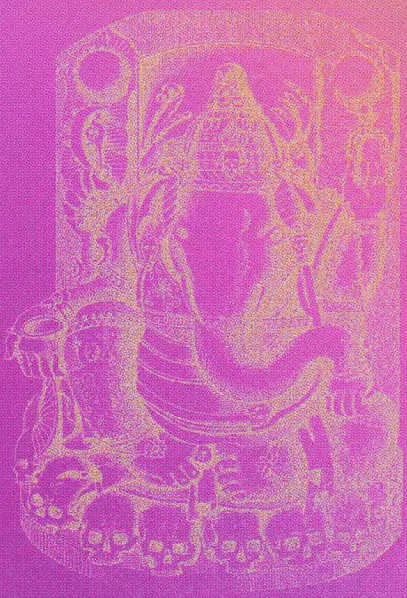

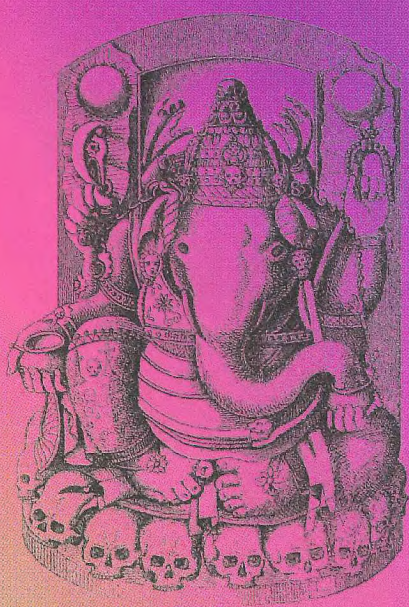

RITUALISTICS

Edited By Tore Ahlbäck

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SCRIPTA INSTITUTI DONNERIANI ABOENSIS

XVIII

RITUALISTICS

Based on Papers Read at the Symposium on Ritualistics Held at Åbo, Finland on the July 31st – August 2nd, 2002

Edited by
Tore Ahlbäck

Editorial Assistant
Björn Dahla

Distributed by

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Editor's Note

A brief survey of the choice of subject for various recurring conferences in religious studies reveals that the problem of ritual is more frequent than many other topics. The reason for this is clear: ritual is one of the most central phenomena in all religions. An examination of the congress activity of the Donner Institute shows that among the seventeen topics discussed at the seventeen congresses to date between the years 1965 and 2001, there is one theme that dealt explicitly with ritual; this was the symposium organized in 1991 under the rubric "Religious Rites" and whose proceeds were published in 1993 as volume 15 in the institute's series, Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis, under the title *The Problem of Rituals*. The first essay in that volume was written by Jørgen Podemann Sørensen and was entitled "Ritualistics: A New Discipline in the History of Religions". The theme for the Donner Institute's 2001 symposium, "Ritualistik", and the title of the conference volume, *Ritualistics*, is taken from Podemann Sørensen's 1993 article. Jørgen Podemann Sørensen naturally appears in this volume, too, with a masterly essay – and I have no hesitation in claiming that Podemann Sørensen is the leading scholar in the Nordic countries in the field of ritualistics. Even if I have already noted that ritual is one of the most interesting phenomena in religion, I would make also make the not particularly original claim that ritual in societies like those of the increasingly secular Nordic countries is fast becoming the only visible expression of religion. This would mean, then, that the discipline of ritualistics would acquire a central role in religious studies.

The Donner Institute's next symposium will be arranged in Turku, in 2005, and on that occasion will have the status of a European Association for the Study of Religion conference. The theme is built round the frame of Violence and Religion and is being worked out by those members of the Donner Institute board who are appointed by the faculty council for the Humanities at the University of Uppsala: Peter Schalk and Ing-Britt Trankell. The symposium will, in other words, be "European" and the conference language will be English. As was the case at the 1997 conference on Methodology in the Study of Religions, on this occasion, too, a Nordic Ph.D. school will be organised in conjunction with the conference. The conference policy of the Donner Institute, as the only organization regularly organising Nordic conferences in religious studies, is aimed in principle at arranging alternately a Nordic regional conferences (with Swedish or "Scandinavian", together with English, as conference languages) and an international conference (where the conference language is English). In this way, we feel

that we can best fulfil both the need for purely Nordic conferences, where the target group is defined as the Nordic countries and where the language is regional, as well as recognise in practice that religious studies is an international discipline which cannot be exercised exclusively within regional boundaries.

Much credit for the production of the present volume goes to editorial assistant Björn Dahla.

Tore Ahlbäck

CATHARINA BLOMBERG

Yoroi-kizome, Genbuku and Taking the Tonsure

Rites of Passage among the *Bushi* in Feudal Japan

The earliest written records extant in Japan were compiled during the Nara period (710–781 A.D.). They are the *Kojiki*, "Record of Ancient Matters", 712 A.D.; the *Nihongi* or *Nihon Shoki*, "Chronicle of Japan", 720 A.D.; and the *Manyōshū*, "Collection of a Myriad Leaves", an anthology of poetry first published in 759 A.D. but also containing material from the Asuka period (*ca* 500–700 A.D.). Prior to these writings, the only existing evidence of practices which may be defined as rites of passage is archaeological. From the Neolithic Early Jōmon period (4500–3000 B.C.) there are indications of a systematic extraction of teeth among a sizeable proportion of the population, the ratio being about 70 per cent males and 30 per cent females, with considerable regional variations (Blomberg 1990: 243). In its most drastic form this comprised the removal of the canines and incisors of both maxilla and mandible. This kind of mutilation eventually came to include an equally systematic filing down of the maxillary incisors into a fork or trident shape, with examples of both practices in the same individual. From the evidence of burnt clay figurines dating from the Jōmon as well as the Yayoi period (*ca* 250 B.C.–*ca* 250 A.D.) it appears that some kind of facial adornment existed. Whether this took the form of scarring, tattooing or painting is of course impossible to ascertain, but it may have been another means of indicating individual distinction or social position. By the Yayoi period Japan was an agricultural society based largely on rice cultivation, and during the Kofun period (*ca* 250–*ca* 500 A.D.), so called after the often gigantic burial mounds in a characteristic key-hole shape surrounded by moats which are a typical feature, a ruling class began to emerge in what may have been petty kingdoms. These tombs, of widely varying sizes, are distributed over large parts of central and southern Honshū, with a concentration in the Kinki district around present-day Osaka and Kyoto. The largest tomb, reputed to be that of the semi-mythical "Emperor-Sage" Nintoku, is over 900 metres in length.

The *Kojiki* and the *Nihongi*, as chronicles of a united realm politically consolidated under one ruling imperial family, give indications of various

practices which may be regarded as rites of passage, e.g. wedding ceremonies and the use of separate parturition huts. Pollution and its avoidance is a central tenet in Shinto, the indigenous Japanese religion which developed in the agrarian society of the Yayoi period. One of the poems in the *Manyōshū* contains an oblique reference to a woman's teeth as "lily-like", an expression used in the *Kojiki* to describe the teeth of an imperial prince which had been filed down into a trident shape. The *Manyōshū* reference, furthermore, suggests that this form of dental ornamentation was in fact an indication that the woman was married. (Blomberg 1999: 322.)

Not until the Heian period (781–1185) however, do we have clear and unequivocal evidence of various initiation rites practised by the ruling imperial family and the court nobility, *kuge*. This peaceful era saw a great flourishing of the arts, and with the emergence in the tenth century of a Japanese literature in the vernacular in the form of novels and diaries written by *kuge* ladies in waiting attached to the imperial court, we have eye-witness accounts of life in court circles and among the *kuge*. One very striking feature, again concerning teeth, was the fact that both sexes dyed their teeth black with a highly corrosive concoction of *sake*, rice wine, or urine mixed with iron filings or powdered gall-nuts. This practice, later known as *o-haguro*, "honourable toothblack", or *o-kane*, "honourable metal", was regarded as a form of personal adornment and an indication of adulthood as well as social status. Girls usually began blackening their teeth at the onset of puberty, or when they got married, and boys did so after undergoing their coming-of-age ceremony, *genbuku*, at the age of about fifteen. From the cradle to the grave significant stages in a person's life were marked by ceremony in accordance with Buddhist or Shinto beliefs. The novels and diaries of the Heian court ladies mention many ceremonial first occasions in the life of that most important of children, i.e. a male heir to the throne, from the infant's first bath and first haircut to the first wearing of *hakama*, the wide silk trousers with trailing legs worn with formal court attire, when the little boy was five years old. Later there was the *genbuku* ceremony, of which more below, to mark the beginning of adulthood, and in later life very often the taking of the tonsure as a Buddhist monk, an indication of retirement from active life. After the introduction of Buddhism in the sixth century the two religions occupied positions of virtually equal importance in Japanese society, including the imperial house. The emperor, as a descendant of the supreme Shinto deity, the Sun Goddess *Amaterasu Ō-mikami*, performed a number of Shinto rites annually for the welfare of the country and people, notably the *Ō-harai*, "great purification", ceremony. Imperial princesses were customarily appointed to the position of high priestess at important Shinto shrines connected with the imperial family, or indeed that of abbess at a Buddhist temple. When the system known as

Insei, "cloister government", in which an abdicated emperor continued to rule from behind the scenes while the actual emperor was a minor, became common in the last two centuries of the Heian period, it was the custom for the retiring monarch to take the tonsure and become a Buddhist monk. Female members of the imperial family and the *kuge* were expected to shave their heads and become Buddhist nuns when they were widowed.

The essentially peaceful Heian society, in which warlike qualities were not at a premium, underwent a profound change with the rise to ascendancy of a warrior nobility, *buke*, from the mid-tenth century. Its members, known as samurai or *bushi*, were descended from younger sons of *kuge* who had moved to the provinces in order to make a living as country squires or commanders of the border guards. Positions at the Heian court and in the civil administration were hereditary among the *kuge*, and since polygamy was widely practised there were many younger sons who had no prospects of promotion. By the twelfth century some *buke* families had gained sufficient influence in the capital to challenge the *kuge*, and after the *Genpei* War (1180–85) between two leading *buke* clans, the warrior nobility ruled Japan for the next seven centuries. The emperor continued to be regarded as the head of state, but the *de facto* ruler was the *Shōgun*, a title which can be translated as "supreme military commander" or "generalissimo". A feudal system developed in which the *Shōgun* distributed land to his vassals, from whom he expected loyal service.

The *bushi*, while retaining many of the manners and customs of the *kuge*, had developed a system of ethico-religious ideas and rules of conduct, known variously as "the way of bow and horse", *Kyūba no michi*, "the way of loyalty", *Chūgi no michi*, or "the heart of the warrior", *Bushi no kokorogiwa*, already by the twelfth century. These values comprised much of the Confucian moral code, notably *Gojō*, the "five cardinal virtues", and the idea of the "five relations", as well as Shinto and Buddhist precepts. The "five cardinal virtues" of Confucianism are benevolence (*jin*), justice (*gi*), propriety (*rei*), wisdom (*chi*), and fidelity (*shin*). They have provided the basis for the Japanese outlook on life since before Heian times and were embraced by the entire population in varying degrees, depending on education and social position. The "five relations" regulate the relationship between lord and vassal, father and son, older brother and younger brother, husband and wife, and friend–friend. In theory, the subordinate party owes loyalty and obedience to the superior, with no reciprocal obligations necessary, but in practice, however, the superior was expected to show benevolence and even render practical assistance. A woman was always considered subordinate, firstly to her father, then to her husband, and lastly to her son.

There were also a number of characteristic traits which reflected the unique position of the samurai and the rigours of his *métier*, contravening the precepts of both Shinto and Buddhism which categorically forbid the

taking of life. The vassal owed his lord unquestioning loyalty and was expected to lay down his life without hesitation. The practice known as *seppuku*, taking one's life by cutting open the abdomen, developed in the twelfth century, originally as a way of avoiding falling into enemy hands when incapacitated on the battlefield. By committing this particularly painful form of suicide a samurai could lay bare his soul in order to prove his innocence or sincerity of purpose, as the case might be, expiate a crime, or even remonstrate with his wayward lord about to commit an error or an indiscretion. *Seppuku* was the honourable punishment for a crime, an execution carried out by the condemned man himself. *Junshi*, "following the lord in death", was practised by some of the chief retainers of a feudal lord until legally prohibited in 1663. This ultimate show of loyalty beyond the grave and into the next existence might perhaps with some justification also be regarded as a rite of passage. After 1663 an instance of *junshi* was liable to be severely punished by the *shōgunal* government, *Bakufu*, e.g. by confiscating the fief of the heir to the lord whose death had caused it, although the practice did not entirely cease. The law prohibiting *junshi* first appeared in the version of the *Buke Sho-hatto*, "Laws of the Military Houses", promulgated by the fourth Tokugawa *Shōgun*, Ietsuna (1641–80, *regnavit* 1651–80). One of the most famous instances of *junshi* occurred as late as 1912, when the hero of the Russo-Japanese War, General Nogi Maresuke, committed *seppuku* at the very moment, announced by a gun salute, when the funeral procession of Emperor Meiji (1849–1912) left the Imperial Palace. Mrs Nogi severed her jugular vein on this occasion, accompanying her husband in death.

To the common people of feudal Japan, the *bushi* were not only the holders of political and military power and paragons of all warlike virtues, they were also regarded as arbiters of culture and taste, whose manners and customs were to be emulated. Heian court life had been refined, imbued with an aestheticism which bordered on the precious and effete, whereas the Minamoto clan, founders of the first *shōgunate*, the Kamakura *Bakufu* (1192–1333), and their vassals prided themselves on leading simple and frugal lives without luxury or ostentation, valuing their warlike skills far above their talents for composing poetry or incense.

From birth the life of a *bushi* was punctuated by rites and rituals marking every step on the way to becoming a warrior. In addition to the ceremonial first occasions of babyhood there was the ceremony known as *yoroi-kizome*, "the first wearing of armour", which was celebrated when a boy was six or seven years old as a sign of his future status. Boys of *bushi* stock were trained from childhood in martial arts, and taught the proper demeanour of a warrior. Horsemanship and the techniques necessary to use the long-bow, which was their chief weapon until the Kamakura period, and to wield the two-handed, single-edged sword were essential skills for all males born

into the warrior class. Women in *bushi* families, incidentally, who were brought up to be the wives and mothers of future generations of warriors, were taught to wield a halberd, *naginata*, in self-defence, as well as how to use the dagger which they carried about their person to sever the jugular vein when in extreme danger of dishonour, or when following their husband in death.

The young *bushi* male came of age at fifteen or sixteen, with the celebration of his *genbuku* ceremony. This was a very solemn event, which began with the initiand spending a night in solitary vigil in a Buddhist temple. There is one famous example of this vigil having taken place in a Shinto shrine, namely the *genbuku* of Minamoto Yoshiie (1041–1108), also known as *Hachiman Taro*, "the eldest son of Hachiman", i.e. the Shinto God of War. Yoshiie's famous sobriquet is variously said to derive from his legendary martial prowess or from the place where his *genbuku* was performed. The following day the young man was clothed in the formal robes of a *bushi* and received his adult first name, *jitsumyō*, which was henceforth used instead of his childhood name, *dōmyō*. We may note that the next change of name took place if and when he took the tonsure and became a Buddhist monk, and that the final name, *shōmyō*, was bestowed upon him posthumously. To further complicate matters, high-ranking *bushi* holding public office within the *Bakufu* were commonly addressed by their titles. The initiand's first *eboshi*, the formal male head-gear made of stiff black gauze or horse-hair, was tied on by his *eboshi-oya*, "hat-godfather". Originally the head-gear donned at the *genbuku* ceremony of a *kuge* was the *kanmuri*, a flat skull-cap with a horn-like appendage at the back which covered the wearer's top-knot. The *eboshi*, worn on non-ceremonial occasions at the Imperial court, was either a soft paper or cloth cap which could be worn underneath a helmet, or a stiffened black conical cap with cords tied under the chin. Its top was folded over slightly, and the members of the Taira and Minamoto families enjoyed the exclusive privilege of wearing their *eboshi* bent towards the right or left respectively. The *eboshi-oya* was usually an older male relative or friend of the family, preferably someone of high rank or holding an influential position in society, and the relationship between him and his protégé lasted throughout their lives. The adult *bushi* male also wore his hair in a distinctive style, with the hair at the back and sides grown long and gathered in a tightly bound queue which was bent upwards and forwards and rested on the shaven crown of the head. This hair-style appears to have developed originally in order to provide a cushion when a helmet was worn. In the Heian period a young man's teeth were blackened for the first time on the occasion of his *genbuku*. After the *Genpei* War, however, during which the Taira warriors had worn blackened teeth and the victorious Minamoto side had not, the custom of tooth-blackening among *bushi* males gradually became obsolete. By the fourteenth century

and the beginning of the Ashikaga *Bakufu* (1330–1573), the only males to adhere to this custom were the *kuge* and members of the imperial family. Emperor Meiji ceased blackening his teeth in 1868, soon after having been seen for the first time by Western diplomats in audience. How closely associated with men of high rank the practice of blackening the teeth had become, also in the minds of lower-ranking samurai, is illustrated by a memoir recording events in the late sixteenth century. The author, Yamada An, had been present at a siege as a young girl, and had personally helped to blacken the teeth of severed enemy heads in order to increase their value, as there were substantial rewards and great honour attached to the feat of taking the head of a high-ranking opponent in battle. (Blomberg 1990: 246.) Among women, the practice of tooth-blackening continued, and in fact spread to all social strata, so that the use of *o-haguro* became an indication that a woman was married. When a young girl blackened her teeth for the first time, at the age of thirteen or when she was engaged to be married, she was assisted by a "god-mother", *kane-oya*, and sat facing the south, the most auspicious direction, in a ceremony reminiscent of the *genbuku* among the *bushi*. The second day of the first month was traditionally chosen as the day when women first blackened their teeth in the New Year.

One of the corner-stones in the education of a *bushi* was *Bun-Bu*, "learning and the art of war", a term which appeared already in the first legal texts written specifically for the *bushi*, the so-called "house laws" of Minamoto Yoritomo (1147–99), the first Kamakura *Shōgun*, compiled for the use of his personal vassals. *Bun*, "learning", referred to the Chinese classics, i.e. the Confucian texts, which continued to be required reading for all schoolboys until modern times. *Bu* included every martial pursuit, from strategy and the drawing of maps to horsemanship and swordfighting techniques. Great emphasis was placed on literacy and mental agility, and although there were many samurai who adhered to Amidist Buddhism, e.g. the *Jōdo*, "pure land" schools, the more intellectually demanding Zen Buddhism, especially the *Rinzai* school, also held a great attraction for pragmatic warriors.

The chief attribute of the *bushi* was without question his sword. From the thirteenth century the two-handed, single-edged sword, slightly curved at the tip for greater force to the blow when used by a mounted swordsman, superseded the long-bow, also a formidable weapon. The sword was inseparable from its owner, and often given a name to commemorate some particular feat performed with it. The actual process of forging a sword required great skill and lengthy preparation, and became surrounded by a great deal of ceremony. The smith, who ranked far above other artisans, was not infrequently of *buke* or even *kuge* stock. He underwent various purification rites, sometimes including a pilgrimage, before undertaking his work, and women, for reasons of possible pollution, were banned from

the smithy at all times. Buddhist or Shinto deities were invoked during the process of forging, including Kannon (Sanskrit: Avalokiteśvara), the Bodhisattva of Mercy, and Inari, the Shinto god of rice and hence prosperity who was the patron of swordsmiths. For the final ceremony, when the finished blade was signed and invested with its *tama*, "vital spirit", the swordsmith wore the robes of a Shinto priest. The association of Buddhist deities with swords goes back to the idea of the "sword of wisdom" (Sanskrit: *prajña*) and the many minor deities, e.g., the *Myō-ō* and the *Shi-tennō*, who are depicted brandishing swords with which to repel enemies of the faith. The names of such deities were often inscribed on the blade, just below the hilt, in the form of *bonji*, cyphers, of modified Sanskrit characters, and images of *Fudō Myō-ō*, the terrible aspect of Mahavairoçana Buddha, a sword, or a dragon were also engraved. By shedding blood and taking life the warrior sinned against the central tenets of both Shinto and Buddhism, knowingly condemning himself to an unfavourable rebirth as an *asura*, "infernal spirit", in one of the Buddhist hells, of which there are ten cold and ten hot ones. If he died on the battlefield grasping the hilt of his sword, engraved with a *bonji* or religious image, there was a chance, however, of a more favourable rebirth. Because of its power to repel evil influences a sword was customarily put in the room of a newborn infant and beside the bier of a corpse.[1]

When a vassal entered the service of a feudal lord a ceremony was held in which he swore an oath of fealty and received a gift in confirmation of the contract, often a sword or a horse. During the Tokugawa *Bakufu* (1603–1868) this ceremony, *genzan*, came to resemble the traditional Shinto wedding, with an exchange of toasts in *sake* between lord and vassal. In this context it is worth noting that the oath of fealty was usually undertaken for the duration of three existences, *shūjū sanze no katame*. The oath was made orally, but in times of grave crisis a written oath, *kishōmōn*, might be necessary, sometimes signed with a *keppan*, "blood-seal", a fingerprint made with the signatory's own blood, beneath his official signature. (Blomberg 1994: 91–104.)

The sword, being present at every important event in the life of a samurai, came to be regarded as a symbol of its owner or even as his soul. The state of the sword reflected a man's character, and to keep the blade spotless was to keep his honour intact. After 1588, when the peasant population was disarmed after a prolonged period of internal strife, the sword became the exclusive property of the *bushi*. The pair of swords, one long, *katana*, and one short, *wakizashi*, was known as *dai-shō* and became the outward sign of the privilege of belonging to the warrior nobility, an advantage

1 For a discussion of the significance of swords in Japan see Blomberg 1994: 48–71 and *passim*.

which was jealously guarded by the samurai. This prized possession was the last thing a destitute *bushi* would part with, since it symbolized his very being, set him apart from the *profanum vulgus* and represented the allegiance he owed his lord.

From the fourteenth century, when the term *daimyō*, "great name", was first used to denote the feudal lords, they gained a certain amount of autonomy due to a weakening in *shōgunal* influence. After the period of civil war, *Sengoku jidai*, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Tokugawa *Bakufu* was established in 1603, and a dynasty of Tokugawa *Shōguns* ruled for over 250 years, enforcing a rigid class system. The *daimyō* were obliged to swear personal allegiance to the *Shōgun* and were prevented from contracting alliances of any kind, including marriage, across the boundaries of their fiefs without his express permission. The same applied to their own vassals, whose lives were regulated in minute detail, including the colours and materials used in their clothing, authorisation to travel in a palanquin, *norimon*, and even the number of dishes which could be served at a formal banquet.[2] The Tokugawa period was peaceful, and the *bushi* were employed as civil servants rather than as active warriors, although they were never allowed to neglect their martial skills. During this period of strictly enforced peace in Japan the term *Bushidō*, "the way of the warrior", was first used by the Confucian scholar Yamaga Sokō (1622–85), who began codifying the concept of chivalrous behaviour and discussing the *raison d'être* of the samurai in his writings in the 1650s.

From the time of his *genbuku* a vassal was under his lord's orders. A lordless samurai, *rōnin*, had little hope of being accepted into the service of another lord, and one of the few careers open to him was to take up a position as fencing-master. Particularly during the centuries of intermittent warfare it was also not uncommon for a *bushi* to take the tonsure and become a Buddhist monk in order to pray for those he had killed in battle. Whatever his social status, whether he was a wealthy *daimyō* or a penniless *rōnin*, the samurai was an object of awe and admiration on the part of the common people. There was also an element of terror, due to the fact that a *bushi* had the right to cut down an insolent commoner on the spot.

Under the peaceful conditions of Tokugawa Japan there was increasing prosperity, however, and a bourgeoisie of wealthy merchants and artisans began to appear in the late seventeenth century. For their entertainment new forms of literature, music and theatre developed, e.g. *kabuki*, a colourful popular theatre very far removed from the hieratic and restrained *Nō* play favoured by the *bushi*. The burgeoning city life also attracted less desirable elements, and an urban sub-culture of actors, strolling players and other kinds of entertainers emerged, joined also by runaway apprentices, ab-

2 For a discussion of the rigours of *bushi* life see Blomberg 1993: *passim*.

sconded peasants and low-ranking samurai. Among these there developed a group of criminal or half-criminal men engaged in extortion or protection schemes in connection with gambling and prostitution, the so-called *otokodate*, "stalwarts", who swaggered about wearing *kimonos* with particularly eye-catching, usually chequered, patterns and carrying exceptionally long swords or long and heavy metal tobacco pipes which could be used as lethal weapons. The *otokodate* formed gangs, known as *kin-gin gumi*, "gold and silver gangs", where the distinguishing mark was a gold or silver inlay in a maxillary incisor, an interesting revival of dental ornamentation among males. Tattooing was chiefly used as a form of punishment for convicted criminals in Japan. The polychrome tattooes depicting dragons and mythical scenes which occurred among the *otokodate* seem to have originated in an effort to conceal the convicts' stripes tattooed around the upper arm, one for each conviction, and to this day there is a strong association in Japan between tattooing and criminals. Not all tattooes belonged to criminals, however. Fishermen and firemen traditionally decorated their bodies with luxuriant polychrome tattooes. Minor Buddhist deities, particularly *Fudō Myō-ō*, dominated among the motifs chosen, and were considered to offer protection against harm.

With the Meiji Restoration in 1868, when the political power reverted to the emperor and the *shōgunate* was abolished, the privileges of the *bushi* came to an end. The samurai class was abolished in 1876, but everything connected with the former rulers, including the ideas of *Bushidō*, continued to be regarded as an ideal and in fact spread to all classes of society. Vestiges of *bushi* rites of passage still exist to this day, beginning with the *shichi-go-san*, "seven-five-three", a ceremony which is traditionally held in November. Girls aged three and seven and boys aged five are brought to a Shinto shrine, the girls wearing colourful *kimono* with all the accoutrements and the boys dressed in the formal male costume of *hakama*, wide silk trousers which are nowadays ankle-length, and *haori*, the short black silk coat bearing the family crest, *mon*. The *genbuku* ceremony may perhaps be said to have been replaced by the university entrance examination, a major stumbling-block in the lives of a very significant proportion of young men and women in Japan. Once accepted at a university, however, they are virtually assured of receiving a degree when they leave. During the last terms at university most students enter the competition for acceptance as trainees in a large company or corporation. Although the famous system of life-long employment appears to be on the wane in today's Japan every company employee, from the lift attendant to the managing director, is regarded as a representative of the firm and expected to behave accordingly. When the new recruits enter the company to begin their training a collective ceremony, *nyūshashiki*, is held. This often contains an element of trial or austerity, with the initiands, as it were, undergoing some physical hardship together. They

might, for example, be assigned to spending a week as mendicant monks soliciting alms, cleaning the office lavatories, or living in a hut by the grave of the firm's founder, weeding and cleaning the tombstone and grave site.

Marriage is the definitive step into adult life, and still regarded as indispensable for a man who wishes to advance in his career, although there are signs that this is about to change, especially where female employees are concerned. A woman traditionally married into her husband's family, but in recent years an increasing number of widows have declined to be buried in the family tomb, stating quite bluntly that they have no wish to continue waiting hand and foot on their husband during subsequent existences. This is very different behaviour from that of the obedient and subservient samurai wife, who was expected to suffer in dignified silence during her marriage, and renounce the world and become a Buddhist nun in her widowhood.

