

# The Reformation of Ritual in the Jiajing Era

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The Ming emperor Shizong, who had ascended the throne as a member of a collateral line of the Imperial Household, reformed a number of state sacrifices between 1529 and 1531. There has already been research on the dispute in early Jiajing over how to honor Shizong's own father. In this essay I will discuss the reformation of the state sacrifices.

This essay describes four reforms: (1) The Deities of Heaven and Earth came to be sacrificed to at the prayers for rain and the suburban sacrifices. (2) Of the ancestors of the Imperial Household, Taizu and Chengzu were singled out for special treatment as companions to a main deity and in the imperial clan's ancestral temple. (3) At the *Shidian*, or sacrifice to Confucious, the ranks and images of Confucious and other Confucian scholars were abolished. (4) Sacrifices in which the Empress participated, such as the sacrifices to the First Sericulturalist and the Supreme Intermediary, were revived.

These reforms took as their keyword the continuation of Ming Taizu's style of state sacrifices. Taizu had introduced a heavily Neo-Confucian system of rituals. Shizong also followed Neo-Confucian thought in interpreting the classics and reforming state sacrifices in the manner described above. I term Shizong's thought "Ritualistic Fundamentalism" and point out that it has some points in common with the spirit of the Wang Yangming School, which was flourishing during the same period.