yin/yang Five Phases correlations generally related war to autumn or winter, because all three are yin. Here, the association of war with summer relates it to fire and yang. By Eastern Han also, texts often see war and the penal code as two sides of the same coin (see below). See HS 23, as analyzed by Hulsewé (1955), esp. pp. 314ff.
"...lost in Western Han"—See JDSW 1/25b.

"...and the Eight Precepts"—According to this system, the higher the office, the fewer but more important are the assigned tasks. This follows the Legalist dictum that the "ruler grasps the handle, while the subordinates are engaged in the constant [i.e., day-to-day] matters." The Six Classics are said to be equivalent to the six branches of government; the Eight Handles, to various rewards and punishments; the Eight Precepts, to principles such as "favoring one's relatives," "respecting the old ways," and "advancing the worthy."

"...for the common people)—This is a probable reference to the Great Plan chapter of the Documents. See Michael Nylan (1992), esp. chap. 1.

"...officers and commoners"—It is thus the duty of the xiao sikou to ascertain the will of the people on important matters, including "establishing the ruler" (when there is no legal heir apparent), moving the capital, and going to war.

"...and the Lord Protector"—See ZL 3/5a (Tian guan, Zaifu); ZL 14/3a (Di guan, Baoshi); pp. 25, respectively.

"...instrument of government"—E.g., ZL 12/4a (Di guan, Tangzheng). The text not only provides an extensive apparatus for promoting law; it also stipulates that local officials have, as one of their main duties, to publicize the state laws at regular intervals. By contrast, many late Western and Eastern Han texts argue that the true king need have no recourse to punishments. See Michael Nylan (1982), chap. 2.

"...to suit each locale"—ZL 10/1a-1b, 6b, for educational and fiscal matters. Cf. LJ 5/40; Legge, I, 229. Here we find materials that help explain the received Tribute of Yu (Yugong) chapter of the Documents.

"...identity of uniformity"—Hall and Ames (1995), p. 233, makes a similar point about early Daoist thought. Contrast Herbert Fingarette (1972), p. 61, which asserts that Confucius's view of the rites looked to "the emergence of a grand and powerful unified culture rooted in a unified polity, the whole deriving its inspiration from a unified literature, language and ceremonial forms of the region of Lu and its environs."

"...people as its basis"—Zheng Xuan commentary to ZL 12/2b (Di guan, Xiang daifu). Ibid. cites the Documents and the Laozi, to the effect that "the sages have no constant heart, as they take the heart of the commoners as their heart."

"...living or the dead"—One such anecdote, following a well-established tradition, has Confucius being instructed in the mourning rites by Lao Dan, who is traditionally regarded as the founder of Daoism. See LJ 7/33; Legge, I, 339. Another has Yuezheng Zichun, a second-generation disciple of Confucius through Zengzi, retreating to his room for months after stubbing his toe — so serious does he take the injunction not to harm the body his parents have given to him. See LJ 24/36; Legge, II, 228-229.

"...government into disarray"—LJ 5/44; Legge, I, 237.

"...and so on"—LJ 18/3 (Legge, II, 85).

"...debates on set topics"—Riegel (1978).

"...if voices are heard"—LJ 1/16; Legge, I, 71.
"...slurp the soup"—LJ 1/29; Legge, I, 80.

"...archery, for example"—E.g., LJ 1/36; Legge, I, 91: "In a war chariot, the banner is fully displayed; in a chariot of peace, it is folded round thee pole."

"...a parent's murder"—See Anne Cheng (1996).

"...unlawful liaison,"—LJ 1/24 (Legge, I, 77).

"...to personally perform"—For husband and wife, see LJ 25/6; Legge, II, 241; for father and mother, see LJ 32/11; Legge, II, 341.

"...worn-out ceremonial paraphernalia"—E.g., LJ 1/38; Legge, I, 92.

"...and honor others"—Cf., e.g., LJ 31/30; Legge, II, 326, vs. LJ 32/10; Legge, II, 338.