Suicide still remains an honourable means of surmounting an impossible situation in the eyes of society at large, and a man who shows exceptional courage or fortitude in adversity is still commended for living up to the ideals of *Bushidō*.

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CLEMENS CAVALLIN

Sacrifice as Action and Actions as Sacrifices

The Role of Breath in the Internalisation of Sacrificial Action in the Vedic Brāhmaṇas

Introduction

Over the last hundred years different attempts have been made to explain why sacrifices have had such a prominent place within many religious traditions.[1] Such theories of sacrifice are sometimes part of a more general theory of (religious) rituals, or a theory of religion in general. In most cases, actual sacrifices are thus explained through recourse to their position within a more general category. The opposite is, however, sometimes the case, i.e. a theory of one sacrificial tradition is extended to cover all sacrifices, or even ritual in general. One example of the latter is Frits Staal's controversial theory of ritual, which is to a great extent based upon the analysis of Vedic sacrifices, both contemporary performances and those in several thousand-year-old manuals.[2] The Vedic material has been, and continues to be, a special platform for scholarly reflections on sacrificial rituals, mainly due to its great age and its detailed documentation of the actual performance of the rituals, but also due to the explicitness of the Vedic texts regarding both the function and meaning of the rituals.[3]

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1 For articles in encyclopaedias that try to present an overview of sacrificial theories and the different aspects of sacrifice, see E. O. James' article from 1920 in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, and the article written by Joseph Henninger in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, published in 1987. For more recent developments, see Ivan Strenski's article "Between Theory and Speciality: Sacrifice in the 90s" (1996) and also John Milbank's "Stories of Sacrifice" (1996).

2 See Staal 1989 and for the debate provoked by Staal's theory, see e.g. Smith 1991 and Staal's reply 1993, and also Penner 1985, which refers to an article of Staal written before *Rules Without Meaning*, but expressing the same ideas; see further, the three articles in *Religion* 21 in 1991 by Allen Grapard, Burton Mack and Ivan Strenski, which were answered by Staal in the same volume.

3 The Vedic "texts" were not initially written but oral. They have been transmitted and preserved from teacher to pupil through generations until our times, although they were also written down at some time. It is not easy to say exactly when, due to the lack

One interesting feature of Vedic sacrificial theology is that it comes to conclusions implying the abandonment of the toilsome Vedic rituals. In this process within the Vedic corpus a system of esoteric correspondences established between ritual objects and entities outside of the ritual enclosure is crucial. The Vedic discussions of sacrifices are conducted mainly through references to this system of correspondences and a large number of the correspondences are forged between ritual and man, and more specifically the breaths of man (*prāṇāḥ*). There is thus an anthropocentric tendency in Vedic ritualistic thought, something which could explain the final abandonment of the "outer" aspects of sacrifice in preference for its "inner" aspects (MU 1.2.7–10; PU 1.9). This internalisation of sacrifice makes it also possible to consider non-ritual actions as equivalent to sacrifices (CU 2.13, 3.17; KU 2.5). Sacrifice can thus be transformed from being extremely ritualised to become an ingredient also present in other types of actions. In the Vedic corpus, the notions of breath fulfil a central function in such a transition from ritual to soteriology and ethics (BU 4.4.1–7). The aim of the following discussion is therefore to delineate some central issues that are important for the analysis of the references to breath in the Vedic correspondences. First of all, a working definition of ritual correspondence will be given and then a short discussion of the nature of the correspondences will follow. Thereafter, a general presentation of the different notions of breath and three different sorts of ritual internalisation will be made. The last section of the paper will concentrate on the relation between the breaths and the self (*ātman*), as this is expressed in a few textual passages. It is my hope that these discussions will provide a basis for a more comprehensive study of the role of the breaths in the internalisation of sacrifice in Vedic ritual theology.

Ritual correspondences

A ritual correspondence is here defined as a relation between two or more entities, which connects them in a way that makes it possible to influence one of them through the ritual manipulation of the other, or to explain e.g.

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of old manuscripts. See Gonda 1975: 18. The Vedic discourses have been preserved with astonishing accuracy, despite their oral character – a feat that was accomplished mainly through special mnemonic techniques. We can therefore speak of "oral texts". That is, the fixation of discourse in human memory is in some respects similar to the encoding of discourse in a readable medium, a process described by Paul Ricoeur as follows: "...writing renders the text autonomous with respect to the intention of the author. What the text signifies no longer coincides with what the author meant..." (Ricoeur 1992: 139). However, the fixation of Vedic oral discourse is perhaps even more akin to the saving of a text file in the memory of a computer.

the use of one entity in terms of the other. A ritual correspondence cannot be known through normal cognition, but in order to discover it, one needs either a collection of special knowledge (i.e. *veda*), or a method for acquiring such knowledge.

The nature of the Vedic ritual correspondences has for some years been receiving renewed attention within Vedology.[4] The focus of the research has been above all on the *brāhmaṇas*, but the continuity with the *upaniṣads* has also been studied by some scholars.[5] The *brāhmaṇas*, which are voluminous prose texts, deal mostly with how the Vedic *śrauta* sacrifices should be performed, under what circumstances they are efficacious and what results can be achieved through them. Some other subjects are also dealt with in the *brāhmaṇas*, but the texts are focused on ritual performance and efficacy. The *brāhmaṇa* ritual discourses are conducted through formulaic lines of argument in which the correspondences often constitute the nodes of the argumentation structure. One example of this is the formula in Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa stating that through the use of the metre *virāj*, one increases the supplies of food.[6] The formularised argumentation is, as demonstrated below, built up by three correspondences functioning as premises and one conclusion, stating the result.

Premise 1.	X is connected with the Virāj.	vairājaḥ (vai) X
Premise 2.	Virāj is food.	annaṃ virāṭ
Premise 3.	X is food.	annam X
Conclusion	Thus by food he causes proper food to abound.	annena tad annādyaṃ samardhayati

As in the example above the ritual correspondences are often formulated in the form of simple nominal sentences, a feature which frequently makes their interpretation difficult. If we take a particular correspondence, for

4 They have formerly been labelled "identifications", which reflects an interpretation of them as expressing the identity of two objects. The notion of correspondence is intended to cover both identifications (in a strict sense) and more symbolic relations, for even identification does not abolish the difference in common sense between objects; the identity is part of a higher knowledge (cf. the higher and lower knowledge of *advaita* monism; see e.g. the discussion by Potter 1981: 62–73). For a previous use of the word "correspondence" in the *brāhmaṇa* context, see Bailey 1985: ch. 2; and Gonda, 1976: 96. For an example of the use of this concept when studying systems of thought outside of India, see Antoine Faivre's discussion of Western esotericism (Faivre 1994: 10f.).

5 See, e.g. Schayer 1927 for a study of the sense of "correspondence" (*magische Äquivalenzformel*) of the word *upaniṣad*.

6 Bernhard Weber-Brosamer (1988: 8–25) makes a distinction between *anna* as the food which is eaten and *annādya* as the food which is owned by a person, i.e. the distinction between food and food-resources. He uses the words *Speise* and *Nahrungsmittel* (*Speisevorrat*). For the discussion of the basis of the correspondence between food and *virāj*, see Weber-Brosamer 1988: 93–110.

example that between the god Bṛhaspati and *brahman*, it is usually formulated as follows: *brahma vai bṛhaspatiḥ* (Cavallin 2002: 137f.). The sentence contains no verb, and the word *vai*, merely gives emphasis to the phrase. The interpretation of the sentence is therefore in a first stage dependent upon the acceptance or rejection of the notion of a "zero copula".[7] One could, on the assumption that a copula has been elided, provide it in the translation, "Bṛhaspati *is* Brahman", which in English seems to indicate an interpretation of the correspondence as expressing complete identification. One could, however, also argue that another type of relation is intended, that the nominal phrase surely does not have a copula, but that this is not an example of ellipsis, and that the nominal construction under discussion therefore has its own semantics (cf. Benveniste 1950: 27). According to such a view, we could on the one hand consider the relation to be of another kind than strict identification, and thus make the alternative interpretation: "Bṛhaspati *and* Brahman *are united*". We could furthermore argue that the first noun in the nominal sentence in reality functions as an adjective, in parallel with alternating expressions.[8] The interpretation would then be that "Bṛhaspati *is of a* brahma *nature*".

In the interpretation of the correspondences it is necessary to combine approaches from linguistics and religious studies. The view of the correspondences as expressing complete identifications has for example been united to theories of "primitive" mentality, according to which an object can be itself and another at the same time without any acute awareness of contradiction.[9] More recent research has, however, been instead inclined to interpret the correspondences as expressions of relations between two or more discrete entities, a relation of, for example, similarity, or of a causal nature (Smith 1998 and Wezler 1996). Nevertheless, it is not necessary to see this as an either/or question, but one could envisage identification and

7 A copula is as Kees Hengeveld writes "semantically empty" (1992: 32). On that criterion, he differentiates between copula, semi-copula and pseudo-copula. An English example of semi-copula is the verb "become" which cannot be left out without changing the meaning of the sentence, i.e. the semi-copula confers "aspects of being" (Hengeveld 1992: 36). An example of pseudo-copula is the verb "seem", which signals not only an aspect of being, like the semi-copula, but also an action; i.e. the verb not only connects a non-verbal predicate to the subject, but functions as a predicate.

8 Foremost the use of *vṛddhi* forms, Cavallin 2002: 97.

9 Schayer 1925: 271; Lévy-Bruhl 1985: esp. 76, which introduces the law of participation: "...in the collective representations of primitive mentality, objects, beings, phenomena can be, though in a way incomprehensible to us, both themselves and something other than themselves". For a discussion (in Swedish) of the notion of "primitive" identification, see Olsson 1972: 72ff., and a summary in English, 171f. For a discussion of such expressions in the religion of the Nuer people (in Africa), see Evans-Pritchard 1956: 123ff.

predication as two poles of the semantics of the nominal sentence. There is also some evidence that there could have been a historical change in the Vedic conception of the correspondences, that is those in the form of nominal sentences, a change from predication (i.e. relation) to identification.[10]

The breaths in the ritual context

Klaus Mylius (1968, 1976) and Clemens Cavallin (2002) have shown by means of statistics that the so-called breaths (*prāṇa*) figure frequently in the *brāhmaṇa* correspondences.[11] There are, however, several levels at which references to breath can occur, and these levels are sometimes interconnected. The first distinction we have to make is that between the notions of breath in Vedic theology, and actual ritual breathing performed in Vedic sacrifices. An example of the latter use of breath is the ritual breathing performed during the two *soma* libations, *upāṃśu* and *antaryāma*, which are offered in the morning of the *soma*-pressing day.[12] During the first libation, a mantra referring to exhalation is murmured by the *hotṛ* (*prāṇam yacha svāhā*... "Support [restrain] exhalation; hail!"), after which he exhales, while during the second libation a mantra referring to inhalation is uttered (*apānaṃ yacha svāhā*... "Support [restrain] inhalation; hail!"), after which he inhales. Moreover, these two soma libations prompt us to make a further differentiation, namely that between breath terms figuring in the hymns and formulas of the ritual, and how these terms are utilized in the argumentations of Vedic theology. We thus get three levels at which references to breath can occur (see table 1 below), which correspond to three text categories, viz. ritual manual (*śrauta sūtra*), ritual formula (*saṃhitā*) and ritual theology (*brāhmaṇa*).

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10 This conclusion is mainly based upon the directions of the correspondences, Cavallin 2002: 168.

11 The first such investigation was undertaken by Klaus Mylius, who in 1968 collected all the correspondences, which he named "Identifikationen", to the metres in the whole *ṛgvedic* corpus, and in 1976 he collected all the identifications (correspondences) in the Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa. To complement the work of Mylius, I undertook to collect all the correspondences in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, see Cavallin 2002. This made possible a comparison of the correspondence system in at least two *brāhmaṇas*. Comparison with other *brāhmaṇas* in the case of correspondences to the breaths was also made (Cavallin 2002: 183–214).

12 For the procedure of these libations see Caland 1906–07: 155–57, 160–62; Staal 1983, I: 601. For an analysis of the *brāhmaṇa* discourses on the relation between breath and these rituals, see Cavallin 2002: 190–92.

1. Ritual breathing (*śrauta sūtra*).
2. Breath terms in mantras (*saṃhitā*).
3. Breath in the theology of sacrifice (*brāhmaṇa*).

Table 1. The use of breath.

In the following, the focus will be, as previously indicated, on the breath terms of the third level.

We also have to consider the different meanings of the word for breath (*prāṇa*) and the breaths (*prāṇāḥ*). *Prāṇa* signifies both a special breath and the set of five breaths: *prāṇa* (exhalation), *apāna* (inhalation), *udāna* (inhalation, up-breathing), *vyāna* (breath between inhalation and exhalation, the air diffused in the body) and *samāna* (concentrated breath).[13]

The breaths could also have functions more akin to those in the later *āyurvedic* system, *viz.* as being operative in different parts of the body and connected with bodily activities such as excretion.[14]

Prāṇa (-āḥ) is, moreover, a term for the vital functions of the human person, such as breath (*prāṇa*), mind (*manas*), sight[15] (*cakṣus*), hearing (*śrotra*) and speech (*vāc*).[16]

Finally, *prāṇa* could mean breath in the sense of life, and consequently it can signify the human soul that animates the body.[17]

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13 For a passage in which all five breaths are mentioned together, see ŚB 8.1.3.6. The translations of *prāṇa* as exhalation and *apāna* as inhalation are chosen here on the basis of Bodewitz's study (1986). Many of the older interpretations, however, reversed these functions; see e.g. Brown 1990 (reprint of an article from 1919), but also more recently this view has been adhered to by Zysk 1993, even though he considers the question as not finally decided. For a selection of scholarly works on *prāṇa* and *prāṇāḥ* see Zysk 1993: 198, footnote 1. My decision to interpret *prāṇa* as exhalation is primarily motivated by the analogy of forward motion that is of importance in the *brāhmaṇa* correspondences.

14 E.g. AiB 1.20.4. For a short summary of the *āyurveda* doctrine of the breaths, see Zysk 1993: 206–08.

15 Keith consistently translates *cakṣus* as eye and *śrotra* as ear, but in this context they probably refer primarily to the senses (i.e. seeing and hearing) – as in the *upaniṣads*, which Olivelle pointed out in the introduction to his translation of the principal *upaniṣads*, (*The Early Upaniṣads* 1998: 22) – and thus not to the physical sense organs.

16 The number of vital functions varies in different contexts; KB 7.12.8, for example, mentions the number nine without, however, specifying the individual breaths. See also ŚB 1963, I: 19f., note 2.

17 The original meaning of *ātman*, according to Oldenberg 1915: 52ff, 1919: 86, was certainly breath. See also Keith 1925, II: 450ff. Nevertheless, Mayrhofer (1986: 165) rejects

The breaths and the internalisation of sacrifice

The breath or the breaths are the goal of many correspondences, which often means that the connection is made from a ritual entity to breath. This direction of the correspondences thus indicates that the breaths constitute the aim of the ritual activity. A typical example is the following passage from Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa.

> ŚB 3.8.1.3. te vā eta ekādaśa prayājā bhavanti. daśa vā ime puruṣe prāṇā ātmaikādaśo yasminn ete prāṇāḥ pratiṣṭhitā etāvān vai puruṣas tad asya sarvam ātmānam āpyāyayanti
>
> Now there are here eleven fore-offerings; for here in man there are ten vital airs, and the eleventh is the self wherein those vital airs are contained; this is the whole man; thus they fill his whole self.[18]

Thus the efficacy of the Vedic sacrifices is not merely dependent upon knowledge of the correspondences, but also directed mainly toward the interior of the human person. This anthropocentric tendency of Vedic sacrificial theology links the question of sacrificial efficacy to the question of the foundation of the human person and to the question of the structure of its inner principles. We could therefore put the Vedic concentration of attention to the breaths into the context of what has been called the internalisation of sacrifice (see e.g. Zysk 1993: 202ff.). However, before continuing with this issue, we have to make a threefold distinction regarding internalisation.

1. The ritual is performed within the human body.
2. The ritual is performed mentally.
3. Intentionality and knowledge are considered as essential for ritual efficacy.

Table 2. Different forms of ritual internalisation.

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the etymological connection with Germanic *atmen*. Bodewitz also downplays the connection between *ātman* and *prāṇa* (Bodewitz *s.d.*: 6). For a short discussion of *prāṇa* and *ātman* in the *saṃhitās* and *brāhmaṇas*, see Connolly 1992: 23–37. The connection between breath and soul is a nearly universal feature. For a comparative perspective focused upon the rabbinic literature, see Kosman 1988.

18 Edition by Albrecht Weber 1964 (reprint of the edition from 1849), translation by Eggeling 1963 (reprint of the first edition 1882–1900). Henceforth this edition and translation of ŚB will be used.

Firstly, sacrifices could thus be internalised through being performed materially within the body; an example of this is the *prāṇāgnihotra*, which is an offering of food into the breaths, i.e. the fires of the body, through the eating of the oblation.[19] In this case, the offering is still performed, although not on a real fire on the sacrificial ground. In the second type of internalisation, the whole sacrificial drama is performed mentally, in the same sense as when a skier goes through the future skiing race mentally before its actual performance.[20] The third type of internalisation is brought about through knowledge and intentionality being accorded decisive importance for the outcome of the sacrificial act. It is primarily this third type of internalisation that is in consonance with the importance given in the *brāhmaṇas* to the knowledge of correspondences, and that also provides a partial explanation of the preponderance of the breaths in the correspondences. However, all three forms of internalisation work together to shift the emphasis from the "outer" aspects of sacrifice to its "inner" aspects.

It is, moreover, mainly the variant of internalisation in which the mental part of the ritual act is emphasised that has the capacity of constituting a bridge between the actual sacrificing of, for example, vegetables or animals, and a theory in which non-ritual actions are viewed as capable of being sacrifices. In the late Vedic context such a theory of actions begins to emerge and the Vedic corpus thus bears witness to a sacrificial tradition which comes up with a theory of action in general (*karman*) through an intense reflection on ritual action (*karman*). In this movement from a concentration on sacrifice to that of knowledge and action, which is manifested in the historical development from the Ṛgveda to the *upaniṣads*, the *brāhmaṇas* occupy an intermediate position both chronologically and as regards doctrine. It could therefore be important to analyse in more detail how the notion of breath, and the breaths, are used in the argumentations of the *brāhmaṇas*, and especially how they form part of the system of correspondences. One of the primary tasks in such a study would be to make an inventory of all the correspondences in the *brāhmaṇas* that involve the breaths. It is my hope that such an undertaking would provide a basis for more specialised studies of aspects of ritual internalisation in the Vedic context. One important question that ought to be dealt with is the relation between the breaths, or the vital powers, and the self, *ātman*.

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19 For the proceedings of the *prāṇāgnihotra*, see Bodewitz 1973: 254–58.

20 For an example of a mental (*manasā* "by the mind") ritual performance, see ŚB 10.5.3.1–3.

The breaths and *ātman*

A recurrent theme in the *brāhmaṇas* is that the officiating priests instil breath, or the breaths, into the self (*ātman*) of the sacrificer, through a particular ritual (see e.g. AiB 2.21.4, *ātmany eva tad dhotā prāṇān pratidhāya*). The natural answer to the question of what the breaths refer to in such contexts seems to be that it is either the respiratory breaths, as exhalation and inhalation, or the so-called vital powers of man, which also comprise such principles as the senses. Thus the ritual often has as its goal the strengthening of the different principles of the self of the sacrificer. This tendency of internalisation furthermore makes it of fundamental importance how these vital powers come together to build up a unity, and if this unity is solely the sum of the different powers, or if it is something more, for example a substrate in which the powers inhere.

A passage touching upon this issue is AiB 2.26, which comments on the relation between the libations for the pairs of gods and the breaths. A correspondence is spelled out in the first line of the *khaṇḍa, te vā ete prāṇā eva yad dvidevatyāḥ*, "The libations for two deities are the breaths", and then the major gods of the Vedic pantheon are correlated with the different "breaths", through the libations directed to them: Indra with speech (*vāc*) Vāyu with breath (*prāṇa*), Mitra with sight (*cakṣus*), Varuṇa with the mind (*manas*), and the Aśvins with the self (*ātman*) and hearing (*śrotra*). In the following table, the pairs of gods are given in the left-hand column,while the corresponding vital powers are presented in the column to the right.

Gods	Vital power
Indra-Vāyu	Speech (*vāc*), breath (*prāṇa*)
Mitra-Varuṇa	Seeing (*cakṣus*), mind (*manas*)
the Aśvins	The hearing (*śrotra*) and the self (*ātman*)

Table 3. The correspondences between the pairs of gods and the breaths (AiB 2.26).

In this context, the breaths thus denote the vital powers of man, in which also, surprisingly, *ātman* is included, and the set of five powers is thereby extended to six. This is perhaps done because pairs cannot yield an odd number, but *ātman* is nevertheless considered here as one of the breaths.

A similar argumentation to that in AiB 2.26 is located in AiB 3.2 and 3.3. The first of these *khaṇḍas* describes the perfection of certain bodily functions that are possible to achieve through the *praüga* recitation, which is made up of seven parts directed to different gods, or pairs of gods.[21] The second *khaṇḍa* describes how the *hotṛ* should manipulate the recitation of the *praüga śastra*, if he desires to deprive the *yajamāna* of the corresponding bodily parts and functions. This is possible because, as the *brāhmaṇa* declares, the *praüga* is connected in a special way to the self (*ātman*).

> AiB 3.2.3. tad dha vai yajamānasyādhyāmatamam ivokthaṃ yat praügam
>
> Now the Praüga is in a way the hymn most related to the self of the sacrificer.[22]

Thus, through making minor changes in a part of the recitation which is directed to a specific god, e.g. Vāyu, the *hotṛ* can take away the corresponding vital power from the *yajamāna*, which is, in this case, breath. In the table below, all the relevant correspondences in the *praüga* passage are presented.

God	Vital power
Vāyu[23]	Breath (*prāṇa*)
Indra-Vāyu	Exhalation and inhalation (*prāṇāpānau*)
Mitra-Varuṇa	Seeing (*cakṣus*)
the Aśvins	Hearing (*śrotra*)
Indra	Strength (*vīrya*)
the All-gods	the Limbs (*aṅga*)
Sarasvati[24]	Speech (*vāc*)

Table 4. The correspondences between the gods in the *praüga* recitation (AiB 3.2–3.3) and the vital powers.

In the former passage, only six vital powers were given, i.e. one to each god in every pair, but in this passage, eight vital powers are mentioned, which is due to the fact that the pairs of gods could either be looked upon as units, or analysed as conjunctions of separate deities (see Gonda 1976: 9). There are also some variants in the correspondences. For example, Indra is in the first passage connected to speech, but in the second passage to inhalation and strength. Besides the new power, (*vīrya*) strength, another new "vital power" is presented, *viz.* the limbs; something which indicates that the vital powers (*prāṇāḥ*), at least in this passage, do not make up a fixed category, but that all the powers relating to the functions of the body and the "soul" could be included. Moreover, *ātman* not only means "self", but could also signify the trunk of the body in distinction to the extremities, a meaning which could be of significance in this context (see e.g. AiB 4.23.5). This issue touches upon the potential tension in the *brāhmaṇas* between the vital powers more closely connected with the physical body, as for example the circulatory breaths, and those of a more "spiritual" nature, such as the mind (*manas*), but in the internalisation of sacrifice in the *brāhmaṇas*, both the mind and the breaths seem to be considered as being on the same level (cf. ŚB 3.2.2.13), something which is indicated by the *caturhotṛ* (*daśahotṛ*) formula:[25]

> AiB 5.25.3–12. teṣāṃ cittiḥ srug āsī3t; cittam ājyam āsī3t; vāg vedir āsī3t; ādhītaṃ barhir āsī3t; keto agnir āsī3t; vijñātam agnīd āsīt; prāṇo havir āsī3t; sāmādhvaryur āsī3t; vācaspatir hotāsī3t; mana upavaktāsī3t
>
> Their offering spoon was thought. (Their) butter was intelligence. (Their) altar was speech. (Their) stew was learning. (Their) Agni was insight. (Their)

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21 For the ritual context and a translation of the whole litany, see Caland 1906–07: 239–41.

22 The translation by Keith (1920) is as follows: "Now the Praüga is the most related to the self of the litanies for the sacrificer as it were." Haug (1863) translates it as: "The Pra-uga Shastra is, as it were, most intimately connected with the sacrificer."

23 It seems that Keith mistranslated 3.2.4 *yad vāyavyaṃ śaṃsati* as "In that he recites (a triplet) to Viṣṇu..." The god receiving the recitation is clearly not Viṣṇu but Vāyu, at least according to the editions of Aufrecht (1879), Haug (1863) and Satyavrata Sāmaśramī (1895–1906).

24 For an explanation of the reasons (esp. inspired thoughts, *dhī*) behind this correspondence, see Ludvik 2000.

25 AiB 5.25 is classified as a version of the *caturhotṛ* formula by Mylius (1993: 120–23), while the content of the formula is more akin to what is called the *daśahotṛ* formula (Mylius 1993: 130–33; Voegeli 2002: 50). The solution to the confusion seems to be terminological, i.e. caturhotr is a term for all the different hotr formulas, and at the same time a term for one of these, in the same vein as *prāṇa* in the case of the vital powers.

> Agnīdh was knowledge. (Their) Oblation was breath. (Their) Adhvaryu was the sāman. (Their) Hotṛ was the Vācaspati. (Their) Upavaktṛ was mind.[26]

The union of *ātman* with its "powers" is furthermore intimately correlated to the Vedic sacrifice, which sometimes is characterised as a person, a ritually constructed twin of the sacrificer. The correspondence between man and sacrifice makes it possible for the ritual to be a creative force not only in the classification of the principles of the human person, but also in its very formation (see Smith 1998: 82–119). In the following passage, the connection between sacrifice and man is clearly expressed, and the relation between the vital powers and *ātman* is expressed being established (*pratiṣṭhitāḥ*) in *ātman*. The translator of Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, Julius Eggeling, has chosen to translate *ātman* in this context as "body".

> ŚB 3.1.4.23. daśa pāṇyā aṅgulayo daśa pādyā daśa prāṇā ātmaikatriṃśo yasminn ete prāṇāḥ pratiṣṭhitā etāvān vai puruṣaḥ puruṣo yajñaḥ puruṣasaṃmito yajñaḥ
>
> Now there are ten fingers, ten toes, ten vital airs, and the thirty-first is the body [*ātman*] wherein those vital airs are [established];[27] for this much constitutes man, and the sacrifice is a man, the sacrifice is of the same proportion as a man. (Cf. e.g. ŚB 1.3.2.1; AiB 1.28.30 and 3.31.3.)

