

## ***Wugong* and State Rites**

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### **Abstract**

Incense burners had long been used on altars with other devotional objects. In particular, the *wugong*, which comprised the censer, two candlesticks and vases, emerged as a standard altar set during the Ming and Qing periods. Despite its popularity, its use in state rites seems to be measured and regulated. Curiously, the *wugong* was only tangentially related to the rites reformation during the Qianlong reign that witnessed the change in ritual vessel forms, and the *wugong* was not featured in the *Huangchao liqi tushi*. Nevertheless, the use of *wugong* in state rites offers clues to how people may have perceived the altar set as well as the rites. The discussion of the *wugong* demonstrates how the material culture of Chinese rituals was invigorated without overt ideological or theoretical change.

**Keywords:** *wugong*, ritual vessels, altar vessels, Grand Sacrifices, Middle Sacrifices, Common Sacrifices

Incense burners had long been used on altars with other devotional objects. In particular, the *wugong* 五供 (five-piece offerings), which comprised the censer, two candlesticks and vases, emerged as a standard altar set during the Ming and Qing period. Made in impressive forms and often with striking decorations, the *wugong* was commissioned by the court for special venues and occasions, and there are numerous records concerning the production of *wugong* in the archives of the Qing imperial workshops. Curiously, the *wugong* was hardly discussed in the rites reformation during the Qianlong reign that witnessed momentous changes in ritual vessel forms, and it was not featured in the *Huangchao liqi tushi* 皇朝禮器圖式, commonly translated as the *Illustrated Compendium of Ceremonial Paraphernalia for State Rituals*. This article argues that the absence of the *wugong* in the *Huangchao liqi tushi* should not be mistaken to mean that it was insignificant, because the *wugong* was used prominently in selected state rites, together with conventional ritual vessels such as the *jue* 爵 for wine and the *bian* 簋, *dou* 豆, *fu* 簠, and *gui* 簣 for food offerings. Indeed, some *wugong* altar sets were more visually spectacular than the ritual vessels used in state rites, and one reason seems to be that there were fewer restrictions on how the *wugong* were to be made. Paradoxically this makes the study of *wugong* more interesting.

In examining how the *wugong* came to be associated with state rites, it is found that standard ritual scriptures and manuals provide an incomplete picture of the state rites and devotional objects used therein. In particular, it remains unclear if and when exactly the *wugong* was conceived of as a preferred set over other altar sets, as there had been various, if not random, assortments of altar vessels. Fluid assortments of altar vessels further raise the fundamental questions of how the incense burner came to be used with candlesticks and vases and how the combination of a censer, two candlesticks and two vases emerged as a standard set, even though the forms, sizes, mediums, or decorations of the altar sets were hardly ever standardized. By studying how altar vessels were discussed in texts, clues appear to show that ritual practices had room for variations and that certain practices became customized out of inertia without necessarily following any particular creed.

This article will show that some settings and state rites served to define the *wugong*.

By the same token, the selective use of *wugong* in some state rites suggests a changing perception of those rites that was not necessarily explained or justified in texts. To reconstruct this history of using altar vessels, this article is divided into four sections. The first section differentiates between the *wugong* and ritual vessels of the ancient bronze tradition based on the different offerings that these two types of objects served respectively. The second section explores how incense-related offerings originally used in Buddhist rites created a context for censers and vases came to be used and grouped together. The third section calls attention to the fact that when extra effort was made to ensure the stylistic consistency of the altar vessels during the Yuan and Ming period, that consistency stemmed from the significance of the setting. For instance, a *wugong* for the Altar to Heaven during the Jiajing period was glazed in blue, in alignment with the color scheme of the grand sacrifice. The proliferation of the *wugong* is the focus of the fourth section, although the reason for this proliferation was hardly addressed in the same texts from which the increasing popularity of the *wugong* was deduced. The variety of *wugong* designs that we see in public and private collections may be seen through the prism of unarticulated ritual practices.

## Different Traditions of “Ritual” Vessels and “Altar” Vessels

China had an ancient tradition of offering food and wine to spirits and ancestors, but the offering of incense, flowers and candles was developed much later. Food offerings that consisted primarily of meat have been recognized across the globe as distinct from offerings of incense, flowers, and candles. In places where Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism prevailed, people offered flowers instead of animal sacrifices in a concerted effort to renounce violence.<sup>1</sup> Although sacrificial killing was a highly ritualized activity in ancient China, the Chinese also presented a variety of vegetarian offerings to spirits and deities. Indeed, the material culture of ancient China suggests that meat offerings

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1 Jack Goody argues that animal sacrifices were common among most non-literate communities in approaching the gods, and the consequent consumption of the offerings by the congregation took the form of a communal meal (Jack Goody, *The Culture of Flowers* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, 70-71]). Yet oracle bone inscriptions of the Shang dynasty (c. 1500-1050 BC) indicate that the writing system was well developed in ancient China, where animal sacrifices were common. Therefore, animal sacrifice was not always a sign of “non-literate communities.”

were subsumed within a larger category of food and wine offerings. Within the category of food offerings, raw meat, cooked meat, and vegetarian offerings represented the needs of different deities and had profoundly different social and religious ramifications, especially during medieval China. Many erudite studies are devoted to various offerings and their differences.<sup>2</sup> By generalizing them as food offerings, it is not wished to suggest that they were more closely related than those other scholars would propose; it is not the purpose of this paper to gauge the status of various offerings or contrast the relationships among offerings of raw meat, cooked meat, and vegetables. Nevertheless, the food and wine offerings in China were grounded in an ideology different from those of blood sacrifices in other cultures.<sup>3</sup> The basis for this categorization is that wine and some vegetarian offerings, such as nuts, bamboo shoots, millet, rice stalk, and sorghum, had long been affiliated with the meat offerings.<sup>4</sup> Together food and wine had been the predominant offerings to ancestors in ancient China, and they were presented together to the ancestors and placed in bronze vessels (or ceramic and lacquer copies) for various foodstuffs. For the purpose of ancestral worship, ritual vessels were meticulously made, thereby showing that the ancients cared for the offerings and the way in which they were proffered.<sup>5</sup>

2 See, for example, Roel Sterckx, *Food, Sacrifice, and Sagehood in Early China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 83-121; Thomas Wilson, "Sacrifice and the Imperial Cult of Confucius," *History of Religions* 41.3 (2002.2): 251-287; Andreas Ernst Janousch, "The Reform of Imperial Ritual During the Reign of Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty (502-549)" (PhD diss., Cambridge University, 1998), part II; Terry Kleeman, "Licentious Cults and Bloody Victuals: Sacrifice, Reciprocity, and Violence in Traditional China," *Asia Major* 3<sup>rd</sup> series, 7.1 (1994): 185-211; Valerie Hansen, "Gods on Walls: A Case of Indian Influence on Chinese Lay Religion?" in *Religion and Society in T'ang and Sung China*, ed. Patricia Ebrey (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), 75-113; Valerie Hansen, *Changing Gods in Medieval China 1127-1276* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1990), chapter 4; Patricia Ebrey, "The Liturgies for Sacrifices to Ancestors in Successive Versions of the *Family Rituals*," in *Ritual and Scripture in Chinese Popular Religion: Five Studies*, ed. David Johnson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 104-136; and Duane Pang, "The *P'u-tu* Ritual: A Celebration of the Chinese Community of Honolulu," *Buddhist and Taoist Studies* I, eds. Michael Saso and David Chappell (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1977), 97 and 103.

3 Thomas Wilson shows that the victim's slaughter does not mark a culminating moment in Chinese rituals (Wilson, "Sacrifice and the Imperial Cult of Confucius," 253). Basing his argument on classical scriptures and their Han commentaries, he writes, "The aim of the sacrificial feast is not that it should taste good. The spirits are satiated not by the flavor of what is eaten but the aroma of the feast" (Wilson, "Sacrifice and the Imperial Cult of Confucius," 277; see also 256-259).

4 According to K.C. Chang, grain was an important component in the diet of the Han Chinese in ancient times. See Kwang-chih Chang, ed. *Food in Chinese Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 37-42.

5 There is an enormous amount of research on Chinese rituals and material culture, because rituals

On the other hand, incense-related offerings were not prevalent in ancient China. Incense offering was likely to have been introduced to China through Buddhism, and light offering was probably made popular via Buddhist rituals.<sup>6</sup> The ancient Chinese did present flowers to the spirits. *Chuci* 楚辭, a collection of poetry from the state of Chu dating from about 300 BC, includes a song in the chapter of “*Jiu ge* 九歌,” which was addressed to the spirits of warriors killed in battle. According to that song, called “*Li hun* 禮魂,” the fallen heroes received “Orchids in spring and chrysanthemums in autumn: So it shall go on until the end of time 春蘭兮秋菊，長無絕兮終古。”<sup>7</sup> Yet it appears that flowers as a form of offering was “greatly extended under the influence of an incoming

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were intimately linked with power and status from time immemorial. See Robert Bagley, *Shang Ritual Bronzes in the Arthur M. Sackler Collections* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987); Jessica Rawson, “Chinese Burial Patterns: Sources of Information on Thought and Belief,” in *Cognition and Material Culture: the Archaeology of Symbolic Storage*, eds. Colin Renfrew and Chris Scarre (Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, 1998), 107-133; Ya-hwei Hsu, “Antiquities, Ritual Reform, and the Shaping of New Taste at Huizong’s Court,” *Artibus Asiae* 73.1 (2013): 137-180; Patricia Ebrey, *Emperor Huizong* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2014), especially 159-168, 243-254, 265-273; Chen Fang-mei 陳芳妹, *Qingtongqi yu Songdai wenhuashi* 青銅器與宋代文化史 (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2018), 191-255 (ch. 4); Chen Xuguo 陳戍國, *Zhongguo lizhi shi—Sui Tang Wudai juan* 中國禮制史·隋唐五代卷 (Changsha: Hunan jiaoyu chubanshe, 1998), 52-413 (Part 2); Chang Wen-chang 張文昌, *Tang Song lishu yu guojia shehui* 唐宋禮書與國家社會 (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2013), 1-44; Iain Clark, *For Blessings and Guidance: the Qianlong Emperor’s Design for State Sacrificial Vessels* (Hong Kong: Art Museum, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2019); Hsieh Ming-liang 謝明良, *Zhongguo taocishi lunji* 中國陶瓷史論集 (Taipei: Yunchen wenhua chubanshe, 2007), 149-189, to name a few examples.

- 6 Although light in the form of *zhu* 燭 had been an important component in ancient Chinese rituals (Joseph Needham, *Science and civilization in China* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962], 79), Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127-200) explained in his commentaries to the *Zhouli* 周禮 that the *zhu* referred to a torch that was secured on the ground for lumination (*Zhouli zhushu* 周禮注疏 36.23b). Aside from the *zhu*, oil lamps and candles were used no later than the Warring States and Han period respectively (Ye Xiaoyan 葉小燕, “Zhanguo Qin-Han de deng ji you guan wenti” 戰國秦漢的燈及有關問題, *Wenwu* 文物 7 (1983): 78-86; and Sun Ji 孫機, *Handai wuzhi wenhua ziliao tushuo* 漢代物質文化資料圖說 [Beijing: Wenhua chubanshe, 1991], 357), but there is not sufficient evidence that light—whether emitted by a torch, lamp or candle—was perceived as an offering in China. There are, however, some references of light for communicating with the spirits or deities in rituals. According to *Dongmingji* 洞冥記 by Guo Xian 郭憲 (26 BC-AD 55), for example, a lamp was used with various kinds of incense to attract spirits during the Yuanfeng era (110-105 BC), and the lamp oil was made of a mixture of special pastes, which could have reportedly shone several *li* and burned through a rainy night (See *Dongmingji* 2.1b and the Song encyclopedia *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽, 870.2a). Furthermore, the fourteenth-century text *Yuanshenqi* 援神契 (prefaced 1305) alleged that Emperor Wu (r. 140-87 BC) used fragrant lamps instead of burning torches in the worship of the Great Monad (Taiyi 太乙) (cited from *Xiangcheng* 香乘, 10.9b and *Gujin shiwukao* 古今事物考, 8.168). Whether or not the lamp offering was made popular through Han Wudi’s worship is unclear.

- 7 Translated in David Hawkes, *The Songs of the South: an Anthology of Ancient Chinese Poems by Qu Yuan and Other Poets* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985), 118.

world religion, Buddhism,” as Jack Goody puts it.<sup>8</sup>

On the basis that vessels for food and wine offerings had a much longer tradition in ancient China, I propose to call them “ritual vessels,” while I shall refer to the censer, vases, and candlesticks as “altar vessels.”<sup>9</sup> My suggestion to differentiate these vessels may seem arbitrary, because from the Han period (206 BC-AD 220) onwards ritual vessels may have been used alongside an incense burner and other vessels. Yet the “ritual vessels” for food and wine presumed the nourishment of the deceased and the deities, whereas the “altar vessels” held inedible things, which probably served a different purpose and may have developed out of several traditions. Hence, the vessels are given different labels because the objects had different sources, and not because one type had closer ties with “rituals” and the other with “altar.”