"...nourishment, and education"—Michel Foucault (1985-86) has as its main thesis the notion that sexuality as a distinctively modern construction beginning in nineteenth-century Euro-America has entailed a new apprehension of the self organized around well-defined sexual characteristics and desires. The introduction to David Halperin, et al. (1989) urges suspension of current sexual categories (especially those concerning the centrality of sex) when studying premodern societies.

"...harms their bodies"—LJ 35/1; Legge, II, 375, vs. LJ 49/5; Legge, II, 466.

"...proper social conduct"—E.g., LJ 1/9; Legge, I, 67.

"...confuse ordinary morality"—LJ 32/7; Legge, II, 332.

"...across his breast"—LJ 2/1; II; Legge, I, 100; LJ 1/16; Legge, I, 70.

"...virtue of exemplary conduct"—LJ 1/15; Legge, I, 69.

"...the proper character"—LJ 32/9; Legge, II, 337.

"...of gender and politics"—The favorite being, "The rites do not extend down to the common people; the penal code does not extend up to great officers." LJ 1/35 (Legge, I, 90), cited in Patricia Ebrey (1991), p. 89. Cf. He Xiu, commentary to Duke Yin 3, which says, "The rites basically are an institution for those with wealth. [In mourning], those who have [wealth], then should see it out; but those without [wealth] should come to wail and nothing more." The same idea can be found in other chapters of the Liji.

"...facilitate effective interaction"—Emily Ahern (1981). According to Xu Gan (170-217), "Models and symbols were established so as to enable people to become superior persons. Of the various models and symbols, there is none more basic than preserving an upright countenance and taking care to maintain an awe-inspiring demeanor.... The countenance is the external side of one's tally. The external side of one's tally being rectified, therefore one's essential dispositions and one's nature will be properly ordered. One's essential dispositions and one's nature being in proper order, therefore ren and yi will exist. Once they are in existence, then perfect virtue will be manifest. When perfect virtue (shengde) is manifest, one can act as a model and a symbol. This is known as being a superior person" (A6b; 4a-4b). Cf. Clifford Geertz (1983), pp. 92-93, which argues that knowledge is power and that symbolic systems of activity provide the individual with the same sorts of code information that are transmitted genetically as instinct in other animal species. For early China, the Liji, for example, itself claims to teach a person exquisite sensitivity to facial and bodily gestures, so that one "cannot be fooled by deceit and artifice." Rites texts also claim to teach
salutary caution and modesty, two basic survival skills needed in a complex society. Finally, the rites teach men the proper formulae (both gestural and verbal) needed to persuade superiors to grant them their desires. John Guillory (1990), p. 225, puts it this way, when speaking of culture in general, rather than the rites in particular: "Culture seems to make 'gestures' toward [both] constraint and mobility."

"…they empowered elites"—Though Michael Nylan (1996) makes the point that when enough commoners mastered and manipulated the rites to their advantage, elites turned about to make ritual out of nonconformist behavior. Compare Baudrillard on this point.

"…canons were put to"—See CIS, III. The apocrypha, unlike the canons themselves, are preoccupied with imperial rites, for two reasons: first, they supplemented material in the Rites canons (which says surprisingly little about imperial rites, except in the Wangzhi chap. of the Liji); and second, their composition was associated with ambitious commoners trying to put forward their own claims to legitimacy.

"…including Kang Youwei"—For Kang, see Laurence Thompson (1958). Huang Zongxi (1610-95) and Yan Yuan (1635-1704) also saw the Zhouli and the Liji as sage blueprints for radical political reform that depended upon strong centralization.

"…is admittedly so strong?"—Admittedly, the conflict that Euro-Americans perceive between normative order and change was less stark to the Chinese, who accepted change, including social change, as an inevitable aspect of good order. See note 65 above.

"…of good government"—For the first quote, see Analects 4/13 (Waley, 104); for the second, LJ 27/2; Legge, II, 268. For the Han emphasis on "loving" (ai) others, see Benjamin Wallacker (1978), esp. p. 222.

