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CHONG-YANG AND THE CEREMONIAL CALENDAR IN CENTRAL CHINA

KINSHIP studies have always been at the core of anthropological research, and there are many good reasons for this. Kinship is one of many devices for the symbolic expression of belonging, but it stands out in combining cultural representations with expressions of language; or rather, elements of language are used as cultural representations. Linguistically, a kinship system may be regarded as a set of words and ways of combining words. In the cultural perspective, kinship is a set of sound representations with regard to many-faceted relational systems joining people into unions. Kinship contains a representation of time—relations over time binding together people living in a contemporary space. It is a unique cultural device for linking people not yet born with those long since dead.

The field thus suggests many interesting opportunities to study the relationships between language and culture. It is one of the few systematic fields in which the linguistic meaning of a word may be shown to have a bearing on the understanding of the cultural system in which the kinship expressions are embedded. The study of myth would be a similar field of enquiry. Myths offer ritual statements in a linguistic disguise. Once ritual takes on the clothes of language, it may allow itself the further use of the possibilities of the verbal code and thereby restructure the messages of symbolic clustering in ritual performance into more linear, narration-like, sequences. I believe that the enormous interest which anthropologists have focused on myth and kinship may be traced ultimately to this doublesidedness of phenomena.

However, the merging of cultural issues with sounds of linguistic form has very often led the anthropologist to give way to a temptation to approach kinship solely in terms of linguistic or linguistically inspired models. The explanatory power of such attempts must always be questioned.

This may, then, be a good time to point towards opportunities of reversing a widespread perspective by departing from language, or at least to suggest shifts in our present positions in a direction which will allow the force of cultural semantics to play a more vital part in anthropological kinship analysis.

Anthropology develops research strategies which attempt to circumscribe cultural messages by an analysis of symbolic textures, messages which make segments of social life intelligible for its participants. At least in the beginning of this enterprise, an obvious avenue to gain such insights into the store of cultural information is to devise plans for the analysis of explicit rituals with their symbolic objects and activities. The results of such operations, once carried out, could be fed into other domains of social life to increase and deepen our understanding of how these are meaningfully constructed from elements of the symbolic world that is the mental ecology of the society under study.

In the present paper, I wish to contribute in a small way to our knowledge of the kinship system of traditional China by presenting some suggestions as to the ritual calendar of that country. In particular, I wish to discuss data from Central China, namely from southern Hubei and northern Hunan, the marshy and hilly areas around the Dongting Lake water system in the middle Yangzi valley. This area may be regarded as the heartland of rice cultivation in China, and rice agriculture is here of paramount social interest both within the productive order and within the expressive order. The data which I will discuss are drawn from local gazetteers or *fang-zhi* 方志 and from the compilations of *fang-zhi* and other materials contained in the great eighteenth-century 'encyclopedia', *Gujin Tushu Jicheng* (*Gujin* 1888).

Chinese kinship has been studied primarily within a sociological framework, that of its organizational consequences with regard to family life, village formation, the possession of land and wealth, the exercise of political power, and the issue of overall control. I think it true to say that Maurice Freedman's major kinship studies (1958, 1966, 1970a, 1970b) were not only seminal in this respect but provided clear-cut paradigms for a whole series of subsequent studies drawing on long-term field investigations in Hong Kong and Taiwan, as well as historical ethnographies of traditional China. More straightforward linguistic approaches have perhaps been less prominent in the sense that much less anthropological interest has been focused on Chinese kinship as a verbal system of meaning, but the studies which exist are forceful and highly interesting

(Chen and Shyrock 1932; Feng 1948; Kroeber 1933; McCoy 1970). Anthropologists working from a cultural perspective may be said to have concentrated so far mainly on the study of ancestral ritual and the nature of death in order to establish representational patterns in interaction and relationships among the living and the dead. The aim, explicit or implicit, has been to understand the structuring of relations between the living through such patterns (e.g. Wolf 1970, 1974; Freedman 1970b; Ahern 1973; Aijmer 1984). Other approaches may be seen in the studies which look at land ownership as a representation of kinship-belonging, or agricultural production as an expression of exchange relations between living and dead relatives (Aijmer 1964, 1968, 1979, 1984). This latter approach will furnish the present paper with its major argument, in that an attempt will be made to study the flow of meaning between the events of the cycle of agriculture and the domain of kinship, mediated by way of death.

Thus, the present aim is to contribute further to some of the general propositions on the Chinese calendrical system as an inseparable fusion of technically productive and expressive elements which I have offered in the earlier publications just cited. I have suggested that one dominant principle behind the emerging structure regulating annual events in the Dongting area involved a strong notion of social exchange. The ritual expression of this notion was to be found in the paying of visits and return visits and the presentation and counter-presentation of symbolic gifts. Visits and return visits are thus important acts of social ceremonialism, and this is so all over China. Visiting becomes spectacularly important during the lunar New Year, when people go to great lengths to visit their relatives, but also involved is the visit of the dead ancestors to their living progeny. The ancestors make a similar visit during the Duan-wu 端午 festival in the fifth moon. Their appearance on this occasion is not only social but part and parcel of the production of rice, the festival being focused on the theme of the transplantation of the young shoots. I have tried to demonstrate that the visit paid by the ancestors to the world of the living might be regarded as a return for visits paid to the dead by the living at the Qing-ming 清明 festival in the spring, an occasion for visiting the tombs of the dead.

In this essay, it will be proposed that the autumn festival of Chong-yang 重陽 implies another visit to the ancestors. Qing-ming is connected with the sowing of rice: Chong-yang concerns the harvest. In such calendrical events, ritual concerns with ancestry (as part of social continuity) become fused with pragmatic interests in the production of rice. I have suggested that we may look upon the calendric system of at least Central China in terms of a general scheme in which one may see how the calendric order, the expressive order and the production order are intertwined in one cyclical cultural process (see Fig. 1).