While food and wine offerings have been studied in great length by historians and anthropologists, bronze ritual vessels for food and wine offerings have long preoccupied generations of art historians. In-depth studies on bronzes from successive periods contributed to the historiographical study of antiquarianism, which has developed into a field of mainstream academic inquiry in recent years.<sup>10</sup> Unlike ritual vessels, the use, development, and popularization of altar vessels did not seem to be dominated by antiquarian concerns, even though antiquarian aesthetics contributed to the adoption of

8 Goody, *The Culture of Flowers*, 385.

9 As the *wugong* are commonly referred to as an “altar set,” I reckon that it may be consistent to call the objects—censer, vases, and candlesticks—“altar vessels.” Such a distinction between ritual and altar vessels is also demonstrated in some later Chinese documents. For example, *Qinding gongbu xuzeng zeli* 欽定工部續增則例 (juan 148) written in 1819 describes a category of objects—the “*gongqi* 供器”—that included incense burners, candlesticks, vases, lamps, flower basins, incense boxes, chopsticks, spoons, vessels for the chopsticks and spoons, tea bowls, and tea caddies. It seems that “altar vessels” is consistent with the Chinese term “*gongqi*.”

10 See, for example, Yun-chiahn Chen Sena, “Pursuing Antiquity: Chinese Antiquarianism from the Tenth to the Thirteenth Century” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2007); Jeffrey Moser, “The Ethics of Immutable Things: Interpreting Lü Dalin’s Illustrated Investigations of Antiquity,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 72.2 (2012): 259-293; Hsu Ya-hwei, “Antiquities, Ritual Reform, and the Shaping of New Taste at Huizong’s Court,” 137-180; Patricia Ebrey, *Emperor Huizong*; Shih Ching-fei, “The New Idea of Ritual Vessels in the Early Ming Dynasty: A Third System?” In *Ming China: Courts and Contacts 1400-1450*, ed. Craig Clunas et al. (London: British Museum Press, 2016), 113-121; Chen Fang-mei 陳芳妹, *Qingtongqi yu Songdai wenhuashi* 青銅器與宋代文化史; Iain Clark, *For Blessings and Guidance: the Qianlong Emperor’s Design for State Sacrificial Vessels*. All these scholars have contributed multiple publications on the subject.

ancient bronze *ding* as incense burners from the Song period onwards.<sup>11</sup> In any event, food and wine offerings did not give rise to the *wugong*. The following section looks at how incense offering led to the emergence of the *wugong*.

## Settings That Gave Rise to the Emergence of *Wugong*

The offerings of incense, flowers, and light were historically related in a circumambulatory rite known as *xingxiang* 行香.<sup>12</sup> The rite was Buddhist in origin and adopted by the Chinese court during the early sixth century.<sup>13</sup> Apparently, it was also through this rite that Emperor Wudi (reign 502-550) of the Liang Dynasty (502-556) adopted incense as an offering to deities.<sup>14</sup> To perform this rite, the noted Song antiquarian Cheng Dachang 程大昌 (1123-1195) explained that the host of the ceremony, while holding incense (*xiang*), would circumambulate (*xing*) a ceremonial site, which had at its center a representation of a deity.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, this circumambulatory rite also involved sprinkling flowers upon the object of devotion<sup>16</sup> and used light as an

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- 11 Antiquarian concerns had actually challenged the validity of incense offering. See Josh Yiu, "The Politics of Incense Offering and the Rise of Archaistic Censers," in *Xin yu wu rong—Rao Zongyi xiansheng baisui hua dan 'Han xue yu wuzhi wenhua' guoji yantaohui lunwenji* 心與物融——饒宗頤先生百歲華誕「漢學與物質文化」國際研討會論文集, ed. Chen Jue 陳珪 (Taipei: Linking Books Press, 2018), 159-178.
  - 12 Yang Zhisui 楊之水 has published widely on the devotional and secular uses of incense. See Yang Zhisui, *Xiangshi* 香識 (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Open Page Publishing Co., Ltd., 2014).
  - 13 For a history of circumambulatory rites, as performed in other religions and places before China, see Susumu Nakamura, "Pradakshina, a Buddhist Form of Obeisance," in *Semitic and Oriental Studies*, ed. Walter J. Fischel (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1951), 345-346. The rite was probably introduced to the western part of China before being adopted by the court. Stanley Abe argues that the rite may have been taught to laypeople in the fifth century. For a reconstruction of the rite in a fifth-century Mogao cave, see Stanley Abe, "Art and Practice in a Fifth-century Chinese Buddhist Cave Temple," *Ars Orientalis* 20 (1990): 10-11.
  - 14 According to the *Liangshu* 梁書 (6.109), incense offering was prescribed in 505 by Liang Wudi. Four decades later in 546, the same emperor also offered incense to the deities at Chongyundian 重雲殿 on behalf of the people suffering from a plague (*Nanshi* 南史, 7.206 and 72.1788). While this practice may have been inspired by Buddhist practice, the Buddhism advocated in Liang Wudi's court was, as Andreas Ernst Janousch's D.Phil dissertation shows, complex and embraced some traditional Confucian values. See Andreas Ernst Janousch, "The Reform of Imperial Ritual During the Reign of Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty (502-549)," 168-211.
  - 15 See Cheng Dachang 程大昌 (1123-1195), *Yanfanlu* 演繁露, in *Congshu jicheng chubian* 叢書集成初編 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1991), vol. 294, 13.149.
  - 16 The seventh-century monk Shandao 善導 (613-681) described the sequence of sprinkling flowers and circumambulation in a scripture entitled "*Zhuanjing xingdao yuanwang shengjingtu fashizan* 轉經行道願往生淨土法事讚":



offering. While circumambulation was a way by which people paid homage and offered<sup>17</sup> incense, flowers, and light to the Buddha, the rite also introduced to the Chinese those substances as suitable offerings for a deity.<sup>18</sup> Later, when circumambulation gave way to congregation before the object of worship, flower offerings were presented in a vessel rather being tossed.<sup>19</sup> This change in ritual practice served as a catalyst for the use of flower vessels to display the flowers neatly before the Buddha image, just as *baozi* 寶子 for incense pieces were also displayed tidily with the censer.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, congregating

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After issuing an invitation to the deities, one makes sevenfold circumambulation. One person stands at the southwest corner of the hall and distributes flowers to the participants. The flowers are first blessed, and they will not be immediately tossed until the participants arrive before the Buddha. Then, they can toss the flower at will. Afterwards, they get more flowers from the same person and repeat the procedure seven times. Then, they return to their original position and remain there until the last strain of the hymn in praise of Buddha fades away (Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō, T47, no. 1979, p. 427c. The translation is largely based on Susumu Nakamura, "Pradakshina, a Buddhist Form of Obeisance," 348).

- 17 The use of a lamp in circumambulation was documented in *Foguoji* 佛國記 by the monk-traveler Faxian 法顯 (ca. 337-422), who recounted a miraculous incident of the Brahmin deities paying tribute to the Buddha:

The heretics often sent people to look after their own temple, to sweep and sprinkle it, to burn incense, light lamps, and make offerings; but next morning the lamps would always be found in the shrine of Buddha. The Brahmins said in their anger, "You Shamans are always taking away our lamps for the worship of your Buddha; but we are not going to stop our worship because of you." On that very night, while personally keeping watch, they saw the Gods they themselves serve, take the lamps, walk three times round the shrine, and then make offering of the lamps to Buddha, after which they suddenly vanished. Thus the Brahmins came to know the greatness of Buddha's divine power, and at once gave up their family ties and entered His priesthood (Translated in Herbert Giles, *The travels of Fa-hsien (399-414 A.D.), or Record of the Buddhistic kingdoms* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923], 34-35).

It is interesting to note that candles were carried in circumambulation in nineteenth-century Thailand. See Kenneth Wells, *Thai Buddhism: Its Rites and Activities* (Bangkok: The Christian Bookstore, 1960), 72.

- 18 According to the Tang monk Yijing 義淨 (635-713), those who observed the oblations of incense and flowers purified their thoughts and received invisible rewards and did so for the accumulation of their own religious merits. See Susumu Nakamura, "Pushapa-puja, Flower Offering in Buddhism," *Oriens* vol. 11 (1958): 178. According to Chen Yaoting, flowers were not originally a Taoist offering; the Taoists adopted the combination of incense and flower offerings from the Buddhists. See Hu Fushen 胡孚琛, ed., *Zhonghua daojiao dacidian* 中華道教大辭典 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1995), 556-557.
- 19 The use of flower vessels was also prescribed in subsequent dynastic records. See, for example, the *Jinshi* 金史 (33.790) and *Yuanshi* 元史 (76.1893). The *Songshi* 宋史 did not prescribe the use of a vase, but it gave a reference of a group of palace ladies paying homage to the bodhisattva, each holding a basin for offering incense and flowers (*Songshi* 142.3350). It is noteworthy that vases were not noted in pre-Song dynastic records.
- 20 Yang Zhishui uses the carved images on the back of Buddhist steles made from the sixth to the ninth centuries to show the development of the *baozi*. The images on the steles demonstrate that the *baozi* had been woven into the design of the incense burner. Early examples show two *baozi* simulating the form of unopened flower buds, or lotus pods, and branching out symmetrically and naturalistically from both sides of the lotus-shaped censer. Later examples show the censer and the *baozi* becoming increasingly



before the object of worship solidified the importance of the altar, where the censer, vases, and candlesticks were aligned and codified into a set.

For a long time, the arrangement of altar vessels was rather fluid, and it varied from place to place. For example, three tombs located in Shanxi and separated by a time span of just over one hundred years between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries show that there were various ways to arrange the incense burner, vases, and candlesticks.<sup>21</sup> The diverse pattern of tomb burials within this small geographical domain may suggest that the tomb findings and the arrangement of objects located elsewhere would be no less diverse.<sup>22</sup> On the basis of these fluid arrangements, it seems probable that some objects were arranged in sets of five.<sup>23</sup> It is also possible that altar vessels made of the same materials were arranged in a linear fashion, thereby further resembling a Ming or Qing *wugong*. For example, a lead altar set dated to the Yuan period had been excavated from the district of Chaoyang 朝陽 in Beijing (Fig. 1).<sup>24</sup> The set, which consisted of a *gui* 簋 shaped censer, two pear-shaped vases, and two candlesticks, anticipated two features of the Ming and Qing *wugong*, namely consistent material(s) among the objects within a

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stylized (Yang Zhishui 楊之水, “Lianhua xianglu he baozi 蓮花香爐和寶子,” *Wenwu* 文物 2 [2002]: 70-76). Yang also discusses how religious use of flower offering spread to interior decoration (Yang Zhishui, *Songdai huaping* 宋代花瓶 [Hong Kong: Hong Kong Open Page Publishing Co., Ltd., 2014], 1-30).

21 See the archaeological reports of the Yan Deyuan 閻德源 tomb dated 1190 (Jie 1978), Feng Daozhen 馮道真 tomb dated 1265 (Jie 1962), and Wang Qing 王青 tomb dated 1297 (also Jie 1962). See Tingqi Jie 解廷琦, “Datong Jindai Yan Deyuan mu fajue jianbao” 大同金代閻德源墓發掘簡報, *Wenwu* 文物 4 (1978): 1-13; Tingqi Jie, “Shanxisheng Datongshi Yuandai Feng Daozhen, Wang Qing mu qingli jianbao” 山西省大同市元代馮道真、王青墓清理簡報, *Wenwu* 文物 10 (1962): 34-43.

22 For an informative study on the regionalism of Yuan ritual vessels in burials, see Hsieh Ming-liang 謝明良, “Beifang bufen diqu Yuan mu chutu taoqi de quyuxing guancha—cong Zhangxian Wang Shixian jiazhu mu chutu taoqi tanqi” 北方部分地區元墓出土陶器的區域性觀察——從彰縣汪世顯家族墓出土陶器談起, *Gugong xueshu jikan* 故宮學術季刊 19.4 (2002): 143-168. Hsieh Ming-liang argues that the Yuan burial goods emulated archaic vessels illustrated in catalogues. While the burial goods in the region of Shaanxi and Gansu resembled the archaic vessels illustrated in the *Sanlitu* 三禮圖 (10<sup>th</sup> century), the burial goods found in Luoyang resembled those in *Xuanhe bogutu* 宣和博古圖 (12<sup>th</sup> century). Yet this distinction seems applicable primarily to ritual vessels, not altar vessels.

