

Sacred Kingship and Sacrifice in Ancient India and China
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Abstract

This unit aims to establish a pedagogical framework for a comparative study of ancient India and ancient China on the basis of reading primary sources across cultural traditions. This comparison aims not at finding universals, but examining practices (such as ritual sacrifice) and ideas (such as origin myths) in light of questions that arise outside of any one tradition in order to understand both what is common and what is distinctive. Ancient India and China share conceptions of the cosmos in which humans work in concert with the gods to maintain the proper order of the world. They also share a similar sense of socio-political order grounded in religious practices that served to legitimate the rule of those who possess ritual knowledge (such as kings in ancient China) or those who could employ those who possess it (such as princes in ancient India). There are important differences, such as the very early emergence of sacred kingship in China, where the sovereign, as a living descendant of gods, possessed privileged access to them, whereas in India, the kshatrya princes were reliant upon an alliance with brahmans, who possessed the ritual knowledge to conduct sacrifices (such as the horse sacrifice) that legitimated princely rule.

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1. Themes and Goals

This unit helps students understand a world in which society and governance were subsumed within a larger religious order and in which effective social, political, and economic administration depend upon proper performance of ritual obligations. (For example, we can see this in "The Canon of Shun," in the *Book of Documents*, where the ruler Shun offers sacrifice to the gods before holding audience with local princes.) As such, this unit raises historically

grounded doubts about pervasive assumptions today that the secular social and political order is more basic or fundamental than religion.¹

The materials in this unit may be approached on three levels: First, students may be expected to master the content, which concerns religion and governing in ancient India and China. Second, they are developing skills in close reading, making sense of these mythical and ritual texts. Third, they are interpreting primary texts in translation in relation to their respective historical and political contexts.² For example, the texts provide insights into the nature of the institution of the king, which integrates social, political, and religious aims. The insights into ancient Indian and Chinese culture should strike a balance between the recognition that the world's diverse societies encounter comparable situations posed by the world, on one hand, and that they each follow a historically unique set of solutions to those problems, on the other.

2. Audience and Uses

This unit was originally designed for the course “Exploring Culture in the Great Cities of Asia” offered at Hamilton College. It could be used in a similar course as well as in a wide variety of other courses including but not limited to:

- World History (especially on the ancient world)
- Comparative History
- Introduction to Asia (South and East Asia)
- Comparative Religions
- Asian Religions
- Nobility, Civility, and Kingship in Comparative Perspective

The unit is designed for four class sessions (see schedule as outlined in Student Readings section below) but also offers readings and activities that could be tailored by the instructor to fill a somewhat smaller or larger number of class sessions.

¹ Such assumptions are distinctively modern and grounded in a prescriptive desire largely beginning in the Enlightenment to separate institutional religions from rationally constituted governments. This unit presents an alternative to the modern historical narrative in which all human societies are imagined to live in such discretely organized systems. Talal Asad's and Prasenjit Duara's work listed below provide historically grounded theoretical alternatives to modernist historiography.

² This is based on reading strategies aimed at asking questions that uncover insights beyond the texts' literal meaning, but yet that do not overdetermine the reading of these sources with contrived symbolic, structuralist readings (e.g., sometimes sacrifice is principally concerned with feeding gods).

3. Instructor's Introduction

Ancient Religions

The following are some general propositions about the nature of ancient religions such as Vedism, Confucianism, Daoism, ancient Greek religions, and Judaism. These contrast to more recent religious traditions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam, which tend to have undergone more systematic unification by political authority. This created the appearance of doctrinal coherence in the latter, although they often also grew out of those earlier traditions, and co-opted and redeployed elements from them.