In the *upaniṣads*, the relation between the self (*ātman*) and the vital powers is further elaborated, and the ontological dimension is more pronounced. One example from the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, which constitutes the last part of Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, is given below:[28]

> BU 2.1.20. sa yathorṇavābhis tantunoccared yathāgneḥ kṣudrā visphuliṅgā vyuccaranty evam evāsmād ātmanaḥ sarve prāṇāḥ sarve lokāḥ sarve devāḥ sarvāṇi bhūtāni vyuccaranti tasyopaniṣat satyasya satyam iti prāṇā vai satyaṃ teṣām eṣa satyam
>
> As a spider sends forth its thread, and as tiny sparks spring forth from a fire, so indeed do all the vital functions (*prāṇa*), all the worlds, all the gods,

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26 Words denoting mental entities are not easily translated, as is borne out by a comparison between the translation made by Keith (1920) of the formula in AiB 5.25, which is used in the quotation above, and the translation by Voegeli (2002) and Mylius (1993) of the *daśahotṛ* formula, as it is given in TĀ: *citti* = thought, intelligence, *der Gedanke; citta* = intelligence, thought, *das Gedachte; ādhīta* = learning, object of thought, *das Beabsichtigte; keta* = insight, will, *der Wille; vijñāta* = knowledge, (what is) known, *das Erkannte.*

27 Eggeling translates *pratiṣṭhitāḥ* as "contained".

28 For a discussion of the relation between *ātman* and *prāṇa* in the *upaniṣads*, see Connolly 1992: 57–96.

and all beings spring from this self (*ātman*). Its hidden name (*upaniṣad*) is "The real behind the real", for the real consists of the vital functions, and the self is the real behind the vital functions.[29]

Conclusion

We can thus conclude that the importance given to the breaths in the *brāhmaṇas* form part of an anthropocentric tendency, or rather a reflection on the nature of the self, a reflection inclined to give increasing attention and significance to the "inner" aspects of the sacrificial act. A possible outcome of such a process is that the "external" aspects of sacrifice can be dispensed with and, in a second step, even be considered harmful. Furthermore, the internalisation of sacrifice facilitates the emergence of a view of non-ritual actions as sacrifices. In this case, sacrifice ceases to be a ritual, but primarily signifies a mental attitude, an intention, which can give non-ritual actions the special efficacy of the highly ritualised sacrifices. In Vedic speculation, the so-called breaths constitute an important category in such a transition from ritual to knowledge and ethics. In order to be able to delineate more exactly the role of the breaths, a thorough inventory of their use in the Vedic correspondences is necessary.

A theoretical issue which seems to be essential for the analysis of the internalisation of sacrifice is the relation between the two conceptual pairs, inner–outer and mental–physical. The scholar has to be attentive toward the religious tradition under scrutiny, so that he does not fail to see the discrepancies between his own theory of the constitution of the human person and that which is expressed in the religious text. For not everything on the inside is mental.

Abbreviations

AiB	Aitareya Brāhmaṇa
BU	Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad
CU	Chāndogya Upaniṣad
KB	Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa
KU	Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad
MU	Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad
PU	Praśna Upaniṣad
ŚB	Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa
TĀ	Taittirīya Āraṇyaka

29 The Sanskrit text and the English translation are taken from *The Early Upaniṣads: Annotated Text and Translation*, 1998, trans. Patrick Olivelle.

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ANDREAS HÄGER

Christian Rock Concerts as a Meeting between Religion and Popular Culture

Introduction

Different forms of artistic expression play a vital role in religious practices of the most diverse traditions. One very important such expression is music. This paper deals with a contemporary form of religious music, Christian rock. Rock or popular music has been used within Christianity as a means for evangelization and worship since the end of the 1960s.[1]

The genre of "contemporary Christian music", or Christian rock, stands by definition with one foot in established institutional (in practicality often evangelical) Christianity, and the other in the commercial rock music industry. The subject of this paper is to study how this intermediate position is manifested and negotiated in Christian rock concerts. Such a performance of Christian rock music is here assumed to be both a rock concert and a religious service. The paper will examine how this duality is expressed in practices at Christian rock concerts.

The research context of the study is, on the one hand, the sociology of religion, and on the other, the small but growing field of the study of religion and popular culture. The sociology of religion discusses the role and position of religion in contemporary society and culture. The duality of Christian rock and Christian rock concerts, being part of both a traditional religion and a modern medium and business, is understood here as a concrete example of the relation of religion to modern society.

The study of the relations between religion and popular culture seems to have been a latent field within research on religion at least since the 1970s, when the possibility of the research topic was suggested in a pioneer volume by John Nelson (1976). During the last few years, a number of anthologies attempting to map the field have been published (Forbes and Mahan 2000; Mazur and McCarthy 2001; Stout and Buddenbaum 2001). The studies in these anthologies could be roughly divided into two cate-

1 Two books looking at the history of Christian rock are Joseph 1999 and Thompson 2000.

gories, one concerning religion in popular culture – religious themes, forms and functions within "secular" popular culture – and the other dealing with popular culture in religion – the use of popular cultural expressions within a particular religious tradition. This paper belongs to the second category, but it is still important to remember that the study of religion and popular culture does not only deal with explicitly for example Christian (or Satanist) pop culture.

Even if there is an emerging field of study of relations between religion and popular culture, the field is still very much in a stage where there are very few established theories, methodologies, research topics, etc. There are attempts particularly at establishing theoretically informed topics – one well worth mentioning is Colleen McDannell's (1995) fascinating book on "material Christianity" – but Christian rock concerts is not such a topic. This paper is therefore by necessity of an exploratory nature. It is an attempt at suggesting some directions for research by sketching some methodological points and applying them to a few examples.

The paper is included in a volume dedicated to the study of rituals. The significance of this concept here is that a rock concert can be seen as a ritual, for example, because it happens in a closed time and space, and involves a number of ritualized activities such as applause, solos, encores, etc. Indeed, one good example of the study of religion in popular culture is the discussion of rock concerts as religious rituals (Hämeri 1993; Weinstein 1995). A Christian rock concert can also be seen as a religious ritual in a narrower sense, by reason of its drawing on ritual practices of Christianity, notably prayer, sermons and – in various degrees of similarity – the singing of hymns. My approach to Christian rock concerts (and therefore to rituals in general) is here – by inspiration from semiotics or (post)structuralism – to view and discuss them as texts.

The paper deals with Christian rock, and the following section discusses possible definitions of this concept. The paper then goes on to discuss the analysis of Christian rock concerts as texts. A concert video with the American Christian rock group dc Talk, as well as some other video material, is then explored.

Defining Christian rock

The distinction between "secular" popular culture and "religious" culture is of course problematic in many ways. In a larger perspective, which I will not address at any greater length here, the problems relate to the definitions of "religion", "culture" and "popular culture". In a more direct relation to the topic of the paper, the problems involved in drawing a line between

secular and religious popular culture are reflected in the matter of defining "Christian rock".[2]

Two different definitions of Christian rock have been hinted at in the previous passages. One definition, the one closest to a literal understanding, is that Christian rock is rock music with a Christian content. The other less obvious, but sociologically more relevant, definition is that Christian rock is rock music that is produced and consumed within institutional Christianity. These two definitions will be discussed further in the following passages.[3] The discussion here serves mainly as an outline for a premise of the analysis of Christian rock concerts, but may also provide a brief general introduction to the world of Christian rock music.

There are many examples of rock music with a religious content, with various references to religions of Indian origin in music of the hippie era and the employment of Satanist material in some hard rock or metal genres being two of the best known examples. References to Christianity, ranging from the use of Christian texts such as the Kyrie or Ave Maria as lyrics in rock songs, to Christian symbols in music videos, are also fairly common. Sometimes these usages may be intended as ironic or even provocative, but sometimes they seem to be more earnest – although it is usually impossible to know merely by exploring the work in question without considering its context. The concept of "Christian rock" does not therefore include all music that uses Christian material in lyrics, visual presentation or indeed in the music. A Christian content or message – whether sincere or ironic – is not enough as a criterion for Christian rock, but the institutional context must also be taken into account.

William D. Romanowski (2000) discusses the Christian music industry. He sees Christian rock as music produced, distributed and consumed within institutional Christianity. Christian rock is primarily marketed to young evangelical Christians, as a Christian alternative to secular rock. It is produced and distributed as a separate genre – or in radio terms, a format – with particular Christian rock groups whose records are released by Christian record companies and listed on Christian top lists, who play at Christian rock festivals, who are reviewed and interviewed in Christian music magazines and sometimes even receive Christian music awards.[4] It is of

2 Another term often used is "contemporary Christan music", abbreviated CCM. I prefer the term Christian rock, but see the two terms as equivalent.

3 The discussion here focuses on the first part of the term "Christian rock", and no further discussion of the definition of "rock" is pursued. A broad everyday definition is assumed, equating rock more or less with "popular music".

4 One of the largest Christian record companies is Word (www.wordonline.com), while others are listed on www.gospelmusic.org/links. The major Christian music magazine is called CCM (www.ccmcom.com). www.doveawards.com is the website of the organsiation that bestows the most prestigious Christian music awards, the "Dove awards". The largest Nordic Christian rock festival is arranged in Turku, and arranged

course still important to note that even if Christian rock can be seen as a particular genre of popular music, the boundaries are never exactly clear, and an important topic in the Christian music press concerns these boundaries (see Häger 2001 for more on this issue).

The label "Christian", as used within the genre of Christian rock (or even the term "gospel"), already indicates that there is a strong connection between the music and the particular religious tradition, Christianity, and the carriers of this tradition, the churches or institutional Christianity. But I will still discuss briefly here the forms that this connection takes. On the one hand, it is possible to see the Christian rock industry as a "parachurch" type phenomenon, (evangelical) Christianity loosely organized in non-congregational forms, in this case for example as business corporations. On the other hand, the music is marketed to, and consumed by, church-going young people, Christian rock festivals are organized by Christian churches and movements, and there are churches which feature their "own" rock bands.[5] A recurring topic in many interviews with Christian artists in the Christian music press (cf. Häger 2001 for a closer study) is the desire to sell records beyond the Christian bookstores and to play in other venues than churches. This repeated ambition to reach outside the churches shows that a strong connection to established Christianity is the rule in Christian rock.

A thorough discussion of the phenomenon of "Christian rock" is far beyond the scope of this paper.[6] The brief comments here only serve to establish the idea that "Christian rock" or "contemporary Christian music" is a separate genre of music, and part of a Christian subculture devoted to this music, and to show that one, but only one, characteristic of this type of

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by one of the largest evangelical revival movements in Finland (www.sley.fi/mn). (All these webpages accessed on 3.9.2002.) An Internet-based Christian rock station may be found on www.christianrock.net (26.9.2002). An example of a Christian rock chart (based on radioplay) can be found on www.jamsline.com/chartac.htm (16.9.2002). The link collection on the same site (www.jamsline.com/koollink.htm; 16.9.2002) gives an idea of the scope of the genre.

5 Apart from the Finnish festival mentioned in the previous footnote, one of the most established Swedish Christian rock festivals, "Rock for Moc", is organized by the diocese of Västerås in cooperation with the youth organisation of the same diocese (www.rockformoc.com; 16.9.2002). The largest European Christian rock festival, Greenbelt, is organised in cooperation with several Christian organisations, some of which are ecumenical and some part of the Anglican communion (www.greenbelt. org.uk/aboutus/partners/; 16.9.2002). On www.sley.fi/nuoriso/vsivu.php?page=bandi (16.9. 2002) there is information on the rock groups run by the Lutheran Evangelical Association in Finland. The group whose video is discussed below, dc Talk, "got it's start at [Moral Majority leader] Jerry Falwell's Liberty University" (Joseph 1999: 222).

6 For studies of Christian rock, see e.g. Howard and Streck (1999), who discuss Christian rock from the perspective of Niebuhr's (1951) Christ and Culture; and Romanowski (2000), who focuses on the music business.

music is that it has a Christian content. The discussion here serves as a background for the definition of Christian rock used in this paper: Christian rock has a Christian content and is produced, distributed and consumed as a separate music genre within institutional Christianity.

The paper discusses Christian rock concerts, or concerts where Christian rock is performed. The definition of Christian rock is therefore part of the definition of the material studied. A working definition of Christian rock is also important for the analysis, since the aim of the analysis is *not* to "show" or "prove" that the concerts feature Christian rock, but this is rather a premise and prerequisite, and the analysis instead discusses how this "fact", that the concerts feature Christian rock, may show in the practices of the concerts.

The most important quality of Christian rock is clear already in the term itself: it is something that is Christian, and it is rock. John J. Thompson puts it:

> Christian rock melds faith and culture. It is called Christian because of the message in the lyrics, or at least because of the faith backgrounds of the artists [...] It is full-on rock and roll [...] yet it is used for worship [and] evangelism. (Thompson 2000: 11.)

Jay R. Howard and John M. Streck (1999: 3) point out this duality in relation to Christian rock concerts by saying that people going to Christian rock concerts are looking for "a clear affirmation of their most fundamental beliefs wrapped in a package of rock and roll music and fun, fun, fun". This characteristic of Christian rock being Christian *as well as* rock, two things at the same time, is the starting point for the analysis of Christian rock concerts in this paper.[7]

The analysis of a concert as text

The material for the study presented in this paper consists primarily of a few commercially distributed videos with Christian rock groups. The

7 The duality of Christian rock, and of the concerts, is also part of the self-understanding of at least some Christian musicians, and also problematised to some extent. On one of the videos I have looked at (Jerusalem 2000), the lead singer of the veteran Swedish Christian heavy metal group Jerusalem, Ulf Christiansson, in a speech at a concert (held in 1983) says that "there are very few rock concerts that one leaves with peace in the one's heart, very few", and then goes on to lead the concert crowd in an *a capella* praise hymn. He seems to point out that there is a discrepancy between rock music and what he implicitly defines as one aim of a Christian divine service, receiving peace of heart, and therefore uses a completely different form (and apparantly as the end of the concert) to acheive this aim.

reasons for this choice are first and foremost practical. Although I have personally attended a number of Christian rock concerts, and also have composed field diaries from a few of these, I have so far recorded my own video material. For a paper such as this, the reference to publicly available material can even have the advantage that an interested reader has a greater possibility to access the material when it is commercially distributed than if it only is stored in the researcher's archives.

The concert videos are viewed as texts, and analyzed with the help of the concepts of syntagm and paradigm (Barthes 1977a; Fiske 1990).[8] The syntagm is the chain of signs that are used in a certain text, e.g. a sentence made up of words. The paradigm (or system, in Barthes' term) is the "series of associative fields" (Barthes 1977a: 71) of the signs that could have been used instead of a particular sign actually used in a syntagm. John Fiske (1990: 57) says that signs are *combined* into a syntagm and *selected* from a paradigm. The meaning of a sign is derived both from its opposition to the other signs in the syntagm, e.g. the other words in a sentence, and the opposition to the other signs in the paradigm, e.g. the different synonyms or antonyms of a particular word.

A video of a rock concert is of course a very complex text. The syntagm of this type of text has, in the term borrowed from Roland Barthes (1977b), three different structures: the music, the words and the picture.[9] The paradigmatic dimension is even more complex. A paradigm is, as already mentioned, a group of signs from which the actually used sign is selected. I will here make use of Barthes' observation that a paradigm is not necessarily one homogenous group, but can be several different "associative fields" from which a particular sign in a syntagm can be drawn. The two major "associative fields" – or repertoires or discourses (which are the terms I prefer to use) – that are used in creating the syntagm of a Christian rock concerts are (somewhat crudely labeled) "Christianity" and "rock". Other repertoires are also used, but these two are by definition the most important ones. The task of the analysis is to see how these two repertoires are used.

These two repertoires *per se* can be seen as a paradigm, as mutually exclusive options to be actualized in a given sign. A sign could then either belong to the "Christian"repertoire or to the "rock" repertoire, and draw part of its meaning from the opposition between the repertoires (opposition here primarily understood as a structuralist term, although it could in

8 In the discussion of the material, I use the terms "concert" and "concert video" as equivalent. The materials used are the videos, but they are videos of concerts, and the points I want to make could in principle be applied just as well to live and not taped concerts (but in practice it is rather more convenient to be able to rewind the tape and watch it again).

9 An individual frame could also be analysed as a syntagm made up of a number of visual signs.

the current context also be understood in an ideological sense). It is also relevant to view a text such as a Christian rock concert as a use of appropriation, of moving a sign from one repertoire to another, and particularly taking signs from rock and making them into part of Christianity. The whole genre of Christian rock can be seen from this perspective, as receiving its meaning from being recognizably similar to one particular discourse – secular rock – but still not the same as this.

If one sees the concert syntagm as three different structures, image, music and words, another task for the analysis will be to observe which repertoires are used in which structures. If one part of the definition of Christian rock is that it has a Christian content or "message", then the textual structure should by definition be using a Christian repertoire.[10] According to the same logic, the musical structure draws on the rock repertoire. The most open and ambivalent structure, the one that is not in any sense predefined as a vehicle for a certain repertoire, is the image, that can use both "rock" and "Christian" – and other – signs.

It is very important to stress that the meaning of a sign comes from its opposition to, or difference from, other signs both in the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic dimension. The same individual sign can take on completely different meanings depending on the context. This is a very important premise for the following discussion of Christian rock concert videos. It is a premise based on semiotics, but the same thoughts are expressed in a famous example mentioned by Clifford Geertz (1973: 6–7) in his discussion of "thick description". The rapid contracting of the eyelids in one eye, or blinking, can mean many different things depending on circumstances, and in order to be able to interpret such a gesture, to say whether it signifies e.g. that the blinker has got something in his or her eye or is making a "conspiratorial signal to a friend", one must take the context into consideration. The context for the signs studied here is a Christian rock concert, and many signs that are interpreted to mean one particular thing here – and notably seen to signify dependence on a Christian or a rock repertoire – would be interpreted otherwise in other contexts, e.g. in secular rock concerts or at football matches.

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10 But most words in e.g. the English language, if individual words are defined as the syntagmatic unit to be analysed, can hardly be said to be particularly "Christian". This can be resolved in two ways. It can be said that the words that are important in the analysis, the words that carry the central meaning, are perhaps exactly the words that are recognizable as part of a religious or Christian vocabulary. Or the syntagmatic unit can be defined differently, as sentences or – in song lyrics – verses. In this paper, however, the analysis of the textual structure is secondary. The assumption that the lyrics, the words, are the most directly Christian part of Christian rock may on another level be argued a particularly Protestant notion, and I will not argue against this.

"Welcome to the Freak Show" – discussion of a concert video

I have viewed a number of concert videos with different Christian rock groups, and have here elected to discuss only one of them (only briefly referring to others), mainly for reasons of space. It is the longest video in my material (72 minutes), and the only one with (almost) entirely live material. It is a video with one of the most successful Christian rock groups of the 1990s, the American group dc Talk (1997). The video is called "Welcome to the Freak Show".

The dc Talk video contains 12 songs taped during an American concert tour in 1997. It contains live concert material from several different concerts, but it is structured as if it were a single concert, with a section of calmer songs in the middle, and the group's biggest hit, "Jesus Freak", as the final song (and of course it is difficult for a video viewer to tell the difference between different evenings and venues of the tour, since it all looks rather the same). This is the only one of the tapes in my material that primarily contains live songs (with some short clips of documentary material on the group, which I exclude from my discussion), and I will not discuss the 72 minute video in its entirety, but give a general description and focus on some parts of it. I will first briefly comment on the music and then go on to discuss words and finally images.

dc Talk performs guitar-based rock with what I would describe as a grunge-type sound, mixed with rap and vocal harmonies.[11] The importance of the vocals – perhaps in character for a Christian band, where the lyrics are central – is indicated by the fact that all three permanent members of the group – Michael Tait, Kevin Max and Toby McKeehan – are vocalists (with other musicians appearing on albums and tours but not being defined as band members) (see figure 1). A general impression of the concert video is that, for the most part, it is at first sight a very typical American so-called "alternative" rock band, hard music and driving guitars. As mentioned, there is a part of the set with calmer songs, where the band members actually sing sitting in cushioned chairs and surrounded by tables, lamps, etc. to give the stage the appearance of a living-room more than a rock stage. The songs in this part sound more like Christian "praise" songs, performed acoustically with very prominent vocal harmonies. This is perhaps particularly true of "In the Light" (written by the Christian musician Char-

11 A site (http://ccmwhatisit.bizland.com; 19.9.2002) dedicated to among other things comparing Christian rock to "secular" counterparts to help visitors "Find *Christian* music to replace your *secular* music" (italics in original) states that dc Talk perform "Innovative vocalized pop/rock, sounds similar to U2, Oasis, Seal"; and another site with general information on Christian rock says that dc Talk "have mixed rock, rap and pop in previously unimaginable ways" (www.jamsline.com/b_dc_talk.htm; 19.9.2002).

lie Peacock and one of the few cover songs on the tape), which would then be the best exception on the dc Talk tape to the previously assumed rule that the musical part of the syntagm draws on the rock repertoire.

Words

It was stated above, as part of the definition of Christian rock, that the structure of the syntagm to most clearly use a Christian repertoire would be the words, song lyrics and short speeches made by the band members between songs. I will here comment on the lyrics of three of the songs appearing on the dc Talk video, and on some of the speeches.

dc Talk's biggest hit is "Jesus Freak" (Joseph 1999: 223).[12] It is a rock song with very prominent guitars and a catchy melody in the chorus. The main theme of the lyrics is conversion. The song begins:

> Separated, I cut myself clean
> From a past that comes back in my darkest of dreams
> Been apprehended by a spiritual force
> And a grace that replaced all the me I've divorced

The very first line contains three words that describe a conversion experience and its perceived result. The narrator has been and has become "separated", by "cutting" (not "moving" or "inching away"), from his[13] past – and from the world – and has become "clean". The past is further described in the second line: it was a nightmare. The last two lines in the verse emphasize that the conversion was the work of someone or something outside the narrator, a "spiritual force" that has "apprehended" (not for example "approached") the narrator, and "a grace" that (as I understand the last words of the verse) filled out the holes in the person and made him whole. The word choices do not echo traditional Christianity, as perhaps particularly the term "spiritual force" can exemplify. Altogether, however, it should not be difficult to see that the verse contains elements of a classical conversion narrative.

The chorus is a reflection on the possible reactions from others regarding the new status following the conversion:

> What will people think
> When they hear that I'm a Jesus freak
> What will people do when they find that it's true

12 The song lyrics can be found on www.ardent-enthusiast.com, and on the video (dc Talk 1997).

13 The singer is a man – as are all three members dc Talk – hence the pronoun.

Figure 1. dc Talk in concert. From left to right: Toby McKeehan, Michael Tait and Kevin Max. Photo: Megan Reedy. All rights reserved, copyright 2002 Megan N. Reedy.

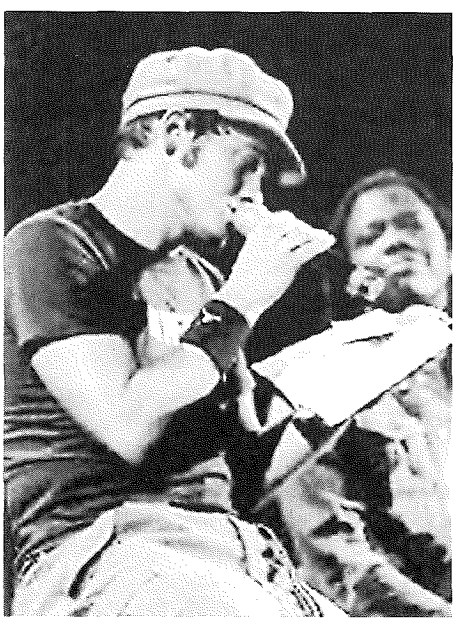

Figure 2. dc Talk's Toby McKeehan in concert reading from the Bible. Michael Tait in the background. Photo: Megan Reedy. All rights reserved, copyright 2002 Megan N. Reedy.

I don't really care if they label me a Jesus freak
There ain't no disguising the truth

The chorus and the title of the song is an appropriation of an expression that could be taken as derisive, calling (a certain group of) Christians "Jesus freaks". The song turns this into a positive term, describing "the truth". dc Talk also seem to take the "freak" label as their own and even naming their concert tour "The Freak Show", a term also used in the video title. The song "Jesus Freak" is on the concert video introduced by Toby McKeehan with the phrase "we ain't nothing but a bunch of Jesus freaks". The band consider themselves part of a group that someone scornfully might call "Jesus freaks" and make this an important part of their identity.

Even if it can be said that the lyrics to "Jesus Freak" present a traditional evangelical view, they do so in a fairly untraditional way, in using innovative language and metaphors, beginning with the title of the song as discussed above. It would perhaps be possible to see this as an indication that the lyrics draw partly on a rock repertoire, that they are in some sense typical rock lyrics. The positive use of the word freak could be an example of this, if one sees rock as a "counter culture" that makes the inversion of the norm a central part of its message (Martin 1979). More generally speaking, another and different example of a use of the rock repertoire in the textual structure could be the parts of the lyrics that are rapped rather than sung.

If "Jesus Freak" is an example of innovative and "counter-cultural" lyrics, the above mentioned acoustically performed song "In the Light" can at least partly be used as example of a more traditional type of lyric. The words

Oh, Lord be my Light and be my salvation
Cause all I want is to be in the Light

in the chorus use a traditional form – prayer – and more traditional vocabulary than the lyrics of "Jesus Freak". Since the music of "Jesus Freak" is much more clearly rock (and perhaps the group's most typical grunge song), the two songs may be taken as an example of correspondence between music and lyrics.

Two of the members of dc Talk are white and one is African American. The group has an active anti-racist involvement in several ways and has founded an organization called "Erace" for this purpose (http://erace.com/about/history.shtml; 24.9.2002); and the organization is also promoted on the concert tape (after the concert material) (dc Talk 1997). One of the songs on the concert tape also takes up this topic. The song is called "Colored People", and is introduced on the concert video by one of the singers (off camera):

> [...] part of our beauty as human beings is found in our diversity. We happen to believe that we are all different shades and tones when it comes to our skin because God is a very creative artist, because aren't we all in fact "Colored people". (dc Talk 1997.)

The chorus of the song goes

> We're colored people, and we live in a tainted place
> We're colored people, and they call us the human race
> We've got a history so full of mistakes
> And we are colored people who depend on a Holy Grace

The spoken introduction to the song "Colored people" and this quote from the lyrics may serve as an example showing that the textual material from dc Talk is not entirely focused on classic evangelical issues – e.g. the need for personal salvation – but also on more political matters such as racial relations. It is, however, also important to note that this political issue is tackled partly through religious means, by saying that we are all different colours because this is how God made us, and that we all "depend on a Holy Grace".

There are a few other instances where one of the singers speaks, either shouting out a few short phrases within a song (see below for examples), or speaking between songs. As an introduction to "In the Light", McKeehan reads a verse from the Bible: "Anyone who says he is walking in the light but dislikes his fellow man is still in darkness, but whoever loves his fellow man will truly be walking in the light" (1. John 2:9–10) (see figure 2). He then continues to tell the audience that the band had been to a hospital earlier in the day to visit someone: "his name is Brian, you can keep him in your prayer". The concert video ends with a short sermon by McKeehan, with an invitation to the members of the audience to become Christians:

> If you're here tonight who have become curious about this Jesus Christ that we're talking about [...] Ask him to come into your life and to walk with you. Find a Bible and read about the person of Jesus Christ, discover for yourself. You've been a great crowd, thanks for making this tour welcome here. God bless you, peace, goodnight.