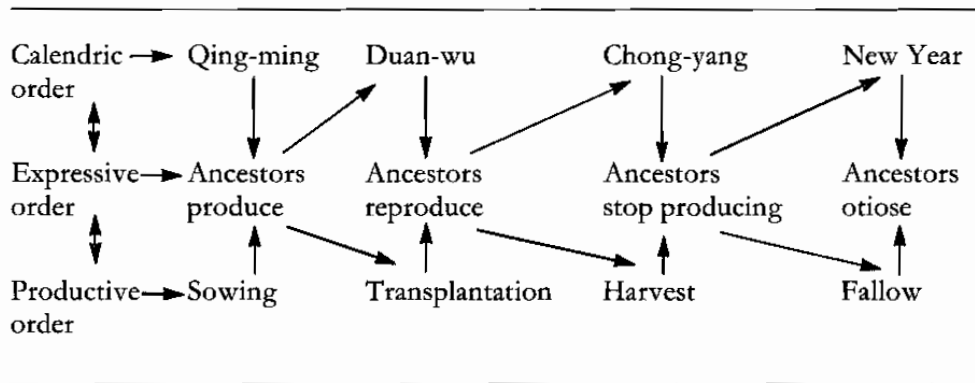
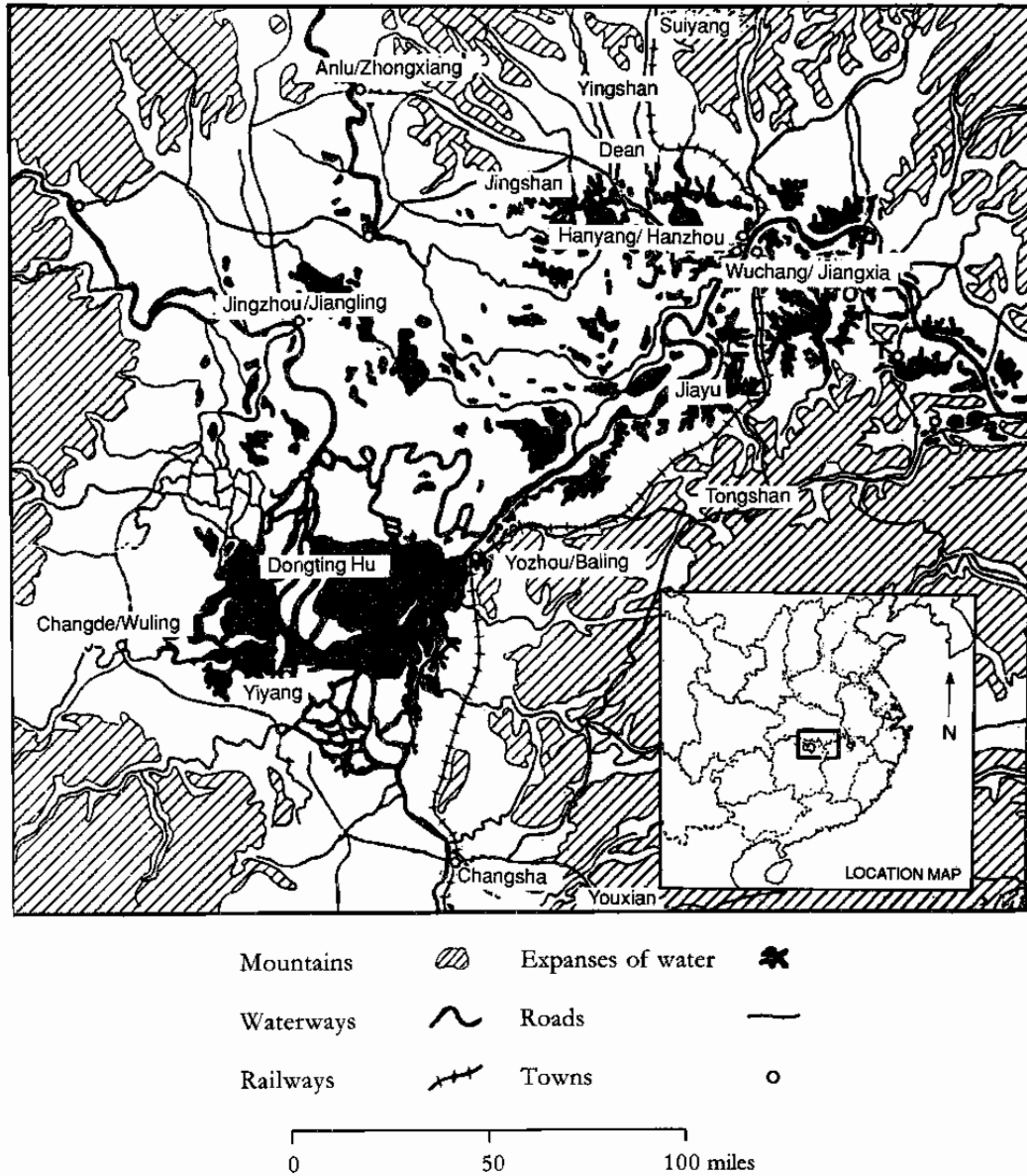


FIG. 1

In what follows, I shall examine in detail some data I have found concerning the ritual events which form part of the autumn festival of Chong-yang as celebrated in the Dongting Lake area in 'traditional' times.

The agricultural activities in this rice-producing part of China (see accompanying map) followed the landmarks set by the twenty-four solar-period calendar. Thus the Qing-ming period marked the beginning of the sowing of rice, and it seems as if this was a widespread traditional pattern in the Dongting basin. Transplantation took place in the fourth moon, harvesting generally in the seventh moon. Of course, these latter dates are only approximations, as the lunar calendar varies in its relation to the solar calendar. The latter cycle must have given the peasant the pragmatic landmarks in time for the phases of the agricultural cycle, but chroniclers often project solar dates on to the lunar calendar. Ritual episodes celebrated according to the lunar year are often thus correlated with the agricultural cycle, and in this way periods of intense work are separated from periods of ritual involvement.

The Dongting basin in Hubei and Hunan is regarded as a single-crop area. Double cropping seems to have been rare in traditional times, and to the extent that it existed it was a late introduction promoted by officials in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Perkins 1969: 47). I have discussed elsewhere some distortive effects of double cropping on cultural semantics (Aijmer 1979: 78 ff.). Chong-yang was celebrated on the ninth day of the ninth moon, and this date in the lunar calendar should, by way of inter-calendric projection, correspond to the autumnal equinox, Qiu-fen 秋分, in the solar calendar. By Chong-yang, harvest would be over and the rice stored in barns. The fields would be dry and left fallow over the winter months, awaiting early spring ploughing. The main period of harvesting in the Dongting basin seems to have been in the seventh and eighth moon of the lunar calendar.