Propositions on the Nature of Ancient Religions:

- They have **heterogeneous origins**, having been formed through a convergence of disparate, local traditions. Thus their “scriptures” contain contradictions and conflicting versions of gods and events (e.g., creation of the cosmos or human society). They are only *later* codified, but inconsistencies persist. This is particularly true of Vedism and Confucianism, but is also evident in the Old Testament.
- They are **based on orally transmitted rituals, myths, and wisdom, rather than written texts**. They are only *later* written *through codification*. Vedic and Confucian texts were primarily committed to memory by adepts as a means of gaining mastery over bodies of knowledge. Vedic “texts” were not written down until the arrival of the British.
- **Gods (there is almost always more than one god) with limited power are anthropomorphic and often converse with mortals**. Only *later* do they acquire greater power over the cosmos (as when Heaven [*tian*] converges with Shangdi in ancient China) or do they become subservient to greater, more abstract forces that dominate the cosmos (as when Brahmâ (creator god) is subordinated to dharma in Purânas; see “Prajâpati and Brahmâ,” *Hindu Myths*, pp. 43-46).
- **Sacrifice constituted the basis of the relationship between humans and gods**. Vedic and Confucian sacrifice were rituals of exchange that served to maintain the proper cosmic order; they did not effect inner, spiritual transformation of the participants. (See “The Horse Sacrifice” in *The Rig Veda* and “The Single Victim at the Border Sacrifice” in the *Book of Rites*.)

Ancient India

Vedism (1500-600 BCE)³:

- multiple gods worshiped without images or temples.
- Logic of Vedic sacrifice: universe created through dismemberment and sacrifice of the cosmic being Prajâpati (Lord of creatures)—a. k. a. Purusa—who willingly gives himself up for sacrifice as described in *Rg-Veda*.
- human responsibility to refabricate the cosmic body of Prajâpati by performing the same original sacrifice that recreates and regenerates the principles that govern the universe. *Why sacrifice?* It sustains and recreates the universe; it must be a *continuous* process.

Vedas:

- Vedas are oral traditions (not recorded until the arrival of Europeans) of *sacred knowledge* believed to have no human or divine origin. They are composed of cosmic utterances (*brahman*) heard by ancient seers who articulated these utterances as verse formulas called mantras used in ritual sacrifice to gods (e.g., Indra, Varuna, Agni, Soma). Brahman priests usually master one or two traditions, which take eight years to memorize.

Originally there were *three* Vedas, each used as the basis for different priestly roles in ritual. Each veda was composed of main text (*samhita*) and commentary (*Brahmanas*)

1. Rg-Veda (*wisdom of verses*; oldest): hymns—praises of and invocations to gods—recited by *hotr* priest during sacrifice.
2. Yajur-Veda (*wisdom of sacrifice*): ritual instructions for mechanics of sacrifice and sacred formulas (*mantras*) assigned to executive (*adhvaryu*) priest who performs major operations of the rite.
3. Sâma-Veda (*wisdom of chants*): adaptation of Rg-veda (chs. 8-9) mantras to music for chanting priest (*udgâtri*) with instructions on how to sing the verses.

Pantheon: — a multitude of gods, including

- Indra, the chariot-driving king of gods and warrior god who wields a thunderbolt to conquer the enemies of the gods;
- Varuna, sky god and guardian of the sacred law and cosmic order;
- Agni, both the fire god and the element fire used in sacrifice;
- Soma, a plant, the juice of which is used in sacrifice to induce a state of ecstasy in the priest; Prajâpati, Lord of Creatures, aka Purusha; and
- Brahmâ, the creator god.

³ This Unit focuses largely on the Vedic Era. For treatment of these issues in later religious texts (Upanishads (7th century B.C.E.-200 B.C.E.) and Mahâbhârata/Gita (2nd century B.C.E.)), see syllabus for “Exploring Culture in the Great Cities of Asia.”

Ancient China

Shang: 1700-1045 (bronze age)

Zhou: 1045-256 (iron age)

Western Zhou: 1027-771 BCE (capital in Xi'an, in present-day Shaanxi Province)

Eastern Zhou: 770-256 (capital in Luoyang, in present-day Henan Province)

Spring and Autumn 770-486

Warring States 403-256

Shang: The king is a direct descendant of gods and spirits that ruled the cosmos and thus is considered semi-divine. The most powerful deity in the Shang pantheon is named Di or Shangdi. The king is subservient to Di and had *privileged access to Di* through sacrifice (ritual feasting) and divination (communication through spirit writing). Oracle bones were made from tortoiseshell and the shoulder blade bones of oxen and deer.