The spoken passages, with the appeal to the audience to pray for Brian, and the final invitation to "ask [Jesus] to come into your life", thus express very traditional elements of evangelical Christianity. And the duality of the situation is again expressed at the end of McKeehan's final speech, where he concludes by calling the audience "a great crowd".

Image

It has been stated several times above that the music and text of Christian rock draws by definition on respective repertoires, so that the music is rock and the lyrics are Christian. In the brief comments on these two syntagmatic structures I have tried to show that it is possible that both of them may also draw on both a Christian and a rock repertoire. The third, visual, structure is however still presumed to be the most open and the least defined in advance in regard to how it draws on rock and Christianity. It is also the structure which seems most particular to the rock concerts: both music and lyrics are contained on albums, but the visual elements are relevant only at concerts (and in music videos). There therefore seem to be two reasons why the visual aspect is the most important in approaching a study of Christian rock concerts: it is the most open, and the one that most clearly sets concerts apart from listening to music on albums.

In the discussion of the visual elements, I will again draw on Roland Barthes (1977b: 15–31), who sketches a method for very detailed analysis of photographic images. I will only apply a few of Barthes' suggestions to the extent that I find them applicable and practical here. Barthes' point relies on the distinction between the denotative – presumably primary, given – meaning of a sign and its connotative – secondary – meaning; as well as on the assumption that we see photographic images as perfectly denotative, as something that shows things as they are and does not require interpretation. Barthes (1977b: 21–25) challenges this notion of photographic images as denotative and looks at different "procedures" (as he calls them) to create connotative meaning in the in principle denotative photograph (or film). I will discuss here the two procedures that most directly concern what is actually in front of the camera rather than photographic technique (such as trick photography, lighting, etc.). The two procedures are "poses" (in which I include gestures) and "objects".

The focus of the visual impression of a rock concert, or of a recording of such a concert, is the performing artist or group. One main reason for coming to a concert is to see the artists in real life – or, to use a word that strongly emphasizes the visual aspect, to see one's "idols". The audience also becomes part of the image, albeit in different ways on a video recording than in a live concert, when the rest of the audience most often merely disturbs the view of the artists. If one wants to look at the image structure of e.g. the concert video with dc Talk (1997) to see to what extent it draws on Christian, rock and other possible repertoires, the visual appearance of the artists becomes central and Barthes' concept of "pose" is one possible tool for studying this. A pose or gesture is according to Barthes (1977b) not immediate and denotative in the way we assume photographs to be, but it relies on a cultural code or knowledge of a cultural context for interpretation.

Its meaning is, in other words, connotative (the example Barthes gives happens to be one with religious connotations: he mentions a photograph of John F. Kennedy where the latter puts his hands together and looks up in a praying pose). The same is to a greater extent true of objects that can give rise to certain associations – a book-case refers to intellectuals, in Barthes' example – or can function as symbols

The fundamental assumption of this paper is that a Christian rock concert is both Christian *and* rock, and the purpose here is to look at possible ways in which this duality may be expressed in the concerts, in both music, text and image. It is further assumed that duality does not imply equal weight: it does not require a certain substantial proportion of the syntagm from a certain repertoire to show that the text depends on a particular repertoire or discourse. A sign can be used to convey a large content, showing all of Molière "in a doctor's ruff", to borrow another example from Roland Barthes (1972: 127). This is here applied to the discussion of pose and object, where it is not assumed that the duality of Christian rock must be expressed by an equal amount of rock instruments and religious pictures on stage, for example, but rather that one orthodox icon – or correspondingly one Buddha statue – would be quite enough to indicate a reference to the respective religious traditions.

Poses and gestures

A rock concert is in many ways a very physical experience. Neither the artists nor the audience tend to sit or stand still to any greater extent, but rather move around more or less to the beat of the music. An important group of poses and gestures can then be grouped together as dancing or perhaps jumping to the music. This group of images I would interpret as part of the rock repertoire, as a way of showing that the occasion in question is a rock concert – as opposed to a classical concert, for example, or a Sunday morning service (acknowledging the fact that some of these also may include prominent physical experiences). A rather extreme example is the so called "stage diving", when somoene dives off the stage into the audience, which (hopefully) catches the person. This also occurs on the dc Talk video, where at least one of the singers (McKeehan) stage-dives.

The Finnish popular music researcher Sven-Erik Klinkmann (1999: 170–79) points out the significance of gestures in the performance of popular music, giving as examples e.g. B. B. King's putting his finger in his ear and Elvis wagging his little finger. The use of such gestures may thus be seen as references to the rock repertoire, and in some examples in the dc Talk concert – particularly the "love sign" (see below) – as appropriations from a rock repertoire into a Christian discourse.

There are, however, also a few gestures that could be interpreted as drawing on a Christian repertoire. The most obvious ones are a few instances when one of the singers (Max) crosses himself. There are also pictures of all three singers (at different times) kneeling as if to pray (a gesture used prominently on a concert video by the English group Delirious? [2000], not further discussed here), including a sequence where McKeehan kneels with arms and face upwards singing "won't you forgive me". There is another image of McKeehan holding his hands together and bowing his head (as if) in prayer. There are also, particularly during the quieter part of the set, shots of prayer-like gestures from the audience. During "In the Light", there are people in the front row of the audience stretching out their arms and closing their eyes, which is uncharacteristic behaviour at a rock concert, where one wants to see the performers, but a typical pose at some Christian meetings. Let me again point out that these gestures do not make the performance of dc Talk (or Delirious?) into a Christian rock concert, but are here interpreted as signs serving to remind the audience (whether concert or video) – who already are supposed to know that this is a Christian group playing – of precisely this fact.

To make the sign of the cross is not part of the ritual practices of the evangelical tradition to which dc Talk (and many other Christian rock artists) belong. One perhaps less easily recognizable gesture in more frequent use at the concerts on the video however is. The gesture involves stretching one (usually the right) arm straight up and pointing with the index finger (on an otherwise clenched hand) to the sky. This gesture has been called "one way" and was a symbol of the Charismatic movement and the Jesus movement in the 1970s, also used on stickers, T-shirts, etc. (cf. McDannell 1995: 25, 253). The "one way" gesture is used repeatedly by both band members and audience on the dc Talk video, most notably at the end of the last song, where it is textually anchored by Toby McKeehan, who with his index finger pointing upwards repeatedly cries out "Jesus is the way, Jesus is the way", and finally completes with "and the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but through him" (cf. John 14:6). The anchoring (Barthes 1977b: 39–41) of an image with text limits the possible interpretations and steers the reader in a certain direction, here in the direction of interpreting the index finger pointing upwards as a symbol of the Christian way.

I will comment on one more hand gesture, the most prominently featured one on the concert video, used by band members as well as audience. This is a raised hand with little finger, index finger and thumb extended. To illustrate the perhaps surprising significance of such seemingly trivial gestures, I will quote the American Christian anti-rock activist Jeff Godwin (1988), who reports from a visit to a concert by another famous American Christian rock group, Petra. Godwin says he saw two Petra members mak-

ing the sign of "il cornuto" ("the horned", or also "the cuckold"), a fist with the little and index fingers extended, forming the hand to look like a head with two horns. This is a gesture very common in the heavy metal culture, not least at concerts. Godwin says of the Petra concert:

> [Singer] John [Schlitt] lifted his hand straight up and made the Il Cornuto sign of allegiance to Satan! This is a bonafide symbol of satanism [...] This was NOT the sign language for "I love you" where the thumb also is openly extended. [...] I know what I saw and never in a million years did I expect to see such a thing at a "Christian" concert. (Godwin 1988: 307, 309.)

Godwin tells us that he wrote to the members of Petra to confront them on the matter, and they answered that they "may have used the 'love' symbol but could not remember specifically" (Godwin 1988: 309). In any case, it appears that Godwin – and Petra – are talking of the same gesture used at the dc Talk concert, something called the "love" sign, that is similar to, but also differs from, "il cornuto".[14]

The use of this so-called love sign, as well as Godwin's discussion of the Petra concert, may be seen as an illustration of some of the main points of this paper. The meaning of these three protruding fingers can be understood only by comparing and contrasting the sign to another sign, the gesture of the *cornuto*, which is similar but different. The difference between the two gestures further signifies the difference between the Christian and the rock repertoires. But the similarity – to the point of confusion – points out that this is not least a case of appropriation: a sign that is perceived as evil, portraying a head with horns, or – as Godwin (1988) claims – even signifying allegiance to Satan, is appropriated, slightly altered and used to signify something infinitely good, love.

Objects

When it comes to the objects visible on a rock stage, there usually are many things – instruments and technical equipment – clearly indicating that rock is what is going on here. This is certainly also true of the dc Talk concerts. Another type of object that is often used to signify "rock" is different forms of clothing. In the case of dc Talk, the clothes are of a "street" style, including the typical hip hop knitted cap. A special object that signifies popular music, but not especially rock music, is a mirror ball, most associated with

14 According to the American Sign Language Browser (http://commtechlab.msu.edu/sites/aslweb/ browser.htm; 30.9.2002), the sign for "love" is made so that "the hands hug something over the heart", while the "love" sign of dc Talk (and possibly Petra) simultaneously forms the sign language letters "I" and "L", beginning the sentence "I love you".

discotheques, reflecting its light on the stage during one song on the video.

As previously mentioned, during the quieter part of the concert the stage is decorated like a room, with couches, chairs, tables, lamps, candles, etc. This is decidedly the part of the concert with the greatest number of other objects than typical rock equipment. Unless one wants to point out that candles are part of the paraphernalia of some Christian services, it is rather clear that these objects do not refer to a particularly Christian repertoire (but perhaps rather to a bourgeois one). I find the most important aspect of the furniture to be the fact that the group members actually sit on it, and for a part of the concert refrain from the more typical rock concert behaviour of dancing to the music. The physical object with the clearest reference to Christianity to appear on the stage is a Bible (or New Testament) out of which McKeehan reads the passage from 1. John quoted above (figure 1).

One special feature of the dc Talk stage show as recorded on dc Talk (1997) is a big film screen at the back of the stage, with pictures illustrating the different songs. The song "Colored People", for example, is accompanied by pictures of people of different ethnicities. The song "Mind's Eye" is illustrated with several different images, of eyes, of a cyclone-like formation (the lyrics mentions hurricanes), etc. The theme of the song is believing without seeing:

> Can you catch the wind?
> See a breeze?
> Its presence is revealed by
> The leaves on a tree
> An image of my faith in the unseen
>
> In my mind's eye
> I see your face

There are two images with references to the Christian sphere. There is a clip with the perhaps best known American evangelical preacher, Billy Graham. You can also hear him speaking: "Can you see God, have you ever seen him? I've never seen the wind, I've seen the effects of the wind", referring to John 3:7–9.[15] Later there is a shot from a helicopter flying in over Rio de Janeiro and ending up with a picture of the world-famous large Christ statue, as the singers repeat the words "I believe, I believe". The pictures on the screen (perhaps representing what is seen "in my mind's eye") carry a certain weight in expressing a Christian message, or at least

15 The spoken words by Billy Graham are also included on the album version of the song (dc Talk 1995).

giving certain associations to Christianity, but it still seems that they need the anchoring words of Billy Graham or dc Talk to more clearly refer to a Christian discourse.

One final example of objects on a Christian rock stage will be selected from another video, with the Swedish Christian heavy metal band Jerusalem (2000). The concert sequence in question was taped in 1983, and in a typical 80s metal fashion, one song ends with a big smoke bomb going off behind the drummer. But just as the first smoke clears, there appears a big sign made up of a number of burning torches, which in large red capital letters spell out the word "Jesus". The torches burn down to the sound of distorted guitars (and there then follows a short speech by the group's lead singer as referred to in footnote 7). The combination of smoke bomb and heavy metal guitars on the one hand and the "Jesus"-sign on the other is in its almost naive fashion a clear illustration of the duality of Christian rock, and the fact that the reference to a Christian repertoire is verbal also serves as a reminder that the most important Christian aspect of Christian rock is expressed in words.

Concluding remarks

The purpose of this paper has been to examine how the dual character of Christian rock, being both Christian and rock, is expressed in the practices of Christian rock concerts. This has been done primarily through a discussion of the music, text and image of a concert video with the Christian rock group dc Talk. It has been the starting assumption of this study that dc Talk is a "Christian" rock group, communicating a Christian message on records, at concerts, etc., produced, distributed and consumed within an institutional Christian framework. The task has been to suggest how this may show in their concerts by discussing how the different aspects of the concerts draw on a rock or Christianity repertoire (or discourse) respectively. It was initially assumed that a Christian rock concert would be both a concert and a religious service. The assumption carries an important point, but it must still be emphasized strongly that the rock concert aspect is rather more easily recognizable in the material studied in this paper.

The study of religion and popular culture, and more specifically of Christian rock or of Christian rock concerts as rituals, is a far from established field. Partly because the field is very undeveloped, it is theoretically and methodologically rather insecure. This paper is therefore not an attempt to draw grand conclusions, but is more by way of an attempt to explore possibilities of interpretation and suggestions for further discussion of the relations between religion and popular culture.

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TINA HAMRIN-DAHL

Witch Accusations, Rapes and Burnings in South Africa

With new different power systems in Africa, the whole concept of learning, authority and power is affected. To have authority means in many cases to have inherent power which exceeds the power of others. So called wizards, *wachawi*, in Tanzania have been found guilty of killing their victims and taking parts from the bodies to obtain and secure power.

> The basic ingredients in the medicines which the *wachawi* use consists of elements taken from the human body on one hand and parts from animals and trees on the other hand. The parts of the body which are obtainable easily are nails, hair and emission of the body. The shadow of a person is also utilized by taking some of the soil over which the shadow had fallen. Other potent parts such as the sex organs, bone from legs or skin from different parts of the body and the nose or tongue are known to be utilized by the *wachawi*. (Swantz 1970: 321.)

We have a similar description from the South African *lowveld*: "Witches manufactured *dihlare* from herbs, roots, animal fats and human bodily substances. A type of *sehlare* called *sefolane* was placed on footpaths, entered the body through the soles of the feet and caused paralysis of the legs. *Go kotola* was made from the victim's own nails, urine, faeces, hair, or footprints, and was used to influence his or her behaviour." (Niehaus 2001a: 25.) Human blood was used in different ways and in the hands of a witch, it could prevent rain. The magic potion could also make friends fight, lightening strike and animals hurt their owners.

In Zimbabwe, many people would like to have well-paid jobs and nice houses, but, "a person who was successful in these respects could easily be suspected of having made use of *uroyi* [witchcraft] to reach his or her goals and was... [therefore] likely to live with a fear of becoming a victim of *uroyi*..." (Dahlin 2000: 179–80).

As far as the social system of the Zulus in the 1930s is concerned, the belief that human flesh was the most powerful fertiliser was propagated. To do *sukula*, or *sukula*ing, was a method of doctoring crops in order to secure abundant harvests: "The medicine is thought to remove all the fer-

tile soil from the lands of other persons and bring it to the charmed fields, and it is therefore a method of obtaining plenty at the expence of others" (Krige 1936: 193). The deployment of magical means for material ends has intensified in the postcolonial context. "Glimpses of vast wealth are accompanied by a chilling desperation of being left out of the promise of prosperity" (Niehaus 2001b: 202).

Among certain Venda people, any form of success, be it political, commercial or even scholarly, is attributed to the supernatural and not to the individual's own efforts. It is believed that to obtain personal success one needs to make use of magic medicines *(muti/mushonga)*. These potions are made more powerful by the use of human parts, such as the hands, ears, nose, lips, eyes and genitals. The strength of the medicine to be used is further enhanced if the victim is young and virile, and if the parts are removed while the victim is still alive. (Minnaar, Offringa and Payze 1992: 21.)

There are several cases of ritual/medicine murders in present South Africa. "Tendani Victor Lukhwareni who was shot while walking to his home on April 18 this year was a chairperson of the Tshivhase Youth Committee, a committee established to fight against ritual murder cases in the area. He was killed hardly five days after he led a big protest march by the community to the area commissioner's office where they were protesting against the dragging ritual murder cases." (Ndivhuwo 2002.)

When it comes to medicine murders, parts of the human body are often used to secure certain advantages from the ancestors. In April 1988, Sharon Mashige, 18 years old, was attacked while in the company of her friend, who fled. Her body was discovered the next day. The girl's external genital organs were cut off while she was still alive, her left leg was severed at the knee and her left arm at the elbow. She was stabbed several times and thereafter decapitated. The tongue had been removed earlier. And why? Because her father wanted some of her fat for a potion. One of the murderers was to receive payment from the girl's father and they had been instructed to obtain the fat from her body. (Minnaar, Offringa and Payze 1992: 59.)

Hilda Kuper pointed out in her studies of the Swazi, that "Murders for 'doctoring' (so-called ritual murders) still [1980s] take place in Swaziland, and fall into two main situational types: (1) agricultural fertility; (2) personal aggrandizement. The victim, referred to as 'a buck', is innocent of any crime and is killed with as much secrecy as possible... The average Swazi condemns murders committed in self-interest as sorcery, and places the ritual specialist who gives the instructions in a different moral and legal category from the diviner who, in his capacity as a witchfinder, may be responsible for the destruction of people publicly revealed as evildoers. The distinction is not accepted by Western law." (Kuper 1986: 69.)

Isak Niehaus underlines, that the Ralushai Commission was required to investigate medicine murders, but the report only contains an overview of eight ritual murder cases and makes no recommendations, since the commission chose to emphasise another kind of witchcraft (Niehaus 2001a: 226).

In magic cases in Kenya, when it comes to gaining advantage, the sacrifice of a living person is sometimes supposed to be necessary. *Utsai*, the intentional use of magic, includes medicines and rituals. It can be directed at people, things, or events and the ritual practitioner (as well as the client who requested the action) can be called *mutsai*. "In the case of an extraordinary greedy person, the mutsai client or mutsai enacts utsai in order to meet his or her desire to obtain inordinate power or wealth. The main objective of the mutsai and mutsai client is not to harm someone, but they are willing to harm someone (create a victim) in the process of achieving their desire." (Ciekawy 2001: 177.)

There was recently a murder case in London which had much in common with South African medicine murders. The discovery of the body, the nature of the wounds and the way in which the boy was killed "are consistent with those of a ritual homicide as practiced in Africa", said Dr Hendrick Scholtz (a South African expert in ritualistic or witchcraft murders). Police in the United Kingdom are currently considering the possibility that they may be facing the first "muti" murder ever committed there. "Muti" is a South African word that means traditional medicine in general, according to Phillips Stevens, an anthropology professor at the State University of New York at Buffalo; "[b]ut in a modern context, it has come to mean pagan or occult", he added. *Muti* is medicine used to "bring about a result", but that result can be improving one's health, or fortune, or general prospects. It is always based on the idea of taking energy from another living thing for your own purposes. At times, the energies provided by herbs or animals are enough, although human beings are believed to have the most energy. Children, however, are thought to have the most powerful energy of all. "They have not been contaminated, they have not grown up and used it for adult purposes, so they have not been used up yet", said Stevens. (Chang 2003.)

Medicine murders, black magic and spells, witch-related rituals with tragic consequences can be seen as one set of problems in South Africa. Another set is usually called "politically motivated witch-accusations".

There was a rapid increase in the levels of violence in black communities like Soweto, South Africa, in the 1980s and 1990s. A popular tendency was to speak of a "youth crisis" and a "lost generation". This approach failed to locate the structural and historical problems rooted in apartheid. The political crisis of the mid-80s, followed by the successive states of emergency, have fundamentally disturbed the social cohesion of black town-

ship communities. It is important to point out that the prolonged political turmoil, combined with the historical underdevelopment of black communities, has had dire consequences for these communities. Political conflict has paralysed the structure of government established under apartheid. It has also reinforced community resentment of the police and local government. At the same time, the state actively undermined alternative structures which sought to replace these illegitimate formations and this was coupled with the detention and elimination of experienced local-level leadership (cf. Mokwena 1991). Furthermore, an investigation of the politics of witch-hunting in South Africa during those years is a task of great analytical complexity. "The witch-hunts of the 1990s are multifaceted social dramas, bearing a variety of meanings for different constituencies, within which political actors compete for influence" (Niehaus 2001a: 157).

Victor Turner wrote that the restoration of peace in a social drama involves a change in social relations: "New power may have been channelled into new authority and old authority lost its legitimacy. Closeness may have become distance and vice versa." (Turner 1992: 92.)

How could social relations change through these ritual burnings of so-called witches in South Africa today? Well, they may place the perpetrators in a new position of power and authority, either through what is seen to be socially useful action or through intimidation. The often very large crowds evident at these events, when women are burned as witches, would suggest that a new sense of closeness and unity is generated. And in fact, those who do not actually partake in the burning may throw stones at the corpse as they depart (De Coning and Fick 1986: 35). If the victim is seen to be the internal enemy, there must be some sense of the reasserted strength of the community.

The youth culture as it is lived by youngsters in the streets of Soweto has three main defining features. First, it is survivalistic, in that it is geared towards the material exploitation of an environment which has limited resources. Secondly, violence is an integral feature of this life. Thirdly, it is a machismo culture based on espousing the attainment of masculinity and male dominance. (Mokwena 1991.) Jacklyn Cock notes that the significance of weapons as emblematic of manliness cuts across ethnic groups in South Africa (Cock 1997: 33). She further argues that during the transition period 1990–94, among Afrikaners and Zulus, identities for men were synonymous with being militaristic (Cock 1997: 34). Under apartheid, black female domestic workers "of whom sexual favours were demanded along with their normal domestic workload" (Cock 1980: 99), found out that the relationship between domestic workers and their employers was intensely paternalistic: "it consigns the worker to a dependent and powerless position and it generates a sense of power and superiority in the employer" (Cock 1980: 100).

In South Africa, many women agree with the belief, that certain women "ask for it" and they "do not feel it is their place or necessary to help women who are being forced to have sexual relations" (Wojcicki 2000: 392). When it comes to street situations and youth gangs, it is probable that all the guns around "contribute to this unwillingness or perhaps inability to help women who are being attacked" (Wojcicki 2000: 393). But this "acceptability of violence can also be explained by the apartheid and post-apartheid governments' failure to legislate harshly against rape and the continued failure to give rapists harsh sentences and low conviction rates" (Wojcicki 2000: 393). Human Rights Watch also reports that South African women, irrespective of race, complain of mistreatment at the hands of police officers taking statements, prosecutors and magistrates in court, district surgeons and court clerks (Human Rights Watch 1995: 3). Moreover, the South African rape laws define rape as a crime occuring only between a man and a woman and only involving the penetration of the penis into the vagina (it does not include oral or anal penetration or penetration with a foreign object) (Human Rights Watch 1995: 3).

When it comes to witch accusations and necklacing, the crisis in masculinity and the centrality of violence in male identity, might play an important role. Black township youths have been historically marginalized by apartheid, leaving them as alienated outcasts within their own wider society. Black township youths have been historically excluded from the key resources of power and authority in the society. Particularly for young post-adolescent males, this leaves them frustrated, emasculated and generally disempowered; it is a generation of young people who have been actively marginalized and brutalized by society (Wojcicki 2000: 388).

Witchfinding can therefore, in many ways, be understood as an attempt by young males to preempt the mystical power of their elders and the structures of gerontocratic authority, by constituting a kind of masculine "imagined community". "Just as the police and army earlier controlled movement along national highways in search of South African 'spies', 'subversives', and women 'black marketeers', so the diviners, playing upon images of state military prowess, sought to regulate movement within novel ritual space in order to reach out the 'real' internal enemies" (Auslander 1993: 185).

Furthermore, young and old men have quite different ideas about witches. The aged are thought to have secret powers of their own, female entrepreneurs are blamed for the AIDS epidemic and since older females make money through their entrepreneurial activities, they are accused of being witches (Auslander 1993: 177–83). The most common reasons given for the burning of alleged witches are certain political motives, the prevailing political unrest, personal jealousy and envy of those regarded as more successful than others, and revenge or the settling of old scores. Some-

times someone had the misfortune of running into people leaving a funeral and was therefore accused of being connected to the death of those who were dead.

One example of "witch burning" is the death of Nosipho Zamela in 1985, in the Eastern Cape township of Mlungisi in Queenstown.

Between 1983 and 1986 Mlungisi was in a state of violent turmoil. A consumer boycott of white-owned shops brought the police and army to the township. The Mlungisi Massacre involved the shooting of Mlungisi residents inside a church hall, while they were holding a meeting to receive a report from their leaders of a meeting they had held with authorities of the municipality and with members of the white business community. The Mlungisi leaders were given an ultimatum: the boycott must be called off. The leaders decided to have a meeting about it, at ten o'clock on the same day as the boycott was supposed to end at twelve o'clock. Soon army trucks and personnel surrounded the church were the meeting was held, a voice announced over a loud hailer that the meeting had to disperse within five minutes. The order was ignored. Moments thereafter, teargas was fired into the church and a stampede followed during which people tried to escape. Police vehicles followed the stream of people running, shooting at random with bird shot, teargas and real ammunition. Fourteen people were killed and many injured. Three of the victims were buried two weeks after the incident, and eleven were given a mass burial on December 7, 1985. Nosipho Zamela, also a Xhosa, was burned as a witch on the 8th.

On the day when strong emotions were at play in Mlungisi, when the final night vigil for the eleven dead was held, Nosipho Zamela was seen being dropped off from an army truck in front of the house where the vigil was held. Soon afterwards, a rumour started circulating that she was "sleeping with Inkatha", which was a reference to the police who were patrolling the streets of Mlungisi and who were believed to be Zulu-speaking.

The strategies used by the police at the time were very crude, and most were designed to shift the focus from their own brutality to "black-on-black" violence. They were known to set up individuals by driving around with them in the township, and then release them while arresting others, giving the impression that is was these individuals who identified the people arrested.

Nosipho was taken from her home some time during the morning of December 8 by marshals from her street, who were followed by a crowd of about sixty youths. She was confronted with the alleged charge of sleeping with the police, being a bitch and a witch. Most of the morning was spent walking her through the streets and demanding that she identified other women who were supposedly sexually involved with the police. The search for other women yielded nothing and the marshals from the street, who

were now joined by marshals from other streets, became increasingly angry, accusing her of making fools of them. Many people in the crowd started shouting obscenities at her. Some of the men started poking her with sticks and sjamboks in her vaginal area as they continued to shout at her. Women's voices were also heard accusing her of grooming herself for the benefit of Inkatha and using "blood money" to buy clothes. One of the witnesses remembered a young man who was a marshal saying: "You didn't want to sleep with us, but you made yourself available for Inkatha!"

An argument over how she was going to be punished ensued after a man's voice called out: "She must be burnt!" The marshals from her street argued against the burning of Nosipho, but they were silenced and threatened by a group of marshals from another area. More people gathered on the way and there was singing and toy-toying. They shouted at her: "Let the one who sold her own die" and "Let her fry!" The burning necklace, a tyre soaked in petrol, killed her while the people were singing and dancing doubt. (Gobodo-Madikizela 1999: 106–12.)

According to Isak Niehaus, witch hunting must be understood in the first place as an attempt to eliminate misfortune. "Those who support and organise action against witches therefore perform a valuable social service, and attain political legitimacy. Despite important changes in the forms of witch-beliefs and in patterns of witchcraft accusation, there have been remarkable continuities in its political implications over time." (Niehaus 2001a: 154.)

