

The above trifling errors notwithstanding, this reviewer believes that they change not one iota of value and contribution of the book. In fact, the book ignites the reviewer's intense interest in the distinction between *jisong* and *shi* poetry and in the diverse understandings of *wenzi chan* as an important constituent of Song Chan monastic literary culture. Readers will do well to add to their knowledge with this captivating book and will be left with many fresh new insights and questions to think about.

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DOI: 10.29708/JCS.CUHK.202207_(75).0006

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Empowered by Ancestors: Controversy over the Imperial Temple in Song China (960–1279). By Cheung Hiu Yu. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2021. Pp. xii + 216. HK\$620.

At first glance, *Empowered by Ancestors* would appear to be a tightly focused monograph on ritual protocol and performance at the ancestral shrine (*taimiao* 太廟) of the Song-dynasty imperial lineage. By making sacrifices to their ancestors as one component of their annual ceremonial cycle, Song monarchs were performing ideal virtues of rulership as filial sons and descendants, and some more than others were overtly attempting to revitalize the classical Way or *Dao* 道 of the sage-kings encoded within the classical ritual texts collected in the *Book of Rites* (*Li ji* 禮記). With the publication of this book, Cheung Hiu Yu has succeeded in restoring the central importance of ritual theory and practice within the political environments and scholarly milieux of the Northern and Southern Song. More important, his research findings on this seemingly arcane and oddly neglected subject could certainly illuminate many adjacent dimensions of history in middle-period China: conceptions of monarchical authority, political conflicts over state policy, disputes over classical exegesis, broader shifts in political culture, reorientations of elite discourse, and reformulations of social values.

Like all previous major dynasties, the imperial house of Zhao 趙 was a discontinuous patriline, a family tree regrafted with multiple adoptions and fraternal successions. Its first monarchical transition was non-normative, when the founding Emperor Taizu 太祖 (r. 960–976) was succeeded by his brother Emperor Taizong 太宗 (r. 976–997) under somewhat questionable circumstances. To follow

this tangled thread through to the end of the Northern Song, Emperor Yingzong 英宗 (r. 1063–1067) was the adopted son and first cousin of Emperor Renzong 仁宗 (r. 1022–1063), and Emperor Huizong 徽宗 (r. 1100–1126) succeeded his elder brother Zhezong 哲宗 (r. 1085–1100), who died young and sonless. In a long-established political culture where emperors demonstrated their filiality by making ritual sacrifices to their patriline, and in which monarchy was imagined as an unbroken father-to-son transmission, was it properly filial for the emperor to make offerings to his older brother and predecessor rather than to the father-monarch they both shared, or to his adopted father rather than his biological father? To introduce a further complication, the imperial clan could trace its pedigree back into the Tang dynasty, but did Taizu's great-great-grandfather, Zhao Tiao 趙朁 (Xizu 僖祖, 828–874), who predeceased the dynastic founding by nearly a century, truly deserve the honour of imperial sacrifice, or was this merely virtue signalling by his filial descendants?

When real-world complexity crashed into classically derived norms, there were no clear answers to these questions to be found in the *Book of Rites*, or in the dynastic ritual protocols inherited from the Tang for that matter, and it was left to ritual officials—the Erudites in the Commission of Ritual Affairs (*Liyuan taichang boshi* 禮院太常博士)—to resolve these ambiguities and to persuade the monarch and other court officials to alter Song sacrificial protocols, as well as the architecture of shrines and the arrangements of spirit tablets, accordingly. Admirably reconstructing ritual discourse on its own terms, Cheung offers a “contextual reading of different ritual texts to reveal their intra- and inter-relations,” endeavouring “to approach the decision-making moment of the authors who produced them,” thereby demonstrating that “liturgical details were much more important than official ritual codes” (p. 10).

The central problematic of the book consists of a series of Song scholar-officials' exegeses of a short passage, “Regulations of the Kings” (*Wangzhi* 王制), a granular description of Zhou-dynasty ancestral temples that was later compiled into the *Book of Rites* by Han-dynasty commentators. The text prescribed a *zhaomu* 昭穆 sequence of individual temples, arrayed along two parallel lines of *zhao*- and *mu*-ancestors, which converged at the central shrine of the “Primal Ancestor” (*shizu* 始祖) who founded the imperial lineage, if not the reigning dynasty. Confucian scholars of the early imperial period “considered the *zhaomu* as a representation of the political succession from the founding ancestor of a royal family to their extant ruler,” arrayed into a spatial hierarchy that indicated generational seniority (p. 19). Chapter One demonstrates that by the Eastern Han, this proscribed system of multiple temples had been replaced by an arrangement of separate chambers, each of which housed an individual ancestral tablet, within

a single temple structure that was divided into *zhao* and *mu* moieties and reserved a central place for the “Primal Ancestor.” Both the Tang and Song courts adopted this multiplex under-one-roof model for their imperial ancestral shrines, and the crucial debates amongst ritual erudites revolved around *which* ancestors’ spirit tablets belonged there and how they should be properly sequenced and spatially arranged.

