# SPATIAL IMAGINATION:

## Skinnerian "Human Interaction Systems" and the Roles of Spatial Imagery and "Subjection" in Chinese Rituals[*]

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    G. William Skinner's complex apprehension of China as a nested hierarchy of regional ("human interaction") systems revolutionized subsequent understanding of what "China" is in temporal and spatial terms. The prodigious spatial imagination embodied in Skinner's project develops from an explicitly objectivist-cum-behavioralist perspective. For the most part, Skinner argued that emic perceptions – for example, of local identities, the structure of imperial bureaucracy, pathways for social and economic mobility – reflect these "natural systems" (i.e., emergent mainly on the basis of rational economic decisions, on the one hand, and the logic of political control and extraction, on the other). Spatial imagination figures importantly, but very differently, in the structure of ritual production of subjectivities (in the sense, broadly speaking, developed in Judith Butler's Psychic Life of Power). Based on analysis of a variety of ritualized contexts (individual worship, domestic architecture, territorial-cult celebrations, pilgrimages, imperial rituals), I propose that Skinner's framework nonetheless possesses potential insights regarding how emic spatial imagination figures in the production of these subjectivities. This juxtaposition of emic and etic vantages, on the one hand, troubles the distinction between ideology and social reality, but on the other hints at an encompassing theoretical synthesis.

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# Introduction

## Li Yih-yuan: Personal Note

I cannot claim to have known Li Yih-yuan especially well, but I can claim, at least, to have known him for a <u>long time</u>. Professor Li was Director of the Minzuso when I was doing my PhD fieldwork in the 1970s, and I am very grateful for the patience and assistance he afforded me in gaining affiliation with the Institute, obtaining documents like mountain passes, and for advice in how to seek information and how to conduct aspects of my fieldwork. Over the years, I became aware of the impressive spectrum of his work and, especially, his central role in establishing anthropology and its institutions in Taiwan. Needless to say, I am very honored to have been invited to speak in this lecture honoring his contributions.

## G. William Skinner

My presentation today begins from a consideration of the work of another prominent anthropologist, G. William Skinner – one of my own professors. More specifically, I will focus on the role of utilitarian assumptions in Skinner's work. I wish to clarify from the outset that my objectives are less to assess Skinner's legacy than to illuminate what I view as a more general conundrum in anthropology regarding human motivation. The broader issues in this regard concern variously denoted conceptual antinomies or philosophical contrasts that continue both to inspire and to trouble cultural anthropology. These antinomies include, for example, a once commonly invoked distinction between culture-specific and human-universal (*emic* and *etic*) vantages, between utilitarian philosophy and cultural constructionism with respect to the nature of human motives, between objective versus subjective understanding, and (perhaps most fundamentally) between humanistic and social-scientific approaches to "culture." In other words, this talk is, for lack of a better term, mainly "theoretical"; broadly speaking, it implicates how anthropology can contribute to understanding the role of cultural differences in shaping human interests and motives.

Mindful of this broader context, I juxtapose and contrast the spatial imagination embodied in Skinner's notion of what he terms "human interaction systems" and the spatial imagination more diffusely and implicitly manifest in a variety of Chinese ritual arenas. My main point will be that Skinner's work masterfully epitomizes a social-scientific apprehension of what "China" is, but it also somewhat downplays what is "Chinese" about China. I should note that Li Yih-yuan contributed importantly to discussions of Chineseness, as have other fellows of the Minzuso, so

I hope in this respect my topic is appropriate to the occasion of a lecture honoring Professor Li.

Those familiar with Skinner's work will already have guessed that I invoke it to epitomize a relatively *etic*, utilitarian, social-scientific approach. I use the term "utilitarian" broadly to represent the idea that human behavior is driven by a desire to maximize utility, satisfaction, and happiness. There exists, of course, a long history of philosophical discussion on the topic, and the discipline of economics is forthrightly founded on utilitarian assumptions. A notable debate in 1950s and 1960s anthropology, for example, pitted so-called "formalists" (who emphasized maximizing utility as motivating behavior) against "substantivists" (who emphasized cultural differences).