Note: Where a place has two names, the first is its name as capital of a prefecture (*fu*), the second its name as capital of a county (*xian*).

The Dongting basin of the central Yangzi valley

The cultural semantics of the two earlier great festivals, Qing-ming and Duan-wu, provided many-layered messages in which technical acts were regarded as offerings or the work of the ancestors, and ritual acts were expressed as technical inputs into the cultural semantic system of production. The grave offerings in spring reproduced the agricultural techniques of the area in terms of symbolic statements. In sweeping and mending graves, we encounter a symbolic message which parallels the set of technical acts which cluster together in the phase of sowing. Just as the graves are cleaned and repaired, the seed-beds are cleaned and repaired. In the same way, the offerings on the grave make sense as a statement which parallels sowing. Meat and wine are offered on the graves, and rice is offered on the seed-beds.

One hypothesis is that the planting of bamboo branches hung with paper money on the graves is a representation of a rice plant in ear. Bamboo and paper money may form a symbolic constellation designating rice stem and rice grain. If this hypothesis is correct, then the ritual act of planting a paper-moneyed bamboo on a grave is a reversed reaping. Basically, the spring offerings on the graves and the sowing of rice in the seed-beds are two expressive forms for providing the ancestors in the earth with gifts of rice.

If we move on to the Dragon Boat Festival of Duan-wu, we find that this celebration was connected with a period centred on the fifth day of the fifth moon in early summer. This festival period is ecologically correlated with the arrival of summer heat, summer humidity and summer rains. There is also a clear connection between the Dragon Boat Festival and an important phase in the rice production cycle, the transplantation of the new shoots from the seed-bed into the irrigated fields. The most striking feature of the Duan-wu festival was the racing of long, slender boats equipped with dragon's heads and tails. Their crews were each made up of men of one lineage seemingly impersonating their own dead ancestors. The racing was a combat between exogamous lineages, and the ceremony may be regarded as a fight between the dead agnatic ancestors of the participating kinship constellations. It appears that agnation is a theme of the festival, and the struggle between the dead is to drive away the negative influences of foreign women on the purity of the descent line. There was a great deal of activity between lineages related to each other by marriage. Women who had married into other constellations returned to their own natal village and their own agnatic relatives during the ceremonies. This meant that all the agnatic members of a lineage group were congregated in their home village, and no outsiders representing other lineages were to be found there.

The negative influence through women on the kinship group was especially dangerous at transplantation time. With the uprooting of the seedlings, the rice lost its *bun* 魂 or 'soul', and the ancestors recalled this

life-essence to the transplanted fields to ensure a continuous growth and a good harvest. Again, rice is agnatic stuff, emerging from ancestors now of the earth. Rice is a counter-presentation to the rice which their living progeny gave them as an offering at Qing-ming. Thus the ancestors protected and restored vegetative power to rice, this being yet another symbolic representation, in that rice is agnatic stuff which mediates between living and dead and sustains both. Exogamy defines an outside influence on human procreation, and this may be counteracted by the eating of rice which emerges from the dead ancestors. But what foreign influences from other lineages could affect rice so that it has to be defended?

I think a possible key to this, one I have not discussed before, lies in the fate of women. Women are also agnates, but where they live as wives they are outsiders tied by affinal kinship to foreigners. When they die, they are not returned to their original kinship constellation for burial in their native territory but remain with their husband and his dead relatives. Married women are buried in the soil which is the dead agnates of their husbands. A woman is also installed in an ancestor tablet, which is kept among the other tablets of the husband's agnatic relatives. This, of course, is a general Chinese picture, and at the present stage I have no empirical evidence from the Dongting area in particular support of this, nor is there to my knowledge any contradictory evidence.

When a married-in woman dies, she is accepted fully among the members of the originally foreign group with whom she has been living her married life. How is this? I have touched upon a solution to this question in a paper concerned with the contemporary situation in Taiwan (Aijmer 1984). There I suggested, with strong support from the excellent ethnography from this island, that the eating of rice slowly turns the eater into a member of the agnatic group producing that rice. Foreign women are converted into agnates by the consumption of agnatic rice. At the moment of death, incorporation is completely achieved. Let me, then, for the sake of the argument, accept this hypothesis and put it into context with my earlier hypotheses regarding the symbolic universes of the calendar.

There is still a lingering ambiguity in this incorporation of women. Rice is the produce of the dead, men and women, but in a sense, agnatic women married away ought to produce for their 'true' agnates. In the recalling of the *hun* of the rice, the lost 'soul' of the rice which has been separated by transplantation is restored. It may be that this recalling ceremony, *zhao-hun* 招魂, also attracts human souls.

The *zhao-hun* was performed from the dragon boats as they were moving backwards on the river. The dragon boats also raced and fought on the river. This combat with other crews was supposedly a fight against the *yin-bing* 陰兵 or 'dark soldiers'. What the *yin-bing*, or the dead of

foreign lineages, in other dragon boats, are after is their own lost agnatic force—lost to them, that is, through marriage. This they probably wish to restore to boost their own rice production. This encroachment of alien lineages must not be allowed to happen, and the foreign dead are vigorously fought off. On the social side, the attempts at stealing back lost females is matched by the return of married-out women to their native villages, where they seem momentarily reincorporated. If this is correct, then the Dragon Boat Festival tries to negate the effects of exogamous marriage on agnatic kinship.

Now it is time to move on to the next celebration I deem to be of particular importance in the calendric sequence of ritual episodes, Chong-yang. I said above that Chong-yang has something to do with the harvest. This statement needs some modification. The festival does not seem to be an articulation of the harvest procedure as such, nor is it explicitly a 'thanksgiving' ceremony for what has been reaped. Such harvest-related practices do occur, but in the moons which precede the ninth moon.

In the seventh moon on the seventh day in Jing-shan, ancestors and deceased were welcomed (*Gujin* 1888: VI: 1120: 2a), and similar practices are recorded from Anlu Zhongxiang (*ibid.*: 1142: 2a) and Wuchang Jiangxia (*ibid.*: 1120: 2a). It is likely, though, that these events relate to the advent by the middle of the moon of the Zhong-yuan 中元 feast, which is a Buddhist ritual period for the deceased in the underworld hells.