"…refined and satisfying"—Confucian learning teaches adherence to the rites as the chief prerequisite for self-cultivation, which is in turn the prerequisite for humane conduct (ren). The Cheng-Zhu strain of classical interpretation, with its admixture of Buddhist doctrine, proposed to extinguish desire, its creed being, "To preserve Heaven's principle and extinguish human desire" (cun Tian li mie ren yu). Gu Yanwu, Wang Fuzhi, and Dai Zhen were but three of the classicists in late imperial China who criticized the Cheng-Zhu interpretations for this. See, for example, Dai Zhen's commentary to the Mencius, in John Ewell (1990).

"crimes after the fact"—DDLJ 46 (Grynpas, p. 53). For more on rites vs. law, see Léon Vandermeersch (1990).

"…and verbal formulae"—LJ 32/2; Legge, II, 330. The LJ also mentions the importance of special clothing, to render visible the inner state of the ritual participant.

"…body and mind"—On the page, the ritual described in Analects 10, for instance, seems quite ludicrous. Imagined instead as fluid movements imbued with meaning, the rites seem much more elevated. Note that in early China reading texts almost invariably entailed chanting them, which blurred the line between reading and performance, body and mind. See Susan Cherniak (1994), pp. 54ff.

"…affect the body"—See "Shiming," for li, which may refer to LJ 10/22; Legge, I, 404.

"…the proper environment"—XZYD 52/14/6; 90/23/92 (Knoblock, II, 206; III, 162, both modified).
"...at each ceremonial occasion"—WeiY2, juan 7, "Yunzheng Xinan yigao liuji," emphasizes that the rites have changed throughout human history in response to changing situations.

"...of the social order"—In other cultures, rites go so far as to dramatize and even celebrate social conflict. See Victor Turner (1970). This happens less often in Chinese civil culture, although the blood offerings made in certain state rites, as well as ritual calls for revenge, preserve traces of an earlier, more militarized culture that recognizes violence and conflict as a prelude to the restoration of order. See Mark Lewis (1990); Li Xinlin (1989), chap. 4; Anne Cheng (1996), esp. p. 7f.

"...patterns) and new"—See Michael Puett (1997) on innovation vs. transmission in the culture. David McMullen (1988), p. 117, says, "It was a central feature of scholars' attitudes to the tradition that ritual usage changed with time and would continue to do so ... The ritual canons ... were often 'deficient and incomplete' as far as directives for specific rituals were concerned."

"...obvious social segmentation"—LJ 27/2: "In the government of antiquity, caring for others was most important; thus ritual was the most important of their methods of rule." Cf. e.g., LJ 3/14; Legge, I, 126. LJ 15/33; Legge, II, 49. LJ 20/23; Legge, II, 144, 149. LJ 42/1; Legge, II, 412.

"...disembodied and the unseen"—LJ 24/6; Legge, II, 212; LJ 9/8; Legge, I, 371.

"...immersion into the Other"—For "immersion" into the Other, see FY 5:12-13 (2x).

"...Euro-American sense"—For a clear definition of Chinese equality, see Wolfgang Bauer (1979), pp. 21-22. For the need to differentiate (bie) the functions of and treatment accorded those in the Five Relations, see CIS, III, 63. For examples of the "true king's" obligation to care for his people as part of the ritual system, see CIS, III, 59. The king's laws and institutions are to " accord with the people's hearts" (he minxin), as in CIS, III, 63.

"...or her abilities"—"Goods and wealth are not to be expected from the poor in their discharge of the rules of propriety, nor the display of sineews and strength from the old." See LJ 1/26; Legge, I, 78; cf. LJ 1/35; Legge, I, 90.

"...the common people"—LJ 27/1; Legge, II, 262. Cf. Mencius 1/2-3 (Lau, 49-52); also, the interesting argument in CIS, III, 101, that the sages did not create music for their own pleasure, but for the social good.

"...monthly communal people"—See Perry and Wong (1985), pp. 46-47, on enforced "charity." There are also gift-giving contests that re-circulate wealth. Cf. Yunxiang Yan (1996), p. 3.

"...social status quo"—For example, sumptuary regulations could be used to promote a meritocratic system. And ritual pailou (ceremonial arches) erected to celebrate chaste widows served to elevate a few women above most men in the moral hierarchy.