I will complicate (but <u>not</u> disavow) Skinner's utilitarian assumptions regarding motivation by invoking the notion of "subjection" as developed in philosopher Judith Butler's influential book, *The Psychic Life of Power*. I read Butler's discussion of subjection to argue that human desire (and, hence, motive) entails an existential-cum-logical imperative – what amounts to striving toward self-possession. This imperative is ubiquitous to human life, but its realization inescapably entails differentiation in processes anthropologists often term "cultural construction." Moreover, this imperative is not straightforwardly reducible to widely influential utilitarian assumptions regarding human motive, assumptions to the effect that people everywhere are driven primarily to maximize (usually material) satisfactions.

I begin today's presentation with a much abbreviated account of the role of utilitarian rationality in Skinner's "human interaction systems." Subsequently, I juxtapose this vision to an equally abbreviated account of a more emic vision of Chinese social and cosmological space, a vision I have abstracted from a variety of ritual arenas. Regrettably, there is much nuance and complexity lost in these summaries, but I hope that they suffice to convey my larger points. I conclude that Skinner's vision persuasively represents China as a dynamically complex assemblage of human interaction systems, but that its foundation upon utilitarian-behavioralist assumptions leaves insufficiently addressed aspects of "China's" distinctiveness.

## Part I: Behavioralist Reason in Regional Analysis: Complicating Skinner

As most of you know, G. William Skinner was arguably the late 20th century's most consequential anthropologist of China and of overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia. He is best known for his work on regional analysis in China, but he also

authored two path-breaking books on overseas Chinese in Thailand. Although he considered himself to be, first and foremost, a cultural anthropologist, his work has been most influential among historians and sociologists of China.

Skinner's regional-systems approach possesses both methodological and theoretical dimensions. With respect to late traditional China in particular, it comprises a complex and distinctive understanding of China as a nested hierarchy of spatially and temporally structured physio-graphic human-interaction systems, which culminate in nine macro-regions. It is a vision that revolutionized subsequent academic understanding of "China" as an object of analytical investigation. Framing this vision are objectivist and behavioralist or utilitarian assumptions. Skinner's work on marketing systems in particular builds upon central-place theory in geography – a tradition itself built explicitly upon utilitarian assumptions.

Briefly stated, Skinner's models suppose that behavior – of farmers, of merchants, of imperial administrations – is intelligible in utilitarian-rationalist terms. The aggregate effect of such behavior accounts for the emergence and perpetuation of what he sometimes termed "natural systems" – that is, the nested-hierarchy of local systems culminating in the nine macro-regions of late traditional China. These systems are understood as aggregate effects or products of individual utility-maximizing behavior on the one hand, and on the other, these systems' emergence can be reasonably supposed to validate the assumption that individual decisions and, hence, behaviors possess a utilitarian basis or rationale. Skinner elaborates these assumptions into elegant but complex graphic models of Chinese social space – to wit, his famous hexagonally diagramed nested hierarchy of regional systems (incorporating eight levels from the standard marketing community to China's nine physiographic "macro-regions").

There exists a substantial cross-disciplinary literature that evaluates, modifies, and amplifies Skinner's vision of China. Although historical and geographical contingencies have been shown to complicate the details, the general tenor of this literature, sharing Skinner's utilitarian assumptions, has been to validate Skinner's approach, especially in empirical terms. My presentation today approaches Skinner's vision from a somewhat different angle, however. I propose that the notion of human interaction systems be augmented to accommodate what I characterize as a more subjective and culturally particular vision of China.

To elaborate, I propose that actors' understandings of the systems they inhabit and produce ought themselves to be viewed as part of those same systems. I develop this point inferentially, mainly with reference to spatial imageries produced and invoked in a variety of ritualized contexts. In particular, I draw attention to how these imageries relate to production of various registers of identity – individual, familial,

as well as communal, regional, and so on. These imageries are "more subjective" not so much because they are less scientifically objective than Skinner's, but rather in the sense that they manifest in processes of subjection.