Procedures are often established to protect those who are accused of practising witchcraft, since the law is against "witch finding". But when people see the authorities protect accused witches, this makes them believe that people occupying powerful positions within the state are using witchcraft for their own purposes. Witchcraft and modern politics are closely related, "state authoritarianism reinforces this link by creating an atmosphere of undeclared competition that makes politics and occult forces hard to distinguish" (Geschiere 1997: 98).

The present situation is a result of the demolition of the apartheid government, widespread rebellions among the youth and marginal elite political movements. The problem is of multiple causation and when it comes to witch accusations, we must evaluate sociocultural change within a matrix of power relationships in (and between) goverments, apartheid and post-apartheid, and society.

Isak Niehaus, who recently wrote about witchcraft and the sexuality of evil in the South African *lowveld*, suggests that discourses about witchcraft and sexuality should be treated as a resource in micro-political studies in the domestic domain:

> Gossip, derogatory statements, and scandal-provoking stories about unacceptable sexual conduct sanctioned certain moral ideas. These open-ended narratives could be a prime site of resistance... Ordinary people could use rumours and scandals to ridicule and humiliate the reputations of dominant persons who abuse their rights to exercise power... in the lowveld accusations of witchcraft are a hallmark of intra-gender struggles. Insubordinate wives, obstinate daughters-in-law, and elderly infertile woman, as well as vulnerable men fell victim to these accusations. (Niehaus 2002: 38–39.)

According to the Commission on Gender Equality (2000): "Witchcraft violence, which has been prevalent mainly in the Northern Province, has had devastating consequences on those who are accused of being witches, which in most cases are old women in these communities. The results in this regard have been mass murders, displacement and ostracisation of families suspected of being witches."

Violence against women in South Africa is common in all groups, whether we categorize them by race, class or ethnicity. In addition to linking this level of violence with the apartheid regime and resultant poverty, inequality and racism, the effects of militarization on South African society are important in creating stereotypes which link masculinity with violence (Wojcicki 2000: 389).

In KwaMashu, the second largest township outside Durban, a gang called "bhepa span" (from a Zulu word meaning crude sex), focused on raping young girls. In 1995, they gang-raped a local high school teacher while her students looked on. In connection with this, Suzanne Leclerc-Madlala notes that the high incidence of rape in KwaZulu/Natal might relate to a belief that having sex with a virgin can cure one from the HIV/AIDS virus (Leclerc-Madlala 1997).

In a survey conducted by the Commission of Gender Equality (2000), it is obvious that the problem of violence against women in South Africa is not limited to incidences of gang-rape.

Furthermore, only one out of every 10 boys interviewed in Gauteng schools opposed sexual violence. Janet Maia Wojcicki, who studied sex-work and violence in the "new" South Africa, realized that many South African men compared women with children and rationalized that, in the same way it is necessary to hit a child if he or she misbehaves, a wife also needs to be controlled through discipline and violence (Wojcicki 2000: 388).

According to Anne K. Mager and Steve Mokwena, South African men have been taught to define their power in terms of their ability to impose their will on women (Mager 1996; Mokwena 1991).

Mokwena points out that the increase in township-based youth violence has most notably been accompanied by a dramatic increase in violence that is specifically directed against young women. Whilst it is true that rape, like all forms of male violence against women, is connected to

the broad socio-cultural milieu which is suffused with beliefs of male dominance, supremacy and aggression, this generalisation does not explain the emergence of the distinct youth subculture of violence known popularly as "jackroll". (Mokwena 1991.)

Jackroll is often committed by roving gangs of armed youths. As a matter of fact, it seems part of the exercise is to be exposed so as to earn respect. Most incidents of jackroll are committed in public places like shebeens, picnic spots, schools, nightclubs and in the streets. It is almost always committed in the open, and the rapists do not make attempts to conceal their identity.

It also seems plausible to argue that jackroll is directly linked to attempts by young males to reassert their power via distorted masculine sexuality. When jackroll first emerged, the victims were carefully selected. Initially many of the victims were those women who were thought to be out of reach because of their class and status. Such women would be called by derogatory names such as "amahaiza" meaning snobs (Mokwena 1991).

South Africa recorded 1,263 rapes in 1979. In 1999 the official annual figure was nearly 50,000, but rape-crisis researchers say only 1 in 35 was reported. Probably there are more than 1.6 million rapes a year – the highest incidence in the world, according to Interpol. (Hawthorne 1999: 1.)

Many women being raped are called witches and it seems like "witch" is an umbrella term for "the evil". In several cases, instead of a gang rape there was a "witch burning". As to why burnings began, Joanna Ball (1994) suggests that the initial rural witch burnings developed in a climate of great social and economic change. There was intense social interaction which had become ill-defined, due to such things as high unemployment, migrant labour and the demise of chiefly authority. This great uncertainty was also to be found in the urban townships in the mid-eighties, which was when the necklace gained notoriety. These "witch hunts", of traitors or murderers or witches, are a means of reasserting communal values. The internal enemy is expunged in an attempt to grasp some form of control over the new uncertainties.

Apart from death from extreme age and minor illnesses, all deaths and occasions of misfortune are believed to be caused ("sent") by some external agent. When the sufferer has neglected religious duties, misfortune is supposed to be caused by the ancestors, but witchcraft attacks comes from "without", therefore the one who suffers is not to blame. "Generally speaking, witches were believed to be women and sorcerers men. This might have been because sorcery involved the actual buying of medicines from a herbalist, while witchcraft could be practised in secret, from within the demure confines of the domestic unit, and thus be more congenial to women. (Hammond-Tooke 1993: 169–70.)

Witches represent behaviour that deviates from the accepted norms of a society, they are evil and create disharmony in social relationships. To call someone a witch is to say that she is a traitor, that she stands in an antagonistic relationship to the rest of the group. In South Africa, there is a strong connection between the victims of burnings, such as witches and collaborators, in that they are seen to "sell out" at the expense of the community and break its social solidarity. The fact that the initial burnings were to punish witches, supposed to have supernatural forces, and only later came to include collaborators then becomes understandable, as it was only in the mid-eighties that the urban areas became increasingly political and where "collaborating" became another means by which communal values could be betrayed.

A woman involved in the anti-apartheid movement would be frightened to report rape by a "comrade" in "the struggle", because all the other comrades would condemn her as having "sold out" to the racist government (Sharlach 2001: 170). According to Lisa Boswell Sharlach, "from the mid 1980s until the all-race elections of 1994, the intensity of violence was so high that some referred to it as civil war... as the level of ethnic violence in a country increases, so too does the state's role in permitting or perpetrating sexual violence increase" (Sharlach 2001: 165). Other hypotheses are: "As the stigmatization of female rape survivors increases, a state's involvement in permitting and/or perpetrating rape of stigmatized group members increases" and "As the degree to which stigmatized groups coincide with class division, a state's involvement in permitting and/or perpetrating rape of stigmatized group members increases." Through her studies, Sharlach shows that "South Africa during apartheid had both state perpetration of sexual violence and pronounced class inequality" (Sharlach 2001: 180). She has come to the conclusion that "when the leaders declare a state of emergency in a society in which there is a vast socio-economic income gap that corresponds to ethnic divisions, state agents' rape of those belonging to a stigmatized group may follow" (Sharlach 2001: 195).

Michelle Rosenthal, who has examined domestic violence and rapes in South Africa after 1994, writes: "Despite constitutional guarantees of equality in the new democracy, the issue of violence against women continues to be of the gravest importance. The activists who struggle with this issue daily deserve our attention as powerful political agents of change both within South Africa, and beyond, in a transnational feminist dialogue on human rights, democracy and justice." (Rosenthal 2000: 114.)

When Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela made case studies based on interviews with perpetrators of a necklace murder, she found out that "Apartheid strategies were no less violent than those used in the resistance against it. In fact, the strategies used by apartheid were much more organised and systematic, not only in terms of the official arsenal and official structures

of the police and army... Many writers hid this violence from scrutiny by focusing on anti-apartheid violence, and by doing so, projecting government repressive measures as a legitimate response." (Gobodo-Madikizela 1999: 24.) According to Gobodo-Madikizela, the subtext often reinforces the myth of blacks going on the rampage in mindless unprovoked killing. A necklace incident has to be placed in its proper political context. (Gobodo-Madikizela 1999: 25.)

While looking at necklace murders, there are two symbols that need to be scrutinized: the notion of the necklace and the consuming of a person by fire. Given that those receiving this punishment are those who have deviated from the social norms of the group, the symbol of the necklace is perhaps associated with ideas such as that presuming the existence of a social community which is important, that it is immoral to act anti-socially and that it will not be tolerated, that communal interests should be placed above individual greed, that social harmony is important. It also conveys a message of what the relationship is to those outside the group. For example, where the youth gain political power through the threat of the necklace, it intimidates those who would oppose them. The necklace defines what behaviour is expected of the community and defines the power relationship. On a broader scale it can define the relationship of the community to the system of apartheid and white supremacy that existed until 1994.

The horror of the separation of the head from the body is perhaps fairly universal, and the burning necklace could be seen as a decapitator in a sense. It is perhaps of some relevance that the "guillotine" (another term for the necklace) portrays this same idea. The term necklace could also have an ironic association. It usually carries positive emotional associations. Necklaces are given as gifts, they are decorative and are normally seen to enhance one's appearance. Also protective medicine is sometimes worn around the neck. For example, the youth gangs in Pietermaritzburg would be given protective medicine from traditional healers, and this could be tied in a small bottle around the neck. With the necklace becoming a burning tyre, there is a direct symbolic reversal of the term which is the more potent because of the strong positive connotations on the one side and the very strong negative connotations on the other. This potency would seem to explain why the term has become so renowned and is used beyond its strict sense (cf. Ball 1994; Sosibo 1992).

Burning symbolises a number of things. It may be associated with the destruction of the soul of the person, thus breaking the link with the ancestors, it may signify the destruction of evil or the purification of society. Obviously, in the physical sense, the victim is unrecognisable after she has been burnt, so there is a visual destruction of the person (cf. Ball 1994).

But beside all those political reasons, clearly many people in South Africa take witchcraft very seriously. The reality of such beliefs manage and compensate for undeserved misfortune and should therefore not be dismissed as an idiom that masks ulterior motives, and is aimed at intimidating political opponents. On the contrary, witch-hunting must (as Niehaus points out) be understood in the first place as an attempt to eliminate misfortune. Witches have been perceived as threatening people's livelihood in many South African communities for centuries. Witchhunts were aimed at restoring fertility to the land and reaffirmed the solidarity of villagers.

In the post-relocation years, witches were perceived at threatening individuals and individual households. Before 1994, youth gangs exploited public perceptions that the South African government protected witches. According to Niehaus, they gave powerless individuals the necessary public support to accuse neighbours and kin of being witches, and although many elderly people felt intimidated by those gangs, it can be argued that this was a consequence of, rather than a motivating factor for, witch hunting. In making accusations youths sought the public co-operation of village adults, and followed the consensual identification of individuals as witches. (Niehaus 2001a: 154.)

At this level, the ritual "may express deep contradictions in the social or cultural system – all kinds of troubles, uncertainties, conflicts and paradoxes" (Moore and Myerhoff 1977: 16). The witch burnings can be seen as a result of social changes. These were caused by such things as forced resettlement, the gradual erosion of the power of the chiefs, the breakdown of agricultural subsistence and the reliance on migrant wages. Kinship patterns of residence were disrupted, resources became scarce and unemployment increased. The new social relations became uncertain and ill-defined (cf. Ball 1994).

In the dramatic encounter between witch accusers and witch accused, all those involved are locked in conflict about "the truth" and about real intentions. The institution in which the drama is now being played out, the New South Africa, is a creation that sees itself as establishing facts and finding law. Apparently open to multivocality and many authentic meanings, the stories about rapes and witch burnings give the victims no real recognition. Internal versions have less validity than outside ones and in the end, all those stories are about something: the suppression of the woman's voice.

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NILS G. HOLM

Ritualistics

An Overview of Research from a Religio-psychological Perspective

Introduction

The study of rites or ritual has a long history. As far back as we can go in the history of religious studies we find analyses of the behavioural dimension of religiosity. It was only towards the end of the 19th century, however, that scholars began to pay more regular attention to rites. This new attitude was linked with an increased tendency to study foreign cultures, often within a discipline that had come to be called anthropology. In theology, and also very much within religious studies in general, greater notice has been given to the cognitive side, that is to say the study of myths and religio-philosophical questions. Gradually, the behavioural dimension – and therefore rites – have acquired greater significance in religious studies, something which the following presentation will demonstrate.

When writing about rituals, I like to refer to what Talal Asad found studying the different issues of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. In the first edition from 1771 there were short articles on both rite and ritual. In the last edition from 1910 there was no article at all about rite, but instead a fairly extensive one on ritual. What we can see is a change in the understanding of ritual. Now ritual was looked upon as something very essential in religions all over the world. Ritual was no longer connected to liturgy and prescriptions, but to behaviour in general. Ritual even became a general concept, not exclusively connected with religion. (Asad 1993: 56–62; Popp-Baier 2002: 154–56.)

I understand the term rite as practically synonymous with behaviour. To give rite a more precise definition, I would like to suggest that a rite is generally a formal practice or custom, which can be exercised by individuals or groups. Ritual, in addition, is more formalized in character and may be defined as conscious repetitious symbolic bodily actions, often placed in contexts which are connected with the holiness dimension. In practice, the use of these two terms – rite and ritual – largely coincides.

In the following presentation I shall first give a brief account of research into rites, before turning to my own more psychologically oriented considerations on the efficacy of rites or ritual.

Older research traditions

As I have already mentioned, at the end of the 19th century there was an increasing awareness within anthropology and religious studies of the importance of rites. Rites were regarded as magic, and often irrational, activities among indigenous peoples in various parts of the world, in contrast to the technological and rational activities of more highly developed Western man. This was the age of colonialism and evolutionism, when there was a readiness among scholars to situate human behaviour within evolutionary schemes. A distinction was made between religion and magic, something which emerges clearly in the work of James George Frazer (1963). Much brainwork has subsequently been devoted to whether – and if so how – a distinction between magic and religion should be made. Today it is widely understood that such debate is obsolete and unrewarding.

Within biblical scholarship and the whole field of Middle Eastern studies, the myth and ritual school came to play an important role. It stressed the close connection between myth and rite. It claimed that a rite was always accompanied by a myth, i.e. words read or spoken that gave content and meaning to a rite. It was common to refer to enthronement myths and ritual in ancient Mesopotamia. It was also believed possible to interpolate texts from one quarter with corresponding texts from somewhere else, since there were often only fragmentary sources to begin with. In the same way, it was possible to "reconstruct" rites which were only indirectly suggested in the sources. Much of the Book of Psalms in the Old Testament was thus thought to belong to an enthronement rite, or an annual rite where the king was stripped of his dignity, assumed his people's sins and underwent purification rites before being reinstated in his high function. This interpretive model played an important role well into the twentieth century. (Cf. Widengren 1971.)

The so-called phenomenological school, inspired, amongst other figures, by the philosopher Edmund Husserl, regarded earlier religious studies (the work of Tylor and Robertson Smith, for example) as reductionist in character. Beginning from the unconditional study of religious phenomena, one was to get as close as possible to their inner meaning. This was the working method of scholars such as Rudolf Otto (1917), Gerardus van der Leeuw (1933) and Raffaele Pettazzoni (1960). The experiential world of the religious person was to be treated with utmost seriousness and not be reduced to something else in the name of scholarship. *Homo religiosus* was promoted

as an honourable term. To a certain extent, one may claim that rites came to play a subordinate role in this school. Mircea Eliade, who may be regarded as a late representative of the school, had absorbed impressions from other theorists, including C. G. Jung (1983), and attached great importance in his research to myths and symbols without, however, entirely forgetting the ritual dimension. Rites were regarded as repetitions of cosmic myths of creation, life and death. (Eliade 1958, 1968.)

Contributions to the discussion of rites came from depth psychology, too; it is, above all, Sigmund Freud who should be mentioned in this context. He developed his psychoanalytical theory, in which the unconscious and the ego's defence mechanisms play a large part. Freud regarded repeated behaviour patterns – rites – as being caused by obsessive neuroses. But he also participated in the debate on totemism at the beginning of the twentieth century and, in his book *Totem and Taboo* (1989), he constructed his theory of parricide in the primitive human horde, something leading to the deification of the murdered father and the need for repetitive patterns of worship. Rites in this context thus acquired a predominantly negative significance. Later depth psychologists have nevertheless in many ways refined Freud's original ideas on this point.

In early religious sociology, too, rites came to play a role. In his famous book, *The Elementary Form of Religious Life* (1995), Émile Durkheim made a clear distinction between the religious and the secular. He regarded religion primarily as rites aimed at social solidarity and identification. No society without religion and no religion without collective rites, he reasoned. Durkheim's contributions have assumed great significance in the subsequent sociology of religion. Religion has come to be seen as the cementing force in societies of different kinds.

Anthropology continued in the direction taken by religious sociology and developed functionalist theories. Names such as A. R. Radcliffe-Browne (1958) and Bronislaw Malinowski (1962) may be mentioned here. There was a reaction against evolutionism and an alternative emphasis on the specific meaning of each ritual in its context. The functionalist interpretation of social phenomena sees society as a unified and more or less closed system, where every part has its organic function within the whole. Rites become important in diverting aggressions, restoring balance and getting society and its different components in overall harmony with each other. Anthropologists of different persuasions have tried, above all through the study of indigenous cultures, to identify this balance within the social machinery. (Cf. Eriksen 1995: 4–9.)

The step from functionalism to structuralism is not a large one. E. E. Evans-Pritchard (1962), Claude Lévi-Strauss (1958, 1964–68) and Clifford Geertz (1993) have, through more detailed study of myths and individual rituals, tried to decipher an inner meaning structure in cultural expressions.

Through a binary polarization of phenomena, they have discovered deep strata of meaning that were not immediately apparent. The functionalist and early structuralist Arnold van Gennep deserves special mention here, since his concept of *rite de passage* has achieved wide currency. Van Gennep studied life's great transitional rites and isolated three stages through which an individual was often obliged to pass: separation, transition and incorporation. By going through rituals which separate him from earlier communities, hold him at an intermediate stage – transition – and then incorporate him into a new community, the individual is transferred from one group affiliation to another. Common examples here are puberty rites and initiation rites, which insert an individual into the adult world. Other important scholars in this group include Victor Turner and Mary Douglas. The latter has become known for her categories of "grid" and "group": grid here refers to rules controlling individual relations and formal positions in society, while group is connected with the more or less involuntary class affiliation of individuals (Douglas 1970; Myerhoff *et al.* 1987).

More recent research approaches

In the decades after the second World War great changes took place in the global structure. The era of colonization finally drew to an end and anthropologists also began to direct their research towards more complex western societies. It began to be understood that rites and rituals could be found here, too. At the same time, sociologists, historians, political scientists and other researchers analysed societies and also came to use such terms as ritual. Within etology, repetitive patterns were studied in animals and birds. The use of the terms rite and ritual has therefore become very widespread, so that they have almost come to coincide with behaviour in general.

The newer scholarly approach to rites was largely derived from structuralism, but was further combined with insights from linguistics. In the same way as one can analyse speech acts and the meaning of words, one can also analyse ritual behaviours. These acquire a symbolic value which goes far beyond the immediate character of the actual expression. A scholar who has made significant contributions in this field is Edmund Leach (1967). Leach understands rites as cultural messages with significance for people's ways of understanding their position within society, as well as for how they are to position themselves with regard to the invisible or metaphysical world. In other words, rites or ritual make culture meaningful.

Clifford Geertz has significantly developed these ideas. Geertz sees religion as a cultural system of symbols adding significance to people's motivations and emotions by giving unified and coherent patterns to the meaning of life. A world view is lived out through rites and thereby acquires concrete meaning for the private individual.

A further development of these ideas can be found in such scholars as E. Thomas Lawson and R. N. McCauley (1990). The latter have become known for a so-called cognitive theory of religion. In the same way as Noam Chomsky claims that linguistic competence goes back to physiological structures in the human brain, these researchers claim that religious communicative competence is also based on physiological functions. One can in other words distinguish a kind of "grammar" of religion and particularly for rites. If one participates in a rite, one knows the rules for an exchange of views, just as the user of a language does. Lawson and McCauley are partly critical of earlier scholars who, in their opinion, devote themselves principally to descriptions and subjective judgments. The cognitive theory, they believe, is more concerned with theorizing and even with empirical testing.

Similar theoretical approaches are to be found in Dan Sperber (1996) and Pascal Boyer (2001). They stress that religion is a normal human activity based on the cognitive ability developed during the evolutionary process. Confronting the reality around herself the human being uses her *intuitive* capacity for understanding things. These are the everyday experiences we have. But there are also a lot of things which cannot be understood so easily. In this case, a capacity cognitivists call *counterintuitive* takes over and forms the ideas. Religion is basically understood as a counterintuitive activity. Boyer writes: "There is no religious instinct, no *specific* inclination in the mind, no particular disposition for these concepts, no special religion center in the brain, and religious persons are not different from nonreligious ones in essential cognitive functions. Even faith and belief seem to be simple by-products of the way concepts and inferences are doing their work for religion in much the same way as for other domains." (Boyer 2001: 329–30.)

Ritual acitivity is also seen as a product of the human equipment in the cognitive and behavioural domains. Rituals are extremely important in human life and are directed towards its social realm. Boyer writes: "What matters to rituals and makes them relevant is that one construes the social effects as the *result* of the actions prescribed. Because of the massive salience of agency in our mental systems, most humans fill this gap with concepts of agents; but an abstraction like 'our tradition' or 'society' can play much the same role as gods or ancestors." (See also Pyysiäinen 2001.)

Ritual studies were adopted by the American Academy of Religion as a special area of research within religious studies in 1977. They received official status in 1982 under the designation of "Ritual Studies Group" (Grimes 1987). At the same time, the *Journal of Ritual Studies* began publication, making an important contribution towards unity within the group. A driving force of the group has been Ronald L. Grimes, who also published his ground-breaking study, *Beginnings in Ritual Studies* (revised edition, 1995). In this work, Grimes gives a thorough account of different rituals

and relates them to such concepts as time, space and language. He divides rites into different categories and thereby comes to include a very large number of formalized human behaviours within the notion of ritual. He also reviews the work of different theorists such as Gotthard Booth (psychosomatic theory of illness), Theodor Gaster and Victor Turner (anthropological theory) and Jerzy Grotowski (ritual theatre).

Criticism against ritualistics in the sense Grimes understands it has also been expressed by Jack Goody in his article "Against 'Ritual': Loosely structured thoughts on a loosely defined topic". He is of the opinion that such a general term as Ritual Studies does not bring anything substantially new to scholarly work. One is merely comparing ideas from different perspectives, but very few new aspects are really being added (Goody 1977; Zuess 1987).

We are also given an extensive account of rites in Catherine Bell's study, *Ritual. Perspectives and Dimensions* (1997). This is a thorough survey of previous scholarship in religious studies, as well as such individual activities as rites of passage, calendar rites, communion, rites of affliction, fasts and feasts, and political rites. Bell also considers general activities with the character of rites, and therefore discusses formalism, traditionalism, invariance, sacral symbolism, performance etc. In this context, she also stresses the physicality of rites. Finally, she adopts a more sociologically oriented approach, analysing societies that promote rites and ritual, as well as those groups which try to resist ritualisation. The book is a quite excellent review of theories and material connected with the study of rites.

The study *Pluralism and Identity. Studies in ritual behaviour* (edited by Jan Platvoet and Karel van der Toorn, 1995) is also a valuable contribution to the field. Here we are given a description of real rites in different cultures (including Umbanda, Bodhgaya rites, the Ayodhya conflict, the Rechabites in ancient Israel and several Muslim rites), as well as a more theoretically oriented analysis of the concept of "ritual". It is Jan Platvoet who goes into the question of definitions, providing an exhaustive account of how he understands the issue (Platvoet 1995).

To summarise earlier research, then, we find that scholars were initially prepared to see ritual among indigenous populations where magic was a frequently occurring phenomenon. Ritual was something more irrational, which could not therefore be found among more developed groups in the west. Myth or the conceptual was more characteristic of the "evolved" individual. Gradually, however, the focus changed, largely through work in sociology and linguistics. Rites and ritual are now seen as meaningful instruments of communication for maintaining the structure of societies and the identity of individuals. Rites have become something quite universal and are found in every culture. One even speaks of secular rituals (Moore and Myerhoff 1977).

Rite and ritual have become practically the same thing as behaviour in general. At this point, we come to the corporeality of rites, referring to what today often goes under the name of "embodiment". Every rite presupposes a body and one may therefore claim that religion and identity, in a certain sense, sit in the body. We have come a long way, then, from regarding a person's religion or world view only as something conceived – or philosophical – to seeing it rather as something also anchored in the body and in behaviour.

In her article on the misuse of drugs and religious rituals Valerie DeMarinis offers a very interesting psychological perspective on the topic. She looks upon the use of drugs as a ritual process which could be changed if the therapy also included treatment of the personal meaning system, together with management at the biological and social levels. (DeMarinis 1996.)

Some reflections in the light of religious psychology

When we talk of rites and their significance for the individual and society at large, we come to the question of their "efficacy". One may ask how rites and individuals give people substance, and in what way they can exercise a kind of power over those that practise them. In partial illustration of this question, I would like to offer briefly a religio-psychological perspective for which I have become an advocate in recent years (Holm 1997a and 1997b).

It must first be noted that all individuals, while growing up, are subject to a learning process. We do not invent cultural patterns by ourselves, but we are brought up among thought processes and behaviours that are more or less collective and culture bound. In this process, we constantly meet other people who influence us by the force of their personalities, but we are also drawn into a number of different situations that can prove either emotionally attractive or repulsive. As we thus learn cultural behaviour patterns – rites or ritual – we also acquire, by actual performance, an emotional relation to our educators, as well as to the different situations in which we find ourselves. The experiences of cultural learning and influence stays in the memory with varying degrees of emotional charge. But experiences are not merely preserved in a long succession; they are adapted in the inner consciousness where fantasies, dreams and daydreams play an important part. In this way, experiences are "condensed" into larger units, perhaps the kind of thing that is positive and attractive, but also something that may be negative and repulsive. A certain amount of this material becomes fairly insignificant and disappears into what we call oblivion.

Our experiences of early contact with key persons in our environment, with behavioural patterns imposed on us while growing up, as well as

with thought processes we learn mainly through language, are combined in larger units of a symbolic nature. A picture of god can thus be understood as a symbolic quantity, where features from concrete individuals in our childhood play a part, but where ideas learned through tradition also acquire significance. It is a similar process with the negative symbol of the devil, which becomes the quintessence of everthing destructive. The cognitive forms of expression associated with religion can therefore be understood as symbolic expressions of experiences undergone by previous generations and formalized in this way. The same process operates with rites: prayers, religious services, baptism, communion, marriage, funerals etc., become symbolic actions which include content from tradition, but also a great deal from the individual experiential world present in every single person from early childhood. The plane on which this takes place within each individual psyche is something I call *inner existence space.*

The experiences of earlier generations have, over the course of time, been externalised and brought out into the collective, forming patterns where norms and social customs are important components. Culture is thus a stereotyped human reality, which has acquired fixed forms in both linguistic and behavioural activity. In other words, culture contains condensed human experience in the form of a mass of symbols. This may be called *outer existence space.*

The interaction between one's own inner world and the outer social one is essential. When symbols from this inner world find a correspondence in culture, a kind of fertilization takes place which leads us forward and provides satisfaction on an inner plane. When an individual finds a correspondence between inner experience structures and what is offered by the collectively given in culture, a kind of *inner role-taking* takes place, a process which can lead to growth, healing, hope and optimism. Sometimes, however, there are negative blockages which can lead to hardships and reverses.