23 The tomb of Li Cuiying 李崔瑩 in Datong, Shanxi, is a possibility. The tomb, dated 1261, contained a censer, two red candlesticks, and two red vases. For an excavation report, see Tang Yunjun 唐雲俊, “Shanxi Datong dongjiao Yuandai Cuiying Li shi mu” 山西大同東郊元代崔瑩李氏墓, *Wenwu* 文物 6 (1987): 87-90.

24 The set is introduced and illustrated in the *Wenwu*. See Cheng Changxin 程長新 and Zhang Xiande 張先得, “Beijingshi jianxuan yizu Yuandai qian gongqi” 北京市揀選一組元代鉛供器, *Wenwu* 5 (1988): 94-95.

set and their archaistic forms.<sup>25</sup> However, it may be premature to call the Yuan altar set a *wugong*. To do so would be to suggest that the set belonged to an established category distinct from other altar arrangements. This question calls to mind when the term—and notion of—“*wugong*” appeared.<sup>26</sup>

When the term “*wugong*” appeared in the Han period, it referred to five “Confucian” sacrifices dedicated to the North (*Beijiao* 北郊), the South (*Nanjiao* 南郊), the Hall of Brightness (*Mingtang* 明堂), the Temple of Emperor Gaozu (*Gaozumiao* 高祖廟), for the founder of the Han Dynasty who reigned from 206 to 195 BC), and the Temple of the Ancestors (*Shizumiao* 世祖廟).<sup>27</sup> In addition, the term “*wugong*” also had a Buddhist source, referring to five offerings used in Buddhist rituals, namely unguents, chaplets, incense, food, and lamps (or candles). These offerings were mentioned in the *Susiddhikara* (meaning “may it be excellently accomplished”) sutra, which was translated into Chinese as *Suxidi jieluo jing* 蘇悉地羯羅經 in the early eighth century.<sup>28</sup> The five offerings had been characterized as “*wuzhong gongyang* 五種供養” in the *Adhyardhasatika Prajnaparamita* (Achieving the principle of non-duality) sutra, which was also translated during the eighth century into Chinese as *Dale jingang Bukong zhenshi sanmoye jing bore boluomiduo liqu shi* 大樂金剛不空真實三昧耶經般若波羅蜜多理趣釋.<sup>29</sup> The term was abbreviated to *wugongyang* 五供養 (or *wugong*), which had

25 The vases with ear-lugs and loop-rings recall, to a minor extent, the famous blue-and-white ‘David Vases’ dated 1351 in the Percival David Foundation. Interestingly, the lead vases are covered with small apertures which may have been intended for single stem (artificial?) flowers.

26 The *gogosoku* 五具足 in Japan was comparable and perhaps related to the *wugong* in China. Yet some Japanese scholars maintain that the *gogosoku* was developed from the *mitsugusoku* 三具足 and trace the latter back to the painted scrolls *Boki ekotoba* 幕帟繪詞 (1351) and the Yuan Chinese text *Chixiu Baizhang qinggui* 勅修百丈清規 (1335), which linked the offerings of incense, flowers, and candles. See Oda Tokunō 織田得能 (1860-1911) et al., *Bukkyō daijiten* 佛教大辭典 (Tokyo: Okura Shoten 1931), 5.4770; Shimizu Tadashi 清水乞, *Butsugu jiten* 仏具辞典 (Tokyo: Tokyodo Shuppan, 1978), 54, 150-151; Mitsumori Masashi 光森正士, *Bukkyō bijutsu no kenkyū* 佛教美術の研究 (Kyoto: Jishosha Shuppan, 1999), 355-357; Nara, Hiromoto 奈良弘元, “On the Buddhist Tool ‘Mitsugusoku’” 仏具「三具足」をめぐって, *Journal of the Nippon Buddhist Research Association* 日本仏教学協会年報 67 (2002): 236-239.

27 Sima Biao 司馬彪, *Hou Hanshu zhi* 後漢書志 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1973), 4.3102.

28 William Soothill and Lewis Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1937), 113; Oda Tokunō (1860-1911) et al., *Bukkyō daijiten*, 2.1156. For more information on the sutra, see Ren Jiyu 任繼愈 et al., *Fojiao dacidian* 佛教大辭典 (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 2002), 604.

29 Cited from *Taishō shinshū Daiōkyō*, T19, no. 1003, p.0614b. For more information on the sutra, see Ren Jiyu et al., *Fojiao dacidian*, 1030. The same sutra also mentions *sizhong gongyang* 四種供養 (four

other meanings during the Yuan and Ming periods.<sup>30</sup> These five offerings overlapped, to some extent, with those used in Taoist rituals.<sup>31</sup> Despite different contents of the five offerings in Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist rituals, the *wugong* referred either to the events (state sacrifices) or offerings, but not to the containers that held them.

An early, if not earliest, use of the characters “*wugong*” in relation to the altar set appeared in a tale written in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century. The tale, narrated by Lin Jinfu 林謹夫 (*jinshi* 1484), concerned the looting of a tenth-century tomb: “The altar was equipped with *wugong*—censer, vases, and candlesticks, which were made of gold and jade 几列五供，爐瓶燭臺，皆以金玉為之。”<sup>32</sup> While the “*wugong*” might have been a name given to the altar set, it is likelier that the “*wugong*” simply refer to five offerings, where *wu* (five) was an adjective indicating the number of offerings. This is because in other cases where the altar set was consistently used, namely the large stone *wugong* in Ming mausoleums, they were referred to as *shi jiyān* 石几筵 or *shitai* 石臺, which emphasized the table or surface on which the altar vessels were placed, without suggesting the combination of five altar vessels to be particularly meaningful (Fig. 2).<sup>33</sup>

Another early reference that alludes to the presence of a *wugong* is the *Yongle dadian* 永樂大典 (completed in 1407). In a section that describes the burial in 1376 of

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offerings) and other groups of offerings. For the components of those groups of offerings, see Ren Jiyou et al., *Fojiao dadidian*, 250 and Ding Fubao 丁福保 (1874-1952). *Foxue dadidian*, 1358-1359.

30 See Ren Jiyou et al., *Fojiao dadidian*, 250 and S. Howard Hansford, *A glossary of Chinese art and archaeology* (London: The China Society, 1961), 34. Furthermore, the term *wugongyang* also had other meanings irrelevant to the altar set. During the Yuan, *wugongyang* referred to a combination in a dice game (see *Shuofu* 說郛 102.9). During the Ming, it also stood for (a kind or number of?) wine cups (See *Zunsheng bajian* 遵生八箋, 14.49b). By the Qing, it referred to a kind of tune (for a reference in the *Gujin tushu jicheng* 古今圖書集成, see Chen Menglei 陳夢雷 [1650-1741], ed., “Lixue huibian wenxuedian” 理學彙編文學典, in *Gujin tushu jicheng* 古今圖書集成 [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju edn., 1934], *juan* 250, 642.6b).

31 The contents of the five offerings in Taoist rituals were largely set by the Southern Song period (1127-1279), the contents being incense, flowers, lamps, water, and fruits (Hu Fushen 胡孚琛, ed. *Zhonghua daojiao dadidian* 中華道教大辭典, 555).

32 Lin’s story was originally in his *Ruzhai leigao* 如齋類稿, a text which no longer survives. The story was cited in later compilations, including *Quan Min shihua* 全閩詩話, 6.47b-48a; and Chen Menglei 陳夢雷, ed., “Fangyu huibian kunyudian” 方輿彙編坤輿典, in *Gujin tushu jicheng*, *juan* 139, 62.52ab.

33 See *Taichang ji* 太常紀, 2.3b, and *Changping shanshui zhi* 昌平山水志, 1.6. For a detailed analysis of the stone altar sets and how they led to the prevalence of the *wugong*, see Josh Yiu, “The Stone Altar in Ming and Qing Mausoleums,” in *Studies on Ancient Tomb Art* 古代墓葬美術研究, ed. Wu Hung et al. (Changsha: Hunan meishu chubanshe, 2013), vol. II, 359-375.

the deceased consort of the Prince of Jin, Zhu Gang 朱綱 (?-1398), the *Yongle dadian* notes that the Prince prepared the sacrifice with the following objects: a set of vases (花瓶一副), a censer, a pair of candlesticks (燭臺一對), two bowls with two sacks, two tea bowls, a vase with a spoon, fifteen plates in different sizes, an incense box, a wine cup, a spittoon, a wine ewer, a basin, a dressing case with five small boxes in it, a chair and footrest, a cylinder with a spoon in it, and a set of objects comprising a *hu* vase, an oil lamp and a large basin.<sup>34</sup> While it is possible that the incense burner, vases, and candlesticks were arranged as a set, flanked by other vessels, the text did not differentiate the censer, vases, and candlesticks as a set.

Similarly, the *Chijian Dayue Taiheshan zhi* 敕建大岳太和山志 (compiled in 1431, re-edited and published around 1494) provides lists of devotional objects bestowed by the imperial court on the Taoist temples on Wudang Mountain in Hubei Province. In a list of devotional gifts dated 1473 for the Golden Hall of the Dayue Taihegong 大岳太和, the court bestowed a censer, a pair of vases, a pair of candlesticks, an incense box, a lamp, a *fazhan* censer, receptacles, and altar tables, together with accessories such as an incense spatula, chopsticks, and scissors.<sup>35</sup> For the Yuxugong 玉虛宮, however, two sets of gilt-bronze altar sets of varying sizes were given. The larger set consisted of a censer, a pair of vases, and a lamp, all with accessories and displayed on a stone stand; the smaller set consisted of a censer, a water basin, a pair of vases, a lamp, a pair of candlesticks, and receptacles for accessories.<sup>36</sup> Candlesticks were not always included. A gilt-bronze set of five vessels that is still on display in the Zixiaogong 紫霄宮 is possibly the same set bestowed by the court and recorded in the text in 1473 (Fig. 3).<sup>37</sup> Pengliang Lu convincingly traces the design of this set to the altar vessels made in the Yongle and Xuande periods for the Tibetan Buddhist temple, namely Qutan Monastery 瞿曇寺,

34 *Yongle dadian* 永樂大典, vol. 4, 7386.20b-21a. The tomb was looted on a number of occasions, and the contents cannot be verified. See An Ruijun 安瑞軍 and Cui Yuezhong 崔躍忠, "Shanxi Yuci Mingdai Jin Yuwang mu qingli jianbao" 山西榆次明代晉裕王墓清理簡報, *Kaoguxue yanjiu* 考古學研究 175 (2018.2): 87.

35 Ren Ziyuan 任自垣 (?-1431), ed., *Chijian Dayue Taiheshan zhi* 敕建大岳太和山志, in *Mingdai Wudang shan zhi erzhong* 明代武當山志二種 (Wuhan: Hubei remin chubanche, 1999), *juan* 2, 46.

36 Ren Ziyuan, ed., *Chijian Dayue Taiheshan zhi*, *juan* 2, 46.

37 See Ren Ziyuan, ed., *Chijian Dayue Taiheshan zhi*, *juan* 2, 52, 60, and 74 for more lists of devotional gifts to other temples. Again, some altar sets did not include candlesticks.

although the Qutan altar set did not seem to include candlesticks.<sup>38</sup>

Scant reference of the *wugong* in standard historical records indicates a discrepancy between what people did and what they recorded.<sup>39</sup> A main reason is that texts often catered to a minority of elite and educated people. What they did or did not record probably reflected what those people considered to be important rather than what had or had not existed. The distinction between the “elite,” scriptural rituals and “popular” rituals is eloquently discussed in David Johnson’s introduction to *Ritual and Scripture in Chinese Popular Religion*:

[T]he distinction [between scripture and ritual] remains very powerful, for in practice there is a fundamental distinction in terms of effect on audiences, demands on performers, and expectations of writers between those modes of representation and communication that were predominantly verbal and those that combined words and ensemble performance.<sup>40</sup>

Viewed in this light, whether the combination of the five altar vessels was considered “standard” in the Ming remains a known unknown.<sup>41</sup> By the eighteenth century, however, the term “*wugong*” was generally used to refer to the altar set and frequently mentioned in court archives concerning the production of altar sets. In sum, the multiple

38 See Pengliang Lu, “Xuande Broznes: A Legend Re-examined,” *Arts of Asia*, 44.6 (2014): 90-100.

39 For the “standard” sources, I refer to those mentioned in Otto Franke’s *An Introduction to the Sources of Ming History*, which includes *Daming huidian* 大明會典, *Daming jili* 大明集禮, and *Mingshigao* 明史稿. These sources describe the food offerings on the altar table in great detail, and they stipulate the content and the position of the ritual vessels. On the other hand, these sources provide little information on the altar vessels. Apart from these “standard” historical sources, informal *biji* 筆記 writings may shed light on the use and understanding of the altar set in the Ming. For that I have relied on Saeki Tomi’s 佐伯富 *Chūgoku zuihitsu zatscho sakuin* 中國隨筆雜著索引 (1960) and *Chūgoku zuihitsu sakuin* 中國隨筆索引 (1954), only to look up the relevant terms in vain. Other books that I have consulted ranged from ritual manuals to treatises on objects and interior decorations. See Saeki Tomi 佐伯富, *Chūgoku zuihitsu zatscho sakuin* 中國隨筆雜著索引 (Kyoto: Society of Oriental Researches, Kyoto University, 1960) and Saeki Tomi, *Chūgoku zuihitsu sakuin* 中國隨筆索引 (Kyoto: Society of Oriental Researches, Kyoto University, 1954).