As I noted earlier, my invocation of subjection draws (albeit rather freely) from Judith Butler's influential development of the concept, especially her able attempt to reconcile psychoanalytic and post-structuralist understandings of the nature and formation of "the subject." A key point is that becoming a subject" – that is, acquiring consciousness of oneself as an integrated, embodied agent possessed of desires and continuity through time – entails what amounts to a double bind. It is a double bind because acquiring the powers (both cognitive and material) of human agency or subjectivity unavoidably "subjects" the subject/agent to the constraints of the phenomenal realities that define subjectivity as such. Among the most insistent of these phenomenal constraints are extant socio-cultural realities. In other words, Butler (drawing from French psychoanalytic theorist, Jacques Lacan) understands human existence to entail subjection and constraint (what she terms "foreclosure") as what amounts to a price of admission to human (which is to say social) life, agency, and self-possession. In sum, to become a cultural subject possessing agency logically entails accommodation (i.e., subjection) to the linguistic, phenomenological, psychodynamic, and cultural determinants of subjectivity.

My point in invoking subjection here is to insinuate desire, agency, and emic imagery into the utilitarian rationality of human interaction systems. In other words, I do not dispute the logic of Skinnerian models, but propose instead that they can be expanded to incorporate a more nuanced and complex understanding of how Chinese people's own understandings and desires contribute to the production of Chinese social worlds and, needless to say, how Chinese social worlds contribute to people's understandings and desires and, thus, what motivates their behavior and choices.

To this end, I propose that spatial imagery in rituals is instrumental in establishing a connection between elements of individual and collective identification and culturally conceived social space. It is important to acknowledge that Chinese culturally conceived social space aligns reasonably neatly with what Skinner's vision discerns. However, the fact that it does so stems from processes more complex than utilitarian reason alone can explain. Skinner assumes that people identify with a nested hierarchy of territorial-cum-social collectivities largely as an unintended consequence of utility-motivated interaction.

I suggest that people also engage consciously in the construction of such identifications for reasons that exceed utilitarian purposes. I propose that such construction is part and parcel of human psychological and social existence in

general, along the lines of what Pierre Bourdieu famously terms "habitus," and also that this process is especially discernible in ritual. But, like Skinner's interaction systems, Bourdieu's habitus implies an underlying behavioralist logic (Bourdieu 1990). Consideration of ritual activities suggests, however, that participants are motivated by desires not wholly reducible to utilitarian logic or behavioral interaction -- that motives, in a word, entail desires that implicate subjection. Central among these desires is what amounts to construction of oneself as a subject or agent, that is, construction of an identity.

In sum, Skinner's vision comprises a conceptually powerful and empirically persuasive image of China, but the character of the rationality it discerns and assumes invites further analytical elaboration. Taken for granted if not overlooked is how variously situated actors themselves perceive the systems that Skinner's work reveals and, relatedly, how such perceptions figure into actors' behavior and, in turn, the shaping of the system itself. Insofar as Skinner's work supposes "natural" behavior to be consistent with utilitarian rationality, it implies that understanding China requires little explanation in culturally particular terms. In other words, if China's socio-spatial organization is natural, one might wonder what is distinctively Chinese about China's regional-systems hierarchies.

## Part II: Spatial Imagery in Ritual and Iconography

### Imagery, Imagination, Subjection: Marx, Lacan, Butler

Mindful of the foregoing observations, what follows discusses how a variety of ritual scenarios connect various dimensions of identification to emic socio-spatial imaginaries. Drawing mainly from fieldwork in Taiwan and from secondary sources, I touch briefly on domestic worship of deities and ancestors, territorial cults, regional pilgrimages, and imperial sacrifices. This analysis builds upon and abbreviates parts of a more substantial, but still evolving work on imagination, production, and alienation in ritual.

My evolving project explores connections among cognates of "image" – for example, imagery, imagination, imaginary. This focus highlights, on the one hand, that spatial imagery and imagination are crucial in ritual enactment and (thus) production of various subjectivities or identifications – including individual, gender, familial, communal, cultural, and even national identities. A key observation is that each of a variety of ritual arenas manifests a habituated protocol for identifying the initiator/agent of the ritual – a protocol that defines the agent's place or position with respect to a culturally shared spatio-cosmological imagery. Although ritual is by no means the sole or even the primary field for the production of subjectivities,

it formalizes processes that permeate social life more broadly construed. In other words, ritual provides a window not only into how subjectivity or identity is understood by participants, but also how it is imagined and, to some degree, produced. In short, imagination in ritual is in this sense creative or productive.

