

Chen Hsi-yuan: Different Faces of State Confucianism: The State *Li* Sacrifice and the Ghost Festival in Late Imperial China

Abstrakt:

The sacrificial altars were the nucleus of the official religious system in imperial China. Ideally, through a series of sacrificial rituals performed on the altars, the local government prayed on behalf of the Emperor for divine protection and demonstrated their care for the people's life from cradle to grave. In comparison with the Altar for Land and Grain in the west, the Altar for the natural Deities in the south, and the Altar for the spirits of Agriculture in the east, the Altar for the dead who did not receive any sacrifices in the north was arguably the most popular one which served as the very center to host annual ghost festivals.

By using the *li* sacrifice in Suzhou (prefecture) as a case study, my presentation proposes to explore multifarious dimensions of State Confucianism in terms of the local altar system practiced on each county and prefecture level. The ambiguous role of the city god who symbolically officiated the *li* sacrifice will be accordingly examined since His supernatural power was legitimately endorsed by the State and enthusiastically worshipped by the populace. Moreover, special attention will be paid to the dynamic interactions between the state rites and popular religions. When the people in Suzhou went out to “watch the fair” for the unworshipped ghosts, they did not really expect to encounter any of the wandering souls. What they really saw and enjoyed was a raucous spectacle drawing large crowds of people. And they were part of it. Ironical as it may sound, the official cult designed originally for the dead without descendants' sacrifice had turned out to be a popular carnival for the living without social or gender differentiation.

O přednášejícím:

Prof. Chen ukončil doktorské studium na Harvardově univerzitě. V současné době působí jako vědecký pracovník na Ústavu historie a filologie, Academia Sinica, Taiwan. Je také ředitelem Archivu z dynastií Ming a Qing a nově i ředitelem Centra pro digitální kulturu na Academia Sinica.



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