The conceptual model I have described above I call *integrated role theory.*

The material content acquired through the symbolic function is thus something which earlier generations have possessed and which is always passed on in cultural formations – that is to say both narratives and rites. At the same time, there is an experiential base unique to each individual. When these two formations simultaneously enrich each other, the individual is given experiential qualities with great reality value. The characters of fairy-tales can grasp such content and evoke quite fundamental experiential worlds in both children and adults. The relationship with religious symbols is similar. There is nevertheless a difference: the religious symbols are often fostered by groups who endow them with transcendental value and a self-evident existence.

Where religion is concerned, I start from the assumption that all human life is influenced by something we might call the sacrality dimension. A

sociologist like Émile Durkheim made a clear distinction between the sacred and the profane. I nevertheless find it more justified to regard the sacrality dimension as a continuum from something quite commonplace and profane to something holy and sacred. Various intermediate forms are found both at the individual level and socially. Each of us undergoes significant experiences fixed in time and space, regarding them as something that goes beyond normal occurrences. It may be a matter of birthdays, examination days, places where one has experienced something very positive or very negative. And in societies there are also generally places and times where one clings in a particular way to things that have happened in history: memorial sites, burial sites, war veteran graves, independence days etc. The really sacred places and points in time are naturally churches and religious services of all kinds. By the repetition of rites in such places and at such times, one establishes for each new generation the memory of events in history – mythological and/or historical.

Religious symbols such as divine services frequently return to what for the individual are often quite commonplace and "simple" circumstances. It is a matter of different ways of approaching the symbolic and spiritual centre which forms the nucleus of faith. In most cultic contexts, this happens through reading – reciting or singing – holy texts, listening to the interpretation of texts (preaching), invocation through prayer or praise-giving, performing some kind of sacrifice (taking a collection) and participating in the ritual meal (communion for Christians). Such contexts, and many other cultic events, always include experiences from both the world of religion and from that of everyday life.

When discussing the efficacy of symbolic actions – or rites – then, it is important to consider both the learning process which has preceded the rite itself and the inner symbolic structures carried by each individual in their own inner existence space. A special rite or ritual becomes meaningful and significant for an individual when her inner experiential structures correspond to the alleged content of a certain action. If one obtains reinforcement at this point through group processes involving persons with similar inner symbolic structures, then these experiences can be very strong and sometimes even approach what we would call trance or ecstasy. In such cases, leaders of different kinds can strongly influence individuals and channel opinions far in the direction of enthusiasm and exclusivity. If the influence of these individuals is seen as inappropriate, then the experiences can be negative, leading to protests and repudiations.

The efficacy of rites and rituals is therefore in direct proportion to how the learning process surrounding them has functioned, and depends on what symbolic structures in outer existence space an individual can connect their performance with. This fluctuates somewhat from generation to generation and from culture to culture, but there are on the whole common

structures that remain relatively fixed over a long period. Rites and rituals are a fairly fixed symbolic language which people have used at all times, and which have created solidarity within groups and meaningful experiences for individuals (see also Argyle 2002).

Sometimes existential crises and geographical displacements can produce a situation where deeply ingrained rites become meaningless. Then the person in question must rebuild contact with content which corresponds meaningfully to an altered inner world and reality interpretation. In such cases, it is precisely rites themselves which can be of help in the construction of some new, so-called "wordless language".

Summary

The study of rites has been influenced relatively little by psychological perspectives. Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytical contribution came to emphasize the negative and compulsive character of rites. It is mainly anthropologists and various scholars of religion who have analysed the form and function of rituals in different societies. We have been able to trace a development in the history of research, from seeing rites as something magic and irrational to regarding them as meaningful and universally human phenomena. On the whole, we may claim to have found an increased appreciation of rituals in the literature. There is now a tendency to emphasize the body and the corporeal as a carrier of spiritual meaning. We have come to the conclusion that there is no spirituality without a connection to behaviour, which in turn always implies a body.

But for bodily rites to achieve efficacy, it is essential that they should be connected with learning processes and symbolic functions in an individual's inner existence space, to the kinds of symbols that have some positive charge and meaning. Without such psychic content, the performance of a rite becomes simply an empty event which in the worst case only produces negative reactions. If, on the other hand, there is positive memory material on the depth-psychological level of events and rites of different kinds, then the feeling of significance and relevance can reach the point where one experiences something definable as ecstasy or trance.

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KNUT A. JACOBSEN

The Sacred Geography of Kapila

The Kapilāśrama of Sidhpur*

Kapila in the Hindu tradition

To most scholars of Hinduism, the sage Kapila is a person associated only with ancient India and known mainly as the mythical founder of the Sāṃkhya system of religious thought. This is the Kapila whose teaching is known through *Yuktidīpikā*, the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* by Isvarakṛṣṇa and other Sāṃkhya texts and the tradition of technical commentaries on them.[1] In India this Kapila belongs to a scholarly tradition preserved mainly by *paṇḍits* with a knowledge of Sanskrit and, for the last hundred years, also by professors in the Indian university system.

In Hinduism there is, however, a larger narrative and ritual dimension to the Kapila tradition. Several sacred narratives about Kapila are found in the Hindu texts: in the *Mahābhārata*, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Purāṇas* and in several *Māhātmyas*.[2] These sacred narratives about Kapila are celebrated at several sites of pilgrimage in India today. They are alive, therefore, in sacred landscapes. Worship of Kapila seldom takes place in the private home or in the local temples, but temples to Kapila are nevertheless found at several pilgrimage sites. At these centres of pilgrimage, Kapila is known as the founder of a system of religious thought called Sāṃkhya, but he is also associated with sacred narratives that are linked to India's geography.

In this article I will analyze the "locative dimension" of Kapila. I will explore the symbolic significance of one of the most important pilgrimage centres (*tīrthas*) connected with Kapila, Sidhpur in Gujarat. I will investigate the meaning of the sacred narratives about him and the rituals connected with this place. In other words, I will investigate the interaction of the mythical, the ritual and the locative dimensions of religion.

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1 See Larson and Bhattacharya 1987, for a summary of most of the texts belonging to this tradition.

2 For some of these narratives see Jacobsen 1998. For a book length study of Kapila see Jacobsen 2004.

Kapila's locative dimension

Hinduism has a strong locative dimension. The sacred narratives of Hinduism are linked to geography. They are believed by Hindus to have happened at particular places in India.[3] The continuous pilgrimage traffic to these places is one of the significant features of Hinduism. In general, among Hindus, the religious motivation for going on a pilgrimage is the attainment of favours in this life or procurement of religious merit, that is, to become cleansed of moral impurities (Bhardwaj 1983: 148–62). But, according to Hinduism, places also have salvific power and pilgrimage is, consequently, a way of salvation. Going to a sacred place with the right purpose is a sufficient requirement for attaining *mokṣa*, according to the sacred texts celebrating the sites of pilgrimage.

The main temples or shrines devoted to the ancient sage Kapila in India today, are at pilgrimage centres and a considerable number of pilgrims visit the places annually. Especially the festivals often draw huge numbers of people. The power of these places is believed to have originated with the previous presence of Kapila. At these centres Kapila is known as the founder of Sāṃkhya, but he is celebrated for other deeds he performed. Each of these centres celebrates the particular deed or deeds of Kapila that took place there: his birth, the giving of salvific knowledge to his mother, the cave in which he meditated and the place he burned to death the sixty thousand sons of Sagara. At the centers of pilgrimage, the pilgrims usually visit the temples to have *darśan* of Kapila. However, the purpose of their visit is not worship of Kapila.

Each place celebrates a deed of Kapila. That Kapila was the founder of the famous Sāṃkhya system of religious thought nevertheless adds to the power of the places. Sāṃkhya is a *mokṣaśāstra*, a system of thought occupied with the attainment of *mokṣa*. Since Kapila is known in particular to have discovered and revealed a way to *mokṣa*, his presence there has infused the places with salvific power.

The association with Sāṃkhya also gives the places a noteworthy ascetic and intellectual quality. Some features of the philosophy of Kapila are presented in the *Māhātmya*-texts of the places. A few persons associated with

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3 Diana L. Eck (1998: 169) writes: "It is indisputable that an Indian imaginative landscape has been constructed in Hindu mythic and ritual contexts, most significantly in the practice of pilgrimage. The vast body of Hindu mythic and epic literature is not free-floating literature of devotional interest to the Hindu and of scholarly interest to the structuralist, comparativist or psychoanalytically trained interpreter. Hindu mythology is profusely linked to India's geography – its mountains, rivers, forests, shores, villages, and cities. 'It takes place' so to speak, in thousand of shrines, and in the culturally-created 'map' of Bhārata. Just as myth is linked to the land, so the land is alive with mythic meanings, and stories."

the places such as *brāhmaṇa*-priests or *saṃnyāsins* often have some rudimentary knowledge of Sāṃkhya philosophy. However, the pilgrims travel there not to learn about Sāṃkhya, but to utilize the salvific and healing power of the places in rituals, especially in ritual bathing and in *śrāddha*-rituals.

The continuous presence of ascetics at the Kapila places also adds to the sacredness of these sites. Some ascetics have settled permanently and established *āśramas*. Other *aśramas* have been established to accommodate ascetics and lay-persons arriving here for the festivals. The *aśramas* frequently have names taken from the philosophical or narrative traditions of Kapila such as Kardamāśrama (Kardama was Kapila's father), Kapilāśrama or Sāṃkhyayogāśrama.

The purpose of pilgrimage to the sacred places of Kapila is often to gain a better rebirth or final salvation for oneself or for one's relatives. Since Kapila is known for having given salvific knowledge to humanity, the places of Kapila worship focus on purification, asceticism and *mokṣa*. People usually come here not primarily to gain material welfare in this life, as is often the case in visiting temples, but to be purified or purify others from sin and gain the ultimate goal in life, *mokṣa*. They go there to utilize, by means of ritual performance, the salvific power of the place created by Kapila's presence. The *Māhātmyas* of the places also describe the power to cure diseases, often associated with moral impurity, and therefore salvific power. Worship of Kapila in the Kapila temples is part of the ritual, but is not the most important part.

The sacred places of Kapila are often part of greater sacred complexes. The particular places in which Kapila is said to have stayed are called Kapilatīrtha, Kapilāśrama, Kapilāhrada or Kapiladhārā, but these names are not the names of the greater sacred complexes. Several of these places are of Pan-Indian or larger regional significance: Gaṅgā Sāgara, the place where the river Gaṅgā enters the Indian ocean; Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh at the foot of the mountain that leads to Tirumala, the place in India which receives the greatest number of pilgrims annually; Kolāyat in Rajasthan, Amarkaṇṭaka where the Narmadā river begins in Madya Pradesh; Vārāṇasī, at the last stop on the Pañcakrośī pilgrimage, and Sidhpur in Gujarat. Tradition relates that Kapila enjoyed the natural beauty of many of these places and therefore selected them as sites for his *tapas*.

Kapila pilgrimage sites are surrounded by natural beauty and associated with water. In Hindu tradition, *tīrtha*s are traditionally held to be sacred on three grounds: because the locality has some striking features of natural beauty, because of some extraordinary features in a place associated with water, or because a sage stopped at a place in order to perform *tapas*, take a bath, etc. (Saraswati 1984: 37). There is a conception among the *saṃnyāsins* who worship Kapila that he was fond of beautiful nature.[4] This might be

because yoga, according to the Hindu tradition, is to be performed in places that are pleasing to the mind. *Āśramas* are described in the classical Indian literature as places of natural beauty. All the sacred places of Kapila are associated with water in the form of waterfalls, rivers or streams, or lakes or tanks. This might have several reasons. Firstly, Kapila is associated with the coming to earth of the river Gaṅgā. He is the person who informed Sagara's relatives that only the water of the Gaṅgā was pure enough to save the souls of the sons of Sagara. According to the sacred narratives, therefore, he knew very well the salvific power of water. Secondly, Kapila is associated with *mokṣa*, and water is considered to have the purifying quality of releasing humans from moral impurity. In the *Māhātmyas* of some of the sacred places associated with Kapila, the purifying quality of water is emphasized. The miracles associated with the places occurred because of Kapila performance of *tapas* at the places, but it is bathing in the water or circumambulating the sacred watertank that is the immediate cause.

At some Kapila pilgrimage sites, *gayāpārvaṇaśrāddha*, a ritual to provide salvation for ancestors, is performed. Although Bhardwaj (1983), in his discussion of the purposes of pilgrimage, categorizes *śrāddha* as a life-cycle ritual, the purpose of *śrāddha* is to gain a better rebirth or salvation. The performance of *śrāddha* rituals therefore harmonizes with the main purpose of the Kapila pilgrimage. One of the most interesting places associated with Kapila is Sidhpur in Gujarat. Sidhpur is a place to perform *gayāpārvaṇa-śrāddha* to the female ancestors, that is, to one's mother, to perform the *matṛgayāpārvaṇaśrāddha*. The rituals performed here are closely connected with the sacred narratives about Kapila. It therefore exemplifies the close link between the narrative, the ritual and space in the sacred geography of Kapila.

Sidhpur in Gujarat

The sacred city of Sidhpur (also called Siddhapura, Siddhapada, Siddhakṣetra, previous to 1200 the name was Śrīsthal[5]) in Gujarat, close to the town Patan and between Palanpur and Mahesana, is a significant pilgrimage centre and one of the most important places in the sacred geography of Kapila. It is a place for the performance of *srāddha* rituals for dead mothers. Sidhpur is to the female ancestors what Gayā, Prayāg or Vārāṇasī

4 Hanuman Baba, Mahānirvāṇī Akhāṛā, Kankhal, personal communication.

5 Śrīsthala is mentioned in *Skanda Purāṇa*. The first historical reference to the place was made by Alberuni in his diary. The name Sidhpur is usually explained by referring to Jayasimha Sidhraj (d. 1143) who completed the great temple in the town, Rudramahālaya. The name Sidhpur was given in his honour.

are to the males. Sidhpur is *matṛgayā*, the mother's Gayā. To perform *gayāpārvaṇaśrāddha* for the mother and female ancestors, many Hindus go to Sidhpur. In Sidhpur, the *matṛgayāpārvaṇaśrāddha* is to be performed at the Kapilāśrama, Kapila's *āśrama*, two miles west of Sidhpur. Sidhpur is believed, by worshippers of Kapila, to be Kapila's birthplace but especially the place where he gave the Sāṃkhya teaching to his mother Devahūti.[6]

At the pilgrimage centre Kapilāśrama there are temples to several gods, but the main ritual is linked to only one of the temples. In this temple are statues of Kapila, his mother Devahūti, his father Kardama and Viṣṇu. This temple is next to Bindusarovar, one of three sacred waters here. The Sanskrit text *Siddhapura Māhātmya*, a text of 114 verses and of unknown date, identifies the place where Kapila gave the truth of Sāṃkhya to his mother as the water tank of Bindusaras or Bindusarovar in Sidhpur.[7] According to the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, the water tank is a tear of compassion from Viṣṇu (3.21.38), but the oral tradition of Sidhpur told to pilgrims explains that the water in the Bindosarovar is the tears of happiness of Devahūti on having realized *mokṣa*. *Siddhapura Māhātmya* says that on realizing the highest, pure drops of tears flowed from Devahūti's eyes (20).

The *Siddhapura Māhātmya* is formed as a conversation between Kapila and his mother Devahūti. The drawing on the first page of the printed edition pictures the child Kapila in conversation with Kardama and Devahūti. The author of the *Siddhapura Māhātmya* first pays homage to the gods and his own teachers (1–5), next mentions some teachers of Sāṃkhya (6), and then describes Kapila

> *kapilo vipulas teśu sāṃkhyācāryo mahāmuniḥ*
> *kevalaṃ vāsudevāṃśo devahūtyām ajījanat (7)*
>
> Kapila the great sage, the teacher of Sāṃkhya, who was well known among them and who was exclusively a part of Kṛṣṇa, was born of Devahūti.[8]

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6 These episodes in the life of Kapila are told in the *Kapilagītā* of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* (3.21–33). In this text the place identified as the *āśrama* is called Bindusaras on the bank of the river Sarasvatī. It is described as a beautiful place with all kinds of trees, birds, wild animals and renunciants. The place where the mother attained *mokṣa* or *brahmanirvāṇa* is according to the text called Siddhapada (3.33.31).

7 *Siddhapura (Siddhapada) Māhātmya*. This Sanskrit text is 135 printed pages. Part one is the conversation between Kapila and his mother Devahūti. Part two is the *Matṛgayāpārvaṇaśrāddham*. *Siddhapura (Siddhapada) Māhātmya* is 38 printed pages with 114 verses in Sanskrit with a Gujarati translation in *devanāgarī* script. The text is composed as a conversation between Devahūti and Kapila. Much of the text is a description of the sacred complex of Sidhpur and Mount Abu.

8 The translations from the Sanskrit texts are by the author.

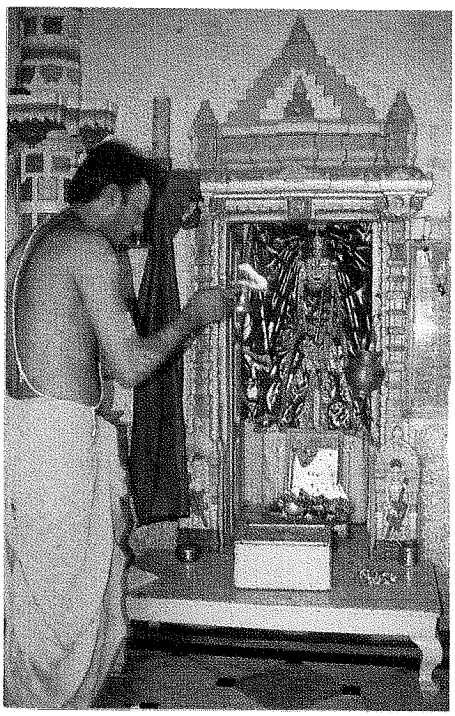

Figure 1. Worship of Kapila at the Kapil mandir in Sidhpur.

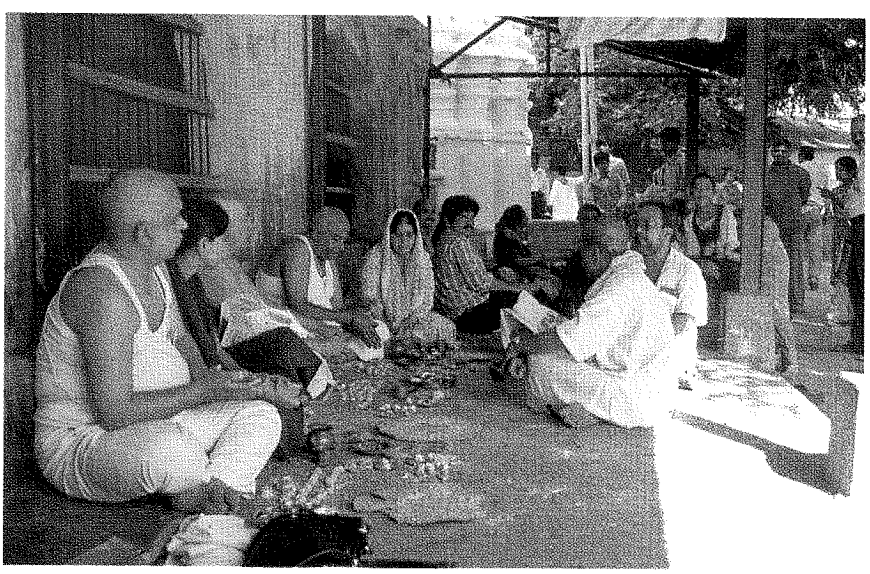

Figure 2. The ritual offering of *piṇḍas* (rice-balls) to dead mothers at the Kapilāśrama in Sidhpur.

That Kapila is an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu/Kṛṣṇa is stated in the *Kapilagītā* of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and is an accepted doctrine in the *Purāṇas*. The philosophy of many of the Vaiṣṇava schools of theology is theistic Sāṃkhya. It is therefore not surprising that Kapila should be considered an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu (Jacobsen 1998). This Kapila arrived in Sidhpur, started to perform *tapas* and reached the highest state (8–9). His mother Devahūti then came to Kapila. She told him to marry since this is considered right according to the *śāstras*. Kapila answered that the only purpose of his birth was to give *mokṣa* to his mother (*mātarmukti*) (15) and that there can be no *mokṣa* without knowledge. This knowledge involves especially the giving up the notion of the self with respect to the body (18). After hearing that, Devahūti attained the highest (19) and thereupon pure drops of tears flowed from her eyes (20). She said:

vande bindusarovaraṃ ca kapilaṃ sāṃkhyādhipaṃ yoginaṃ siddhaṃ siddhapadaṃ puraṃ sukṛtināṃ kaivalyamokṣapradam,
gaṅgā yatra sarasvatī priyatamā prācī jagatpāvinī māta mātṛgayā sadā vahati yā pāpāpahā puṇyadā (21).

I offer my namaskār to the pond Bindusarovar, to the perfect yogin Kapila, the leader of Sāṃkhya, to the city called Siddhapada which is the city of learned people and which grants *mokṣa* in the form of *kaivalya*, in which city Gaṅgā Sarasvatī, dearest Prācī, which is instrumental in purifying the whole universe, the mother Matṛgayā, which is the killer of sins and grants merit, always flows.

sāṃkhyācāryamahāmuniḥ kṛtayuge svādhyātmaniṣṭhārataḥ prakhyātaḥ kapilo hi kardamasutaḥ siddhaś ca siddhāśrame,
tīrthaṃ bindusarovaraṃ ca sumahadvijñānadīpojjvalaṃ kṣetraṃ mātṛgayeti siddham iti yatkhyātaṃ trilokeṣv api (22).

In the *kṛtayuga*, Kapila who was the teacher of the Sāṃkhya philosophy and a great sage, was constantly with complete confidence engaged in his own philosophy of realizing *ātman*. He was known as the son of Kardama and a perfect person. In that place leading to perfection there is a sacred place named Bindusarovar which is shining with a lamp in the form of extremely great knowledge, a place leading to perfection named Mātṛgayā which is well known.

At the place where Devahūti attained *mokṣa*, *matṛgayāpārvaṇaśrāddha*, the ritual of offering *piṇḍas* (rice-balls) to dead mothers should take place. The *gayāpārvaṇaśrāddha* ritual has the same function as the transference of merit (*puṇya*) to the dead in Buddhism, and is one of the causes of salvation in Hinduism. By means of the *gayāpārvaṇaśrāddha* ritual the dead can be secured a better rebirth on earth, the attainment of heaven or *mokṣa*. After

stating that the Mātṛgayā is the cause of *mokṣa*, the *Siddhapura Māhātmya* states: "In the great ocean of *saṃsāra* innumerable women have been my mothers since I have had many previous births in different classes of beings" (24). The text thereafter celebrates the sacred area of Sidhpur and the different gods and goddesses associated with Sidhpur and the surrounding area.

The *matṛgayāpārvaṇaśrāddha* ritual in Sidhpur these days has five parts. Previously it also included a bath in the river Sarasvatī, but this river has dried up due to the building of dams upstream and lack of rain. One hundred years ago the riverbank was crowded with *āśramas*, today the buildings are empty and decayed. A new modern cremation facility called Mokṣadān, which uses water from tube wells for cooling and for fountains, was recently opened next to the riverbank. The ritual bathing that previously took place on the banks of Sarasvatī has been moved to Kapilāśrama. This has shortened the ritual. It previously took two days but now lasts only one. The ritual involves cutting of the hair, bathing in the Bindusarovar, the sacrifice of sixteen *piṇḍas*, taking water from the Bindusarovar on the pipal tree and *darśan* in the Kapil mandir, and payment to the brahmins.

With each of the 16 *piṇḍas* (rice balls) given, a different Sanskrit *śloka* in the simple *anuṣṭubh* meter is repeated. This collection of *ślokas*, called *Mātṛṣodaśī*, expresses the different types of pain and sorrow a son may feel he has caused his mother to suffer. The verses seem to express feelings of guilt. They show that one function of the ritual is to relieve the son of guilt. For each *piṇḍa* that is offered, the son asks to alleviate a particular suffering the mother experienced in performing her duty of reproduction. These include the suffering a mother feels for not giving birth to a son, the suffering of the physical pain of pregnancy, the suffering of giving birth when the baby is placed wrongly in the uterus, the disgusting taste of the medicines she had to take, the death of the mother in childbirth, pain during the son's childhood, and finally the pain of fear the mother feels at death's door.[9] The sixteenth and final verse says:

> *yasmin kale mṛtā mātā gatis tasyā na vidyate*
> *tasya niṣkramaṇārthāya mātṛpiṇḍaṃ dadāmy aham*
>
> For the mothers that have died now, and for those that have no liberation, for the alleviation [of their punishments] I offer this *piṇḍa* to my mother.

According to some sources,[10] the story of Paraśurāma, who had cut off the head of his mother, Reṇukā, is the foundation story of the *matṛgayāpārvaṇa-*

9 *Matṛgayāpārvaṇaśrāddham*, constitutes pp. 39–135 of the printed text *Siddhapura (Siddhapada) Māhātmya*. The sixteen verses are printed on pp. 112–13.

10 *Gujarat State Gazetteers: Mehsana District* (Ahmedabad: Government of Gujarat, 1975) p. 830; Śāstrī 1884.

śrāddha ritual in Sidhpur. By bathing in the Bindusarovar and using its water in the *śrāddha* ritual, Paraśurāma was purified from the guilt of killing his mother. However, Paraśurāma is not mentioned in the *Siddhapura Māhātmya*, and the Paraśurāma story does not explain why the water of the Bindusarovar has this salvific function. The power of Kapilāśrama in Sidhpur, the reason the *matṛgayāpārvaṇaśrāddha* takes place here, is that Kapila previously performed *tapas* and saved his mother at this place. Next to the pond of Alpasarovar in Sidhpur is a statue of Paraśurāma, reminding the visitors of this sacred narrative, but there is no regular *pūjā* to the statue. *Pūjā* is performed to the *mūrtis* of Kapila, Kardama, Devahūti and Viṣṇu in the Kapilāśrama.

The figure of Paraśurāma personifies the feeling of guilt towards the mother. The Kapila story has a different function. Kapila personifies the son's wish and ability to grant *mokṣa* to the mother. Paraśurāma was able to get rid of his own guilt, but Kapila was able to save another person, his own mother. In the *matṛgayāpārvaṇaśrāddha* ritual the son is able both to get rid of his guilt, as exemplified in the story of Paraśurāma, and give *mokṣa* to his mother as exemplified in the story of Kapila. The verses recited in the *piṇḍadāna* ritual express the feeling of guilt, but the stated purpose of the ritual is to give *mokṣa* to the mother. The son is made to feel like Paraśurāma and achieves the same as Kapila.