Notably, the rhetorical premises and material organization of space and iconography in ritual re-present – that is, construct an image of -- the agencies of this production as transcendental, and in this sense, alienated" agencies. For example, life experience is attributed (at least in part) to abstractions like fate or to the interventions of divine agencies (*xianling* 顯靈) rather than to worshippers' own activities. Imagination is thus – and this is key -- simultaneously at the core of human self-productive creativity (both individual and collective) and a source or at least a technique of alienation. Motivating both creative and alienating trajectories of imagination is desire manifest as fantasy, and understanding the role of imagination in these terms can illuminate how ideology inhabits social processes and how individual desire operates simultaneously as effect and producer of collective representations.

My focus here on imagery and imagination is inspired, in part, by similarities in how imagery figures in Karl Marx's concept of alienation (as in Marx's famous *camera obscura* analogy) and in Jacques Lacan's understanding of misrecognition (*méconnaissance*) (as in his "mirror stage"). Both Marx and Lacan employ these graphic analogies to argue, in effect, that imagination underlies creativity but also, inevitably, obstructs or veils a full apprehension of reality.

In Marx's case, the reality that is obscured is that contemporary social organization (in Marx's case, capitalism) is not ordained by nature but is, instead, a product of historical and cultural production. Because humankind possesses the agency to produce social arrangements, people can in principle rearrange things. (Note in this regard that anthropology's legacy documenting cultural differences provides robust evidence for not only the possibility, but also the existence of quite differing social arrangements.) But because culturally and historically specific realities frame the formation of people's consciousnesses, full apprehension of the degree to which society is changeable is obstructed by ideology. This circumstance lies at the core of what anthropologists generally term "ethnocentrism." In addition, it is important to emphasize that ideology (and ethnocentrism) are inherent not only in capitalism but also in societies cross-culturally.

In Lacan's case, the "mirror stage" refers to a process necessary for human infants to develop a sense of themselves. According to Lacan, a subject comes into being by identifying with an image of itself – an image that Lacan, combining ego and image, terms an "imago." This imago emerges both literally in a mirror's reflection and more substantially in images of oneself that others (especially caregivers) convey

back to the infant. Only as a subject can a human being achieve self-possession and possession of its own desire(s). But the imago, the consciousness of self, that emerges is imperfect, incomplete, and subject to distortion in what Freud terms an "ego-ideal." Consequently, people's self-consciousness is wedded to a distorted or incomplete image that is to some degree imposed upon them as a price of social recognition. Again, as for Marx, imagination for Lacan is productive of human subjectivity, but it mistakes our imago for a much more complex and unstable reality.

I am still developing the implications of this comparison between Marx and Lacan, but I do not attempt to explicate and justify it thoroughly here. For the moment, my main point is to suggest affinities in how imagery is employed in Marxian treatments of ideological alienation, on the one hand, and in Lacanian treatments of subjectivity, on the other. Both, in my view, imply that imagination drives human creativity ("species being" for Marx) but also entails alienation and ideology (Lacan's "misrecognition"). This focus on imagery in desire and ideology, I argue, suggests that actors' motives in traditional Chinese "human interaction systems" cannot be adequately understood solely in conventional utilitarian terms.

## Rituals

This section briefly surveys the role of spatial imagery in a variety of rituals. A key point to make at the outset is that in each of these ritual contexts, the ritual agent – variously, a believer or worshipper (*xintu* 信徒), a ritual specialist, various social collectivities (e.g., the hamlets, villages, market towns -- often represented by ritual specialists) -- invokes spatial imagery in a process that reflexively defines the agent's subjectivity with reference to this imagery. Note here an important but implicit or veiled complexity in this process of invocation. The rhetoric of ritual, reduced to its arguably most basic form, is that of communication: The ritual beseeches divine but unseen (*kanbujiande* 看不見的) agencies for blessings. The beseecher's agency manifests as initiating the communication by expressing a desire (*xuyuan* 許願), while the unseen respondent's agency is putatively discernible or manifest in the form of miraculous realization of expressed desire (*xianling* 顯靈). Thus, the rhetoric of communication or invocation veils the degree to which the object/other as well as the agent/subject of ritual action are effects or products of ritual action itself, represented – that is to say, imagined – as pre-extant agencies.