Political function of Di: The king and his emissaries traveled throughout the Shang domain and participated in sacrifices to local clan ancestral spirits. This elevated Di over other local deities and ancestral spirits, making him a supreme deity rather than one ancestral spirit among many

Zhou kingship and the Mandate of Heaven: The Zhou royal clan did not destroy but rather built upon existing Shang religious institutions and practices that effectively justified Zhou conquest according to a doctrine known as the Mandate of Heaven. Significant differences between Shangdi and Heaven: Di was *never identified with the sky* or an *abstract concept of Heaven*. Access to Di was relatively straightforward; Di communicated with the human world through language in oracles that was intelligible to the living. Heaven was more abstract and universal, and thereby separated from the ancestral spirits of royal family. Access to gods during the Zhou became increasingly difficult.

The supreme deity is thus no longer associated with a particular ruling clan, but becomes a universal deity. This serves the needs of the Zhou who had to wrest the symbolic power of Di from the exclusive possession of the Shang royal clan. It also, however, made the legitimating power of gods contingent upon other factors, such as the king's virtuous rule. Thus, Heaven confers upon kings the right to govern the world based on continuation of the ruling house's good and proper governance. The king's right to govern is secure only as long as he governs properly.

The Five Classics

The primary readings included in the student readings section below are taken from two canonical books included in the Five Classics. The Classics were canonized in the early Han dynasty and underwent changes in subsequent periods due to competing versions of the texts that date to the late Zhou dynasty. The imperial courts under the Han, Tang, Song, Ming, and Qing each endorsed different versions of the Classics, had them engraved onto stone tablets and placed outside of the Directorate of Education in the capital. The earliest extant imperial edition of the Classics is called The Correct Meaning of the Five Classics (*Wujing zhengyi*, ed. Kong Yingda,

et. al., 653). [Further Reading: Michael Nylan. *The Five “Confucian” Classics*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001.]

The Five Classics:

- *Mao Odes (Maoshi, a.k.a. Book of Odes (Shijing))*, Mao Heng (3rd c. BCE)
- *Book of Rites (Liji)*, Zheng Xuan (127-200)
- *Book of Documents (Shujing)*, Kong Anguo 156-174?)
- *Zhou Changes (Zhouyi, a.k.a. Book of Changes (Yijing))*, Wang Bi (226-249)
- *Zuo Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals (Chunqiu Zuozhuan)*, Du Yu (222-284)

4. Instructor Readings

These two readings will allow the instructor to put the student readings presented in the following section in context.

Wilson, Thomas A. “Sacrifice and the Imperial Cult of Confucius.” *History of Religions* 41 (Feb. 2002): 251-87.

This article introduces the comparative approach to Confucianism and Vedism that underlies this unit. It focuses on Confucian sacrifice and draws comparisons with Indian and Greek ritual practices.

Ebrey, Patricia Buckley. *Confucianism and Family Rituals in Imperial China: A Social History of Writing about Rites*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.

This social history situates developments in Confucian ritual practices in the context of important social changes, particularly those in the family.

5. Class Schedule, Student Readings, and Student Activities

This unit was designed for four class sessions (see schedule below). The four-session unit is split into two parts—Part I (two class sessions) addresses myth and ritual in ancient India and Part II (two class sessions) addresses myth and ritual in ancient China.

Although the thrust of the entire unit is to show students that myth and ritual are integrated in significant ways, it is possible to organize the materials into a two-session unit on ancient myth or a two-session unit on ancient ritual. The readings on myth (indicated by “A” below) both contain numerous references to ritual sacrifices without explaining those rites in detail. The readings on rites (indicated by “B” below) contain some insight into the myths associated with the rites, but focus more on liturgical details

For a four-session unit, cover all materials in the order listed below.