Cheung devotes several chapters of *Empowered by Ancestors* to painstakingly reconstructing Song court disputes over the proper sequence and order of imperial ancestral rituals, explaining these texts and unpacking these arguments lucidly. He locates two competing (and overlapping) discourses and interpretations of their proper function: the first was “merit-based” and the second valorized filial piety. The former was exclusive and selective, recognizing the individual achievements of a monarch’s ancestors, especially the dynastic founder, and assumed that “only those ancestors who contributed remarkably to the foundation of the dynasties were qualified to be permanently stored in the temple” as spirit tablets (p. 36). In contrast, the latter was governed by strict genealogical seniority, performing and visualizing the quality of filial piety by honouring the dynastic patriline all the way back to the imperial house’s Primal Ancestor, regardless of each progenitor’s actual historical achievements, or lack thereof. To be sure, these two discourses were not monolithic or mutually exclusive, and were subject to merger and compromise; for example, late Tang ritual officials sought to honour an especially meritorious ancestor as the Primal Ancestor while revering imperial ancestors in their entirety within the imperial ancestral shrine.

In the early reigns of the Northern Song, a merit-based discourse prevailed amongst the court’s ritual experts, as detailed in Chapter Two. After the fraternal succession from Taizu to Taizong, Erudites ultimately persuaded Taizong’s son (and Taizu’s nephew), Emperor Zhenzong 真宗 (r. 997–1022), that both of their spirit tablets should be placed side-by-side in the same shrine chamber, since the *zhaomu* sequence only legitimately applied to successive generations of monarchs, not brothers. Cheung speculates that honouring Taizu’s merits might have been an attempt to resolve conflict amongst branches of the imperial line, placating Taizu’s heirs in order to “ease their discontentment with the monopoly of the throne by Taizong’s line,” substituting ritual superiority for structural marginality (p. 59). Yet, during the Qingli 慶曆 era (1041–1048) of Emperor Renzong’s reign, ritual officials reached an entirely different consensus, imagining the current monarch’s conspicuous expression of filial piety as the major function of the imperial shrine, and honouring the dynasty’s obscure first ancestor Xizu, despite his nonexistent role in its founding.

For me, the highlights of the book were Chapters Three and Four, in which Cheung deftly unpacks some very complex ritual debates in 1072 and 1079 about the proper arrangement of ancestral tablets within the imperial shrine according to the *zhaomu* sequence of seniority. While these years were the high point of the reformist New Policies (*xinfa* 新法) regime, a time of fierce factional conflict at Emperor Shenzong's 神宗 (r. 1067–1085) court, Cheung maintains, quite plausibly, that this controversy was “a relatively independent event in which factional concerns appeared less relevant” and “was associated more with different conceptions of antiquity and ancient ritual practices than with political struggles” (pp. 83–84). In fact, he finds that more dissension occurred *within* the reformist camp than with their anti-reformist adversaries, and that the general tendency amongst Shenzong's ritual officials was for the reigning emperor to express filial piety towards distant dynastic progenitors in general, more than to reward the merit of any specific monarchs. Cheung resists the tendency to speculate about what these ritual officials' political motivations and policy programmes might have been, but I could see why shifting the focus away from Taizu and diverting ritual attention back to his distant progenitors could have been intended to clear the path for the deep structural reform of state institutions beyond the dynastic founder's blueprints.

Chapter Five takes a deep dive into the ritual scholarship of Wang Anshi's 王安石 (1021–1086) “New Learning” (*xinxue* 新學), the most influential intellectual movement of the late Northern Song, which has been almost entirely ignored in the English-language historiography. In quality and scope, this book confirms and extends the findings of Jaeyoon Song's monograph, *Traces of Grand Peace*,¹ by demonstrating that there was substantial diversity and disagreement within this movement, when read through their commentaries on the *Book of Rites*, especially Wang Zhaoyu's 王昭禹 (fl. 1080) *Zhouli xiangjie* 周禮詳解 and Chen Xiangdao's 陳祥道 (1042–1093) *Lishu* 禮書. Intriguingly, some New Learning ritual scholars and officials were in close dialogue with those from other scholarly affiliations, most notably the Cheng 程 brothers. Wang's political and scholarly circle was divided between advocates of merit-based and filiality-based approaches to the *zhaomu* ritual sequence, but the latter approach ultimately won out in the late Northern Song, when Huizong's new ritual code of 1113, the *Zhenghe wuli xinyi* 政和五禮新儀, affirmed Xizu as the Primal Ancestor and formalized a bilateral sorting of every previous monarch into *zhao* and *mu* lines.

