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1. *Family Rituals*, an influential Confucian “liturgical text” compiled by Chu Hsi, describes the proper ways to conduct “standard Chinese family rituals” for daily, seasonal, and lifecycle rites (xiii, xiv). These rituals represent the “key principles underlying the family system,” specifically the worldview of maintaining familial relationships across generations through the practice of making “offerings and sacrifices to ancestors” (xiv). The dynamic relationships cultivated through Confucian ancestral rites benefited both the living and the dead: “The ancestors depended on their descendants for food; the living could benefit from the blessings of their ancestors” (xvi). The honoring of the ancestral lineage expresses the “mutual dependence” between the generations, in both “social and cosmic realms,” while leading to the practice of the self-cultivation and the Confucian ideal of jen (xiv, xv).

The *Family Rituals* provides specific instructions to guide the performance of the ancestral rites for daily, bi-monthly, and monthly seasonal and ancestral rituals (xxiv). The “offering hall,” or ancestral shrine, serves as the ritual space for the performance of these rites, which range from the preparation of the ancestors body, mourning of descendant s before the ancestors soul cloth, engraving spirit tablets, initial food offerings to the ancestors, and subsequent annual rites during the anniversary of the first and second years of the ancestors death (xxii-xxiii, xxiv). The inner and outer area of the offering hall holds enough space for families to perform both small (minor) and large (major) rituals (xxiv). The internal organization of the offering hall contains specific place settings for

ritual objects (inscribed tablets and incense), and sacrificial food offerings, which were arranged in a hierarchical ordering according to the ancestral lineage of the family (xxiv).

The primary sacrificial offering made during the ancestral rites consisted of food that was “used to indicate the importance of the occasion and the nature of the ritual act being performed” (xxvi). The “food was offered both to people and to spirits,” and acted as a unifying conduit between newly married couples and their families during wedding ceremonies; these “offerings of food and drink were the central acts of ancestral rites...kinds and quantities offered indicated not merely the importance of the occasion but also the distance between the ancestors and their descendants” (xxvi).

The “Offering Hall” section of Patricia Buckley Ebrey’s article, titled “Chu Hsi’s *Family Rituals*,” focuses on the daily rituals conducted within the offering halls of family homes. These rituals consist of “repaying one’s roots and returning to the beginning,’ the essence of ‘honoring ancestors and respecting agnatic kin,’ the true means of preserving status responsibilities in the family, and the foundation for establishing a heritage and transmitting it to later generations” (6). The author emphasizes the internal and external arrangement of the offering hall, and showcases the specific placement of ceremonial objects and their directional orientation within the sacred space (7). The instructional details of the rituals performed in the offering hall include the proper preparation for “sacrificial utensils,” proper etiquette and ritual for departing and returning to the household, lunar holiday rituals, “locally observed” festivals, appointment reports, and the proper course of actions to preserve the “spirit tablets and inherited manuscripts” during an emergency (11-12, 17, 20).

The “Four Seasons” section of Ebrey’s article focuses on the actual ritual actions taken during the seasonal rites, as prescribed by the *Family Rituals* text. These seasonal rites occur during the “second month of the season,” and include divination to determine an “auspicious” day to perform the ceremony in the offering hall (155-156). The practitioners engage in purification rites three days prior to the seasonal rituals, which includes bathing and changing into ceremonial clothes, while practicing moderation and restriction with specific foods and drink (156-157). The ceremonial utensils are placed at table settings on the ritual table according to ancestral hierarchy and directional orientation (157). The *Family Rituals* text provides explicit instructions on how to construct the ceremonial space for the sacrificial food offering to the ancestors:

“Each generation has a separate place setting; do not connect them. The places for the associated ancestors are all on the east side facing west, with the most senior at the north end...set the incense stand below the steps in the middle of the room...Set a wine rack at the top of the eastern steps and...place a wine decanter, a cup for making the libation of wine, a plate, another plate for holding meat offerings, a spoon, a cloth, a box of tea, a tea whisk, a tea cup, a salt saucer, and a bottle of vinegar... To the east also set up a large bench for laying out the cooked food” (157).

