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This broad-ranging examination of Chinese state and court ritual from 1000 BC to AD 1750 represents the first modern comprehensive account of the subject in any language. The essays demonstrate how and why ritual has played such a fundamental and often controversial role in the practice of Chinese politics. By tracing the political and social development of particular rituals, such as imperial funerals and popular religious practices or Buddhist ordination ceremonies and court audiences, the authors set out to convey their historical significance. Further discussion of the role of ritual in relation to language, and elite and popular concepts of emperorhood, is included in the volume. The book will be of interest to students of Chinese history, anthropology, and religion, as well as those seeking to understand the legacy of that history in the context of modern China.

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# State and court ritual in China

Edited by

**JOSEPH P. McDERMOTT**

*University of Cambridge*



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## CONTRIBUTORS

- ROBERT L. CHARD University Lecturer, University of Oxford, and Fellow of St Anne's College
- NICOLA DI COSMO Assistant Professor, Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures, Harvard University
- DAVID FAURE University Lecturer in Modern Chinese History, University of Oxford, and Fellow of St Antony's College
- ANDREAS JANOUSCH Research Fellow, Emmanuel College, University of Cambridge
- MICHAEL LOEWE Fellow Emeritus of Clare Hall, University of Cambridge
- JAMES LAIDLAW University Lecturer in Social Anthropology, University of Cambridge, and Fellow of King's College
- MARK EDWARD LEWIS University Lecturer in Chinese, University of Cambridge
- JOSEPH P. McDERMOTT University Lecturer in Chinese, University of Cambridge, and Fellow of St John's College
- DAVID L. McMULLEN Professor of Chinese, University of Cambridge, and Fellow of St John's College
- OLIVER MOORE Assistant Curator, Department of Oriental Antiquities, British Museum
- JESSICA RAWSON Warden of Merton College, University of Oxford

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This volume is the outcome of a conference, 'State and Court Ritual in China', held at St John's College, Cambridge, on 6–8 April 1993. For many years the topic of this conference had been considered important for an understanding of Chinese history. But it has long suffered serious neglect due to a reputation for being a highly esoteric backwater of sinology which most scholars had the wits to avoid. Cambridge being the sort of place it is, a surprising number of its teaching staff and graduate students had by the early 1990s come to share this erudite interest. And so, it was decided that a conference on this topic was not only desirable but also feasible. At the conference itself fourteen papers, ten of which are collected here, were presented on virtually every major Chinese dynasty. The authors benefited greatly from the participation of scholars not represented in this volume: Tim Barrett, Peter Burke, Patricia Ebrey, Stefan Feuchtwang, Jack Goody, Robert Hinde, Gilbert Lewis, Robert Neather, Edward Shaughnessey, Edward Shils, and Hans van de Ven. Much of the conference's intellectual discussion, if not its humour, has found its way back into the papers, and I hope that these articles will serve as evidence of what was a highly instructive and pleasant occasion.

The conference was supported by St John's College, Cambridge; the British Museum; the Spalding Fund; and a generous gift from an anonymous American donor. St John's provided exemplary service and support; I can imagine few places more pleasant for holding a conference. In organizing the proceedings I benefited considerably from the advice of Michael Loewe, who helped out with the initial preparation for the conference, and from David McMullen, whose knowledge of Chinese state ritual helped to shape the concerns of many of the Cambridge papers here. Later as editor, I again benefited from them, from my colleague Mark Lewis, and from a St John's graduate student Ken Brashier for his help with the glossary. I wish to express my sincere gratitude to them all and to all others who made the conference a success and helped to see its papers end up in this volume.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

CSJC	<i>Congshu jicheng</i>
SBBY	<i>Sibu beiyao</i>
SBCK	<i>Sibu congkan</i>
SKQSZB	<i>Siku quanshu zhenben</i>