In the eighth moon, however, we find records of a kind we are looking for. A record of the prefecture of De'an reports that in the magistracy of Yingshan, there were grave offerings (*jiao* 醮) in the eighth moon, in a fashion similar to that of Qing-ming. It is said that not everyone did so, but those who did practise this kind of worship started on the new moon. In the following days, there was an 'escorting ceremony', *song-wang* 送往, a sort of farewell. This information seems to distort somewhat the model I am trying to demonstrate. However, it could be that this explicit autumn version of Qing-ming related to the planting of winter crops. Wheat was sown in the solar period of Chu-shu 處暑 or End of Heat (23 August–8 September) and vegetables in Bai-lu 白露 or White Dew (8–23 September) in Tongshan in the prefecture of Wuchang (*ibid.*: 1120: 6b). Thus, it may be that the dry cultivation cycle to some extent mirrored the rice cycle here. But it may also be that this grave worship was a kind of 'thanksgiving' related to the harvest of rice. I prefer the latter interpretation, as there is precious little to indicate any rituals concerned with the winter crops.

In the county of Baling, the centre of the prefecture of Yuezhou, there were, it is reported, meetings in the ancestor hall (*ci* 祠) at harvest time to conduct *dao* 禱 or 'prayers'. Men and women *ta* 踏 ('trample') and sing to the accompaniment of drums. This was called *ge-chang* 歌場 or 'singing on the threshing floor' (*ibid.*: 1223: 1b).

A general impression of these ritual events connected with the harvesting period is that they fit in with the calendric model I am trying to demonstrate. People seem to express gratitude at the graves to the dead ancestors who are the providers of rice. There are other customs in this period too, but I shall not dwell on these in this particular context.

The festival on which I focus in this essay is celebrated on the ninth day of the ninth moon, which would occur around October in the Western calendar. Within the Chinese solar calendar, it is related to the autumnal equinox on 23 September, the equinox being projected on to the moon calendar to be celebrated there accordingly on the 'Double Nine'. The stable solar calendar gave the pragmatic landmarks to the agricultural year, but the celebration of the accompanying ritual aspects occurred in the lunar year, thus avoiding a temporal clash between the events of the two cultural orders.

The most striking feature of the Chong-yang festival is that celebrations took the form of mountain-climbing. From the prefecture of Changde it is reported that in Wuling people 'work their way up the Dragon Mountain' (*ibid.*: 1259: 2a). We learn that in the prefecture of Changsha, in the magistracy of Yuxian, there is a mountain called Linggui, and it is said that the inhabitants of the district performed a *xi* 楔 ritual and 'ascended heights' at this place on the ninth day of the ninth moon. They also did this on the third day of the third moon (*ibid.*: 1204: 2a; 1213: 12b). In Yuezhou, in the capital area of Baling, it is said that gentlemen and dignitaries ascend heights, where they whistle and sing on this day (*ibid.*: 1223: 2b). In Hanzhou magistracy, in the prefecture of Hanyang, it is said that guests and friends are invited, wine is brought along, and one ascends heights. Referring to a legend of two Taoist masters, He Kong and Chang Fang, it is claimed that the climbing of the mountains is to avoid illness (*ibid.*: 1130: 2a).

The climbing of mountains is further mentioned in several chronicles—for example, Yiyang, in Changde prefecture (*Yiyang* 1819: 2: 5b). Jingshan and Zhongxiang in the prefecture of Anlu (*Gujin* 1888: VI: 1142: 3a, 2a), Wuchang and Suiyang in Wuchang prefecture (*ibid.*: 1120: 2b, 4b, 5a) and Yingshan in De-an (*ibid.*: 1166: 4b).

The argument presented here takes as its starting-point the assumption that the Qing-ming festival is a symbolic statement of the sowing of rice, and, further, that the Duan-wu festival provides messages which are concerned with the transplantation of young rice seedlings. I maintain now that there are a number of salient similarities between the spring practices and the customs of Chong-yang in the autumn. Both are cases of ritual gatherings of people away from built-up areas in natural surroundings. The main difference is that at Qing-ming, activities are focused on ancestral graves, while at Chong-yang they are directed toward mountain tops.

The cult of ancestors in China takes two clearly separate forms. One set of rituals concerns the ancestors as physical remains, mainly as bones. Another set is centred on the ancestral representations known as 'ancestor tablets'. Within the classificatory structure that provides order in the 'traditional' Chinese universe, ancestral bones were classified as *yin* 陰, in that they were of earth, passive and retiring. *Yin* is the female creative cosmic force complementing the *yang* 陽 principle. It could be said that the two forces are related in such a way that they are inversely proportional; the increase of one force diminishes the influence of the other. *Yang*, then, is the male cosmic force which is manifest in Heaven, in activity and in what is outgoing (see Freedman 1966: 140 ff.). Ancestor tablets belong to the *yang* sphere.¹

In an earlier article (Aijmer 1979), I tried to demonstrate that the Qing-ming festival has affinity with *yin* ancestors, graves, earth and underground. As it is clear from the ethnographic material presented in this essay, Chong-yang is a reversal of Qing-ming, in that it implies striving upwards, obtaining affinity with Heaven and *yang*.

The Qing-ming festival was, above all, characterized by visits to the graves, which were swept and cleaned, food being placed there and twigs of bamboo with suspended paper-money erected. This latter custom was known in this area as 'to hang on the mountain' and 'to suspend on the mountain'. These linguistic labels seem to reflect cultural intuitions that graves and mountains are phenomena of one kind. There may be features of their physical appearance which support such identification. Graves in this area may well—I do not have descriptive evidence here—look like small mountains or hills, or be situated among the hills. But there is certainly more to the grave-mountain association than is brought out by an analysis merely stressing the combination of metaphorical expressions.