"...middle and knows"—For the rites as the recreation of the Dao, see Xunzi's "On Ritual," which throughout adapts the language of chap. 77 of the Laozi Daodejing (Lau, 139) to describe the power of the rites (e.g., XZYD 71-72/19/32-34). "The Secret [that] sits..." is Robert Frost's metaphor for the Dao.

"...course of the day"—Cf. Ruth Padel (1995), pp. 65, 95. The most solemn rites of China, as of early Greece, can be associated with raving. Only such extreme emotion can bring needed release. See Elizabeth Johnson (1988). Note also the standard use of madmen in exorcisms associated with funerals, as in Ebrey (1991).

"...connection to the dead"—LJ 24/7; Legge, II, 213.
"...improbable, impossible claims"—Barbara Myerhoff (1978), pp. 86, 105ff. Ronald Grimes (1982), p. 49, comments on ritual play: "Celebration is not to be confused with Western optimism; it is not mere yes-saying." It is a mode of embracing the present.

"...less-than-ideal behavior"—LJ 32/7; Legge, II, 332, which criticizes various sorts of ren behavior, including being "[over-]solicitous about oneself."

"...location seldom matters"—To early classicists, what made a site holy over time was the quality and quantity of moral — often ritual — acts enacted at the site (for example, the continuation of special sacrifices to the gods). Therefore, the precise location of the Five Sacred Mountains (except for Mt. Tai) was relatively unimportant; what mattered was their cosmologically significant number and the rituals that honored them. Similarly, Chinese capitals were moved repeatedly over the course of Chinese history (sometimes several times in one dynasty) to suit the convenience of the emperor or to meet changing socioeconomic and political realities. The classicists offered no vociferous protests; one chapter in their Documents instead celebrated the model king who moved his capital, for what made a city the king's capital were its ritual halls and educational institutions, where the classical Way of the Ancients was taught to successive generations. See Michael Nylan (forthcoming-b).

"...from present disorder"—This point is made in Paul Wheatley (1971), esp. chap. 5; Kristopher Schipper (1993), pp. 85ff.; and Angela Zito (1994), p. 103. Wheatley, in particular, contrasts those societies that embrace revelation from a monotheistic God (and therefore value the site at which revelations occurred) with those societies in which all sites are potentially sacred.

"...and system making"—Xunxi, in his chapter on ritual, specifically says that "he who tries to enter it with the kind of perception that distinguishes hard and white, same and different, will drown there.... He who tries to enter it with the uncouth and inane theories of the system-makers will perish there."


"...work of self-transformation)"—Cf. the Zuozhuan, specifically CQYD 414/Zhao 25/2 Zuo (Legge, 708).

"...with a greater entity"—This is the basic argument presented in the opening arguments of XZYD 19.

"...and social unity"—Argument of Martin Whyte (1974), chaps. 1-3, which recalls XZYD 70/19/1-5. Sumptuary regulations seek to realize in politicaal institutions the words of Confucius: "Without ritual, one has no way to establish oneself" (See Analects 16/13).

"...among the ruler's subjects"—Details of the "well-field" system were extracted from sections in the Di guan chapter of the Zhouli (e.g., "Sui jen"). Cf. CIS, III, 97; Mencius 3A/3; Lau, pp. 99-100.

"...toward the common good"—This vision is found elsewhere in the Rites, e.g., in LJ 29/4; Legge, II, 281: "Heaven is impartial in what it covers; Earthh is impartial in what it supports; the sun and moon are impartial in what they shine upon."

"...of social hierarchy"—Mencius 3A/3; Lau, p. 99. Mencius writes, "The eight families share the duty of caring for the plot owned by the state. Onlyy when they have done this duty dare they turn to their own affairs. This is what sets the common people apart [from the ruler]."
"...was public-spirited"—According to Zheng Xuan's commentary, this means that the throne was passed on to sages, rather than to members of one's family. LJZS 21/3a.

"...portion [of land]"—Or, following Zheng Xuan, "[their] allotted [tasks]." See LJ 21/3a.

"...also from this"—LJ 9/1; Legge, I, 364-66; cf. Wing-tsit Ch'an (1963a), pp. 377-78.