## Domestic Space

My first example concerns traditional Taiwanese domestic spaces. The typical focus of such space is the "guest room" (*keting* 客廳), where guests are entertained. Crucially, the *keting* is also distinguished as the locus of a family's domestic altar.

The altar usually includes ancestral tablets, formal portraits of key ancestors, sometimes carved images of deities, and above the altar table a schematic painting of some portion of the celestial pantheon. In addition, other supernatural entities are associated with other parts of the house: A paper image of the Stove God is affixed to or near the stove itself, ghosts and ghost soldiers are occasionally presented offerings at the threshold, and incense is offered to heaven or the Lord of Heaven outside in the courtyard.
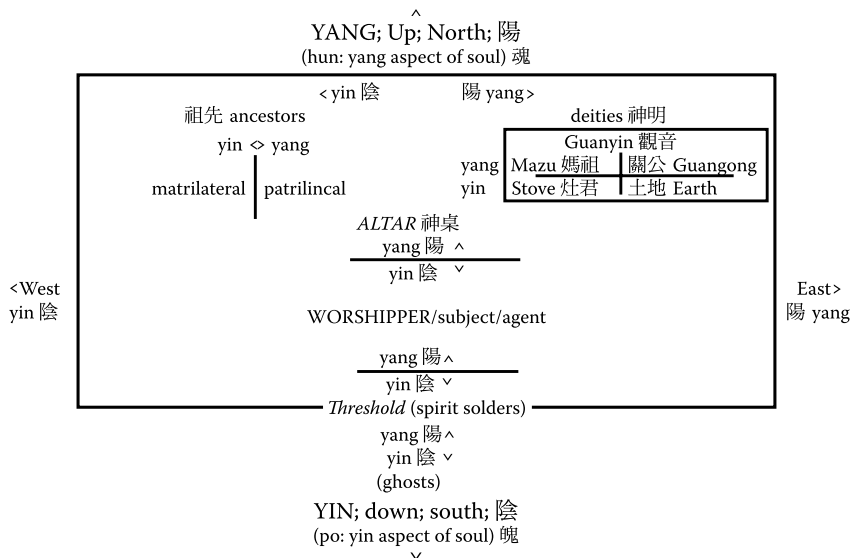


Source: Sangren 1987: 135.

The arrangement of potent objects -- ancestor tablets, deity images, and architecture itself -- manifests a fairly consistent schema in terms of relative relations of *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽, concepts that I have argued in earlier work imply trajectories of ordering and disordering processes and, hence, power 靈. To summarize a significant point of this earlier work, invocation of various supernatural agencies is not simply a form of sacrifice, entreaty, or other form of engagement or communication; ritual action also comprises the performative evocation and re-production of the household itself as agent in its own production. Incense is lit and offerings presented on behalf of the household. In sum, the iconographic representations of relevant cosmos locate the household within a broadly conceived, spatially organized imagery.

## Territorial Cults

A similar rhetorical-performative logic applies at the level of communities. Broadly speaking, Taiwanese local religion is organized as a nested arrangement of territorial cults. Lower levels (neighborhoods, hamlets, and villages) are

encompassed within higher levels (marketing communities, urban trading systems). Each of these levels possesses a temple housing a tutelary supernatural governor or celestial bureaucrat. As in the case of domestic arrangements, this nested hierarchy plays out in temple architecture and iconography.

The spatial organization of territorial cults is too complex and variable to describe thoroughly, so I note only a few key points. The nested structure of collectivities is explicit in the imperial metaphor widely asserted to describe the Chinese pantheon; to wit, just as higher-levels of imperial administration encompass lower levels, so too do celestial bureaucrats administer corresponding territories. Although complicated by other considerations, this structure is explicitly replicated and readable in temple architecture and iconography. For example, high-ranking deities occupy higher or more central positions in iconographic representations.

Typically in Taiwan, the efficacy of such temples is revived periodically by a Daoist performance. Note that an important element in Daoist ritual is the reading and conveyance of a written memorial (*zhuwen* 祝文), which, among other things, names the subjectivity (i.e., the collectivity), often with specific spatial details, in whose name supplication is made.