This observation calls for a revision of my earlier argument. In a sense, the visiting of graves at Qing-ming and the climbing of mountains at Chong-yang are rather similar. But they are in no way identical. The grave is clearly within the social sphere, although it is located away from built-up areas; the mountain is outside that circle and is part of nature. We have assumed that the ancestors in their *yin* shape were connected with the graves; it would plausibly follow that we should look for *yang* ancestral connotations in the Chong-yang celebrations. One very strong indicator in this direction is what was mentioned above, namely, that climbing mountains implied striving upwards, ascension, and obtaining affinity

1. This is an over-simplification. Both guises of ancestors are, as dead, part of the *yin* sphere—but bones are *yin* in *yin*, and tablets are *yang* in *yin*. This distortion is maintained for simplicity and, at this point, does not affect the argument.

with *yang*.² Again, the contrast achieved by a juxtaposition of Qing-ming and Chong-yang will be somewhat reduced in the light of the grave-mountain connection: the graves 'are' mountains, and grave-climbing 'is' mountain-climbing. Still, Chong-yang is, as it were, 'more' mountain than Qing-ming.

It is well known that mountains have spiritual associations all over China, and so it was in Hunan and Hubei. One example of this is Baimian Mountain in Jiayu magistracy in Wuchang prefecture, where there was a legend which concerned the white colour of the rock. Someone offered prayers on the mountain, and later three sons were born. They all had white faces. They died and became *shen* 神, spirits who influenced rain and moisture (*Gujin* 1888: VI: 1116: 7a). In the Liang dynasty source (*Jing* n.d.) it is mentioned in connection with the New Year celebrations that 'the stinking and evil *gui* 鬼 demons' of the mountains are driven away by the use of bamboo crackers. But the Chong-yang celebrations do not seem to concern such phenomena at all.

Curiously enough, 'ascending mountains' is mentioned by the same Liang source as taking place on the seventh day of the first moon, which was called Ren-ri 人日 or Day of Man (the name is derived from the display of a doll). This was, it seems, part of the New Year period, and people ascended mountains to compose poetry (*ibid.*: 4a).

The climbing of mountains in somewhat later periods occurred also on the third day of the third moon in Yuxian in Changsha prefecture, where the Linggui Peak attracted people just as it did on the ninth day of the ninth moon (*Gujin* 1888: VI: 1213: 12b; 1204: 2a).

The third day of the third moon in the lunar calendar is a date which in all likelihood is a projection on to the lunar year of the Qing-ming solar-derived festival and *han-shi* 寒食 day, which, again, connect with the spring equinox. Such projections occur also at midsummer (Aijmer 1964: 21-7). We should, then, see whether there are any possibilities of linking Chong-yang with the autumn equinox. The latter date, being fixed in the solar calendar, must have provided the pragmatic landmark in time for the rice-producing peasant population of this area in Central China. The autumn equinox, or *qiu-fen*—Division of Autumn—is hardly marked at all in the corpus considered in this paper. Only in the prefecture of Changde is it mentioned that on Yang Mountain there was a temple *miao* 廟, dedicated to the spirit of the mountain. Women gathered there for some offerings on the Division of Autumn (*Gujin* 1888: VI: 1255: 1b).

It is, of course, tempting to see a parallel with the mountain-climbing of Chong-yang as significant, at least to some extent, but why this Yang Mountain offering was a female affair is something which, at least for the

2. In some other parts of China, the same was achieved by ceremonial kite-flying; see, for instance, Hodous 1918.

present, seems to be unfathomable. It may be that the rituals on Baimian Mountain in Jiayu, mentioned above, offer another parallel.

One feature of the Chong-yang festival was the collection of *zhu-yu* weed 茱萸—*Cornus officinalis*, in all likelihood. Sometimes the weed was worn at the waist, and sometimes mixed with wine and drunk. Evidence of this comes from Wuling, the capital of Changde prefecture (ibid.: 1259: 2a), Zhongxiang, the capital of Anlu prefecture (ibid.: 1120: 2a), Wuchang, the capital of Wuchang prefecture (ibid.: 1120: 2b), Suiyang, in the same prefecture (ibid.: 1120: 2a), Hanzhou in Hanyang prefecture (ibid.: 1166: 4b) and Yiyang magistracy in Yiyang prefecture (*Yiyang* 1819: 2: 5b). Herbs and weeds of a great many varieties were employed at different festivals. *Zhu-yu* is, however, mentioned only in connection with Chong-yang. The fact that it was worn at the waist could be a sign of its protective capacity, while the mixing with wine seems to point to some medicinal qualities, perhaps again protective. There are no further data at hand in the corpus surveyed here.

In Wuchang magistracy (in the prefecture of the same name), it was customary to prepare wine described as very clear and cold; if saved for a long time, it was not spoiled (*Gujin* 1888: VI: 1120: 2b). The preparation of wine is also mentioned in Yingshan magistracy, De-an prefecture (ibid.: 1166: 4b). It is not known whether such wine was connected with the *zhu-yu* weed which, as mentioned above, was sometimes mixed with wine on this day, perhaps for medicinal effect. Further, a record from Jiangshan in De-an (ibid.: 1142: 3a) tells us that chrysanthemum-flower wine was drunk on this day. This certainly links up with a fairly common ceremonial use of chrysanthemums on this day.

In Zhongshan, in Anlu prefecture (ibid.: 1120: 4b, 5a), we learn that the abundant chrysanthemum 'heads' were collected and sent as presents. Here it is added that this was regarded as a joyous event. Less clear is the information from Yingshan in De-an (ibid.: 1166: 4b) that many people go to bamboo fences and clay banks with 'yellow flowers' (whether they were chrysanthemums is not easy to say).

We have no local evidence as to the further significance of chrysanthemums. The Liang 'Chronicle of the Seasons in Jing and Chu' (*Jing* n.d.: 12b) mentions that chrysanthemum was collected at the summer solstice and made into a powder (or ashes). It was used, rather pragmatically, to prevent worms in the wheat. Generally in China, the ninth moon is called the Chrysanthemum Moon or Chrysanthemum Autumn, and there is thus a general and conventional association between the flower and that time of the year.

In Jiangling magistracy, the centre of Jingzhou prefecture, it is mentioned that on the ninth day of the ninth moon, people eat rice-flour noodles and steam dumplings (or cakes). On top of these was a small deer, and the dumplings were therefore called *lu-gao* 鹿糕 or 'deer dumplings'

(*Gujin* 1888: VI: 1193: 2b). We know further that dumplings were given as presents on this day in Zhongxiang, the capital area of Anlu prefecture (ibid.: 1142: 2a). This presentation is described as a reciprocal affair in Yingshan magistracy in De-an (ibid.: 1166: 4b). Finally, dumplings were eaten on Chong-yang in Wuling, the capital of Changde prefecture (ibid.: 1259: 2a). Here they were called 'chrysanthemum flower dumplings'. Whether this was so because they were eaten in the autumn or on grounds of their shape, or for other reasons, is not known.