"...morally serious society"—Cf. "There is no such thing in the world as acquiring honorable position by birth" (LJ 11/24: Legge, I, 438).

"...to cherish them"—These three injunctions occur, respectively, in Analects 12/5 (Waley, 163-64); Analects 12/2 (Waley, 162); Analects 7/5 (Walley, 123) and Analects 5/26 (Waley, 114 [renum.]).

"...among the living"—Yang Xianggui (1986). Presumably, the fundamental notion of the rites as reciprocal gifts underwent a shift of emphasis evident by the time of Confucius (551-479 BC), if not before. After the eleventh century BC Zhou conquest over Shang, a growing preoccupation with human affairs, rather than with propitiation of the gods, manifested itself in two ways. First, it came to be believed that the gods were satisfied less by gifts (or bribes) than by their descendants' proper arrangement of human affairs. Second, as the notion of ritual expanded from exchange between the living and the dead to exchanges among the living, it came to dominate a whole way of patterned existence. Confucius completed this conversion of old rites, with their emphasis on propitiation of gods, to new rites that emphasize reciprocity and celebrate the human aesthetic, associating both with the pursuit of goodness. See Gunnar Heinsohn (1996), esp. 98-99; Rene Girard (1987). Vassili Kryukov (1995), p. 317, contrasts the exteriority of the Shang exchange with Zhou ritualism, which first differentiated inner ideas from outer forms.

"...a gift for a gift"—Thus a focus on the rites beautifully meshes with an emphasis on filial piety, which is seen as an attempt to repay the gift of life from the elder generation. As Joyce Lebra (1974) notes, certain gifts can never be fully repaid. As background, note that virtually all Western Zhou bronzes mention gifts from the king or lord, first as part of the ceremony of infeudation and then as part of the ritual of appointment to office. The Zuozhuan highlights the importance of gifts, most notably in entries concerning the appointment of Duke Wen of Jin as hegemon. Gifts also figure in accounts of interstate meetings where earlier presentations from the Zhou king are cited to justify status rankings, to explain obligations, and even to justify rebellions. That this association continues after unification in 221 BC is confirmed by HSWZ 4/11, which defines the lord as "one who distributes largess according to ritual."

"...are in danger"—LJ 1/5; Legge, I, 65.

"...disinterested and self-interested"—Marcel Mauss (1950), p. 1. Critics of Mauss include Malinowski, Levi-Strauss and Sahlins, but his discussion of gifts still dominates anthropology. As Mauss wrote, societies like China that recognize the advantages of the gift, though often mischaracterized as comparatively primitive or simple, tend to rely on alliance, gifts, and trade, instead of war, isolation, and stagnation.

"...love last forever"—Ode 64/1. Perhaps the emphasis on honorable requital was transferred from older definitions of the nobleman to the Confucian "noble man." The bao (requital) associated with the rites and the bao of law differ significantly in the penal code's requirement that the requital be "matched" (dang), as shown in A.F.P. Hulsewé (1955), p. 80.
"…with the receiver"—C.A. Gregory (1980), on "inalienable objects." Annette Weiner (1992), in contrast, thinks that the only thing that motivatesless reciprocity is the reverse — the desire to keep something back. Note that this construction of gift relations, for China at least, stems not from any modern impulse to romanticize non-Western societies, but from explicit theory in the Rites canons. See Lien-sheng Yang (1957).

"…than diminishes existence"—This definition of paradox is borrowed from Eva Brann (1979), p. 1.

"…all in one's hand"—XZYD 14/5/49 (Knoblock, I, 209), following Hall and Ames (1995), p. 209. The performance aspect of the rites requires that the ritual rules be continually adjusted to the participants' situation and needs, lest the rites prove deadening, rather than enlivening. As Hall and Ames, p. 237, remarks, to achieve ren, one acts ritually by personalizing formal patterns of conduct.

