

The Sage Unbound: Ritual Metaphors in the *Daode jing**

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Abstract

This article endeavors to describe and analyze passages of the different versions of the *Daode jing* according to their ritual content. It begins by asserting that the term *li* 禮, usually translated as “ritual,” encompasses two different domains: the *Ru* 儒 conception of a ritually ordained society and the detailed execution of ceremonies. The *Daode jing* rejects the first aspect but draws from ritual details in order to construct a series of philosophical interpretations. Two examples in particular show the soundness of the ritual knowledge of the redactors of the text and its versions: the first one linked to military and funeral ritual, the second one with gift-giving ritual. This study analyzes those interpretations through three themes: simplicity and the question of origins; generosity of the Sage and royal magnanimity; the Sage and the king, body, self-sacrifice and the dialectic between the masculine and the feminine.

The passages related to those themes contain images and metaphors derived from ancient ceremonies. The precise analysis of those images shows that the redactors of the *Daode jing* were well aware of the subtlety

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of archaic rituals but chose to select elements that resonated with the ideal of simplicity they extolled. They build on a sacrificial system present in the ritual of Eastern Zhou dynasty, centered on two kinds of offerings: the great stew and the numerous tasty side dishes. The great stew, offered to the creators of human civilization was bland and this blandness was the metaphor the redactors used to present the Way as the pure potential from which everything else emerged. Furthermore, they transformed and subverted ritual characteristics of the old Zhou monarchy, particularly those related to the virtues of generosity of the archaic kings, and the ideology of self-sacrifice of the monarchs, in order to give birth to a new Sage-king, superior to the kings of old, one with the Way and unbound from any limitation.

Keywords: *Daode jing*, ritual, metaphors, simplicity, royal virtues

不受限的聖人——《道德經》的儀式隱喻

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摘要

本文致力於描述和分析不同版本的《道德經》中提及儀式內容的段落。首先，「禮」這個字通常被翻譯為 *ritual*，但是事實上，「禮」應包括兩個不同的領域，一方面是儒家以禮治國概念中的「禮」，另一方面是墨守儀式的「禮」。《道德經》摒棄第一種「禮」，但卻利用繁瑣的禮儀細節，以建構一系列的哲學詮釋。本文提出兩個例子，以顯示《道德經》纂寫者對禮儀知識正確的認知：第一個與軍事和葬禮儀式相關，第二個關於送禮儀式。本研究將透過以下三個主題來分析《道德經》的儀式隱喻：簡單性和起源問題；慷慨的聖人和王室氣度；聖人和國王、身體、自我犧牲以及男性和女性之間的辯證關係，與這些主題相關的段落包含來自古老儀式的描繪和比喻。這些描繪的精確分析，顯示纂寫《道德經》者既深諳古老儀式的奧妙，又選擇他們理想中讚頌的簡樸。他們在東周儀式中採用一種以兩種祭品為中心的祭祀系統——大羹與庶羞。大羹——供獻給人類文明的創造者，是淡而無味的，這種淡而無味，用來比喻「大道」那種未出現他物前純粹未知的潛能。此外，他們還改造和顛覆舊時周朝君主制的禮儀特點，特別是那些有關古老國王的慷慨美德和自我犧牲的君主思想，用以創造出一個新的聖王，優於老的國王，一個順從「道」的無拘無束的聖王。

關鍵詞：《道德經》、儀式、隱喻、簡樸、王室美德