The association of deer with this sort of dumpling is a little puzzling. The only local record concerned with the symbolic significance of deer comes from Zhongxiang, the central county of Anlu. Sixty *li* east of the capital of the prefecture was a lake called Lu-hu Chi 鹿湖池 or Deer Lake Pond, deeper than could be measured. According to an old tradition, a white deer inhabited this place, hence the name (ibid.: 1136: 3b).

Cornus weed, and perhaps chrysanthemum, were protective devices of some sort. In Jiangshan it was customary to have a *nuo* 傩 ceremony in one's rooms, the general intention being to drive away pestilence and sickness (ibid.: 1142: 3a). In Yingshan (ibid.: 1166: 4b), there was a ritual which apparently involved the collection of ten roots, but the record is hard to interpret.

What is striking about Chong-yang is that it is a festival of merry-making. Wine was drunk and people celebrated alfresco. There were games—for example, in Wuling something called *luo-mao* 落帽 or 'falling hats' was played (ibid.: 1259: 2a). In Baling it is noted that there were competitions (*sai-hui* 賽會) which attracted crowds in the country villages (ibid.: 1223: 2b). *Yiyang* (1819: 2: 5b) mentions the game of *fan-jiu* 泛酒 or 'to set cups afloat' in connection with 'much drinking and merry-making'. Often the *fan-jiu* game is to float cups of wine on the stream so that they reach the guests. This joyful atmosphere is mentioned in *Jing* (n.d.: 15a), referring to a period of some 1,400 years ago.

Structurally speaking, the striking element about the Chong-yang festivities are the similarities and the differences between them and those of Qing-ming. Both are gatherings of people away from built-up areas in search of nature. This is in contrast to Duan-wu and New Year, which both imply congregations of people in built-up areas, in villages and towns. Duan-wu is 'more nature' than New Year, in that the celebrations are riverine and people crowd the banks of the waters to watch the dragon boats race. New Year is centred on the individual houses and ancestor halls. Chong-yang is 'more nature' than Qing-ming, in that on the former occasion picnickers climb mountains, while on the latter they visit, and have a meal on, the tombs of dead ancestors. The tombs are away from built-up areas—they are in nature; none the less, they are structures built by men and contain men. Graves may be of society, but they are in nature. Yet graves and mountains have something in common—graves are in a

sense small mountains.

The findings presented here support the hypothesis presented in the opening paragraphs of this essay. Qing-ming was a visit to the dead, a communion with the dead and the presenting of gifts to the dead—mainly rice in various transformations. The ancestors made a return visit to their living progeny during the Duan-wu festival in the fifth moon. Chong-yang, again, implies another visit to the dead ancestor. Is this, then, merely a replica of the Qing-ming practice?

The cult of ancestors as bones is focused on the grave, with regard both to calendar events and to geomantic considerations. The *yang* ancestors in their tablets were worshipped either at home or in collective ancestor halls. Chong-yang seems to fall in between these two propositions, in that the rituals employed concern a bit of grave (mountain) but not really any tablet worship.

We are now in a position to elaborate the initial scheme further: Qing-ming is an invitation to the ancestors to produce rice. The symbolic episode may be represented in terms of a cluster diagram (Fig. 2). Further implications of this festival can be traced through a process diagram (Fig. 3), supported by data I have presented in earlier contexts (Aijmer 1979, 1984). In a similar fashion, the Chong-yang cluster could be depicted as in Fig. 4, or perhaps as a process diagram, like Fig. 5.

Qing-ming, then, was a presenting of food on the grave, the cleaning of the grave, and the placing of rice on the grave, implying a reversed reaping (see Aijmer 1979), rice being transferred into the grave. In return, the ancestors provide, as counter-prestations, rice-shoots and later rice. They also pay a return visit to the living at Duan-wu when they arrive in their dragon boats (Aijmer 1964).

Chong-yang is not linked by symbolic parallelism to the agricultural production cycle. The festival occurs after harvest, but carries in its constituent rituals no reflections of technical acts and the termination of the year's efforts in the fields. Rather, by turning attention in an upward direction, Chong-yang points to Heaven rather than to Earth, to social life rather than to rice production, and to life rather than to death. None the less, there seems to be a ritual concern with ancestors here.

If Qing-ming is a visit to the ancestors in their *yin* guise, an invitation to them to visit their living progeny and a prayer for rice as a return gift for what was presented on the graves, then Chong-yang is a visit to the ancestors in their *yang* guise.

If, as the parallelism suggests, there is at Chong-yang an invitation to the *yang* ancestors to visit their descendants, then we should expect this visit to occur in the coming New Year celebrations. To the extent that gifts were given to the dead—the picnics and merriment may partly be for their enjoyment—what return gifts do the ancestors in their *yang* versions provide? The hypothesis to be set out here is that they are providers of life

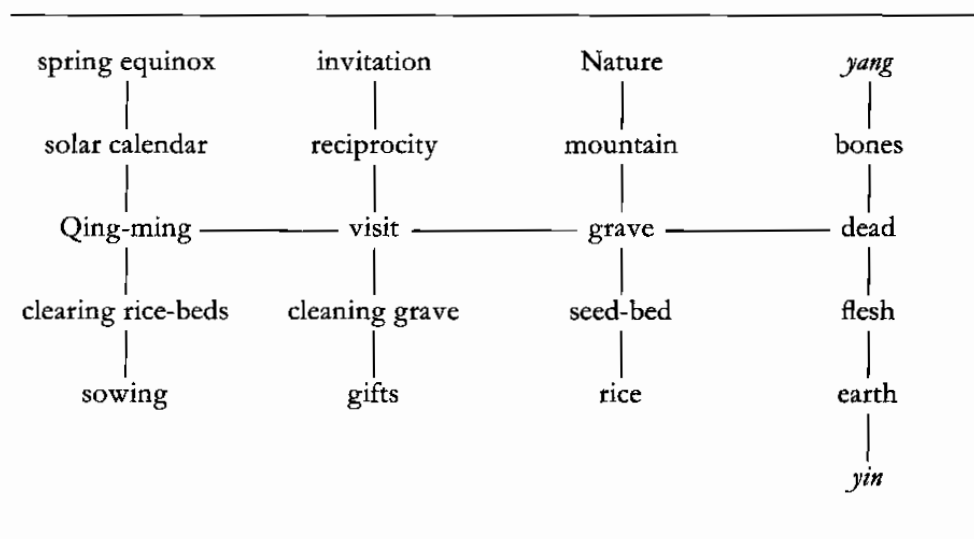


FIG. 2

for future progeny.