"…in its transformative powers"—"The noble man says, 'Ceremonies and music should not for a moment be neglected by any one.... From them, .. comes joy and then repose. The man in this constant repose becomes a sort of heaven, becomes a sort of god.'" (LJ 24/34; Legge, II, 224). Note that the construction of human imagery in ritual is perceived as an entirely natural phenomenon, pursued as a complement to and extension of the patterning of the heavens and the topography of the earth, as reported in Hall and Ames (1995), p. 223.

"…one's thoughts and deeds"—See arguments in the "Doctrine of the Mean"; cf. XY A/6b (Ku, 83).

"…and faithful 'transmission'"—In Analects 7/1, of course, Confucius says of himself that he is a transmitter, not a creator. SJ 130:3299-3300, however, credits Confucius with creating. Talk of creating vs. transmitting continues in Han, surfacing, for example, in Yang Xiong's poem in defense of the TXJ and in LH 84. Attempting to move beyond either the "intellectualist" or the "functionalist" approaches to ritual favored in the West, I argue the fundamental importance of paradox in the rites. The ritual performer does transmit messages encoded in the liturgy, but also enters into the order to which her own performance has given life. See Roy Rappaport (1979), p. 192. Therefore the successful ritual participant becomes a second Confucius.

"…conscious, direct, and aware"—The phrase comes from Chad Hansen (1992), p. 303, writing of Zhuangzi's approach to paradox; cf. Hall and Ames (1995), pp. 1151ff. Two Confucian masters who associated rituals with divine mysteries are Xunzi and Yang Xiong. The last line of Xunzi's famous "On Ritual," for example, speaks of the mourning rites as what "gives form to the bodiless" (See XZYD 76/19/127). To those who object that one should not extrapolate from the mourning rites to generalize about all rites, I answer that both Xunzi's chapter and the entire Liji consider the mourning rites to be the prototype for all rites. In further corroboration, see HSWZ 3/11-12.

"…to his birth mother)"—These needs are made plain in LJ 15, "Sangfu xiao ji," which discusses exceptional cases of mourning. For the need to balance en (debts incurred by emotional obligation) and yi (social duty), see WFJ, commentary to LJ 15, which draws some of its language from CQYD 148/Wen 2/8 Gong. In translating yi as "social duty," I reject the translation offered in Hall and Ames (1984), which reads the pair zide and zishi as "self-realizing" and "self-negating," rather than as "self-getting" and "self-defeating."

"…cosmic Dao itself"—See LZ 77 (Lau, 139), which gives nearly the same description of the Dao; cf. HSWZ 8/32. HSWZ 2/3 offers a clue as to why these rites are successful, since they, like the Way, are characterized equally by constancy and adaptability.
"...and repair deficiency"—XZYD 73/19/63.

"...achieved true ritual"—Watson, pp. 100, 102-3.


"...meaningful human interactions"—Western notions of self, for example, can be used to suggest that faulty genetics or the so-called culture of poverty will nullify the potentially beneficial effects on the poor of continuing education. Hence, arguments like those in Ambrose King (1991), p. 67, which credit the person in China with having greater autonomy, in the sense of shaping, if not controlling, the social realities. Ironies abound here, as America, the land of equality, is more likely to discount the possibility that greater equality can ever be achieved. Liu Shao’s (3rd c. AD) Renwu zhi, trans. in John Shryock (1937), p. 7, contains a rather unexpected assessment: "Confucius and Confucians generally incline toward freedom, while the Daoists incline toward determinism."

Reginald Johnston (1934), pp. 92-93, insisted that the Chinese enjoyed more personal autonomy than any other nationality, including the English. Far more critical assessments of the Chinese self have been expressed by Sun Long-kee (1991) and Po Yang (1992).

"...done for survival"—Donald Hall (1993), pp. 3-23, passim.

"...to those below"—LJ 25/7 ; Legge, II, 241, 243.

"...reading the Rites"—XZYD 2/1/26. For the description of America as less civic- and community-minded than ever before, see Robert Putnam (1995).<


"...need be said"—Analects 4/13 (Waley, 104). One wonders whether some of the academics may not have been influenced by René Girard (19987), which argues that earlier cultures dependent upon violence were saved by visions designed to supplant mimetic conflict with harmony. Girard focuses on Jesus Christ, but he also mentions Confucius.