For a two session unit, select the materials marked with an “A” or “B” below:

A = lectures, topics, and readings for a 2-session unit on ancient myth

B = lectures, topics, and readings for a 2-session unit on ancient ritual

Part I: Ancient India

Session 1 (A)

Lecture: Ancient Religions and the Vedic Era

Topics: Rg Veda and Vedism, Brahmanas; creation myths; pantheon: Prajâpati, Brahmâ; gender

Reading:

“Prajâpati and Brahmâ,” in *Hindu Myths: A Sourcebook translated from the Sanskrit with an introduction by Wendy Doniger O’Flaherty*. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1975. pp.25-55

Session 2 (B)

Lecture: Ancient India and the Vedic Era: Ritual, Sacrifice, and Governance

Topics: sacred foundations of the social order, political legitimation through ritual

Reading:

“The Horse Sacrifice,” in *The Rig Veda: An Anthology: One Hundred and Eight Hymns*. Selected, Translated and Annotated by Wendy Doniger O’Flaherty. New York: Penguin Books, 1981. pp. 87-95

Discussion Questions for Part I:

- How do myths explain the creation of the cosmos and its maintenance? Consider:
 - incest among gods
 - oblation/offerings
 - dismemberment
- What is the relation between governing and ritual?
- Is the modern distinction between politics and religion pertinent in this world view?

Part II: Ancient China

(Note: Having read the Vedic sources in Part I, most of the discussion questions for the Session 3 and Session 4 readings can be answered comparatively as well as on the basis of the Chinese context alone. Class discussion of comparative examples at this point will prepare students for the writing assignment below. In particular, they will develop a more focused thesis.)

Session 3 (A)

Lecture: Ancient China: Origin Myths

Topics: the Son of Heaven, Heaven’s Mandate, sacrifice

Reading:

“The Canon of Shun” from the *Book of Documents*

“The Canon of Shun,” in *The Chinese Classics*. Edited and Translated by James Legge. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1970. Pages 29-51.

Discussion Questions:

- “The Canon of Shun” is a chapter from the *Book of Documents*, one of the Five Confucian Classics, which were collected over the course of several hundred years, ending in about the third century B.C.E. The events described here take place in 2283-2205 B.C.E. *What does that tell us about relation between this text and events it describes?* For what types of information are these texts reliable sources?
- Who was Shun and what does the source say about him?
- What does “The Canon of Shun” suggest to us about royal succession and the virtues associated with the King?
- Once he receives the mandate to be sovereign, what does Shun do first? Once he establishes himself on the throne, then what does he do? How do Shun’s actions establish a paradigm for governance?
- What are the effects of music?
- What is the interrelationship among religion, society, and politics in ancient China?

Session 4 (B)

Lecture: Sacred kingship and sacrifice in Ancient China

Topics: oracle bones, divination, *Book of Odes*, sacrifice, victim, reciprocity, yin and yang

Reading:

“The Single Victim at the Border Sacrifice,” in *Li Chi, Book of Rites: An Encyclopedia of Ancient Ceremonial Usages, Religious Creeds, and Social Institutions*. Translated by James Legge. Edited with Introduction and Study Guide by Ch’u Chai and Winberg Chai. New York: University Books, 1967. pp. 416-420, 423-37.

Discussion Questions:

- What happens in the sacrifice? What is considered to be most important in offering sacrifice to gods?
- What is offered in sacrifice and what happens to these things both during and after the sacrifice?
- *Who* participates in the ritual and *how* do they participate? Who offers the sacrifice?
- Who receives the sacrifice?
- What is the reason (the purpose) for the sacrifice?
- What is needed in order to offer sacrifice?

Writing Assignment

Drawing from these sources, explain the interrelationships among religion, society, and governance in the context of kingship in ancient India and China. Think about such questions as: What is the religious function of social organization? What are the political effects of religious practice?

6. Instructor Notes on Student Readings

Notes on “Prajâpati and Brahmâ” and “The Horse Sacrifice” (Sessions 1 and 2)

In addition to the Vedas, this translation includes material from the Upanishads and the Mahabharata (epic), which date to the post-Vedic era. Thus the ideas expressed in them change

significantly. Early Vedic gods such as Brahma are conquered by later gods such as Vishnu (Krishna) and Shiva, and then are increasingly subordinated to the higher law of dharma — a term whose meaning also changes in these texts. “Prajâpati and Brahmâ” in *Hindu Myths* (25-55): The point of this reading is to trace the ways that religious beliefs change over time through *appropriation* of earlier myths and redefinition of earlier concepts to articulate new ones.