After preparing the ritual space, the inspection and slaughter of the sacrificial animal takes place, and women prepare various types of food to be offered during the ceremony (157-158). The food offerings are presented the following day in the offering hall after the utensils, condiments, and libations are placed on the offering table (158).

The presiding man and woman partake in specific duties for the ceremony, such as reporting to the audience which ancestors are being honored and asking permission from the ancestors to move “the spirit tablets...to the main room,” while the descendants take their places in the offering hall according to family hierarchy (158-159). The spirit tablets,

inscribed with the names of ancestors and their familial lineage, are carried to the main room of the offering hall and properly placed within their respective positions (159).

The spirits of the ancestors are welcomed into the offering hall by the descendants, followed by the invocation of the ancestral spirits with an offering of wine poured over a bundle of reeds into ceremonial cups (159-160). The presiding man and woman present the prepared food to the ancestral spirits at the ceremonial table, followed by the placing of each ancestors spirit tablet in the proper place and the offering food to the each tablet (160). The presiding man makes the initial offering, consisting of wine, to the eldest ancestors and gives his tablet to the liturgist, who “kneels and reads” from the tablet:

“I, filial great-great-grandson A...report clearly to your honor, our late great-great-grandfather...and our late great-great-grandmother...The time now is the middle of spring. When we think back with gratitude on the seasonal service, we cannot overcome our long-term longings. We presume to take this pure offering of a soft-haired animal, a vessel of millet, and sweet wine, and respectfully present them as our seasonal service. Please enjoy them along with the associated spirits (162).

The liturgist offers prayers to each ancestor’s spirit tablet, followed by a second and final offering of food to the ancestral spirits, concluded by the presiding man offering wine to each spirit tablet and the presiding woman offering utensils to each food bowl placed in front of the spirit tablets (163). The descendants attending the ritual leave the offering building, and then return again at the cue of the liturgist, in order to “receive the sacrificed foods” and blessings from the ritual: “The ancestors instruct me, the liturgist, to pass on abundant luck to you filial descendants and calls you, filial descendants, to approach and receive riches from Heaven, have good harvests from the fields, and live a long life forever, without interruption” (163-164). The conclusion of the seasonal ritual includes the ancestral spirits leaving the offering hall, the return of the spirit tablets in their cases, the removal of the utensils and food offerings, and the consumption of the leftover sacrificial

foods (166). The ancestral rites assist the practitioners in cultivating jen through the ritual's "emphasis...on fulfilling sincere feelings of love and respect" towards the ancestral spirits (166).

The Confucian ancestral rites center on the ritual food offerings to ancestors, which are later consumed auspiciously by the descendants. These ritual practices connect the ancestors, descendants, and future generations through food offerings, which nurture relationships with the ancestors, bestows blessings upon the present generation, while also protecting the familial lineage and heritage.

2. Patricia Buckley Ebrey's text, entitled *Chu Hsi's Family Rituals*, succinctly summarizes and emphasizes the historical significance and progression of Hsi's Confucian text on the proper practice of ancestral rites, while explicitly describing the rituals themselves (xiv). Generally, the emotional tone of the scholarly writing style remains neutral and matter-of-fact during the discourse on the historical evolution of *Family Ritual*. However, there are moments within the introduction where the author makes assumptions, alludes to her opinion of the text, and infers the meaning of the Chu Hsi's original text based upon implied historical connections. Ebrey explicitly states her claim that Chu Hsi's *Family Rituals* "is a liturgical text... not an ethnographic description" of the actual ritual actions taken by the practitioners, but "much can be inferred from its contents... The continuing encounter and mutual modification of ideas of classical origin and customs strongly rooted in social life can be seen in the history of the *Family Rituals*, both in the specific steps prescribed in it and in the way they were adapted or altered by later authors" (xiv). The author also clarifies her intentions to "trace the history of the Family Rituals to bring out these interactions" (xiv). The author uses vocabulary, like "seem," "probably," "discerned," and

“inferred,” that suggests particular assumptions or inferences she makes when explicating historical and liturgical analysis of Chu Hsi’s text (xiv, xvi, xviii).

