

The Transformations of the Suburban Sacrifice System

by Tsuyoshi KOJIMA

The suburban cult was one of the most important sacrifices in imperial China. The emperors deify Heaven and Earth with their ancestors at the suburbs of the capitals. This system began in the Han period, and was not abolished until the fall of Qing.

After an outline of its history in Chapter One, the other two chapters discuss two subjects each. The first one deals with how they chose the ancestors associated with Heaven and Earth: who made a distinguished contributions to the dynasty? The wife of the founder accompanied Earth in the original style, but it has been changed since Northern Zhou. There were disputes on the character of the founders in Tang and Song. The second is when and where Earth was to be worshipped. As a fundamental rule, it was at the time of the summer solstice at the square altar in the northern suburbs that the ceremony should be held. But as being unable to fulfill this condition, debates occurred in Song and Ming. These two discussions will elucidate the character of Heaven in the official cult.