Brâhmanas: (1000-800 BCE)

- Aitareya Brâhmana (Rg-veda) [*Hindu Myths*, pp. 29-31]
- Kausîtaki Brâhmana (Rg-veda) [*Hindu Myths*, pp. 31-32]
- Satapatha Brâhmana (Yajur-veda) [*Hindu Myths*, pp. 32-33]

Upanishads (7th century BCE-200 BCE)

- Brhadâranyaka Upanisad (Satapatha Brâhmana /Yajur-veda) [*Hindu Myths*, pp. 34-35]

The power and status of earlier gods gradually declines as they become subject to greater forces (Prajâpati is no longer supreme in *Mahâbhârata*: pp. 35-6).

The conception of dharma changes from the Vedas and brâhmanas, in which it is the sacred duty of one’s occupation (sacrifice is the first dharma on p. 28), to the Upanishads and epics, in which it is laws governing existence even of gods.

New concepts such as karma (p. 46) emerge. In the Vedas and brâhmanas it simply refers to action and works. In the Upanishads and epics it is tied to the new idea of transmigration of the soul.

Notes on “The Canon of Shun,” *Book of Documents* (Session 3)

- “The Canon of Shun” is a chapter from the *Book of Documents*, one of the Five Confucian Classics, which were collected over the course of several hundred years, ending in about the third century B.C.E. The events described here take place in 2283-2205 B.C.E. *What does that tell us about relation between this text and events it describes?* For what types of information are these texts reliable sources?
Events are probably mythologized (for example, restructured, infused with newer values, or altered to serve later purposes) and the texts most likely express values of the 3rd Century BCE, the late Zhou not the Shang.
- Who was Shun and what does the source say about him? What does “The Canon of Shun” suggest to us about royal succession and the virtues associated with the King?
A sage-king, *chosen* successor to Yao. He did not inherit the throne. His character conformed to that of his predecessor: wise, accomplished, and intelligent.
- Once he receives the mandate to be sovereign, what does Shun do first?
 1. consults stars (i.e., gods) & organizes cosmos: examined pearl-adorned turning sphere with transverse jade tube to observe stars & harmonize movements of Seven Directors (stars & planets)
 2. sacrificed to a. God; b. Six honored ones; c. hills & rivers; d. host of spirits
 3. called in & confirmed princes’ appointments

- Once he establishes himself on the throne, then what does he do?
 1. establishes his sovereignty over the kingdom with tours of inspection (East, south, west, north) where he: a. sacrificed to Heaven, hills, and rivers; b. gave audience to princes; c. standardized their calendars, [musical] tubes used in ceremonies, and measures used in trade; d. regulated the Five Ceremonies (auspicious [sacrifice] /, grieving, guest, military, celebration) & other items used in rituals.
 2. What does he do when he returns? Reports to Accomplished Ancestor & sacrificed single bull
- How (else) do Shun's actions establish a paradigm for governance?
 1. communication with the four quarters (communication with local worthies, not directly with populace)
 2. observe seasons to ensure harvest; be kind to distant (non-kin); cultivate ability of relatives; honor the virtuous & confide in the good.
 3. selection of successor and of ministers (pp. 15-17 top)
- What are the effects of music?

Poetry is the expression of earnest thought; singing is the prolonged utterance of the expression; the notes accompany that utterance and are harmonized by the standard tubes. In this way the eight different kinds of musical instruments can be adjusted so that one shall not take from or interfere with another, and spirits and men are brought into harmony.
- What is the interrelationship among religion, society, and politics in ancient China?

Notes on "The Single Victim at the Border Sacrifice," *Book of Rites* (Session 4)

Read pp. 416-420 through #7 (#8-13 concern tangential issues), 423-431 (#8), 434 -437 (#14-#18), 443-448 (#14-#29).