Ebrey’s scholarly writing style and text structure, interjected with a few assumptions and inferences, is similar to David Kinsley’s article on “The Worship of Durga.” The scholarly analysis and explanation of the historical and cultural influences that transformed *Family Rituals* follows a chronological structure similar to Kinsley’s historical explanation of the goddesses Durga and Navaratra festivals. However, the structure of the *Dharmasutras* parallels that of *Family Rituals*, from Patrick Olivelle’s introduction on the text’s literary history and structure to the subject matter of the actual translation of the *Dharmasutras*. The specific instructions on ritual food offerings for ancestral rites are contained within both texts, as well as prohibitions prior to ritual, daily and monthly ancestral offerings, specific foods for ritual, and funerary rites (Olivelle 59, 60, 62).

3. The ideologies and practices from the Confucian ancestral rites that are applicable to the discussion on creating a sustainable food culture center on the practitioners’ awareness of the impact of their daily decisions on the wellbeing of past and future generations. The physical actions taken by descendants, honoring ancestors on a daily basis, assisted in the preservation of the future generations. The practice of “repaying one’s roots and returning to the beginning,” and the cultural value of “establishing a heritage and transmitting it to later generations” could lend to the creation of a new American food culture that considers the impact of daily food and lifestyle choices on future generations; a new “heritage” of sustainability that honors a biocentric ancestral lineage billions of years old, from bacteria to whales, could take the place of the anthropocentric ancestral lineage (6).

The implicit results of these rituals centered on food consist of liberating self-cultivation and reformation of current ideologies, in order to bring balance to the people and culture. Chang Tsai claimed that the rituals themselves contained the potentiality to liberate the practitioner from “the entanglements of conventional social life” when utilized for self-cultivation (xix). The homesteaders practiced self-cultivation to free themselves from the current constraints of the current industrial American food culture and economic models, while also creating their own culture in response to the unhealthy lifestyle these models produce in the mainstream culture. The ability of ritual to safeguard self-cultivation in the midst of adversity emerges in Gould’s writing as well as in the Confucian ancestral rites:

“community is often preserved or destroyed on the basis of socially constructed rules (both written and unwritten) about food. Eating in a certain way can be a means of political protest, a strategy for maintaining social and cultural distinctions, or an embodied practice leading toward spiritual experiences of transcendence or communion. Like homesteading itself, then, eating is a symbolic gesture that can perform both cultural and religious ‘work.’ (Gould 75).

In a similar way to the effectiveness of ancestral rites safeguarding the Confucian culture and heritage of the familial lineage, the homesteaders effectively resist the mainstream culture by adhering to homesteading practice:

“The heart of the matter is that homesteading as a way of life is a model and enactment of dissent: a lived politics...living out a daily commitment to nature and against consumer culture is a spiritual practice: a lived religion. Stephen Carter has argued that religious life has the power to embody dissent in a way that political life—based as it is on compromise in the public sphere—can never do...They live and embody dissent more than they organize and campaign for it” (Gould 199).

Ch-eng I, a philosopher interested in the “principle behind the rites,” critically examined rituals and cautioned practitioners of the risks from adhering “too closely to ancient forms,” while advocating for “new ritual forms on the basis of moral principles” (xix). The

practice of openness, flexibility, innovation, and creativity balanced with ethics continues to emerge from the Gould, Kingsolver, and Pollan's texts, as they search for new ways to create a sustainable culture. Chu Hsi promoted "balance as the basis on which to make choices about ritual practices," in the effort to renovate the *Family Rituals* (xxi). The reformation of the Confucian text could serve as an example of how to make balanced changes in food and environmental policies. The idea of creating balance in "ritual practices" compliments Sal's idea of transferring homesteading practices in various environments, not only at the homestead or bakery.