The story of Gayā, that Rāma offered *gayāpārvaṇaśrāddha* there to save his father Daśaratha, has a parallel to the Kapila story. In the same way as Rāma saved his father by performing *srāddha*, Kapila saved his mother by giving her the Sāṃkhya teaching. He becomes a model, however, not for teaching philosophy to the mother, but on a more general level, to save her. The means available for a son to save his mother is the performance of *matṛgayāpārvaṇaśrāddha*.

The story of Kapila giving *mokṣa* to his mother has become paradigmatic for those wishing to help their mothers in their afterlife and persons come to Sidhpur from all over India (but especially from Gujarat, Rajasthan and Maharashtra) to achieve what Kapila once did. The appearance of the mother in a dream might be interpreted as a reason for going to Sidhpur and this might happen many years after the mother has died.[11] Some persons are told to go there by spiritual advisors in order to cure a sick member of the family. The disease, they are told, is caused by the dead mother's inability to attain *mokṣa*.

The sacred complex of Sidhpur illustrates the close connection between the sacred narratives about Kapila and the rituals performed at the pilgrimage centres. This is a significant feature of the sacred places devoted to Kapila. The story of Kapila in Sidhpur functions to make credible the pro-

11 Interviews with visitors, November 2000.

mises of this pilgrimage site. The promise is that the place itself has the power to remove moral impurity and grant *mokṣa* when the correct rituals are performed. Since Kapila was a giver of *mokṣa*, his previous presence in Sidhpur has given permanent salvific power to the place.

Conclusion

The close connection between the sacred narratives and the rituals performed at the pilgrimage centre is a significant feature of the sacred places devoted to Kapila. At every place of pilgrimage to Kapila there are narratives about him which account for the sacredness of the place. These narratives belong to the geography of Hindu India as much as to the mythology of the Hindu tradition. The life history of Kapila is engraved in a sacred landscape. The place where Kapila was born, the place where he gave the sacred knowledge of ultimate reality to his mother, the different places where he performed *tapas*, the place where he killed the sons of King Sagara are all part of India's imagined landscape. The promise of the Kapila pilgrimage sites is that these places have power in themselves to remove moral impurity and grant *mokṣa* to the pilgrims. The sacred narratives of Kapila function to make this promise trustworthy.

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MARJA-LIISA KEINÄNEN

Religious Ritual Contested*

Anti-religious Activities and Women's Ritual Practice in Rural Soviet Karelia

After the October Revolution, the Bolsheviks sought to establish a new atheistic order which would eradicate from the public consciousness all vestiges of "religious prejudices", which were regarded as a residue from the imperial era and an instrument used to exploit the masses. Even though it was generally held that religion would automatically disappear from socialist society when its material precondition, the class society, was abolished, the regime made concentrated efforts to speed up the process by means of virulent anti-religious propaganda. The ultimate goal was to wipe out the persistent remains of the bourgeois system of values (Lahtinen 1991: 68). No force was to be used since it was feared this would merely offend the religious sentiments of the people and strengthen their adherence to religion. Theoretically, the ultimate goal was to be achieved through education and information, but in practice, anti-religious activities were at times quite brutal. These attacks were successful in curtailing the activities of religious institutions in Karelia, but did not bring to an end the religious practices of lay people, which were continued, in one form or another, throughout the entire Soviet period. One fundamental reason for the survival of religious rituals, both Christian and indigenous, was the fact that they were so deeply embedded in people's consciousness and intimately integrated with their everyday lives. Every important phase and turn in human life was sanctified by rituals. The goal of the present paper is to examine what forms anti-religious attacks took in Soviet Karelia and how people reacted to them. I will focus on the attacks against the very fundaments of the ritual complex of the church and, by extension, on the effects of these attacks on the indigenous ritual complex, which co-existed in parallel with that of the "official" religious institutions.

The two fundaments of Orthodox liturgy were the sanctification of time and human life. The smallest temporal cycle was the day, structured by Matins and Vespers. The next, larger, cycle was the week, which commemo-

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rated important events in the history of Christian salvation. Finally the greatest cycle, the church year, which, with its fasts and feast days (*prazdniks*), commemorated and celebrated holy persons and major events in the history of Christian salvation (Sidoroff 1988: 42ff.; Piiroinen 1984b: 94ff.). Religious holidays and festivals were not only an intellectual commemoration of holy events, but were also a re-experience of sacred history. As Per-Arne Bodin has pointed out, these events took place once in the past, but also in *nunc aeternitatis*, eternal now. Many of the Orthodox hymns describe biblical events in the present tense, repeating the keyword "now". (Bodin 1993: 16f.)

The turning-points in the agricultural year were tied to the church calendar, which had assimilated the pre-Christian seasonal calendar. An individual's life cycle was also intimately linked to the course of the church calendar. Everyone was named after the saint whose day was closest to their birthday and this saint served as the person's heavenly guardian. Moreover, human life was sanctified by the sacraments: baptism, Chrismation, the Eucharist, Repentance and Holy Matrimony etc. These sacraments, together with the indigenous rites of passage, divided the human life span into different phases.

As the sanctification of time and human life were the very fundaments of Orthodox ritual practice, I will focus on the anti-religious attacks which aimed at annihilating these fundaments. First, I will discuss anti-religious actions aimed at abolishing sacred time-reckoning, which underlay the ritual system of the church, and actions aimed at abolishing the religious rituals and festivals which were tied to the sacred calendar. The "rites of fasting and feasting" must have been particularly provocative to anti-religious activists since they could be seen as a public manifestation of people's commitment to a competing and forbidden system of values. According to Catherine Bell, "in these rituals, people are particularly concerned to express publicly – to themselves, each other, and sometimes outsiders – their religious commitment and adherence to basic religious values" (Bell 1997: 120). The function of religious feasts as a manifestation of the participants' adherence to religion was accentuated when the observance of religious holidays came under attack. In a corresponding manner, the Communists manifested their atheistic stance by working on the religious holidays.

Second, I will examine the attacks directed against sacred space, which served as the *locus* of ritual performance and celebration of religious feasts. The chapels and churches, which were the concrete bases for church rituals and religious feasts, were seen by the authorities as centres of potential resistance and were therefore to be confiscated or closed down.

A third factor, vital to the survival of ritual traditions, was, of course, the existence of ritual specialists. Through the so-called "parasite laws"

the clergy were deprived of their civil rights. Priests, not being considered workers, were defined as *kulaks* and were deported in great numbers during the first wave of de-kulakisation (Conquest 1986: 203). With the deportation of religious specialists, women found an increasingly important role as ritual leaders both in Soviet Karelia and elsewhere in the Soviet Union. Consequently, the third goal of the present study is to view the reallocation of ritual roles after the deportation of the clergy with the special focus on the performance of rites of passage.

Women's ritual roles and people's reactions to the anti-religious campaigns will be studied within the wider framework of folk religion, which was a conglomerate of popular orthodoxy, Old Belief and indigenous religion. We may say that folk religion and its rituals, by its very existence and persistence, contested the official atheistic policy.

The sources

I have studied the anti-religious campaigns in Karelia during the 1920s and 1930s from material published in the Soviet Karelian newspapers *Karjalan Kommuuni* (the "Karelian Commune", abbreviated KK), which was later renamed *Punainen Karjala* ("Red Karelia", abbreviated PK). These Finnish-language papers reflect the official ideology and view on religion of the time and, to some degree, give us a glimpse of the contemporary religious situation in Karelia. We can also read indirectly and directly about people's reactions to the anti-religious campaigns, but we must bear in mind that this publication was an official instrument of anti-religious propaganda and therefore gives a somewhat distorted picture of these reactions. According to these papers, various anti-religious campaigns were initiated at the spontaneous request of the people, but we know that this was seldom true.

Literature published by Finns who worked in occupied areas of Karelia during the War of Continuation (1941–44) gives us a further insight into people's reactions to the anti-religious order.

I have also used folkloristic data, relying primarily on the archive collections in Helsinki and Petrozavodsk, to study people's reactions to anti-religious activities. A further important source for this study are the publications by Karelian and Finnish folklorists who conducted fieldwork in Karelia during and after the Soviet period. Yet another source are the field interviews I have conducted with about forty women who were born between the years 1909 and 1937. Their life-spans cover almost the entire Soviet period and give us valuable information about the popular religious practices of the period.

The abolition of sacred time

Sacred time pulsated in cycles of various lengths. The day, the weekly calendar and the church year repeated the history of Christian salvation. Wednesday and Friday were fast days as a commemoration of Christ's suffering. Karelian weekdays were divided into "sacred" days, fast days (*pyhä*) and non-fast days (*argi/arki*). *Pyhä* in Karelian, besides denoting "holy", also meant "fast". On such days a believer had not only to keep to a particular diet but, at least in earlier periods, abstain from sexual intercourse. Sunday, which was not a fast day, was dedicated to the resurrection of Christ and was called the "holy day" (*pyhäpäivy/pyhäpäivä*) (Jetsu 2001: 158f.).

An important step towards the elimination of sacred time-reckoning was the prohibition of the observance of the Sabbath. The authorities sought to achieve this by abolishing the seven-day week and in the wake of collectivisation, a "continuous" five-day calendar was introduced. This extreme measure was never accepted, and in 1940 the seven-day week, with Sunday as an official day of rest, was reintroduced (Pospielovsky 1988: 56f., 71, 91). According to Elisabeth Wood's study, older women in particular had opposed the introduction of the five-day week (Wood 1997: 211).

The annual calendar also revolved around events in the life of Christ and the Mother of God as well as numerous saints. Each church and chapel was dedicated to a certain holy person or to an event in their lives and days dedicated to these persons or events were celebrated with *prazdnik* feasts. A number of villages formed a *prazdnik* network and *prazdnik* gatherings were important social events, especially for the young who often found their marriage partners at these festivals. The celebration of church holidays was also forbidden and a shift to a secular feast calendar initiated.

At the beginning of the 1920s, the authorities attempted to propagate against religious holidays by subjecting them to ridicule in dramas arranged by the Komsomol at the time of major church holidays. Anti-religious festivals were also arranged in Petrozavodsk. These activities proved to be far too offensive, even to non-believers, and their public performance was discontinued. During the Kruschev period, similar types of campaigns were tested again (Laitila 1991: 48f.).

It was not only the ordinary people who "wandered in the darkness" who had difficulties abandoning the celebration of religious holidays. During the 1920s it was not uncommon for party and Komsomol members to observe religious holidays, choose a church wedding, baptise their children and attend church services (Young 1989: 135–42). An anonymous author expressed his or her dissatisfaction with the Finnish members of a communist youth organisation who attended church once a year on Easter

night. She or he complained that "many observe this custom more conscientiously than their duties to the Youth League".[1] In 1930 the collective "Our victory" was accused in the press of faithfully celebrating church holidays. According to the newspaper, the collectivists should be ashamed of themselves since they were expected to show a good example to private households.[2]

During the 1920s and 1930s, newspaper campaigns were initiated against religious celebration immediately prior to the major religious holidays, especially Easter and Christmas. The celebration of these holidays was challenged by specially arranged work campaigns. Working during a religious holiday came to serve as an anti-religious manifestation. After each holiday, *Punainen Karjala* published reports on the success or failure in deterring these religious celebrations, as well as the success of work campaigns and other alternative celebrations. After the Easter celebrations in 1930, the reading-room in Essoila, Olonets, was criticised for not having arranged any anti-religious activities for Easter. The same publication was pleased to report that the anti-religious Easter celebration at the Finnish pedagogical institute had been a great success, attracting a large audience.[3] In a later issue (no. 100), the discussion of the inefficient anti-religious activity of the reading-room in Essoila continued. This time the pseudonym "Jussi" accused the central reading-room for the Säämäjärvi region of negligence in its anti-religious work. According to "Jussi", they had not arranged the kind of entertainment which would attract young people. The audience had largely consisted of the organisers themselves, while the nearby church had been packed with people.

A more subtle method in the struggle against religious feasts was to change their religious content into a secular and political one. The religious content were not replaced by secular entertainment, but by a programme considered to be physically and intellectually edifying. A number of notices in *Punainen Karjala* inform us of how a traditional village feast was turned into "an occasion of enlightenment". In Kostamus, for instance, a sports competition and a soirée with a play were arranged on the day of the Mother of God. The festival was attended by 250 people from nearby villages.[4] Feasts with such political and edifying content were not found to be so attractive everywhere. In Nokeus, the village *soviet* had arranged a meeting on St George's (*Jyrinpäivä*) day, but, as the annoyed reporter writes, after three hours wait only three villagers turned up. Not even all the mem-

1 PK 1927, no. 45: 2.
2 PK 1930, no. 164: 2.
3 PK 1930, no. 96: 2.
4 PK 1927, no. 15 (103): 2.

bers of the council were present, but celebrated the day in the traditional manner.[5]

In order to speed up the abandonment of religious festivals, a new festival calendar was introduced in the Soviet Union, in which religious holidays were replaced by secular ones (see Lane 1981: 130–39). This, of course, was the same strategy the church had once employed when seeking to replace indigenous, "heathen" feasts with Christian festivals.

Religious sanctions against the violation of sacred time

The Soviet era brought two crucial changes in traditional time-reckoning. Firstly, it involved a shift from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar in 1918 and secondly, a shift from a religious calendar to a secular one. The former shift had been a pan-Orthodox topic of discussion at the beginning of the 20th century. I have very little source data for how people in Soviet Karelia reacted to these changes, but we may get some idea of their emotions if we examine how people in the Finnish side of the border reacted to the shift from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar. In spite of the fact that the clergy sought to convince the people that the change of calendar was merely a technical issue, the decision in 1921 to switch to the Gregorian calendar provoked strong opposition among parishioners in the Karelian Borders. Some parishioners justified their opposition with the claim that God only understood Russian and old time-reckoning. Some saw the change of calendar as tantamount to a change of faith (Hämynen 1995: 116ff.). An article in *Karjalan Kommuuni* indicates that popular reaction to the decision made by the synod in Moscow to switch to the Gregorian calendar in 1923 was far from calm. The paper reported somewhat triumphantly of people's disapproval. A "*kulak* peasant" was said to have complained that the "crooked priests had even sold the holidays to the Bolsheviks".[6] This brief survey clearly shows how deeply the traditional time reckoning was anchored in people's minds.

If the switchover to the Gregorian calendar initiated by the clergy caused such a storm of protest, it is easy to imagine what the reactions were to the Communist regime's rash and insensitive scheme to eliminate the religious calendar altogether. As the observance of holidays was reinforced by the strongest religious sanctions, we may assume that the people viewed the orders to work on holidays with the utmost horror.

Folklore sources stress that there were three special days ("Fridays") when people were not supposed to work: Good Friday, the eve of Pente-

5 PK 1927, no. 55: 2.

6 KK 1923, no. 95: 2.

cost and Ilja's (St Elijah) day.[7] There are a number of tales describing the kinds of punishment meted out to people who did not observe the prohibition against work on these particular days. Ilja, who had assumed some of the features and functions of the ancient Karelian god of thunder, was known in the popular traditions as a fierce being who would punish those who worked on his day. One source relates that hay gathered on Ilja's day was burned by the thunder.[8] Another source warns that anyone who desecrated Ilja's day could be struck dead. This is said to have actually happened in the village of Kormilisto, where it was claimed that Ilja killed a man who had made hay on the eve of his day. The narrator himself had been punished by Pedru (St Peter) for working on Petru's day. He and his wife had collected firewood in the forest and on that very same day a cow had died, a clear instance of the saint's revenge.[9]

Considering the harsh punishments for working on religious holidays, it is understandable that believers must have felt terrified when the shift was made, first to Gregorian, and then to the secular calendar. Those who chose to observe the holidays according to the new calendar were taking a great risk. According to a record from the village of Räimälä in Salmi, a farmer named Ojapelto and his wife were killed in the summer of 1934 because they had harvested rye on the "old" Ilja's day.[10]

An article in *Karjalan Kommuuni* shows that the change in the calendar caused chaos within the festival networks, since some villages retained the old feast calendar and some switched to the new.[11] The safest solution to the existence of different calendars during the transitional period was perhaps to follow them both, as was done in the village of Supuski on the coast of Murmansk – a nightmare for anti-religious activists. According to one correspondent, the village celebrated 160 annual holidays. Not only did the people celebrate the church festivals according to both calendars, as well as birth and name days, but also celebrated the new revolutionary feasts.[12] We may assume that Supuski was not the only village of this kind, but was representative of a common phenomenon in this transitional period.

The new secular feasts were introduced to replace religious festivals, but it seems that during a transitional phase people could integrate the new Soviet holidays into their religious calendar. Some sources indicate that the work-free time allowed by the Soviet feasts may have been inter-

7 Salmi: Martta Pelkonen < Anni Mikkilä, b. in Orusjärvi; SKS 1940: 298.

8 Tulomajärvi: Helmi Helminen < Akim Lomojev, b. 1874; SKS 1944: 3376.

9 Salmi: Martta Pelkonen < Johor Lammas; SKS 1940: 411.

10 Salmi: Martta Pelkonen < Outti Feodorantytär; SKS 1935–40: 372. Also < Johor Lammas; SKS 1940: 410.

11 KK 1923, 95: 2. Cf. Hämynen 1995: 118.

12 PK 1928, no. 43: 2.

preted in terms of the observance of the Sabbath. Indeed, the official proclamation of the "Revolutionary holidays and special days of rest" specifically stipulated that it was forbidden to work on major holidays, such as New Year's day, the first of May etc.[13] An informant from Porajärvi maintains that during the "*kolhoz* era" the first of May was the only *prazdnik* which was celebrated. People were forbidden to work for three days, but had to work twice as much at Easter.[14] A newspaper notice indicates that the religious sanctions for failing to observe the Sabbath could also come to embrace the celebration of the first of May. A headline in *Punainen Karjala* declared ironically that "Even God has acknowledged the first of May as a holiday". According to the article, an old woman in Tumtsa got a headache after working on the First of May, which she interpreted as a supernatural punishment for having worked on a holiday. "It seems that God looks upon the first of May as a holiday as well, since he gave her a headache for her sin", the writer concludes sarcastically.[15]

In spite of the massive campaigns against religious celebrations, people held on to their feasts for quite some time, but, as Pekka Hakamies' survey shows, collectivisation seems to have been the crucial turning point for the decline of traditional village culture. People celebrated their *prazdniks* until the villages were collectivised (Hakamies 2000: 283). By inhibiting people's free movement, collectivisation contributed to the breakdown of the social networks which underlay the inter-village *prazdnik* celebrations. By regulating work schedules, the working collective could hinder people from taking part in festivals in other villages. A folklore record from Porajärvi mentions that the so called *ativo* visits, which were an important part of these celebrations, ceased with the collectivisation of the villages.[16] The wars, the liquidation of "non-prosperous villages" and labour migration broke down the last remnants of the social network which was the foundation of the village feasts. After the Second World War, the ethnic composition of the villages changed and, as one of my informants put it, the newcomers did not know the local feast traditions while the festival networks were too weak to be able to integrate the newcomers.

Collectivisation struck a further hard blow at the celebration of *prazdniks*, since it often involved the closure of the local church or the chapel to which the feast quite concretely was tied.

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13 PK 1928, no. 12: 4.

14 Porajärvi, Jänkäjärvi: Helmi Helminen < Pero Ahtoinen, 95 yrs; SKS 1943: 1314.

15 PK 1930, no. 143: 2.

16 Porajärvi, Kuutamolahti: Helmi Helminen < Maša Kottarainen, 52 yrs; SKS 1943: 1293.

The abolition of ritual space

At the end of 1929 an intensive attack against churches was orchestrated, reaching its peak during the first months of 1930 (Conquest 1986: 203). A report from 1938 reveals that of the 594 churches in the Olonetsian episcopacy 539 had either been closed down or put to other use, allegedly "at the request of the workers" (Makkonen 1989: 67). Churches and chapels were turned into secular establishments, serving as schools, cinemas, cultural houses, public dining rooms etc. A new wave of closures took place during the Kruschev period (Pospielovsky 1988: 121–28).

In spite of the threat of arrest and deportation, protests were held throughout the Soviet Union against church closures. In some parts, women opposed both collectivisation and church closures in the so-called *bab'i bunty*, women's uprisings (Viola 1992: 189). No such uprisings took place in Soviet Karelia, where collectivisation proceeded relatively smoothly. However, judging from the contents of the newspapers, not all women in Karelia accepted the closing of their churches without dissent. That women, much more than men, could protest against these violations with impunity was perhaps due to the fact that they were not so readily regarded as anti-Soviet (cf. Viola 1992: 189).

A teacher, Siina Taulamo, writes that two woman from the village where she stayed had travelled to Moscow with an appeal for their church to be saved, but in vain. These women did not, however, accept the decision but fiercely opposed it, which later led to their arrest (Taulamo 1985: 49f.; see Järvinen 1998a: 57). Erkki Piiroinen, who worked as a priest in the occupied areas in Olonets, also mentions that two women, Katarina Fomkin and Maria Lukijeva from Suolusmäki, travelled to Moscow to plead to the president of the USSR for their church. Their journey did not succeed (Piiroinen 1984a: 101). On the other hand, the journey to Moscow by one Anna Antonovna in Solomanni was successful in preventing the church being turned into a clubhouse (Piiroinen 1984a: 55).

In some areas, where the churches and chapels had already been closed, women fought for their re-opening. One correspondent, who had travelled around the Karelian countryside, mainly in the Uhtua and Paatene regions, during the summer of 1927, maintains that there was not a single village, with the exception of Klyssinvaara, where there was a priest or an open church. The writer does report, however, that in some parishes there was a religious revival among the wealthy peasantry. In several places the peasants made demands for the re-opening of the church and the employment of a priest. These campaigns were often led by women, especially in Kiimasjärvi and Repola. In view of women's "backwardness", he found the situation worrying and urged men to explain to their wives and daughters the pointlessness of re-opening the churches.[17]

A newspaper article from February 1930 tells us that the conversion of the local church in Ruva into a club, led forty people, the majority of them women, to found a religious association. But, as the author wrote ironically, these women were illiterate and were not able to act as preachers. In their desperation the women apparently tried to force some members of the Youth League to take over this task, but, for obvious reasons, failed. The women's enterprise came to an end and they had to hand back their prayer house to the village *soviet*.[18]

Religious sanctions against the violation of sacred space and objects

In spite of the fact that Karelian peasants have often been described as only superficially Christian, their strong reactions to the closure of the churches and the deportation of their priests bear witness to a strong attachment to their religious institutions. The believers in Jeletjärvi were said to have complained that being without a chapel was like having lost an arm.[19] The pulling down of church bells and icons and the closure of the churches not only offended people's religious sentiments. These objects and places were associated with taboos which strictly regulated people's behaviour. Warning tales describing the dreadful punishments that would afflict the person who broke the taboo have functioned as sanctions for certain religious norms, such as observation of the Sabbath or the showing of respect to sacred space and objects (Jauhiainen 1998: 213ff.). In anti-religious Soviet Karelia, the importance of these tales as the affirmation of religious belief grew in importance.

A popular narrative theme, which constantly re-occurred in my interviews, was the supernatural punishment which was meted out to party functionaries and administrators who had participated in the violations of sacred places and objects. It was a commonly held belief that God, the patron saint of a church or a chapel, or the personified building itself, could punish those who did not show it due respect. For this reason, people may have been frightened to visit public buildings which had originally been churches or chapels. *Punainen Karjala* reports that old women in a village did not like to go to the "Red Corner", the cultural club, since it had originally been a chapel.[20] We may assume that dances arranged in a club house which had been a church were seen as extremely sacrilegious.

17 PK 1927, no. 4: 2; no. 40: 3 and no. 49: 2.

18 PK 1930, no. 45: 3.

19 PK 1927, no. 88: 3.

20 PK 1930, no. 97: 2.

A common theme in my Olonetsian interviews was that the Communists who destroyed or stole church property were the objects of God's vengeance. A woman who is in charge of a small chapel dedicated to the Mother of God told us of the dreadful punishments which struck those who had desecrated the chapel during Soviet rule. She claimed that, one summer, sixteen cows on the local *sovhoz* had been struck by lightning as revenge for the fact that the chapel towels had been taken to the cowshed. These towels were originally given to the chapel as votive gifts by the local people. She further related that the chairman of the village *soviet* and the chairman of the *kolhoz*, the two most powerful men in the village, had demanded that her father, who at that time was the elder of the chapel, should give them the chapel's money. The men took "God's money" and drank it up, but they did not have to wait long for their punishment. Both of the men became sick and were admitted to hospital. Even although they performed the customary rite of apology, God was implacable: the men were doomed to die.[21]

These tales not only communicated the threat of punishment for violation of the chapel and sacred objects, but also provided the narrators with concrete proof of the existence of an omniscient and omnipotent God, which the godless rulers denied. The idea communicated by the tales that violations against sacred time and space were punished by the supernatural provided the outraged but powerless people with a sense that justice would be served. The unjust rulers could apparently avoid the legal, secular punishment, but they could not escape the wrath of God. The countless tales of supernatural revenge wreaked upon party officials and the leaders of the *kolhoz* gave the people some consolation by verifying that evil will be punished, not only in the afterlife, but in this one. These tales, which seem to have been a quite vital tradition, functioned as a safety valve by which people could ventilate their strong feelings of anger and frustration.

With the closing of churches and chapels, the central ritual arena was lost. These buildings, however, were not the only public sacred space. Cemeteries were also important cultic places and continued to be so throughout the entire Soviet period. As Juha Pentikäinen has quite correctly observed, after the closure of churches and the deportation of priests, religion moved to the cemeteries, where women kept it alive (1990: 33f.).

Continuity and change in women's ritual practice during the Soviet period

When institutionalised religion was under attack and the clergy had more or less disappeared from the rural areas, laypersons, at least for a time,

21 Vieljärvi: Marja-Liisa Keinänen and Pekka Hakamies, video-tape 1998.

took over the performance of certain religious rituals (Young 1989: 228). In Karelia this was facilitated by the fact that people had been quite self-sufficient in religious matters even in pre-Revolutionary times. Heikki Makkonen has noted that in remote villages in the Karelian Borders only served irregularly by the clergy, people followed the church traditions unaided (1989: 128). Moreover, the Orthodox tradition has always emphasised the layperson's role in the performance of spiritual duties (cf. Koukkunen 1983: 124). The division of ritual duties between the lay functionaries largely followed the gender-based division of labour and the allocation of authority in the community. Ritva Saarikivi's study, which covers the Salmi region[22] before the Second World War, indicates that men, quite expectedly, occupied the positions of authority in parish matters. They sat on the parish council and acted as chapel elders. Men were also in charge of Vespers and the duties of the lector (Saarikivi 1974: 86ff.; Koukkunen 1983: 124). Even though no women in Salmi held the office of lector or psalmist, they did in fact often perform these duties, especially in remote villages. Saarikivi's study shows, moreover, that there were some women in the Salmi area who had acted as cantors and that women were particularly active as choir members (1974: 72–85ff.). In addition, women were in charge of the cleaning and decoration of the chapel with flowers and embroidered towels. There were women who specialised in baking the Host (Saarikivi 1974: 62–72). When the need arose, elderly women took charge of family rites, for instance, administering emergency baptisms.