Although this proposition cannot be adequately demonstrated from data at hand, it still draws some support from the ethnography of the Dongting Lake area. The chroniclers of two places report that the ninth moon was the opening of the season for contracting marriages. In Yiyang, we learn that 'in late autumn and the winter leisure, one starts marriage activities'. It is also said that 'in ancestor halls of the various phratries (*xing* 姓), all use the period in accordance [with the season]. The lineage members (*zu-ren* 族人) make *ji* 祭 sacrifices to dead ancestors' (*Yiyang* 1819: 2: 5b). From Wuling, it is reported that 'in the latter part of the ninth moon one starts activities with marriage ceremonies' (*Wuling* 1863: 7: 3a).

These items of information tell us that marriages came into focus as a social activity while the fields were abandoned for the winter. It is also noted that a great deal of interest was vested in the ancestral halls. Chong-yang separates the agricultural cycle from the sphere of marriage and progeny in that the festival both terminates the earthly season and introduces the heavenly marriage and family season.

In nature, summer is dominated by *yang*. The *yang* force reaches a climax at the summer solstice and after that declines, while at the same time *yin* influences start growing stronger, to come to full force by the winter solstice. By the two equinoxes in spring and autumn, *yang* and *yin* are balanced. This double and proportionally inversed process of increase and decline is matched in the sphere of social life by a reversal of the *yang* and *yin* influences. The spring equinox and Qing-ming are points of