Moreover, intriguingly, during a Daoist *jiao* ritual a temporary altar in set up in the position normally occupied by the temple's deities, which are replaced with esoteric deities of a prior or transcendent heaven (*xiantian* 先天). Concurrently, the temple's permanent god images are moved to a temporary altar opposite (along the now closed temple doors, facing the permanent altar). This arrangement implicitly asserts that the ritualists, as putative "officials" of prior heaven, possess power to invest the relatively mundane gods of heaven with the authority and power to govern secular life, secular life implicitly including the ritualists themselves.

YANG; Up; North; 陽

| | |
|---|---|
| | ALTAR: Prior Heaven 先天<br>Three Pure Ones 三清 |

‹West
yin 陰

DAOSHI 道士/Subject/Agent

East›
yang 陽

TEMPORARY ALTAR
Normal "heavenly" gods; territorial gods
TEMPLE DOORS CLOSED

YIN; down; south; 陰

Source: P. Steven Sangren

Daoist ritual thus makes explicit a key feature that remains mainly implicit in domestic ritual. By claiming in effect to create a cosmos, the Daoists' performance temporarily suspends the alienating inversion of product (in this case, secular social agencies – the relevant subjectivity – and corresponding social arrangements) and producers (heaven, fate, deities) by asserting control over heaven and its personifications in the temple deities. Roughly put, instead of representing gods as governing the mundane, in a *jiao* the Daoist presumes to govern the gods. Moreover, because the Daoists are hired by representatives of the territorial cult or temple/community, the spatial arrangements of the ritual manifest symbolically what amounts to the self-constitution of local communities. Consequently, the transparency of human agency is simultaneously affirmed by the conceit that the Daoist officiates over heavenly agencies (which, in this context, amounts to calling them into presence and being by inviting them) and veiled by the Daoists' re-attribution of agency to prior heaven, itself an imaged/imagined product of the Daoist's mediation as community representative.

To overstate somewhat, both families and communities come into being as agencies in part by representing, that is to say, by imaging, themselves ritually as such. Imaging/imagining is, in this sense, a form of social action. By positing a spatially and conceptually transcendent agency, itself a product of ritual imagination, ritual action or performance asserts individual and community existence as agents or subjectivities in part by auto-enactment. In other words, only until or when the family (through its representative) or the community (via the ritualist) addresses its desires to a transcendent or alienated realm can it be said to possess presence or agency and exist as a desire-possessing subject.

To help illustrate this point, I borrow a joke recounted by anthropologist Marshall Sahlins:

> Three umpires of major league baseball were debating how to call balls and strikes, "I calls 'em the way they is," the first said. "Me," said the second, "I calls 'em the way I sees 'em." "Naw," declared the third, who had been around the longest, "they ain't nothin' till I calls 'em." (Sahlins 2002: 8)

I believe Sahlins' point to be one familiar to most anthropologists – in other words, balls and strikes become so only as cultural constructions of the material physics associated with pitching.

One can take Sahlins' joke a step further: One might propose that even umpires exist (that is, as umpires) only insofar as they call strikes and balls. Of course, this analogy overstates the degree to which individual, familial, and communal agents

or existences as subjects (including subjects like umpires) are simply or solely products of explicitly ritualistic rhetoric. Performativity, that is, imagination enacted, alone does not produce performers as embodied beings. And people, families, and communities exist and possess agency and imagination prior to and outside the sacred or liminal context of ritual enunciation. But ritual performance of the foregoing sort certainly reinforces and aids in defining the social dimensions of subjectivities by providing, through enactment, an image of the actor/subject's social location.

In addition, ritual performativity hints at a template of agentive self-productive action that is relevant beyond the context of ritual. For example, whenever people employ first-person, plural pronouns to refer to their familial or communal identities, such enunciation in itself contributes to producing the agency of those collectively conceived identities by virtue of enactment through enunciation. In sum, although pervasive in the conduct of mundane social activity, the performative-agentive nature of subjectivity is, arguably, more clearly delineated in the spatial-cum-illocutionary parameters and imagery of ritual. Moreover, the fact that this agency is implicitly locatable or invoked with reference to domestic icons, architecture, temples, and myriad other cosmologically potent, spatially denoted symbols, symbols that also frame secular activities, helps to habituate such activities with reference to this cosmology.