This reading describes sacrifice, perhaps better understood as ritual feasting of the gods. The frequent comparisons between sacrifice and feasting among the living (e.g., p. 417 #1, p. 418 #3) suggest that these activities are similar enough to compare in this way

Section I

- Border Sacrifice (*Kiào* = *jiao* 郊) = king's or emperor's sacrifice to Heaven (south of palace) & Earth (north). Suburb refers to places outside the walls of the royal/imperial city, not the "burbs" in the contemporary sense.
- *Kau* = Zhou dynasty
- To "express thanks" (*bao* 報) has the more particular meaning of *to reciprocate*, in this case, to offer something in exchange for the gods' protection or other form of assistance.
- p. 417n4: "...the taste was not valued; what was held in honour was the scent of the air" = The flavor of the food was not important, what was honored was the [food's] aroma. Because the gods partake of sacrifice through its aroma they don't physically consume the food; thus, as it says later, rich flavors are not important in sacrifice
- p. 418-427: It is important to distinguish between different occasions for feasting in this chapter: some feasts were offered to gods (e.g., Section I para. 2, pg. 417) and others to heads of state (e.g., I. 1, pg. 417 top; I.3, pg. 418).

- p. 418: “developing influence” = yang 陽, a power or *influence* at work in the cosmos; “receding influence” = yin 陰. Drinking nourishes yang (music is played); eating nourishes yin (no music); later (e.g., p. 434) water. [Is yin not “a power or *influence* at work in the cosmos in this text? What about water?]
- p. 419 #5: “They did not dare to use for them things of extraordinary flavours. . .” should be read as “They did not dare to offer extraordinary or many flavors. . .” *viz.* they offered simple, unadorned foods.
- p. 420: “expanding influence” = yang 陽; “contracting influence” = yin 陰
- pp. 420 #8- 423 #13 concern tangential issues, such as violation of ritual, court audience, ceremonial primacy of the son of Heaven; and violation of ritual (again).
- p. 423 #16: “driving away pestilential influences” was a corrupt popular rite because it disturbed the ancestral spirits.
- p. 424#18: “beat his drums”: No music was to be played when fasting.
- #19: inside the Khû gate: Where carriages are parked; each rite must be performed in its appropriate place.
- #20-21: concern the Shê altar 社 for the god of soils; “darker and retiring influence of nature” refers to yin (vs. yang); kiâ 甲 is the name of the first day of a sixty day cycle.
- p. 425#20: to be an efficacious place to sacrifice to the god of soils, the Shê altar must be exposed to the workings of the cosmos.
- #21: first sentence should read: “Rites at the Shê altar are the means to service the Earth” (“as if” is a misleading translation)

Section II

- p. 426#1: "reared a pile of wood" used for cooking the sacrifice
- p. 428#4: fane = temple
- p. 429#4: Grand temple = ancestral temple of the royal family; only people who had the "same surname" could enter
- p. 430 (#7): God = Di 帝 or Shangdi 上帝; Ki, or Hâu Ki = Hou Ji 后稷, Lord Millet. manes = material spirit or "ghost" (without any spooky connotations)
- pp. 431(#9)-434 (#13) describes a cult of the Father of Husbandry and other lesser spirits who invented husbandry, etc. The sacrifice is called kâ or zha 軾

Section III

- pp. 437 (#1)-442 (#13): primarily concerned with other rituals, such as capping and weddings, but parallels with sacrifice can be found throughout: What conclusions can be drawn from them?

7. Comparative Opportunities

The following readings deal with sacrifice in ancient societies, for anyone interested, for example, in making comparisons across cultures for a comparative religion or world history course. The Greek and Roman cases make the closest comparisons with the Chinese case of royal sacrifices. *Leviticus* is more analogous to the Vedas in that they are both liturgical texts written for and by the priests who perform the sacrifices (although in *Leviticus* these ceremonies are not performed for rulers).

Greek and Hebrew Traditions:

These materials lend themselves to comparisons with Greek and Hebrew traditions, for example in world religions, world myth, or world civilizations courses.

Burkert, Walter. *Homo Necans: The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth*. Peter Bing, trans. Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1983.

Argues that ancient sacrifice grows out a natural of man's primitive instinct to hunt and kill.

Hesiod. *Theogony*. M. L. West, trans. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Theogony is a description of ancient Greek gods and the ceremonies devoted to them. (Useful as a primary source.)

