



# Of Body and Brush: Grand Sacrifice as Text/Performance in Eighteenth-Century China

By Angela Zito

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The Qianlong emperor, who dominated the religious and political life of eighteenth-century China, was in turn dominated by elaborate ritual prescriptions. These texts determined what he wore and ate, how he moved, and above all how he performed the yearly Grand Sacrifices. In *Of Body and Brush*, Angela Zito offers a stunningly original analysis of the way ritualizing power was produced jointly by the throne and the official literati who dictated these prescriptions.

Forging a critical cultural historical method that challenges traditional categories of Chinese studies, Zito shows for the first time that in their *performance*, the ritual texts embodied, literally, the metaphysics upon which imperial power rested. By combining rule through the brush (the production of ritual texts) with rule through the body (mandated performance), the throne both exhibited its power and attempted to control resistance to it. Bridging Chinese history, anthropology, religion, and performance and cultural studies, Zito brings an important new perspective to the human sciences in general.

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About the Author

**Angela Zito** is associate professor of anthropology and religious studies, director of the Religious Studies Program, and co-director of the Center for Religion and Media, all the New York University.

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