40 David Johnson, ed, *Ritual and Scripture in Chinese Popular Religion: Five Studies*, ix. Another contributor to that book, Robert Chard, shows in an examination of the stove cult that popular practices and conceptions could have been preserved without textual documentation, which often had the agenda of modifying popular practices and conceptions.

41 The combination of the five altar vessels can be found in woodblock prints from the Yuan period onwards. Nonetheless, their appearance in pictures does not prove that people in the Yuan or Ming considered this combination more “standard” than, say, a dining table with four chairs or a censer with two candlesticks.

meanings of the term “*wugong*” suggest that it had a history distinct from the history of the altar set. While the term was adopted in Confucian, Buddhist, and Taoist rites, in different contexts it referred to different events or things, which did not necessarily correspond to the altar set. It seems that the term may have been adopted informally from writings like the tale by Lin Jinfu and then incorporated into imperial statutes and official documents later. Interestingly, the name of the set emerged after the altar set had been in use for some time.

It is important to note that when a group of objects came to be used together, this “grouping” did not necessarily mean that they were devised to be used together. Take, for example, basic stationery like the writing brush, ink-stick, ink-slab and paper, which were used together long before the notion of *wenfang sibao* 文房四寶 was coined during the Song period.<sup>42</sup> That textual tradition did not always align with historical practices and phenomenon reflects the nuances and complexities in the study of history. If the combination of censer, candlesticks, and vases could be seen in visual and material culture before the term “*wugong*” was used, that means the prevailing practice of using and grouping certain objects together took time to reach a point where the combination of five altar vessels emerged as a more common combination. The prevalence of this combination warranted the name “*wugong*” and differentiated it from other combinations of altar vessels. To put it another way, naming the altar set did not denote its origin but its prevalence.

If historical texts alone do not give clear indications that people had conceived of the *wugong* as a set, then what about style? If an elaborately made censer has the same design as vases and candlesticks, can we assume that it was made as a set of *wugong*? We shall turn to some concrete examples in the following section.

### Special Occasions That Defined the *Wugong*

A notable example may be the blue-glazed altar set of the Jiajing period now

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42 Luo Zhufeng 羅竹風, ed., *Hanyu dacidian* 漢語大詞典 (Shanghai: Hanyu dacidian chubanshe, 2001), 6.1525.



housed in Musée Guimet (Fig. 4). Coated with a blue glaze and decorated with a design of dragon chasing pearls in reserve decoration, the fine objects with an imperial mark must have been made as a set. Moreover, the reserve decorations on the porcelains show traces of gilding, which suggests that the pieces would have had greater visual impact originally.<sup>43</sup> The features of the set seem consistent with the objects described in the *Taichang xukao* 太常續考, a late Ming ritual manual that contains detailed information on the display of ritual vessels on altars. The value of this text was acknowledged by the editors of the *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書, who credited the manual as having more information than *Mingshi lizhi* 明史禮志, *Minghuidian* 明會典, *Mingjili* 明集禮, and *Jiajing sidian* 嘉靖祀典 with respect to the dimensions and nomenclature (*mingwu dushu* 名物度數) of things in state rituals. The *Siku quanshu* edition of the *Taichang xukao* contains an illustration showing the display of ritual vessels at the Altar to Heaven (Fig. 5). According to the illustration, there was an altar set of five vessels behind another set of altar vessels comprising a censer and two candlesticks.<sup>44</sup> Under the porcelain category for offerings, the *Taichang xukao* describes the censer as a “golden dragon censer.”<sup>45</sup> This description is consistent with the gilding on the reserve decorations. Hence, the Guimet altar set was most likely made for the state rite at the Altar to Heaven.

What interests us more than the “golden” decoration is the blue color scheme of the objects, as different colors had been assigned to ritual vessels for major altars. In 1376 the court decreed that blue ritual vessels were to be used at the Altar to Heaven, yellow ritual vessels at the Altar to Earth, red ritual vessels at the Altar to the Sun, and white ritual vessels at the Altar to the Moon.<sup>46</sup> The court also decreed that the ritual vessels in

43 Reserve decoration refers to the main decorative motifs being deliberately unglazed, and this practice gained popularity during the Yuan period. For the Jiajing altar set, moreover, the reserve decoration was in relief and made possible by a technique called “traced slip (*lifan* 澀粉),” which is not unlike the icing on cakes. The 16<sup>th</sup> century treatise *Jiangxi sheng dazhi* 江西省大志 describes this type of vessels as *duiqi* 堆器 (*Jiangxi sheng dazhi* 7.26a). The reserve decoration was probably intended for gilding to be applied. I am grateful to Prof. Peter Lam for explaining the technique to me and showing me the reference in Wang Zongmu 王宗沐 (1523-1591), *Jiangxi sheng dazhi* (Beijing: Xianzhuang shuju, 2003).

44 See the illustration in the anonymous *Taichang xukao* in *Siku quanshu* (Taipei: Commercial Press, 1986) on page 1.38b. The altar set was also prescribed for the “farewell ceremony” (*gaocili* 告辭禮) after the sacrifice was performed. See *Taichang xukao*, 1.103b.

45 *Taichang xukao*, 1.56b; see also the diagram in 1.38b.

46 See Christine Lau’s detailed study on monochrome ritual vessels of the Ming period: Christine Lau, “Ceremonial Monochrome Wares of the Ming Dynasty,” in *PDF Colloquies on Chinese Art &*



the forms of *deng* 登, *xing* 銅, *bian*, *dou*, *fu*, and *gui* to be replaced with conventional dishes and bowls.<sup>47</sup> It is not difficult to imagine that the Guimet altar set would have had greater visual appeal than the dishes and bowls. Evidently, the *wugong* altar set was important. And there is more to it.

As the illustration shows, there are many offerings on the altar. Extant pieces in museum collections offer a glimpse of what the sacrifice was like. A *jue* libation cup with the same color and decorative scheme in the Baur Collection suggests that it was likely to have been used in the same setting (Fig. 6).<sup>48</sup> The consistency of this design posits the notion of the set: Did the Ming consider the *jue* part of the altar set? How exclusive was the notion of the so-called “*wugong*” altar set during the Jiajing period? Interestingly, the National Palace Museum, Taipei, has an incense spatula of the same cobalt blue glaze with gold trimming (Fig. 7). The design is consistent with the altar set. Presumably its purpose was to shovel ashes in the incense burner.<sup>49</sup> Was the incense spatula an accessory or an indispensable component of the “*wugong*” altar set? If all these objects were commissioned to be used at the Altar to Heaven, then the “*wugong*” may not have been conceived separately as an exclusive altar set to be added with other objects. Rather, the censer, vases, and candlesticks were part of a larger set of devotional objects made specifically for the Altar to Heaven. In other words, the completeness of the Guimet altar set may be a modern perception, as we see the “full set” in the museum display case.

Nonetheless, there is some indication that the Guimet altar set in the Jiajing period may have functioned as a distinct category—even in the absence of the name “*wugong*”—from other ritual vessels for food and wine and other combinations of altar vessels. This distinction can be deduced from other illustrations in the *Taichang xukao*,

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*Archaeology in Asia*, no. 16, *The Porcelain of Jingdezhen*, ed. Rosemary E. Scott (London: University of London, Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art, 1994), 83-100.

47 Christine Lau, “Ceremonial Monochrome Wares of the Ming Dynasty,” 83-100. See also Shih Ching-fei, “The New Idea of Ritual Vessels in the Early Ming Dynasty: A Third System?” 114; and Shen Shixing 申時行 (1535-1614), et al, *Daming huidian* 大明會典 (Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1964), 82.35ab.

48 Daisy Lion-Goldschmidt, *Ming Porcelain*, trans. Katherine Watson (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), 156.

49 See National Palace Museum 國立故宮博物院, *A Special Exhibition of Incense Burners and Perfumers Throughout the Dynasties* 故宮歷代香具圖錄 (Taipei: National Palace Museum, 1994), cat. no. 59.

which show the displays of ritual paraphernalia in various sacrifices—most rituals show only an incense burner and two candlesticks, and the worship of Heaven on the emperor's birthday was the other occasion which required a fuller set of five altar vessels.<sup>50</sup> Whether those “special” occasions implied the additional significance of the combination of five vessels is hard to say, for one could argue that vases were offered in those rites but not in others. In any event, it is fair to conclude that the alignment of five altar vessels at the front of the altar had a strong visual impact and allowed for these objects to be seen as a set. Therefore, the combination of five vessels was distinct *because of* the rite, not in spite of it.

The foregoing discussion of the Guimet altar set shows that an impressively made altar set, like the stone altars made for the imperial mausoleums, was not in itself proof that the combination of five altar vessels had become a “standard” or “special” combination. Rather, it was those special rites that gave rise to the possibility that the altar set with five objects could be perceived in a new light. In time, the set of five objects became a separate entity that warranted different designs from other objects on the altar. That was when five offering vessels—*wu gong*—became the *wugong*, the predominant altar set.

A monumental copper-body painted-enamel altar set dated 1732 and measuring over 70cm tall may hold the key to this transformation of perception (Fig. 8). This set was thoroughly examined in a recent article by Chen Fang-mei.<sup>51</sup> The planning, manufacture, and shipping of the set took over two years, and it was a special gift, completed with five individual lacquer stands, from the Yongzheng emperor (reigned 1723-1735) to the Confucius Temple in Qufu, Shandong Province. The enamelled altar set, commissioned by the emperor, was deliberately different from the bronze ritual vessels, which were bestowed in 1730 to the Confucius Temple by the same emperor. In addition to the different medium, the vibrant floral decoration and imperial yellow base color firmly set

50 See *Taichang xukao*, 8.23b and 8.26b. In those ceremonies, the *wugong* was the only altar set, unlike the altar arrangement for the Altar to Heaven, where there was another altar set in front of the *wugong*.

51 Chen Fang-mei 陳芳妹, “Ritual Vessels Presented to the Qufu Temple of Confucius by the Yongzheng Emperor: The Five Offering Enamelware Vessels and Bronze *Fu* and *Gui*” 雍正帝贈送曲阜孔廟的祭器——畫琺瑯五供與銅簠簋, *Gugong xueshu jikan* 故宮學術季刊 37:1 (2020.3): 73-142.

the altar set apart from the ritual vessels. Although the Kong family deemed the gift a departure from orthodox ritual vessels in ancient rites, Chen argues that the Yongzheng emperor had originally designed this altar set for the worship of the Kangxi emperor, and that transfer of the same design for the worship of Confucius was to underpin the Yongzheng emperor's filial piety.<sup>52</sup> Whatever the intention of the emperor might have been, it is notable that the design of the *wugong* did not correlate to the ritual setting and other ritual vessels associated with it, thereby setting a precedent for distinct set of *wugong* for the rites.

Another *wugong* for the Confucius Temple in Beijing further corroborates this argument (Fig. 9). The *wugong* for the Beijing temple was bestowed by the Qianlong emperor (reigned 1736-1795) some 37 years after his father gave the enamelled set to the Qufu Temple. According to the *Qinding Guozijian zhi* 欽定國子監志 (completed in 1778, revised in 1836), the Qianlong altar set for the Beijing temple was made of bronze with no decoration (素質無紋) and had been “added (添設)” and placed on five stone stands between an incense table with a censer and two candlesticks and a table with ten “ancient” bronzes.<sup>53</sup> The incense burner, vase, and candlestick were illustrated individually in the text in a format akin to the illustrations of ritual vessels—each altar vessel was illustrated on a page, followed by a caption of its dimension and design on another page (Fig. 10).<sup>54</sup> By the same token, this format of illustration rendered the altar vessels similar to ritual vessels and so perhaps gave them a more orthodox appearance.<sup>55</sup> The ten “ancient” bronzes—*ding* 鼎, *zun* 尊, *you* 卣, *lei* 罍, *hu* 壺, *gui* 簋, *xu* 盥, *gu* 觚, *jue* 爵, and *xi* 洗 now housed in the National Palace Museum<sup>56</sup>—were bestowed

52 Chen Fang-mei, “Ritual Vessels Presented to the Qufu Temple of Confucius by the Yongzheng Emperor,” 86-95.

53 The *Guozijian*, as the highest academic institution, was closely associated with the Confucius Temple. Indeed, a Confucius temple was included in all levels of government schools from the Ming period onwards. See Julia Murray, “Portraits of Confucius: icons and iconoclasm,” *Oriental Art* vol. XLVII no. 3 (2001): 18.