¹ Jaeyoon Song, *Traces of Grand Peace: Classics and State Activism in Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2015).

Perhaps Cheung's most unexpected conclusion is his assertion in Chapter Six that profound intellectual continuities existed between the ritual learning of Wang Anshi and the *Daoxue* 道學 synthesizer Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), whose conception of the spatial arrangement of the imperial ancestral shrine echoed those of New Learning scholars, when he revisited the ritual debates of the 1070s in his own commentaries on the *Book of Rites*. Perhaps the passage of time had de-escalated the intensity of eleventh-century intellectual conflicts between *xinxue* and *Daoxue*, and Cheung suggests that Zhu “could value” Wang’s ritual learning “in a more objective way” (p. 139). Furthermore, in Chapter Seven, Cheung demonstrates that when *Daoxue* spread through a horizontal network of locally based institutions in the late Southern Song, the discourse of imperial ancestral rituals underwent a process of what he terms “socialization,” predicated upon a “detachment of these rituals from their imperial context,” and a divergence between the court and elites in local society (p. 160). In creating family precepts that revived the spirit of antiquity, ritual scholars like Lü Zuqian 呂祖謙 (1137–1181) advocated that local elites should employ the *zhaomu* sequence to arrange the spirit tablets within their own families’ ancestral shrines (*citang* 祠堂); Zhu Xi’s contemporary Zheng Genglao 鄭耕老 (1108–1072) went so far as to claim that *zhaomu* was a transcendent universal principle, just as applicable to local gentlemen’s descent groups as it was to the imperial lineage.

Empowered by Ancestors is the product of meticulous textual scholarship and offers clear translations and incisive analyses of technically challenging (even forbidding) material, which I hope will be well received by both the sinophone and anglophone communities of sinologists. But I would venture beyond Cheung’s more circumscribed conclusions to argue that this book is making a more substantive contribution to the social history of Song China. Providing major data points that support the localization hypotheses of such senior scholars as Robert Hymes, Peter Bol, and Beverly Bossler, Cheung has delineated a shift from court-centred discourses and practices of ritual in the Northern Song to *shi*-oriented discourses and practices in the Southern Song, corresponding to a *longue-durée* shift in the locus of elite practices and orientations outwards and downwards from the imperial court to local society. One of the chief virtues of this book is its laser-like focus on classical exegesis and ritual protocol, as reflected through granular debates over the proper application of the *zhaomu* sequence by Northern Song ritual erudites and Southern Song *Daoxue* scholars. Yet, I would encourage Cheung to contextualize his findings about the imperial family’s and scholar officials’ ancestral shrines within the broader landscape of social history, and to broaden his base of primary sources beyond court memorials and ritual codes to include the

wealth of corroborating evidence from collected works (*wenji* 文集) and funerary inscriptions (*muzhiming* 墓誌銘). He did exactly this in a 2018 article on family ancestral shrines (*jiamiao* 家廟) in the Northern Song,² which unearthed previously neglected practices of honouring the merits and virtues of scholar-officials' male ancestors, and identified parallel discourses that enabled scholar-officials to signal their own meritorious service as imperial bureaucrats while representing their own status identity as filial practitioners of ritual. Along the same lines, I would have also liked to have seen him respond to Cong Ellen Zhang's recent monograph, *Performing Filial Piety in Northern Song China: Family, State, and Native Place*.³ As I read them, Cheung's findings support Zhang's interpretation of the corpus of Northern Song funerary inscriptions, which reveal how crucial the performance of filiality was to maintaining conceptions of individual and collective identity amongst scholar-officials and within their lineages. And ranging farther afield, beyond textual representations of ritual practices into archaeology and art history, I would encourage Cheung to explore the connections between ancestral shrines and scholar-official as well as imperial tombs, which were the other major architectural structure in which descent groups both expressed filial piety and honoured meritorious ancestors. Nevertheless, I would recommend *Empowered by Ancestors* to all middle-period specialists, for demonstrating the centrality of ancestral ritual discourses and practices across intellectual, political, cultural, and social history, because the implications of its research findings are more influential than they might initially surmise.

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DOI: 10.29708/JCS.CUHK.202207_(75).0007

² Cheung Hiu Yu, "Inventing a New Tradition: The Revival of the Discourses of Family Shrines in the Northern Song," *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 47 (2017–2018): 85–136.

³ Cong Ellen Zhang, *Performing Filial Piety in Northern Song China: Family, State, and Native Place* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2020).