## Movement and the Ritual Production of Agencies

Instrumental in the construction of the spatial imageries that emerge and frame ritual action are movements that contribute to their construction. For example, at both domestic and territorial-cult altars, supplicants typically offer lighted incense following a habituated protocol beginning with heaven, then moving sequentially from inferior to superior deities. This protocol entails a worshipper's movements from one altar or censer to the next as well as ritualized gestures. At each censer the worshipper should identify him or herself to the associated deity. This movement, in effect, locates the worshipper conceptually and in a spatially embodied sense at the agentive center of subjectively relevant cosmological-social reality. In other words, it frames the ritual process not only with respect to an iconographic map traced in movements, but also reflexively with respect to a subjective or phenomenological posture.

Much the same general process, although more elaborately and explicitly detailed, is evident in the ritualized institution of altars and their framing cosmology in Daoist rituals. Many rituals entail the Daoist calling forth this cosmos and its attendant divinities by dancing a model of cosmos while simultaneously inviting

(perhaps interpellating) divine agencies into an imagined presence through incantations and meditation. Imperial rituals, too, reveal a broadly similar materialization through spatial movement.

Movement is especially salient in processions organized, usually annually, by territorial cults. On a god's birthday, its image is paraded out of its temple and taken on a tour of inspection of the boundaries of its domain. The spatial constitution of the community as such could hardly be more explicit. Just as importantly, the boundaries themselves help to constitute the community as a collectivity of households that reside within them. And, of course, worshippers who follow the procession literally map (hence, in this sense, produce) the community in their movements.

A final relevant observation, especially salient in Taiwan, concerns people's senses of place. Local historical narratives in Taiwan often are framed around the notion of pioneering or opening new land (*kaiken* 開墾). This notion, I suggest, not only envisions converting forest into fields, but also installing celestial agencies in the classic nested-hierarchical fashion. Put perhaps hyperbolically, land or territory only becomes a Taiwanese/Chinese place when it has been installed iconographically and ritually in the nested hierarchy of the imperial metaphor and thereby incorporated within "all under heaven" (*tianxia* 天下). Recall that Skinner's models of regional organization emphasize the development and intensification in the density or velocity of human interaction. Yet the notion of *kaiken*/opening anticipates nested hierarchy as a goal as well as a product or effect of regional organization, so imagery/imagination not only reflects social activity, it inspires and (to some degree) plays a role in producing it. In sum, socially organized space is culturally constructed not only retroactively in cognitive imagination, but also as an effect of cultural imagination realized in social action.

## Conclusions

The foregoing ritual scenarios all contribute to an *emic* vision of social-phenomenological space. Although fraught with overlapping dimensions related to multiple levels of identification, this vision is not chaotic or formless. I propose that a motive discernible in each of these scenarios is what amounts to a desire for individual or collective self-constitution. In other words, subjectivity is not solely an effect or product of cultural construction or linguistic interpellation but entails what at its core amounts to agency. This latter assertion, I am aware, implicates a broad spectrum of contemporary philosophical debate and speculation. For present purposes, perhaps it suffices to accept at least that the ritual construction of subjectivities employs spatial imageries.

To elaborate upon a point made earlier, I do not suppose the mutuality linking agency to spatial imagination to be limited to rituals, but rather to be a phenomenological constant in human life. All instances of human communication and interaction entail, incrementally, production and reproduction of subjectivities via the images of ourselves we intend to convey and the reflections back to us that these messages produce. This process is intrinsic even to such prosaic encounters as greeting others on the street. However, I suggest that ritual imageries make these general processes more accessible to analysis. The cognitive operations that explain these linkages must be inferred, in part because they are ideologically veiled and (arguably) largely unconscious.

To return to the topic of utilitarian assumptions, consider again Bourdieu's notion of "habitus." Habitus is Bourdieu's term indexing the process by which individuals acquire motives that result in the reproduction of the objective structures that comprise society, in the absence of any intention or consciousness of this process. Bourdieu supposes that, in the last analysis, habitus is shaped primarily by people's interests, which are differentially determined by their objectively defined social roles.