54 This way of presenting objects in texts is, by the Song period, typical of ritual vessels. The *Qinding Guozijian zhi* is the first source I know of that presents the incense burner, candlesticks and vases in this manner.

55 This idea is indebted to Catherine Bell's discussion of ritual and textualization. Bell argues, “The textualization of ritual practices has been linked to the promotion of universal values over local ones and the emergence of orthodoxy over orthopraxy” (Catherine Bell, *Ritual theory, ritual practice* [New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992], 138.)

56 *Qinding Guozijian zhi* 欽定國子監志, 19.41b: 謹案以下各器均於乾隆三十四年二月添設大成殿正

together with the bronze altar set by the Qianlong emperor in 1769 after the completion of the temple's renovation in 1768.<sup>57</sup> For the Qianlong emperor, the bestowal of ancient bronzes served to celebrate the piety of Confucius in adhering to Zhou rituals and to "complement the ritual objects" used there (用備禮器).<sup>58</sup> Displaying "ancient" bronzes alongside ritual paraphernalia may have been to demonstrate that the ritual paraphernalia used in the Confucius Temple were proper for ancient rites.<sup>59</sup> The emperor further explained the purpose of the gift of the ten "ancient" bronzes:

Earlier the renovation of the Imperial Academy was completed. As I ponder about the [Confucius] temple in Queli displays *xizun* and various other vessels, I chose ten Zhou bronzes from the antique collection to be exhibited in the *Dachen* Hall [for the Confucius Temple in Beijing] to supplement the ritual paraphernalia. This time I am fortunate to visit Qufu and pay tribute to Confucius, and I see that all ritual vessels on display are only made in the Han Dynasty. Also, the luster is not antique. I think that in this prosperous hometown of the sage, it is appropriate to display ceremonial accessories to make it more attractive. Following the example of the Imperial Academy, I bestow ten Zhou bronzes from the Inner Court to be exhibited in the temple's hall. It has always been my wish and pleasure to emulate the Zhou. Upon my return [to the capital], I shall carefully choose the bronzes and bestow them to

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中，承以石几在香案之前，周範十器之後。This description is consistent with the illustration of the altar arrangement of the Confucius Temple in the Jiaqing and Guangxu editions of the *Daqing huidian tu* 大清會典圖，which show the altar set placed behind (from the visitor's standpoint) the ancient bronzes.

57 The "ancient" bronzes and the altar set were bestowed in the second lunar month of 1769 (See *Daqing Gaozong Chun Huangdi shilu* 大清高宗純皇帝實錄, 828.3b and *Qinding Guozijian zhi* 19.41b). Quotation marks are added because only the *lei*, *ding* and *xizun* were correctly dated to the Zhou period. According to Zhang Linsheng 張臨生, the *gu* was a Shang vessel, the *xi* a Han vessel, and the other five belonged later periods. See Zhang Linsheng 張臨生, "Zhenyan shangsan de Guozijian Zhoufan shiqi" 真贗相糝的國子監周範十器, *Gugong wenwu yuekan* 故宮文物月刊, 73 (1989): 34-55. For a recent study, see Wu Hsiao-yun 吳曉筠, "The Temple of Confucius and the Establishment of Ritual Vessels from the Qianlong Court" 孔廟與乾隆朝祭器的設置, *Gugong xueshu jikan* 故宮學術季刊 37:2 (2020.4): 93-134.

58 *Qinding Guozijian zhi* 19.6b-7a: The text in the original reads: 謹案乾隆三十三年皇上以重修聖廟落成，將親詣行禮，以孔子志在從周，特頒內府所藏周範銅器，鼎，尊，卣，壺，簠，簋，觚，爵，洗各一，命陳設大成殿中，用備禮器，以非祀事所用，恭詳戴金石門，茲不編入。

59 A similar gift of ritual bronzes was bestowed on the Confucius Temple in Shandong in 1771 after the Qianlong emperor's visit. No *wugong* was included, because the Confucius Temple in Shandong already had the elaborate altar set bestowed by the Yongzheng emperor in 1732.

Kong Zhaohuan [a descendant of Confucius]. They should be guarded for later generations and never replaced, thereby demonstrating my dedication to the past and to Confucius.<sup>60</sup>

Therefore, it is evident that correct ritual paraphernalia had been a concern of the Qianlong emperor.<sup>61</sup> Yet this concern did not explain the bestowal of the altar set, which had not been used in the Zhou period, and the emperor did not refer to it in his statement. The bronzes had close associations with ancient rituals championed by Confucius, whereas the *wugong* did not have any such associations. The capacity of the *wugong* to offer incense and flowers was not relevant to the ancient rituals described in the classics. It is unlikely that the *wugong* in the Confucius Temple was bestowed in the same spirit of “demonstrating [the emperor’s] dedication to the past and to Confucius” as the “ancient” bronzes. Therefore, even though the altar set was bestowed at the same time as the “ancient” bronzes, they were essentially different kinds of gifts, just as the enameled altar set that the Yongzheng emperor bestowed to the Qufu temple was a different sort of gift compared to the ritual vessels. While both the Yongzheng and Qianlong bestowals of *wugong* to the Qufu and Beijing temples were respectful gestures, it is interesting to note that the two sets were radically different in design and size. In any event, the additions of *wugong* in both Confucius Temples show that the *wugong* could have been added or adopted without a precedent set out in ritual prescriptions. This freedom, or detachment, from ritual tradition also meant that the *wugong* could have been incorporated in other devotional settings. That was indeed the case, and the growing use of *wugong* in state rites will be explored in the next section.

60 諭，前歲修葺 太學告成，因念闕里廟堂，設有犧象諸尊，爰擇舊藏周範銅鼎尊等十事，陳之大成殿，用備禮器，茲臨幸曲阜，祇謁先師，閱視所列各器，不過漢時所造，且色澤亦不能甚古，惟茲昌平聖里，宜陳法物，以為觀美，仿太學之列，頒內府所藏姬朝銅器十事，備列廟庭，用愜從周素願，俟廂朕迴鑾後，慎選郵發，交與衍聖公孔昭煥，世守勿替，以副朕則古稱先之意。(Daqing Gaozong Chun Huangdi shilu, 880.8ab)

61 Indeed, the emperor’s concern with correct ritual paraphernalia brought about a revolution in ritual vessels as early as 1748, because the ritual vessels used until then had had the shapes of conventional plates and bowls. Therefore, the Qianlong emperor commissioned new ritual vessels and decreed that they should be archaistic in form so that the rituals could be performed properly as in ancient times (see Daqing Gaozong Chun Huangdi shilu, 306.2ab).

## State Rites That Popularized the *Wugong*

The use of *wugong* in state rites was of great importance to the development of the *wugong*, because the primacy of the rites afforded much attention to the objects, both in terms of how they were to be produced and how they were regarded. The Jiajing altar set from Musée Guimet mentioned earlier would have had an imposing presence at the Altar to Heaven, perhaps even more striking than the ritual vessels, which were monochrome porcelains in the conventional forms of plates and bowls.<sup>62</sup> Whether the set was used in the late Ming period after the Jiajing reign remains unknown, but an incomplete porcelain set of the Wanli period at the British Museum provides more food for thought (Fig. 11). Consisting of two candlesticks and a vase, they were likely matched with the three-legged censer now in the Israel Museum, Jerusalem, and the vase in the Tokyo National Museum.<sup>63</sup> This set is coated with a yellow glaze and decorated with a green dragon motif, and the individual vessels are square in cross-section, unlike the Guimet set and other sets in the mausoleum of the Wanli emperor.<sup>64</sup> The conspicuous use of yellow glaze suggests that it might have been made for the Altar to Earth, where yellow-glazed porcelain ritual vessels were used. The square cross-section of the vessels corresponded to the concept of “round heaven, square earth” (*tianyuan difang* 天圓地方). This concept stemmed from ancient Chinese mathematics and astronomy

62 Lau, “Ceremonial Monochrome Wares of the Ming Dynasty,” 83-100. Several blue plates and bowls at the Palace Museum give an idea of what some ritual vessels may look like. See The Palace Museum and the Archaeological Research Institute of Ceramic in Jingdezhen, comp 故宮博物院等編, *Imperial Porcelains from the Reign of Jiaqing, Longqing and Wanli in the Ming Dynasty: A Comparison of Imperial Kiln from Jingdezhen and Imperial Collection of the Palace Museum*, vol. 1 明代嘉靖隆慶萬曆御窯瓷器：景德鎮御窯遺址出土與故宮博物院藏傳世瓷器對比（上）（Beijing: The Forbidden City Publishing House, 2018), cats. 152, 153, 159, and 161. In addition, the British Museum has a pair of vases that are almost identical to the vases in this set. See Jessica Harrison-Hall, *A catalogue of late Yuan and Ming ceramics in the British Museum* (London: the British Museum press, 2001), 242. Ching-fei Shih calls this ritual reformation with ceramic objects the “third system,” in addition to earlier ritual vessels that followed the *Sanli tu* system and *Xuanhe bogu tu* systems (Shih, “The New Idea of Ritual Vessels in the Early Ming Dynasty,” 114). The Hongwu emperor reasoned that if the dead had never used vessels resembling those of the Shang and the Zhou during their lifetime, then it made little sense for the deceased to use them in their afterlife. He then drew support from Confucius’ principle of “serving the dead like the living.” See the original text in *Mingshi* 明史, 51.1315 (近時泥古，好用簋豆之屬祭其先，生既不用，死而用，其無謂也，孔子曰：「事死如事生，事亡如事存」，其製宗廟器用服御，皆如事生之儀)。

63 Harrison-Hall, *A catalogue of late Yuan and Ming ceramics in the British Museum*, 11:170, 11: 171, 11:172.

64 Dingling fajue weiyuanhui gongzuodui 定陵發掘委員會工作隊, “Dingling shijue jianbao” 定陵試掘

and is discussed in Zhao Shuang's 趙爽 (active 3<sup>rd</sup> century) *Zhoubi suanjing* 周髀算經, according to which the concept correlated to the "yinyang" dichotomy rather than to the shapes of the heavens and earth.<sup>65</sup> By the Ming period, however, the idea of heaven and earth became associated with circle and square, with the most patent examples being the circular Altar to Heaven and the rectangular Altar to Earth built in Beijing in 1420 and 1530, respectively, as well as the Ming mausoleums that characteristically comprise a square courtyard and round tumulus.<sup>66</sup> Conceivably, some altar vessels, such as the Wanli altar set, may have followed this convention. The use of *wugong* at the Altar to Earth was not indicated in standard texts like the *Daming huidian*. Considering that the *Daming huidian* was prefaced in 1587, however, it may not have covered other ritual practices in the late Wanli and subsequent period. The significance of the yellow Wanli altar set may be assumed, because it is considerably larger—measuring over 70cm—than the Guimet set, which measure 28 to 48cm in height. The Wanli altar set is about the same size as the Yongzheng enameled set for the Qufu temple. Therefore, the lack of textual information on the Wanli set does not preclude the possibility that it was made for a special occasion.

There are ample textual records concerning the *wugong* during the Qing period, and their uses in the state rites are particularly revealing. The state rites were divided into three groups, namely the Grand Sacrifices (*dasi* 大祀), Middle Sacrifices (*zhongsi* 中祀), and Common Sacrifices (*qunsi* 群祀). The Grand Sacrifices, which included those performed at the Altar to Heaven and the Ancestral Temple, were the most important and conducted in the capital, with the emperor as the principal participant; the Middle Sacrifices, performed in places such as the Altar to the Sun and the Altar to the Moon, were conducted both in the capital and in other county seats by the emperor or his delegates; the Common Sacrifices were primarily devoted to meritorious and deified officials, whose shrines were built mostly in Beijing. These rites were to ensure that the emperor and the people under his dynastic authority would receive blessings and protection from supernatural powers and deities without end.<sup>67</sup>

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簡報, *Kaogu tongxin* 考古通信 7 (1958): pl. 5.1.

65 *Zhoubi suanjing* 周髀算經, part 1, 1.17b.

66 For more information on Ming mausoleums, see Yiu, "The Stone Altar in Ming and Qing Mausoleums."

67 The rituals also sanctioned the authority of the emperor as the Son of Heaven. For a lucid history of these sacrifices, see Susan Naquin, *Peking: Temples and city life, 1400-1900* (Berkeley: University of



The schedules, practices, and regulations of those rites were listed in the statutes known as the *Daqing tongli* 大清通禮 and the *Daqing huidian* 大清會典.<sup>68</sup> The five editions of the *Daqing huidian* provide a glimpse of the changes to the arrangement on various altars during the Qing period. Both the *Daqing tongli* and the *Daqing huidian* form the basis of my investigation into the use of the *wugong* in Qing state rituals.