Leviticus 1-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary. Jacob Milgrom. The Anchor Bible Vol. 3. New York: Doubleday, 1991.

A liturgical text that describes the ceremonies and sacrifices performed by ancient Hebrew priests. Can see a transition from anthropomorphic to more abstract and transcendent god analogous to the transition from Shangdi to Heaven (*tian*). (Useful as a primary source.)

Puett, Michael. *To Become a God: Cosmology, Sacrifice and Self-Divinization in Early China*. Harvard-Yenching Institute, Harvard University, 2002.

Also listed under "Further Reading," Puett makes excellent comparisons between ancient Chinese and ancient Greek sacrifice. Puett also has a section on *Theogony*.

Vernant, Jean-Pierre. *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece*. Janet Lloyd, trans. New York: Zone Books, 1996.

Contains excellent essays examining ancient Greek sacrifice. He talks about sacrifice and also the gods who receive sacrifice in ancient Greek ceremonies.

8. Further Reading

Religion and Ritual:

Asad, Talal. *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.

Historical and critical essays on the problem of ritual and religion in Christianity and Islam. Argues, among other things, that ritual needs to be understood outside of overdetermined readings produced by semiotics.

Bell, Catherine. *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Critical survey of major schools of thought on the problem of ritual in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Prasenjit Duara. *Rescuing History from the Nation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Formulates an approach to twentieth-century Chinese history based on critique of modernist categories used to explain it. Although the book is concerned with “modern” China, it contains insights into how modernity has been opposed to religion in ways that make it difficult to understand the latter in its own terms.

Girard, René. *Violence and the Sacred*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972.

Freudian approach to the problem of sacrifice.

Hubert, Henri and Marcel Mauss. *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Functions*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964.

The standard theory of sacrifice produced by Durkheimian scholars in the late nineteenth century.

Jay, Nancy. *Throughout Your Generations Forever: Sacrifice, Religion, and Paternity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Feminist critique of theories of sacrifice, especially those of Girard and Burkert.

Strenki, Ivan. *Contesting Sacrifice: Religion, Nationalism and Social Thought in France*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.

Historical analysis of the changing conception of sacrifice in France, including historical critique of the theories of Hubert and Mauss.

China and India:

Drury, Naama. *The Sacrificial Ritual in the Satapatha Brâhmana*. Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1981.

Chapter 3 "The Asvamedha" provides the mythical background and detailed description of the horse sacrifice.

Gilders, William K. *Blood Ritual in the Hebrew Bible: Meaning and Power*. Johns Hopkins, 2004.

Close reading of passages on sacrifice in the Old Testament.

Granet, Marcel. *The Religion of the Chinese People*. Maurice Freedman, trans. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1975 (first published as *La Religion des Chinois*, 1922).

Kleeman, Terry F. "Licentious Cults and Bloody Victuals: Sacrifice, Reciprocity, and Violence in Traditional China." *Asia Major* 7 pt. 1 (1994): 185-211.

Taoist critique of Confucian sacrifice.

Lewis, Mark Edward. *Sanctioned Violence in Early China*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990.

Study of ancient society, religion and politics on the basis of the central role that killing played in ancient ritual.

McClymond, Kathryn. "In the Matter of Sacrifice: A Comparative Study of Vedic and Jewish Sacrifice." University of California, Santa Barbara PhD diss., 1999.

Study of sacrifice in Vedic and Hebrew sources on the basis of a critique of the premises of Hubert and Mauss.

Meyer, Jeffrey. *The Dragons of Tiananmen: Beijing as a Sacred City*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991.

Study of the religious function of the ritual spaces of the capital city.

Puett, Michael. *To Become a God: Cosmology, Sacrifice and Self-Divinization in Early China*. Harvard-Yenching Institute, Harvard University, 2002.

An excellent reinterpretation of the major changes in thought about the nature of gods in ancient China; it challenges many prevalent views about ancient Chinese religion.

Smith, Brian K. and Wendy Doniger. "Sacrifice and Substitution: Ritual Mystification and Mythical Demythification." *Numen* 36 (1989) 2: 189-224.

On the problem of substitution in Vedic sacrifice.

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