Like Bourdieu, I suppose that subjectivity entails habituation, which I suggest is immanent in an on-going dialectic in which individuals interact with the world and with others. However, I also suppose that the stakes for individuals are inadequately glossed as "interests" – at least as understood in a straightforwardly utilitarian sense or (in Bourdieu's jargon) as "dispositions deposited" (as habitus) by "objective structures." The foregoing description of subjection in the context of ritual imagery hints at a process entailing a more robust sense of agency. On the one hand, interests are explicitly expressed in ritual performance, for example, in the expression of desires. On the other hand, an additional motive that is largely implicit, if not veiled or unconscious, is the enactment or performance of what might be termed "self-production."

Mindful of these observations, I propose that a hierarchy of ritual identifications (including, but not limited to those I have outlined here) plays a role that reinforces, but does not derive wholly, from the utilitarian-behavioralist motives that buttress central-place theory and Skinner's project more generally. In other words, people's identifications at various levels of spatial aggregation derive from more than simple habit or interest, but include in addition psychic investments in identifications that are in turn linked to imagery of the subject/self's place in the world.

This argument does not diminish Skinner's achievements, in my view, but rather augments his vision. It does so in at least two senses: First, it draws attention to the limits as well as the possibilities of utilitarian-behavioralist assumptions; in

this regard it is in the spirit of Skinner's own procedures comparing models derived deductively from utilitarian assumptions to observed phenomena. As I suggest at the outset, actors' understandings of the systems they inhabit and produce ought themselves to be viewed as *parts* of those same systems. But also, as Skinner's vision demonstrates, these understandings do not wholly account for or alone suffice to produce the systems they envision. Just as Skinner's image of China as an eight-tiered, nested hierarchy of regional systems pays short shrift to the consciousness of the actors who produce the system, so do the actors' understandings of China's socio-spatial organization lack full apprehension of the system they (in aggregate) play a role in producing.

Second, my argument here suggests ways in which China's regional organization is distinctively Chinese. In addition, and at a more profound philosophical level, it raises questions regarding how one understands utility and associated analytical constructs, including value. These topics exceed my purposes here, but I conclude by noting that there is some utility in the production and maintenance of a pragmatically effective and psycho-dynamically stable sense of oneself and one's various identifications. And, by the same token, the measure of this utility may exceed conventional utilitarian reason.

To conclude, then, my discussion of the insights and oversights associated with utilitarian reason suggests that human motive is inadequately reduced to maximizing utility. People desire not only to acquire things, wealth, and power, they also aspire to inhabit a sense of self, identity, imago. In this respect, my exploration of spatial imagery in ritual as it relates to subjectivity suggests that locating/producing oneself, in a broad but essential sense, produces crucial value that utilitarian assumptions struggle to accommodate. To understand what is Chinese about China's spatial social organization, it is a value that cannot be ignored.

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# 空間想像：
## 施堅雅「人類互動系統」與漢人儀式中空間意象及主體性之角色

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人類學系

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G. William Skinner提出將中國視為具有套疊性階層之區域（「人類互動」）系統的複雜研究，徹底顛覆了爾後我們對所謂「中國」的時間與空間層面上的理解。Skinner研究所體現出來的巨大的空間性的想像力，得自於明確的「客觀主及行為主義」（「objectivist-cum-behavioralist」）觀點。Skinner認為，在多數情形下，主位（emic）觀點----例如地方性認同、官僚系統結構、社會經濟流動----皆反映了「自然系統」（即主要基於經濟理性決策，但又受到政治控制與榨取的邏輯）。空間想像具有重要性，但在主體性的儀式建構上是非常不一樣的一件事（廣義來說，這是從Judith Butler《權力的精神生活》中所發展而來的）。基於對各種儀式化脈絡的分析（個人信仰、家內建築、地方信仰慶典、繞境、國家祀典），我認為Skinner的架構仍能幫助我們來討論，主位的空間想像如何在建構主體性過程中發揮作用。這裡將主位與客位（etic）並列的好處是，一方面對意識形態與社會現實間的區分提出詰問，同時也暗示了一個涵蓋更廣的理論性的統合。

<div align="right">（蔣馥蓁翻譯，丁仁傑校訂）</div>

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