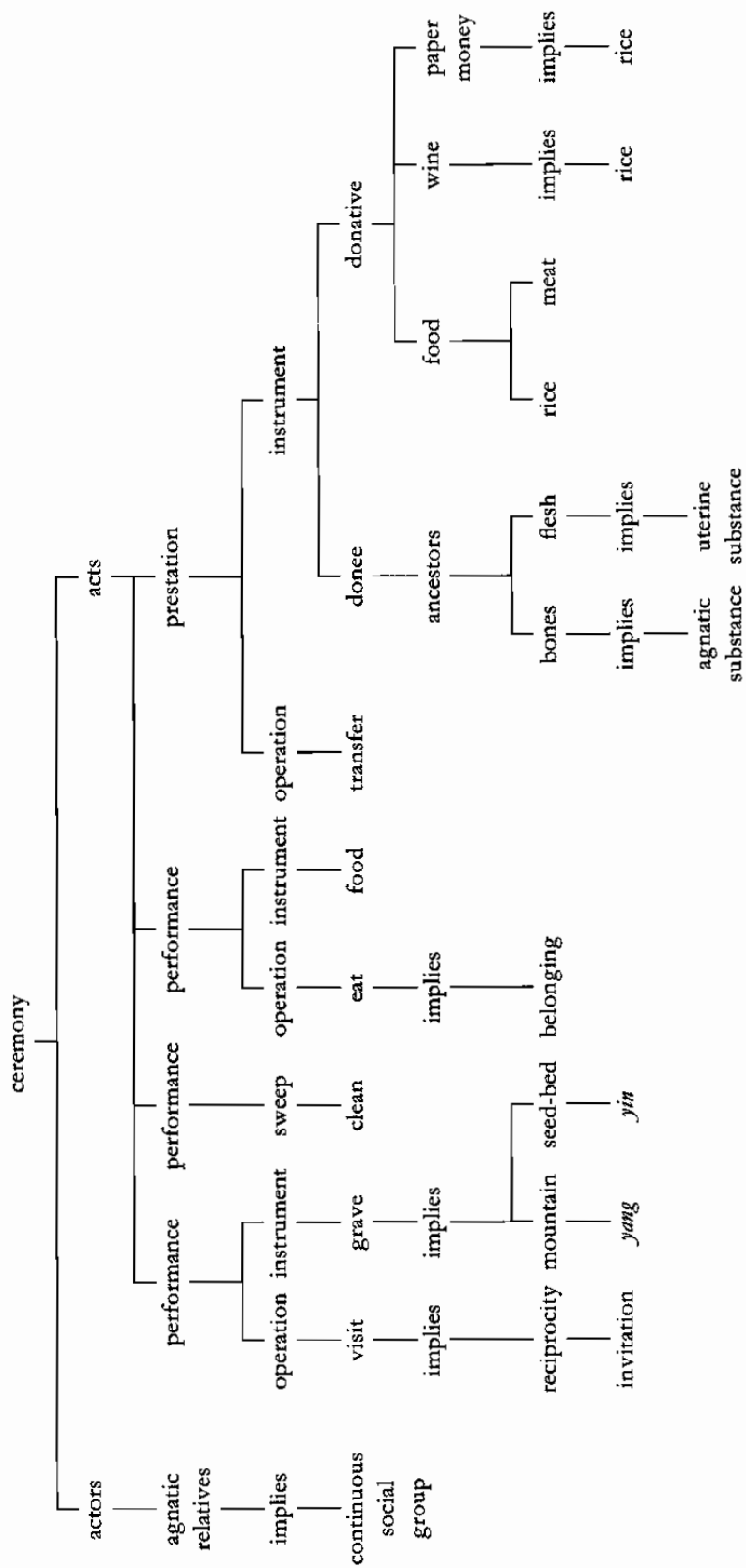


FIG. 3

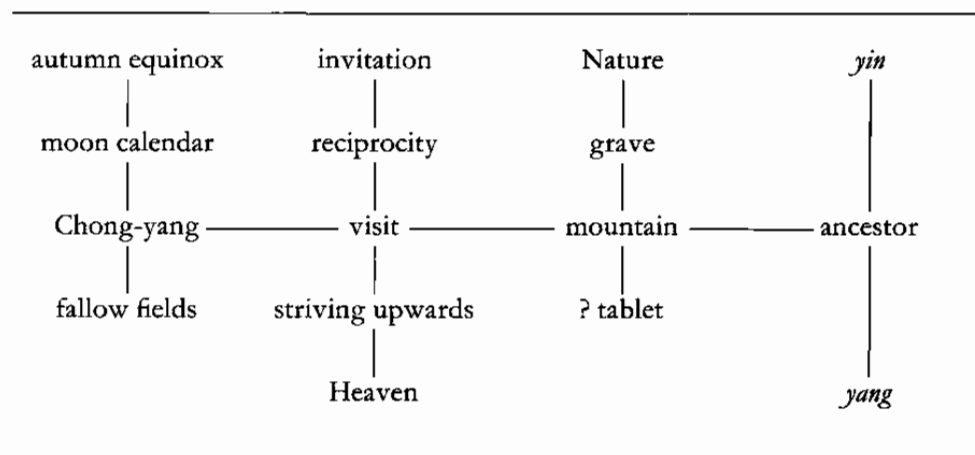


FIG. 4

balance, but in the social sphere, *yin* will from then on increase: grave worship introduces the *yin* ancestors who are in the earth. The *yin* force, as it dominates the social sphere, culminates in the fifth moon—a projection from the solar calendar—when the grave ancestors visit the living and perform the spectacular dragon-boat races. The Duan-wu festival marks the extreme depth of *yin* and female and death connotations. Production of rice is of death, of earth and water, and of the ancestors in the grave.

Chong-yang, again, balances the forces (being the projection of the autumnal equinox on to the lunar year) and introduces the ancestors as represented in the ancestor tablets. While Nature turns to death and inactivity, social life gains force, marriages are contracted, and children are expected. The *yang* ancestors are visited on mountain tops, in the vicinity of Heaven. Wedding-days are also determined with the help of Heaven in a process of divination and horoscope-making concerning celestial phenomena and the way these signs tally. Chong-yang is a joyful invitation to the ancestors, and it predicts the arrival of the dead among the living relatives at midwinter.

The insights into the cultural semantics of Chinese ancestors provided by the discussion above may have a bearing on the understanding of the importance of kinship in Chinese society, especially its tendency to develop large-scale organizations of agnatically related people in those areas which were primarily concerned with rice cultivation. The circumstance that ancestors somehow 'are' the land which produces rice—and rice is an ancestral manifestation—should invite us to ask new questions as to how land represents kinship and how kinship is formed by rice as well as children.

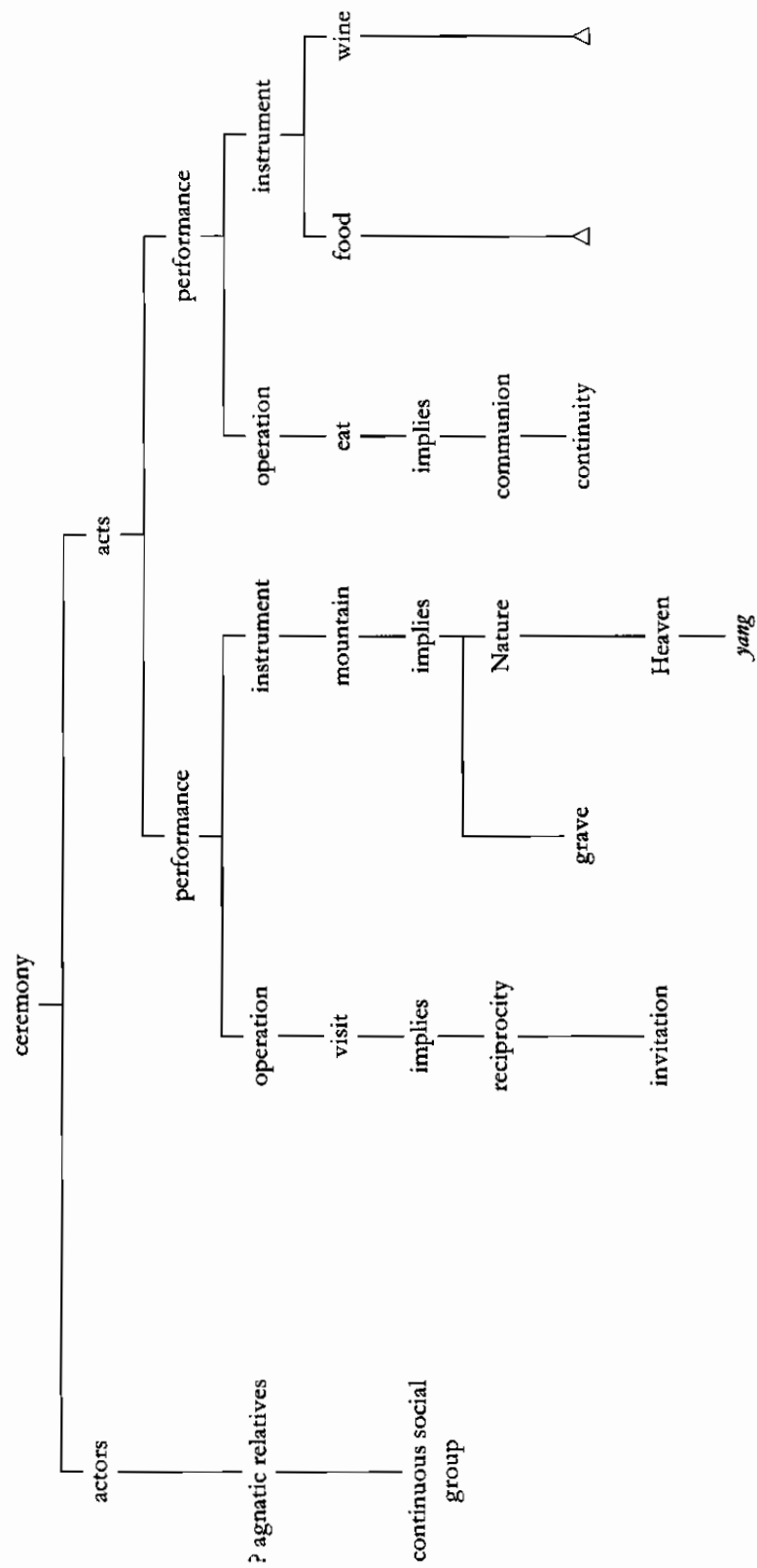


FIG. 5

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