These two documents indicate that the *wugong* were used selectively. Of the state rites mentioned in the Kangxi edition of the *Daqing huidian*, only those at the Altar to Heaven (Grand Sacrifice) and the worship of Dingnan Wuzhuangwang ci 定南武壯王祠 (Common Sacrifice), which commemorated the meritorious general Kong Youde 孔有德 (d. 1652), required the use of a bronze altar set equipped with wooden *lingzhi* covered with gold (貼金木靈芝).<sup>69</sup> Other rites in the Kangxi period generally required a smaller altar set, with only an incense burner and two candlesticks. During the Yongzheng period (1723-1735), three new rites were added in the Common Sacrifices to commemorate three meritorious officials. Like the two rites mentioned, the new additions to the Common Sacrifices required the use of a bronze altar set.<sup>70</sup>

Extant altar sets that can be securely dated to the Kangxi and Yongzheng periods are less common. A cloisonné set inscribed with the Kangxi reign mark (Fig. 12) now at the

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California Press, 2000), 144-146 and 324-331. See also Stephan Feuchtwang, "School-temple and City God," in *The city in late imperial China*, ed. William Skinner (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977), tables 1-3.

68 The former was printed in 1759 with 50 *juan*, which was enlarged to 54 *juan* in the second edition printed in 1824. The *Daqing huidian* went through five editions (1690, 1733, 1767, 1818, and 1899) during the Kangxi, Yongzheng, Qianlong, Jiaqing, and Guangxu reigns of the Qing Dynasty, and the document expanded tenfold from 162 *juan* in the Kangxi edition to 1,590 *juan* in the Guangxu edition, which included 1,220 *juan* of *shili* 事例 and 270 *juan* of *tu* 圖. For more information on the statutes, see Arthur Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period*, 2 vols (Washington: Library of Congress, 1944), 2.805.

69 *Daqing huidian* (Kangxi) 大清會典康熙朝, 156.8b and 156.26b. The layout of the sacrifice at the Altar to Heaven is also illustrated in *Daqing huidian* (Kangxi) 55.43ab. The Kangxi cloisonné *wugong* at the National Palace Museum is also equipped with lacquered *lingzhi* with gold lines (acc. no. 中琤 238-242). The *lingzhi* for a Qianlong altar set in the National Palace Museum is fully covered with gold (acc. no. 中琤 296-300). In any event, the practice of using wooden *lingzhi* with gold decoration appeared in the Taoist temples on Wudang Mountain by the 15<sup>th</sup> century. See *Chijian Dayue Taiheshan zhi*, *juan* 2, 47, 52 and 60.

70 The three new shrines were dedicated to Kexigong 恪僖公 Ha Shitun 哈什屯 (1598-1663), Wenxianggong 文襄公 Tu Hai 圖海 (d. 1681), and Qinxianggong 勤襄公 Tong Tulai 佟圖賴 (d. 1658) and his two sons (see the *Daqing huidian* [Yongzheng], 237.23b-24b). For information on the sacrifices to the Altar to Heaven and to Kong Youde, see the *Daqing huidian* (Yongzheng), 237.3b and 237.23ab.

National Palace Museum was unlikely to have been used in the state rites which called for bronze *wugong*. A bronze set dated to the Yongzheng period and filled with gold-plated wooden *lingzhi* in the Palace of Benevolent Peace (Xianruoguan 咸若館) in the Forbidden City was probably similar to the ones used in state rites (Fig. 13).<sup>71</sup>

During the Qianlong period, new sacrifices were added at the level of both the Middle and the Common Sacrifices. According to the Qianlong edition of the *Daqing huidian*,<sup>72</sup> however, only the sacrifice at the Altar to Heaven was recorded as requiring the use of the *wugong*. This is curious, because from the records of the Imperial Household Department, there are scores of references to *wugong* commissioned by the court to be used in various palatial halls, a fact that is reinforced by numerous *wugong* inscribed with Qianlong reign marks in major museums in Beijing and Taipei.<sup>73</sup> Hence, the paucity of reference to the *wugong* in the Qianlong edition of the *Daqing huidian* may not provide a conclusive picture of whether it was used in other sacrifices, such as those performed at the shrines of meritorious officials.<sup>74</sup>

71 Wang Wan, Yi Shuqing and Lu Yanzheng, *Daily Life in the Forbidden City* (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 1985), 299, fig. 467. Another Yongzheng period set was auctioned and published in Christie's 1999, lot 522.

72 Susan Naquin observes that "the great majority of those [Common Sacrifices] added for worship in Peking (twenty-one out of thirty-one) were meritorious individuals not gods and did not represent deepened state involvement in popular religion" (Naquin, *Peking: Temples and city life, 1400-1900*, 330).

73 A cursory search in the *Neiwufu Zaobanchu gezuo chengzao huoji qingdang* 內務府造辦處各作承造活計清檔, or simply the *Huojidang* 活計檔 (Archive of daily allowances), compiled by the *Neiwufu* (Imperial Household Department) shows altar sets made for palatial halls or imperial residences. Those halls include: Ninghuitang 凝暉堂 (in the Forbidden City), Guxiangzhai 古香齋 (at the Yuanmingyuan 圓明園), Xiangshan 香山 (northwest of Beijing), Chaoshoulou 抄手樓 (at the Summer Palace—Rehe), Hanjingtang 含經堂 (Changchunyuan 長春園), Jiyunlou (Forbidden City), Wanshoushan 萬壽山 (Qingyi yuan 清漪園), Shanshe huguang gong yilou 山色湖光共一樓 (Qingyi yuan), Qixianggong 啟祥宮 (Forbidden City), Fanxianglou 梵香樓 (Yuanmingyuan), Huiyaolou (Forbidden City), Cininggong 慈寧宮 (Forbidden City), Fengsan wusi 奉三無私 (Yuanmingyuan), a palace in Tianjin, Rushishi 如是室 (at the Forbidden City), Chunhuaxuan 淳化軒 (Yuanmingyuan), Le'anhe 樂安和 (Yuanmingyuan), Yongsidian 永思殿 (Jingshan 景山), Yongcuiyan 湧翠岩 (Chengde), Jietai 戒台 (Rehe), Ningshougong Yizhai 寧壽宮抑齋 (Forbidden City), and Yihexuan 頤和軒 (Forbidden City) and Cuishanglou. The online database provided by Academia Sinica (<http://mhdb.mh.sinica.edu.tw/document/>) provides many more references to the *wugong*.

74 The illustrations of the Grand and Middle Sacrifices in the Qianlong edition of the *Daqing huidian* only indicate the use of the *wugong* in the Altar to Heaven (*Daqing huidian* [Qianlong] 37.[20a]). The altar set was not discussed in the main text, however. The absence of the *wugong* in the text does not necessarily mean that the *wugong* was not used. Rather, it is possible that the *Daqing huidian* had omitted the *wugong* altar set, which was mentioned in the *Daqing tongli*. Compare the descriptions in the *Daqing huidian* and the *Daqing tongli*:

Use of the *wugong* was mentioned frequently in the Jiaqing edition of the *Daqing huidian*. Compared to the Qianlong edition of the *Daqing huidian*, the Jiaqing edition lists six more rites for the Common Sacrifices, namely the worship at the Wenchang dijun 文昌帝君,<sup>75</sup> the Kunminghu longshen 昆明湖龍神,<sup>76</sup> and at four other meritorious shrines.<sup>77</sup> Not only did these six new rites require the use of the *wugong*, but during the Jiaqing period (1796-1820), all of the twelve meritorious shrines incorporated the *wugong* as well. In addition, the following nine rites “upgraded” required paraphernalia from smaller altar sets to the *wugong*: the worship of Yusi 雩祀 (Grand Sacrifice), Xianshi Kongzi 先師孔子 (Middle Sacrifice),<sup>78</sup> the Star god Jupiter 太歲 (Common Sacrifice), Guandi 關帝 (Common Sacrifice),<sup>79</sup> Dongyue 東嶽 (Common Sacrifice),

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上帝[幄內]: 蒼璧一, 帛十有二, 犢一, 登一, 簋二, 簠二, 籩豆各十有二, 尊一, 爵三, 鑪一, 鐙六, 燔牛一 (*Daqing huidian* 37.2b)

上帝幄內: 犢一, 登一, 簋二, 簠二, 籩十有二, 豆十有二, 金鑪一, 青鐙二, 金鐙四, 鑪餅五事, 爵一 (*Daqing tongli* 欽定大清通禮, 1.15a)

The descriptions of the ritual vessels are consistent, but the former does not include the altar set, which the latter referred to as the “five things with censer and vases (*luping wushi* 鑪餅五事).” Given that both the *Daqing tongli* and the illustration of the *Daqing huidian* indicate the presence of the altar set, the *wugong* was probably used, despite its omission in the text of the *Daqing huidian*. Nevertheless, the *Daqing tongli* does not seem to have indicated the presence of the altar set in the meritorious shrines, such as the altar arrangement in the Dingnan wuzhuangwang ci: 定南武壯王之禮祠, 一案以福晉配, 祭日太常寺官入祠具器陳羊一, 豕一, 果實五盤, 鑪一, 鐙二, 中設一案少東陳祝文, 東設一案陳尊一, 香盤一, 素帛三, 爵九, 設洗於祠門內之 (*Daqing tongli* 15.20a). It is not clear whether the *wugong* was merely omitted from the record, or not used in this sacrifice. It must be noted, however, that because a *wugong* had been used in this Common Sacrifice during the Kangxi and Yongzheng periods, its removal would probably have to be memorialized to the throne and recorded in the *Daqing huidian zeli* 大清會典則例, which documented details such as the Qianlong emperor's approval for the addition of a pair of candlesticks on the altars in the Ancestral Temple in 1736 (*Daqing huidian zeli* 161.4b). The *Daqing huidian zeli* does not, to my knowledge, indicate the removal of the *wugong* from the meritorious shrines.

75 The state worship of Wenchang dijun 文昌帝君 began in 1801. In 1856, after the worship of Guandi 關帝—a symbol of military prowess—was upgraded to “Middle Sacrifices,” the worship of Wenchang dijun—a symbol of literary merit—was also upgraded to the “Middle Sacrifices” (See the *Daqing huidian shili* [Guangxu] 大清會典事例光緒朝, 438.18a-19b).

76 The worship of Kunminghu longshen began in 1812 (*Daqing huidian shili* [Guangxu], 444.10a).

77 The four meritorious shrines were Jingyongci 旌勇祠, Jiangzhongci 獎忠祠, Baozhongci 褒忠祠, and Ruizhongci 睿忠祠. For the use of the altar set in these shrines, see the *Daqing huidian tu* (Jiaqing), 18.6b-8a. For the altar arrangements of the Wenchang dijun and Kunminghu longshen, see the *Daqing huidian tu* (Jiaqing), 17.7 and 17.10b-11a, respectively.

78 Actually, the Confucius Temple had already started using the *wugong* in the Qianlong period, but it was not indicated in the Qianlong edition of the *Daqing huidian* (which was published in 1767), because the Qianlong emperor only bestowed a set to the temple in 1769, following his visit to the newly renovated Imperial Academy, which was adjacent to the temple, in 1768. For the purpose and record of the visit, see *Qinding Guozijian zhi* 19.6b-7a; for a description of the incense burner, vases, and candlesticks, see 19.41a-43b.

79 The worship of Guandi was elevated from the “Common Sacrifices” to “Middle Sacrifices” in 1853

Duchenghuang 都城隍 (Common Sacrifice), Huoshen 火神 (Common Sacrifice), Heilongtan longshen 黑龍潭龍神 (Common Sacrifice), and Yuquanshan longshen 玉泉山龍神 (Common Sacrifice).<sup>80</sup> In contrast to the ritual regulations for state rites of the Qianlong period, twenty-four of the forty-three rites<sup>81</sup> during the Jiaqing period required a *wugong* on the altars; the Qianlong-Jiaqing transition involved a significant increase in the use of *wugong* in state rites. Evidence from the Guangxu edition of the *Daqing huidian* also points to this predominance of the *wugong*. What is more, three additional Common Sacrifices, performed at the Bailongtan longshen 白龍潭龍神, Huijici 惠濟祠, and Heshenmiao 河神廟<sup>82</sup> and documented in this subsequent period, also called for the use of the *wugong*, again increasing the proportion of the *wugong* being used in Qing state rites. This trend suggests that the use of altar sets may have continued to increase after the Qianlong period. It seems that some temples and devotional settings, which may not have had a *wugong* before the Jiaqing period, had acquired or were given a set later.

Why did some sacrifices, especially those that had been using a smaller set with three objects, adopt a *wugong*? There is evidence to suggest that originally the *wugong* may have been reserved for some important settings. State rites that required the use of the *wugong* generally put the altar set on the main altar. For the Grand Sacrifice at the Altar to Heaven, offerings were made to various deities, the main one being *Shangdi* 上帝. His altar occupied the main position (*zhengwei* 正位) on the top terrace, where a *wugong* was placed on five stone stands (Fig. 14).<sup>83</sup> On two sides of the main altar were

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(see the *Daqing huidian shili* [Guangxu], *juan* 438.12b). Interestingly, the *wugong* was only displayed in the anterior hall, which celebrated the ancestors of Guandi (see the *Daqing huidian tu* [Jiaqing], 17.4ab). In contrast, the front hall, where Guandi was worshipped, did not use the *wugong* (see the *Daqing huidian tu* [Jiaqing], 17.3ab).

80 For illustrations or descriptions of those altar arrangements, see the *Daqing huidian tu* (Jiaqing) 6.3b, 15.7, 13.4, 17.4a, 17.9a, 17.10a, 17.8b, 17.10b, and 17.11a, respectively.

81 My count is based on the description of the altar settings listed in the *Daqing huidian tu* (Jiaqing) *juan* 1-18.

82 The worship of Bailongtan longshen began in 1813 (see the *Daqing huidian shili* [Guangxu], 444.7a), and the Huijici and the Heshenmiao were set up in 1817 (see the *Daqing huidian shili* [Guangxu], 444.11b). For illustrations of the altar arrangements, see the *Daqing huidian tu* (Guangxu), 20.201, 20.199 and 20.198, respectively.

83 The Jiaqing edition of the *Daqing huidian tu* (1.9b-10b) describes the dimensions and construction of the three terraces, and mentions "five stone stands (*baishiji wu* 白石几五)" (1.10a). The stone stands seem to be omitted from the *Daqing huidian zeli* and the Qianlong editions of the *Daqing huidian* and *Daqing tongli*, because the stone stands clearly existed before the Jiaqing period. According to the Kangxi edition of the *Daqing huidian* (156.8b), a bronze altar set was placed on five stone stands carved

supplementary altars (*peiwei* 配位) for the deceased emperors. These altars had a smaller altar set, comprised of three objects, instead of the *wugong*. Similarly, the smaller altar set was used in the altars on the second terrace for other deities, primarily constellations, accompanying the *Shangdi* (*congwei* 從位).

A similar arrangement was made with the Common Sacrifices at Zhaozhongci 昭忠祠, which honored civil and military officials of various ranks. Six out of fourteen chambers—the main hall, the right main room, the main room, the left main room, and two auxiliary rooms—were dedicated to the dukes and officials (Fig. 15). These “main chambers,” as some of them were called, commemorated high-ranking officials, served blood sacrifices, and included a *wugong*. On the other hand, the minor chambers at the Zhaozhongci, according to the *Daqing huidian*, honored (low-ranking) soldiers, who did not receive blood sacrifices.<sup>84</sup> The *wugong* was not used in those chambers; a smaller altar set with a censer and two candlesticks was used instead. The *Daqing huidian* specified that the altar set used in the minor chambers was not to be equipped with stands for the vases (不設瓶几),<sup>85</sup> which is to say that there were no altar vases. Therefore, the use of the *wugong* in the main position and shrines made visible a hierarchy of altars within a temple or a ceremony. The apparently selective use of the *wugong* in some Common Sacrifices for distinguished warriors and officials may have signified honor reserved for the deceased or fallen heroes.

As the worship of some Grand and Middle Sacrifices did not require a *wugong*, it seems that its use in state rites was not based on the powers of the deities, but perhaps on the particular esteem by the court. Indeed, the use of the *wugong* was specifically prohibited in some cases. For instance, concerning the altar arrangement of the Grand Sacrifice at the Altar to Grain (Qigu 祈穀), the *Daqing huidian* noted that “the displays on and in front of the altar table were the same as that at the Altar to Heaven, except that

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with dragons: 鑿龍白石五供五座 (上置銅香爐, 香靠全), 花瓶一對 (插金芝), 銅燭臺一對. In any event, the placement of the altar set in the main position on the Altar to Heaven may be traced back to the late Ming, or the early seventeenth century, as it was documented in the *Taichang xukao* 1.38b. Yet the use of the altar set was not mentioned in the *Daming huidian*, which was written in the late sixteenth century.

84 In this particular shrine, the use of the *wugong* accompanied blood sacrifices. Yet blood sacrifices were used alongside a smaller altar set in other state rites.

85 *Daqing huidian tu* (Jiaqing) 18.5a.

the stone *wugong* were not provided.”<sup>86</sup> Instead, a smaller altar set, comprised of three objects, was used. In this light, it is possible that the “upgrade” of the altar set with three objects to a *wugong* was deliberate, although the records of those sacrifices in the *Daqing huidian* and *Daqing tongli* do not provide a reason for replacing the smaller, three-piece altar set with a *wugong*.<sup>87</sup>

This prevalence of the *wugong* appears to be at variance with its “selective” use in state rites. Yet the court did not prevent its use in other public or private devotional rites, and the aforementioned Yongzheng bronze set at the Palace of Benevolent Peace was used by the Qing empresses and consorts in the Hall for Worshipping Buddhas.<sup>88</sup> Indeed, the use of the *wugong* in many Common Sacrifices during the nineteenth century may have indirectly promoted their use to a wider public. In contrast to the imperial altars of the Grand Sacrifices, which were confined to visits from the imperial family and court officials, the shrines of meritorious officials for Common Sacrifices were open to public. As a result, visitors in Beijing, where there were large numbers of merchants and students, were able to view the interiors of those shrines and other temples. The visitors, praying for success in business or examinations, or participating in “temple fairs (*miaohui* 廟會)” and “temple markets (*miaoshi* 廟市),” would have become familiar with the *wugong*.<sup>89</sup> Perhaps the most impressive examples were the altar vessels commissioned for the Dongba Temple of the Mother of Gods (*Dongba tianxian shengmu* 東壩天仙聖母) in Beijing in 1741 by Tang Ying 唐英 (1682-1756), the supervisor of the imperial kilns at Jingdezhen 景德鎮 (Fig. 16).<sup>90</sup> It seems that while important rites gave “imperial” status to the *wugong*, splendid altar sets could, in turn, have enhanced the solemnity and prestige of the setting.

86 *Daqing huidian tu* (Jiaqing) 6.15b: 祈年殿正位籩豆案上案前陳設與園丘正位同，唯不設石五供。Here the stone *wugong* referred to the stone stands for a *wugong*.

87 The *Daqing huidian tu* merely describes that the altar set was used in certain rites, but no explanations are given there, or in the *Daqing huidian shili*.

88 For example, the *Daqing huidian* indicates that, in addition to the state rites, family shrines of the dukes (王府廟祀) were to use a copper *wugong* in family rituals: 每位前設紅案一，銅香爐一，銅燭臺二，銅花瓶二……(*Daqing huidian* [Kangxi] 66.26a and [Yongzheng] 95.22a).

89 The fairs and markets may have attracted those who did not normally pay tribute to deities in temples. The public use of temples has been thoroughly examined in Naquin, *Peking: Temples and city life, 1400-1900*, 57-105 (chapter 3).

90 For more information on Tang Ying and this set, see Peter Lam, “Tang Ying (1682-1756): The Imperial Factory, Superintendent at Jingdezhen,” *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramics Society* 63 (2000): 65-82.



## Conclusion

The correlation of the *wugong* and the importance of ritual settings, as deemed by the court or the patrons of altar sets, makes us pause, because there was scarcely any deliberation on the form, medium, dimensions, and, in fact, the reason for the *wugong* in state rites. The lack of deliberation, especially during the Qianlong period when many ornate altar sets were made,<sup>91</sup> is made all the more notable by the wealth of information concerning the form and justification for ritual vessels produced during the same period and stipulated in the *Huangchao liqi tushi*. The Qianlong emperor played an active role in revitalizing archaistic ritual vessels in 1748.<sup>92</sup> Hence, the innovations of ritual vessels and the adoption of *wugong* during the High Qing period were essentially different kinds of change. The former was abrupt and revolutionary, whereas the latter was comparatively subtle and gradual. Nevertheless, both changes contributed to the vitality of Qing rituals, meaning that there was room for ritual practitioners to negotiate and introduce novel elements to what might otherwise be considered unvarying practices. Even Grand Sacrifices evolved over time, as Angela Zito argues in her seminal study:

Grand Sacrifice began in an exegesis and discussion of past ritual that culminated in texts that were both descriptive and prescriptive. Performance according to the texts was a re-presentation of the knowledge of past order coupled with the power of the emperor to command the objects and people needed to demonstrate its reality in the present Qing reign. Text and performance complemented one another, combining in an ever-changing whole. Only rituals according to the text were correct. Yet the text as synopsis (a summarizing visualization) of the study of ritual was valid only when it also truly described and led to ritual performance that “accorded to circumstance.” Models of a Chinese polity that was eternally fixed in stagnant equilibrium can be dismissed. The constant effort to sight change, cite precedent, and re-site

91 Altar sets of the Qing period are too numerous to be enumerated here. cursory search from major museums in Beijing and Taipei gives a rich variety of altar sets in various mediums and dimensions.

92 The Qianlong emperor posited that the ritual vessels, which bore the names of ancient vessels, ought to be modeled after their forms (*Daqing Gaozong Chun Huangdi shilu*, 306.2b: 朕思壇廟祭品，既遵用古名，則祭器自應悉倣古制) For more information, see Clark, *For Blessings and Guidance*.



ritual practice bespeaks a sensibility that was fine-tuned to transformation.<sup>93</sup>

How an action or object was described and recorded in a text may have had an impact on later iterations of the rite. Still, no matter how much information and instructions there were concerning a rite, following procedures was not necessarily a straightforward business, because implementing the rites involved a fair amount of individual interpretations—which may vary from one individual to another—of the texts. Unspecified aspects of rituals created room for individual choices for practitioners, who performed in ways they deemed suitable, from arranging altar vessels casually to commissioning specific altar sets. Whatever degree of intent those actions had had, some passed onto later practitioners, who simply followed suit as they had no reason to change the practices. In time, certain practices became standard and subsequently codified. It is because of—not in spite of—the lack of scriptural justification and endorsement that the *wugong* became inadvertently popularized during the later Qing period. The material culture of Chinese rituals was all the richer for it.

#### **Acknowledgements:**

The author would like to thank Prof. Ching-fei Shih and Dr. Yu-chih Lai for the opportunity to present an earlier version of this paper at the International Conference on “Ceremonial Paraphernalia of the Imperial Qing Dynasty.” I am grateful to Prof. Gao-shu Yeh for his encouraging comments and to anonymous reviewers for their constructive feedback. Prof. Fang-mei Chen, Dr. Pengliang Lu, Prof. Peter Lam, and Dr. Laure Schwartz-Arenales have also kindly provided some of the images used in this article.

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93 Angela Zito, *Of body and brush* (Chicago: University of Chicago press, 1997), 151.

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## Captions

- Figure 1 Yuan period lead altar vessels excavated from Chaoyang district, Beijing. H: 11.5cm (censer) and h: 22cm (vases and candlesticks), Yuan period. © Cheng Changxin 程長新 and Zhang Xiande 張先得. “Beijingshi jianxuan yizu Yuandai qian gongqi” 北京市揀選一組元代鉛供器. *Wenwu* 文物 5(1988) figs. 1-3.
- Figure 2 Color photograph of the stone altar in Changling taken by Albert Kahn in 1913. © Musée Albert Kahn. *Chine: 1909-1934: catalogue des photographies et des séquences filmées du Musée Albert Kahn*, vol. 1, pl. 251. Boulogne: Musée Albert Kahn, 2001.
- Figure 3 Bronze altar set dated 1473 in Zixiaogong, Hubei Province. Photo by Pengliang Lu.
- Figure 4 Porcelain *wugong* with dragon design in biscuit with traces of gold on blue ground, h: 28-48cm, Jiajing period (1522-1566). Musée Guimet. © RMN-Grand Palais (MNAAG, Paris) / Thierry Ollivier.
- Figure 5 Layout of altar vessels and ritual vessels at the Altar to Heaven during the Ming period according to *Taichang xukao*.
- Figure 6 Blue-glazed porcelain *jue* libation cup with reserve design in biscuit. Jiajing mark and period (1522-1566). H: 15cm, L: 14.5cm. © Baur Foundation, photo Marian Gérard.
- Figure 7 Blue-glazed porcelain incense spatula with gold trimming. Jiajing mark and period (1522-1566). L: 33.3cm, W: 9.3cm. © National Palace Museum (珍二六五之八).
- Figure 8 Copper-body painted-enamel altar set dated 1732. Confucius Temple, Qufu, Shandong Province. Photo by Fang-mei Chen.
- Figure 9 Photo taken by Stephen Bushell of the main hall of the Confucius Temple in Beijing. After Bushell 1921, vol. 1, fig. 33.
- Figure 10 Altar vessels illustrated in the *Qinding Guozijian zhi* 19.41a-42b.
- Figure 11 Yellow-glazed porcelain candlesticks and vase decorated in enamels. Wanli mark and period (1573-1620). H: 73.6-74.5cm. © British Museum (1930,1017.1, 1930,1017.2, 1930,1017.3).
- Figure 12 Cloisonné censer altar set with plum-blossom decoration. Kangxi period (1662-1722). H: 7.6-24cm. © National Palace Museum (中琺 01.11.000238-242).
- Figure 13 Bronze altar set in the Palace of Benevolent Peace. Yongzheng period (1723-1735). After Wan 1985, fig. 467.

Figure 14 Layout of altar vessels and ritual vessels in the main and supplementary positions of the Grand Sacrifice to Heaven. After *Daqing huidian* (Qianlong ed.), 37.20ab.

Figure 15 Layout of the Zhaozhongci. After *Daqing huidian tu* (Guangxu ed.) 20.205.

Figure 16 *Temple vase with floral scroll design*. Jingdezhen ware, underglaze blue porcelain. Qing period, 6<sup>th</sup> year of the Qianlong reign, 1741. Height: 64cm, Widest diameter: 26.8cm. Collection of the Art Museum of The Chinese University of Hong Kong (2000.0083). Development Fund.

# 五供與國家祭儀

姚進莊

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## 提 要

香爐與其他的供器很早就一同使用於祭壇上，特別是在明清時期形成了一套標準的供器組合，即包含有香爐、二座燭台與二件花瓶的五供。此器群雖十分通俗，但它在國家祭儀中的使用似乎已具有一定的標準與規範。耐人尋味的是，在乾隆時期的禮制改革中，唯有五供並未涉及禮器與祭器的形制變革，且未出現在《皇朝禮器圖式》之中。儘管如此，五供在國家祭儀的使用脈絡裡，仍能為人們如何看待祭壇陳設與祭祀此一問題提供一些線索。本文藉由探討五供，說明中國禮儀祭祀的物質文化如何在無顯著思想與理論變革之中煥發振興。

**關鍵詞：**五供、禮器／祭器、供器、大祀、中祀、群祀

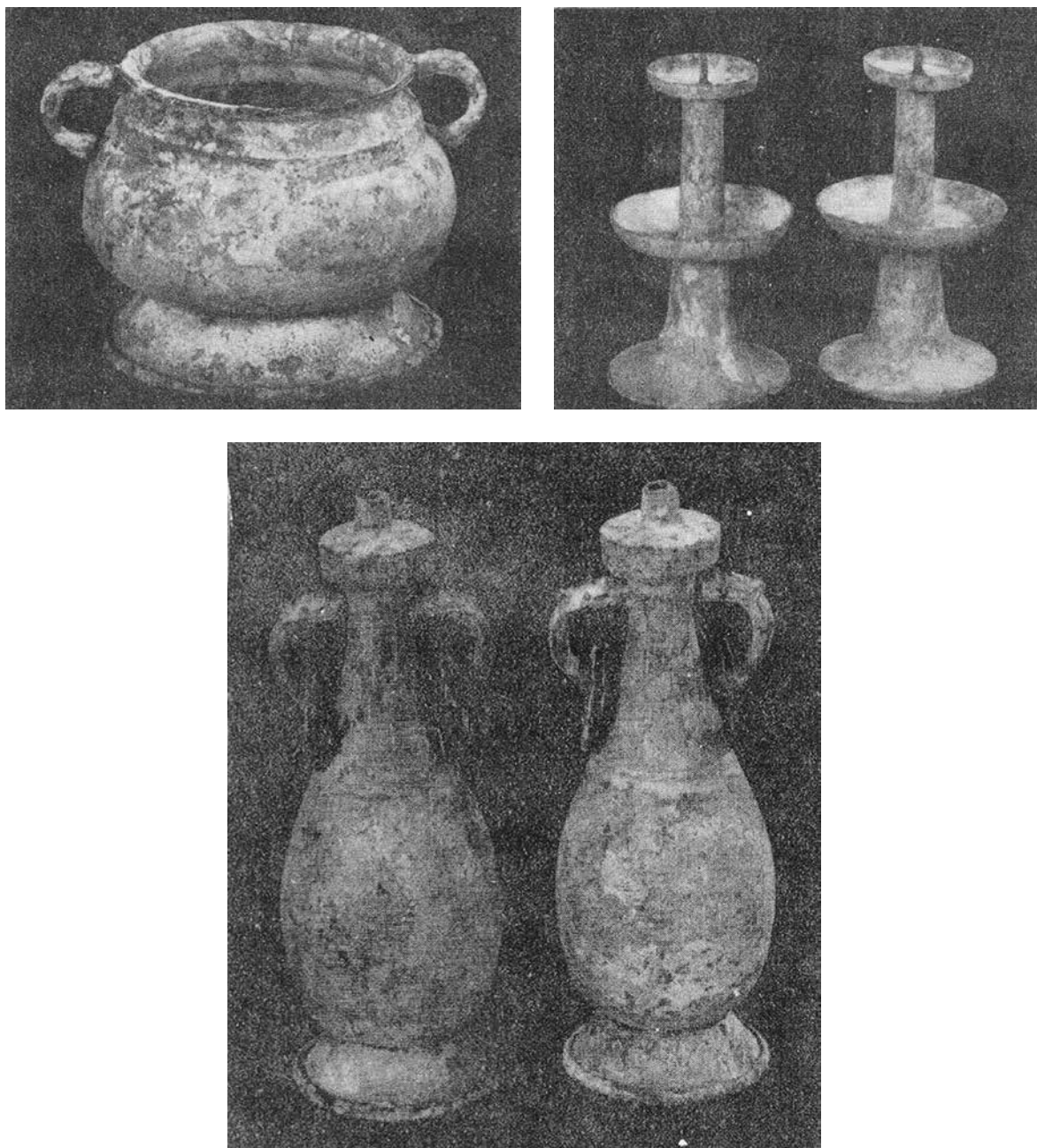


FIGURE 1 Yuan period lead altar vessels excavated from Chaoyang district, Beijing. H: 11.5cm (censer) and h: 22cm (vases and candlesticks), Yuan period. © Cheng Changxin 程長新 and Zhang Xiande 張先得. "Beijingshi jianxuan yizu Yuandai qian gongqi" 北京市揀選一組元代鉛供器. *Wenwu* 文物 5 (1988) figs. 1-3.



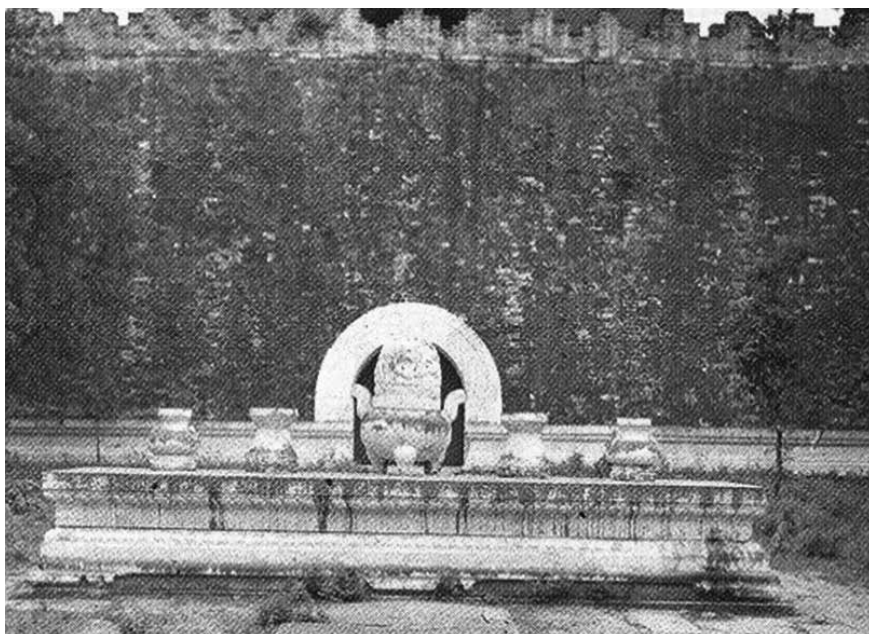


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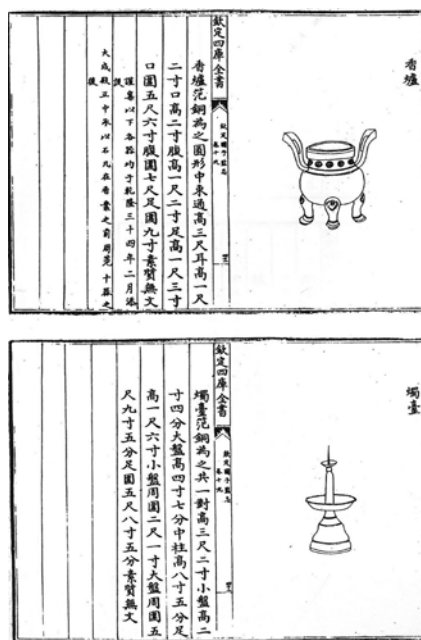


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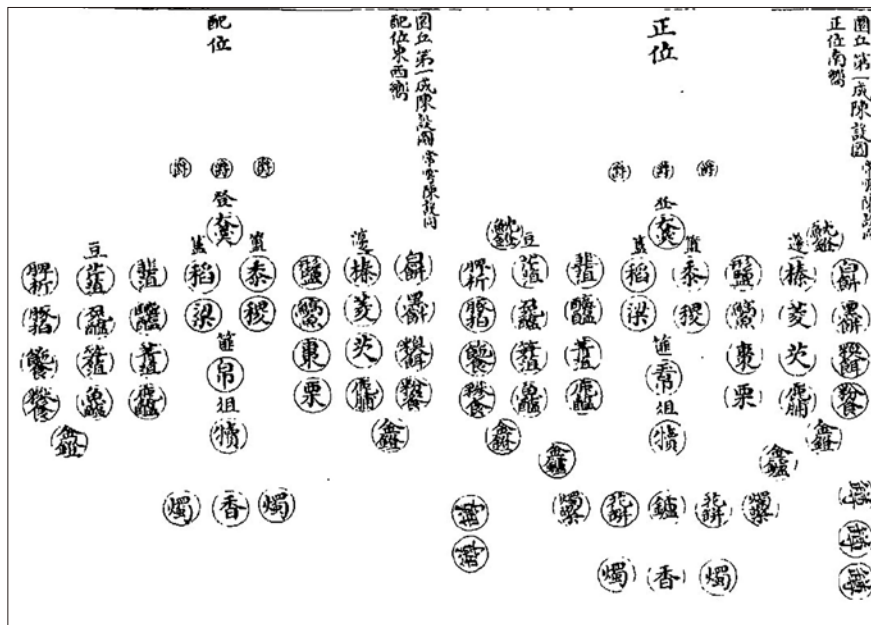


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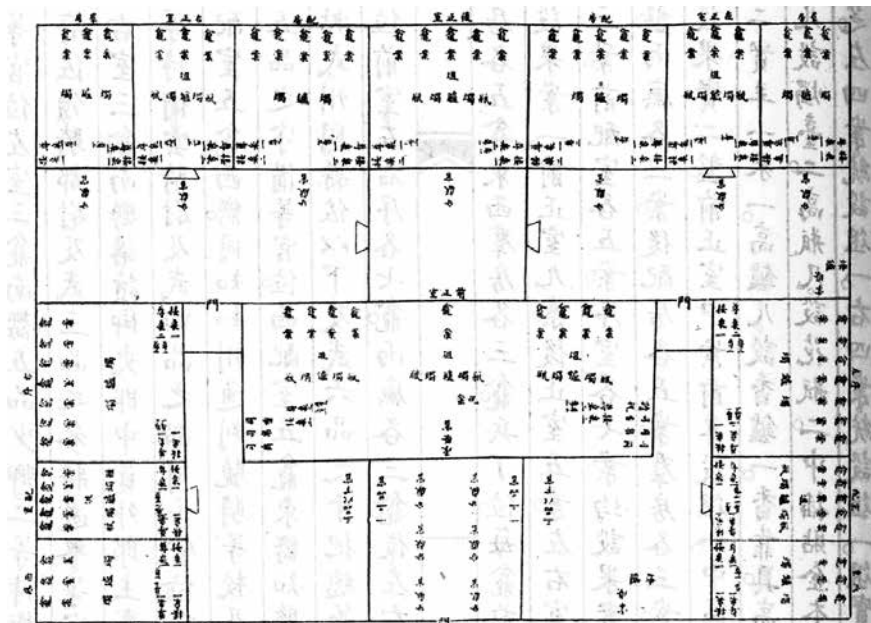


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