The Orthodox tradition of active lay participation in church services and ceremonies had provided the people with the knowledge required to carry out religious ritual during the Soviet rule, when the clergy was no longer there to perform these ceremonies. Makkonen's study of the pre-war Karelian borderlands shows that elderly people in particular mastered the prayers, hymns and the liturgical order and the blessing of the dead and could even guide the priest in the performance of these rituals if the need arose (1989: 76). A rural dean had once interrupted the evening service in Vegarus in order to attend a dying parishioner and discovered on his return that one Grandma Akuliina had continued the service, reading both the cantor's and the priest's lines. The dean was amazed that this illiterate woman knew the texts and the liturgy of the evening service by heart (Makkonen 1989: 129).

People's religious self-sufficiency in pre-Revolutionary Karelia was further enhanced by the relatively large number of priestless Old Believers, who did not accept all the sacraments of the church and who had their own ritual specialists (Laitila 1995: 314f.). Among Old Believers, women could function as preachers, could baptise, and could conduct funeral cere-

22 The Salmi region covers here, besides Salmi, the parishes of Korpiselkä, Suistamo, Suojärvi and Impilahti.

monies (Pentikäinen 1986: 20). A record from 1908 shows that the Old Believers in Tunkua were visited several times a year by two women from Voijärvi, Fokla and Jelena, who functioned as "kind of priests". They held services, buried the dead, baptised children and even determined the penance for those who had sinned. These women also charged for their services (*Karjalan Heimo* 1999: 135).

This self-sufficiency in ritual matters was further facilitated by the fact that, even prior to the October revolution, indigenous rites of passage were often regarded as more important than church rituals. Pertti Virtaranta, has pointed out, that the church played only a minor role in weddings in northern Karelia. A male *patvaska* and a female lamenter had the key role in the ceremonies, not the priest. The church wedding was performed when people found it convenient, either before or after the indigenous wedding ceremony. (Virtaranta 1958: 691.) According to customary law, marriage in northern Karelia acquired its legitimacy through the indigenous wedding ceremonies (Pentikäinen 1987: 198).

Both Old Believer and mainstream Orthodox women, played important roles as leaders of indigenous rites of passage. They acted as lamenters at weddings and funerals and, as birth assistants, performed the crucial rituals for the new-born, even baptising children. In rural areas, particularly in distant villages, the priest's role was apparently marginal, if not nominal. Vicar Sergei Okulov's description of a funeral ceremony in Sortavala at the end of the 1880s shows that the function of the priest could at times actually clash with that of the female lamenter. He complains that the lamenting women disturbed his performance of the service at the cemetery, and called for measures to be taken to put an end to the custom:

> How would the performance of the ceremony in the graveyard have turned out if I had permitted everyone to cry out aloud on their relatives' graves during the performance of the litany? It would have been impossible to hear the litany at all. Although none seemed to bother listening to it in any case. During the performance of the litany, people (mostly women) just peacefully chatted with one another, even by the graveside where the ceremony was being performed. They are accustomed to these practices and it is a monumental task to get them to stop. (Merikoski 1944: 52.)

Makkonen's study indicates that the priest was not always present at the wake, but if he was, he conducted the *panihida*. At funerals he conducted either the *panihida* or a litany. A priest could also attend the memorial feast (Makkonen 1989: 128, 136, 177). Since the deceased had to be buried three days after death, a priest was not always able to reach remote villages in time and the villagers buried their dead without him (Makkonen 1989: 143). Poverty hindered people in these villages from calling for a priest

since they were not able to finance his journey.[23] Baptisms were often delayed for the same reason and people had to wait until the priest made his regular visit to the village or was invited there by some wealthier farmer.[24]

Even though the functions of the priest at the rites of passage appear to be quite marginal when compared to the vast indigenous ritual complexes in pre-Revolutionary Karelia, we should not underestimate the significance of church rituals. At the beginning of the previous century, the church was clearly increasing its influence over the performance of rites of passage. The folklore sources indicate that a priest's blessings were regarded as crucial for the soul of the deceased to find peace (e.g. Paulaharju 1995: 142; Virtaranta 1958: 750, 756). One of Helmi Helminen's informants has asserted that the soul of the deceased would not be able to settle down if it had not been blessed by a priest, but would fly about like a bird.[25] Iivo Marttinen reports in 1912 that, in larger villages in northern Karelia, people were increasingly complying to the demands of the priests by holding the church wedding ceremony before the indigenous wedding ceremonies, as people did "elsewhere in the world".[26]

After the clergy were removed from the village scene during the first decades of Soviet power, women, who already had a relatively strong position as ritual leaders, expanded their field of ritual activity. When the last priest was taken away from the church of the Holy Cross in Petrozavodsk, women continued to perform those ceremonies which were permitted to lay people. Anna Antonovna performed services in the village of Solomanni. After the convent of Klemenitsky was closed, Sister Daria officiated at services in various parishes (Piiroinen 1984a: 18, 157f.). In 1930, *Aamun Koitto*, a journal for the Finnish-speaking Orthodox, published fragments of a letter by one Pelagia K. from Repola, in Soviet Karelia. Since there were no longer any priests in Repola and the women had obviously lost their struggle to re-open the church, she had written to a priest in Finland and asked him to pray for her and the others. She described her religiosity and her religious activities thus "Pelagia K. is a pious Christian. She baptises children, blesses the deceased and sells neck crosses to people" (*Aamun Koitto* 1930: 45).

In the following passage, I will examine more closely women's ritual practices in Soviet Karelia, in particular the rites of death and baptism, since these were the most viable of the religious rites of passage. Christel Lane's study shows that the wedding ceremony was the most readily accepted of the Soviet secular rituals. The secular name-giving ceremony and

23 *Aamun Koitto* 1907: 32.

24 E.g. Suistamo: Siiri Oulasmaa < Paraskeeva Makkonen; SKS E246: 205–08, 1959. Suojärvi: Lyyli Home; SKS 1979: 40.

25 "Ei ole asetustilaa vainajalla ennen 'pajatusta'" (Tulomajärvi: Helmi Helminen < Marfa Jeforov, b. 1873; SKS 1944: 3766).

26 Viena Karelia: I. Marttini MV:KTKKA 967: 157ff., 1912.

the secular funeral rituals never attained the same degree of popularity (Lane 1981: 247). In conclusion, I will try to identify some of the reasons for the survival of the religious rites of passage and for women's greater involvement in these rituals.

Women and the cult of ancestors

Among the agrarian Finno-Ugrian peoples, the living and the deceased members of a family formed an organic unit. This means that death did not lead to non-existence, but was merely a transition from the community of the living to the community of the ancestors (Honko 1968: 153f.). The ancestor cult was based on reciprocal relations between the living and the dead. The dead were assumed to influence every human enterprise in either a negative or positive way (Paulaharju 1995: 209). The deceased functioned as upholders of tradition and ritual and as the guardians of the moral and social order (Honko 1968: 153, 162). These functions proved to be important for the continuation of ritual traditions during the Soviet era. Women, who by tradition had central ritual roles in the cult of ancestors, continued to communicate with the deceased by means of laments and dreams. As lamentation gradually declined in post-war Karelia, dreams became more important as a means of communication. According to Irma-Riitta Järvinen's survey, a central theme in women's dreams was the performance of ritual duties. The significance of the ritual and the importance of ritual compliance was reinforced through dreams and the deceased could even instruct the living on the proper performance of ritual (Järvinen 1998b: 306f.).

Lauri Honko has divided the rites which were the basis of the ancestor cult into rites at the moment of death, preparatory rites, funeral ceremony and commemorative feasts (1968: 154). Even here, the division of ritual roles between women and men largely followed the traditional gender-based division of labour, even though these rites were mostly performed by women (Jetsu 2001: 101). As several scholars have contended, the rites of death were an extension of women's daily activities as care-takers of their families (Nenola 1990: 500; Jetsu 2001: 104). Women usually washed the corpses, though in some areas this practice was gendered, with men usually washing male corpses and women female corpses (Paulaharju 1995: 92; Saarikivi 1974: 96). Women had prepared the burial outfit in advance and provided the deceased with the necessary religious objects. The deceased was to wear a cross round her or his neck, a headband, and an icon and carry a "passport", the vernacular term for a prayer card (Jetsu 2001: 192–200). It was the duty of the men to prepare the coffin, carry the coffin and dig and fill the grave. The performance of these preparatory rites was supervised by the keener.

Women's responsibility for these, the most important of rites, explains why the performance of ritual duties had such a central position in women's dreams. The dead upheld the ritual traditions by expressing their dissatisfaction if the preparatory rites had not been performed correctly. During the Soviet era the proper preparation of the deceased for her or his journey was not always practically possible. Women's deep feelings of guilt for having failed to perform their ritual duties is strongly present in my interviews as well as in those of my Finnish and Karelian colleagues. Well aware of their duty to ensure the journey of their family members and friends to the other world, women were at pains to provide the deceased with the necessary objects, for instance, the "passport". This was not an easy task, since there were no open churches where these objects were sold. As "Maria Nikitina" explained, the boundary between the two worlds ran by the gate in Tuonela and could not be crossed without a "passport". For Soviet citizens, who had to be prepared to show their passports even when travelling within their home republic, not to mention other parts of the country, it was unthinkable that a person could cross any border without adequate documents. Maria illustrates the importance of a "passport" by a tale which describes the fate of a deceased who was sent on his journey without a "passport". The deceased had appeared in a dream complaining that he was not allowed to join the others in the other world, because he did not have a passport and asked the dreamer to send him one.[27]

Another of my informants, "Sandra Ivanovna" (b. 1929), said laughingly that she had three passports: one domestic, one international for travelling to Finland with and one passport for the other world. The latter caused her some trouble since it was originally intended for her mother and she was not sure if it was "valid". Her sister, who lived in a town in Central Russia, where there was an open church, had sent the "passport" but it had not arrived in time for her mother's funeral (1980) and Sandra had decided to keep it for herself.[28]

Formerly, it was the keener who guided the soul of the dead to the other world. Complaining that people nowadays did not know how to lament properly, Maria says that "people used to say that you had to mourn for someone deceased with [at least] three words". This was important, since mourning signalled that "there was a newcomer at the gate" and was therefore the precondition for the proper reception of the deceased in the other world. She told another warning tale in which a woman who had not been mourned appeared in a dream to complain that, because of this negligence, she had not been properly received into the other world. The woman who had been responsible for mourning or for hiring a mourner defended herself in her dream by countering that they had dressed the

27 Vieljärvi: M-LK < woman b. 1916. Tape 12b, 1998.

28 Kiestinki: M-LK field notes, 1996.

deceased in the finest funeral attire. The deceased replied that the dress had indeed been fine, but reminded her that one was also supposed to say the "three words" to ensure that one's ancestors would meet the deceased at the gate. As the words had not been said, nobody met her at the gate and "the dogs of Kusma" tore her fine clothes to shreds.[29]

The Karelian lament researcher, Aleksandra Stepanova, has described the apprehension old women felt about their fate after death, when there were no longer any lamenters left to perform the obligatory dirges. They feared they might end up as placeless souls wandering about the other world. In order to ensure themselves a place among the ancestors, women would ask somebody to mourn for them, at least with a few words (Stepanova 1995: 142). When the tradition of ritual keening declined, old women took recourse to several strategies to avoid the fate of placeless souls. Some women composed their own funeral laments and dictated them to their relatives. One woman asked her daughter to read the laments at her funeral, while another recorded a keening on a tape recorder so that her relatives could play it at her funeral (Stepanova 1996: 225).

As mentioned earlier, after the clergy disappeared from the scene, women took over some of the functions of the priests at funerals. It seems that the dead could also legitimise women's taking over this priestly role. Helmi Helminen, who collected folklore in occupied Karelian areas during the Second World War, reports that the dead were said to complain that they were not let into the other world since they had not been blessed by a priest. One of Helminen's informants, Pero Ahtoinen, said that a dead person had appeared to her in a dream complaining that the gates to the other world were closed. The deceased had screamed for the doors to be opened, but no one answered the calls. It was only after Pero had prayed for the deceased in the graveyard that the gates were opened.[30]

Heikki Makkonen's study shows that in the towns of both Olonets and Suojärvi, women attended wakes more often than men (1989: 134). Women prayed for the soul of the deceased and sung psalms and, as Laura Jetsu's study shows, continued this tradition even during the Soviet period (2001: 185f.).

Women also continued commemorative traditions, playing important roles in commemoration feasts. An integral part of the commemoration of the deceased was to feed them regularly at the cemetery or at home in front of the icons. Memorial days with a communion meal were celebrated at regular intervals. It seems that the deceased protested if these commemorations were not observed, thus making sure that the traditions were upheld (Järvinen 1998b: 310f.).

29 Vieljärvi: M-LK < woman b. 1916. Tape 12b, 1998. (Cf. Paulaharju 1995: 209).

30 Porajärvi, Jänkäjärvi: Helmi Helminen < Pero Ahtoinen, 95 yrs, Putsila; SKS 1943: 1677.

Baptism

According to church regulations, the performance of baptism was the prerogative of a priest, but could be performed by any Christian person in cases of emergency, i.e. when it was feared that a new-born child might die. If the child survived, the priest completed the baptism by reading the necessary blessings and performing the Chrismation, i.e. the ointment with holy myrrh (Valmo 1935: 282). The folkloristic sources show that it was usually the birth assistant who performed emergency baptisms in pre-Revolutionary Karelia. Some old women were seen as specialists in the field. On the island of Lunkula in Salmi, one grandmother, Törrö, who acted as healer and keener, was often asked to perform an emergency baptism. She had even been blessed by a priest for this duty. Another grandmother, Brander, who mastered the baptismal prayers, conducted emergency baptisms in the village of Kanabro. These grandmothers, even those who had not been blessed by the priest, knew the ceremony and had learned the prayers at church (Saarikivi 1974: 28f.). On the island of Mantsi, where neonatal mortality was particularly high, there were a number of old women who performed emergency baptisms (Rouhola 1997: 79).

We may assume that in pre-Revolutionary Karelia women's role as baptisers had been particularly important in those villages which only received sporadic visits from a priest. It is quite possible that in these places emergency baptisms became the rule rather than the exception. Since many women only had a vague idea of the doctrine of baptism and the baptismal regulations, they may not have seen its performance as the exclusive prerogative of religious professionals. Vicar Sergei Okulov's report from the end of the 1880s to the bishop of St Petersburg indicates that this may indeed have been the case. In one village, a woman who Okulov presumed to be the local birth assistant asked him to baptise a child. Her idea of the priest's role at baptism seems to have been rather vague as she told Okulov that she had already christened the new-born and was now asking him to do what ever "babbling" he found necessary. Okulov emphasises that the woman's choice of words was not due to any lack of respect, but she was expressing her request innocently in pureness of heart. As far as she was concerned, the priestly ceremonies were nothing but "babbling" (Merikoski 1944: 52f.).

As mentioned earlier, women who adhered to the priestless Old Believers could act as baptisers, even though Pentikäinen mentions that the task was often passed on from father to son. The parish priest registered the births on his rounds and confirmed the baptism by anointing the child with myrrh, which the people disapproved of (Pentikäinen 1987: 109, 181). There is some data to indicate that this kind of "double baptism" was not unusual. Ustinja Tokareva (b. 1906) was originally baptised into the Is-

lander sect by a female baptiser and was given the name of Ustinja. She was later baptised by a priest and given the name of Fedoša. It seems that she did not discover her "official" name until she was grown-up and working in Kiestinki where she had checked the church ledger.[31] "Palaka Arhipova", who was born 1917 in Lakkijärvi, was also baptised twice, firstly by "old women" and secondly by a priest who was doing his usual rounds of the villages.[32]

The fact that there were women who were specialised in baptising children, came to be crucial for the continuity of baptismal practices after the Bolshevik take-over, when the clergy could no longer provide people with this service. Data concerning baptism and baptisers in Soviet Karelia is, for obvious reasons, quite scarce, but it seems that in places where there was still a priest or deacon available, women saw to it that their children or grandchildren were baptised by them (Stepanov 1987: 152). This was also the case elsewhere in the Soviet Union (Bridger 1987: 181). In those areas where there were no priests, children were often baptised by old women (Listova 1992: 127f.). Erkki Piiroinen, who served as a priest in the Ladoga area during the Continuation War, observed that the wealthy had had their children baptised in Leningrad or Petrozavodsk, where a few churches were still open, while the children of the poor either remained unbaptised or were baptised by some old woman (Piiroinen 1984a: 15). A Finnish nurse who worked in northern Karelia during the Continuation War mentions that "old pious birth assistant-grannies" performed emergency baptisms in secret and read their blessings over the "little heathens" (Lindroth 1972: 35f.). Also my interviews show that old women performed baptisms after the priests were gone. "Outi Petrovna", who was born in 1919 in the village of Nokeus not far from the Finnish border, says that as long as the border was open, a priest from the Finnish side visited the villages and baptised children. Three of her siblings were baptised by the visiting priest, but the rest were baptised by the local birth assistant who was a "believer in God".[33]

Baptismal practices follow a similar pattern in my southern Karelian interviews, although there, a visiting priest or an old deacon are also mentioned among the baptisers.[34] My informants explain the female predominance of baptisers by the fact that women, contrary to men, possessed the necessary knowledge, the ritual "know-how" necessary for officiating at the ceremony. In some cases it is evident that the baptisers were particularly devout and active in some religious sect.

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31 Kiestinki: N. Lavonen & N. F. Onegina IJALI 2214:13, 1975.

32 Knäzöi: M-LK < woman b. 1917, Lakkijärvi. Tape 5a, 1996.

33 Kiimasjärvi: M-LK < 1. woman, b. 1919 Nokeus; 2. woman, b. 1931. Tape 2b, 1999.

34 During the Finnish occupation, Finnish priests baptised children in the village.

Baptism was not the only rite of passage at childbirth and there were also important indigenous rites whereby women incorporated the newborn child into the family.

Summary: Women as upholders of ritual traditions

As Håkan Rydving has pointed out, it is important to examine religious change from the perspective of gender as the changes affect women and men differently (1993: 151). Indeed, we can discern a clear gender-specific pattern in religious acculturation in the Soviet Union. As men joined the Communist party and the anti-religious activists more frequently than women, it would be more accurate to talk about religious deculturation when depicting men's relationship to religion. Women, on the other hand, more often than men preserved their affiliation to religion, which was probably a great source of conflict at family level. It is interesting to note that the anthropologist William Christian has identified a similar gendered pattern in southern Europe during the Cold War. Men belonged to the militant Left, while women supported the religious Right and continued the performance of their religious duties within the family. (Christian 1984: 244.)

It is important to note that Karelian men, due to their greater mobility, were more subject to religious acculturation than women already in the pre-Soviet era. Seasonal labour migration brought them into contact with the cultural and religious traditions of their neighbours. Karelianist I. K. Inha, who travelled around Northern Karelia (Viena) in the year 1894, observed that it was largely women who maintained the Karelian language, customs and traditions, while men who travelled around in Finland as peddlers had assumed Finnish ways and ideas to a greater degree (Inha 1921: 396). A church report from 1908 in Tunkua complained that men who stayed a lot in Finland were indifferent to certain religious observances, neglecting for instance the fast (*Karjalan Heimo* 1999: 135). The Old Believer men who peddled in Finland also gave up their strict norm system earlier than women did (Pentikäinen 1987: 113). Young Northern Karelian men who travelled a lot in Finland viewed their indigenous practices with contempt and did not approve their family members' using spells (Vuoristo 1992: 124).

The continued religiosity of the women puzzled anti-religious activists and atheistic scholars and various kinds of explanations were offered to explain women's clinging to religion. Women's greater involvement in religious rituals was assumed to be due to their greater emotionality. Religious rituals simply appealed to emotional women more than to men. Some scholars argued that women suffered more during Soviet rule and there-

fore sought comfort in religion (Anderson 1993: 209). Women's suffering might, indeed, explain for instance the sudden renaissance of keening in some parts of the Soviet Union during the Second World War and the Afghan war (Honko 1994: 59), but is not a comprehensive explanation. At the end of the day, it was men who suffered more – they were persecuted or executed in greater numbers than women and it was largely men who were involved in revolts and fought the wars. Women who lost their husbands and sons could, indeed, express their despair through keening, although we should not view women and their practices merely in terms of deprivation, but rather examine these practices in a wider social and cultural context.

Furthermore, Soviet scholarship explained women's greater involvement in religion partly by their "backwardness", ignorance and lack of education, and partly through their social outsider status, which reinforced their psychological disposition to "dreaming" (Keinänen 1999: 153f.). As Soviet surveys show, the highest numbers of believers were found among poorly educated, elderly women who had worked at home as housewives (Bridger 1987: 178). We can agree with the Soviet analysts that women's "social outsiderhood" was indeed an important factor accounting for their continued religiosity. Women who stayed in the private sphere were not subjected to systematic political and anti-religious propaganda to the same degree as people who worked in public institutions. At home there was nobody, other than their husbands, to supervise and control their ideological purity.

Another important factor which facilitated women's perseverance in ritual traditions was the greater continuity in their social roles during the pre-Revolutionary and Soviet eras. Those ritual traditions which were closely intertwined to female duties, e.g. household duties involving childcare and care for other family members, or with female subsistence activities, e.g. cattle-raising, were more liable to survive. Women, whether they minded their own small cattle or that of the collective farm, could take recourse to traditional rites, for instance for healing cattle and protecting them against attacks from bears (Heikkinen 1994: 148ff.; Keinänen 1999: 162ff.).

The fact that women's ritual practices survived, at least to some degree, throughout the Soviet period, can probably be explained by these practices being an integral part of women's care for the well-being of their family members and friends. The secular Soviet rituals, on the other hand, dealt with the existential turning points in human life cycle in an impersonal and bureaucratic manner, focussing on the individual as an anonymous member of a collective, emphasising the individual's duties and rights as a Soviet citizen, and seeking to instil in the participants the proper Soviet values. A major reason for the secular ceremonies of name-giving and funeral only slowly gaining popularity among the people can be found in

their fundamental failure to give meaningful answers to basic existential questions, such as life, death and suffering. Quite contrary to the secular rites, women's traditions personalised and contextualised social transitions and placed them in a wider framework of meaning. We could characterise women's ritual domain in Susan Sered's words "as the arena in which the ultimate concerns of life, suffering, and death are *personalized*". Women's rituals deal with, "the lives, sufferings, and deaths of *particular* individuals". (Sered 1992: 32.) Unlike the secular rituals, women's rituals were designed to express and channel grief and suffering. Unlike women's traditions, the atheistic ideology could not offer any satisfactory answer to the issue of human fate after death. Instead of seeing death as complete annihilation, the tradition which women professed presupposed continued existence in another world. The bond between the dead and the living was not severed, but by the funeral rituals women merely transferred the deceased to the community of the dead ancestors. Through dreams and rites, they also maintained the contact between the living and dead.

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GÖRAN LARSSON

On-line Rituals: A New Field of Research

Neo-pagan and Muslim Cyber Rituals

In 1967, Thomas Luckmann published *The Invisible Religion*, a groundbreaking work in the field of the sociology of religion. This book has had a tremendous impact on the academic study of the role of religion and religiosity in modern society in many respects. Contrary to the view that prevailed in the late 1960s, in this work Luckmann argues that, even though church attendance is declining in Western Europe, religion and religiosity have not disappeared. Although secularisation and institutional specialisation have reduced the importance and influence of church-oriented religion, people still have a need for religion and transcendence. Therefore, according to Luckmann, while church-oriented religiosity has been declining, new forms of religion have emerged in western society. One result of this process has been the development of a so-called invisible or private form of religion, that is, a religiosity separating the individual from the institutionalised, church-oriented religion. Now the individual is placed at the centre and the believer is more or less autonomous and free to think what he or she wishes.

> To an immeasurably higher degree than in a traditional social order, the individual is left to his own devices in choosing goods and services, friends, marriage partners, neighbors, hobbies and [...] even "ultimate" meanings in a relatively autonomous fashion. In a manner of speaking, he is free to construct his own personal identity. (Luckmann 1967: 98.)

The driving force behind this change is primarily the process of urbanisation and industrialisation – two factors contributing to the rise of modern society. According to this point of view, modern society gives the individual great freedom, because it is more focused on the individual than the collective. Modern society is also dominated and characterised by a high degree of functional differentiation in its social structure. As a result, according to Luckmann (1967: 35), church-oriented religion has become a marginal phenomenon in modern society.

> The span of transcendence is shrinking. Modern religious themes such as "self-realization", personal autonomy, and self-expression have become dominant. More recently, they have fused either with the newly emerging mix of pseudo-science and magic or with certain rearticulations of the intermediate and great transcendences in the ecological components of the "New Age". The shrinking of transcendence thus does not mean a loss of the "sacred". The dominant themes in the modern sacred cosmos bestow something like a sacred status upon the individual himself by articulating his autonomy. As the transcendent social order and the great transcendences cease to be generally significant, matters that are important to the privatized, partly egoistic and hedonistic, partly ecological, symbolically altruistic individual become sacralized. And, of course, the offer of the traditional social constructions of the great transcendences on the part of the traditional universal religions still remains open. (Luckmann 1990: 138.)

Because of this development, the family or clan seems to play a less important role for the individual in modern society than in so-called pre-modern societies. Through the establishment of social institutions, such as social healthcare, kindergartens, etc., the individual has acquired better opportunities to develop his or her worldview with little influence and interference from the surrounding society. The rise of secularism, together with the spread of fundamentalism and New Age movements, should all be seen as responses and reactions to this development. Even though they generate different solutions, they are all products of modern society.

Today the individual's freedom of choice is also influenced and stimulated by such processes as globalisation, migration and the development of the new information and communication technologies (cf. AlSayyad and Castells 2002: 1–6). By using this technology, the individual has become, for good or ill, freer from the collective to a greater extent than Luckmann predicted in the late 1960s. By looking at two so-called on-line rituals – a neo-pagan *blot* and a Muslim *dhikr* – I shall examine and illustrate how religiosity may be articulated on the Internet. Although Internet research is often discussed in relation to methodological and theoretical problems, I shall argue that rituals performed on-line should be included in the academic study of religion. Common problems associated with Internet research (questions of representation, source criticism, etc.) in themselves stimulate the development of new methods and theories for studying on-line religiosity. This text deals primarily with theoretical issues, but if we want to say something about on-line religion, more empirical data will be required – I intend to undertake this venture in the course of my recently initiated project on religion and the new information and communication technologies.

Religion and globalisation

In recent years, a large number of works have been written with the aim of analysing and explaining the so-called "globalisation" process and its impact on religious communities around the world. To my knowledge, however, only a limited number have paid any attention to how religious communities are influenced by the new information and communication technologies. How Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) is used in spreading information about religious worldviews, and how religious groups are taking advantage of information technology, is almost unknown. This is surprising, since the development of the new technology, especially the Internet and communication devices such as mobile phones and handheld computers, have been the driving force behind the phenomenon often labelled globalisation. Although it is difficult to define what we mean by globalisation, it is clear that the world has gone through a large number of changes. These changes will also have profound implications for religious discourse.

In recent decades, it is clear that production, consumption and distribution patterns have been transformed to the global level (Castells 2001). For example, prior to the Second World War, Sweden was in many respects a homogenous society, especially with regard to language, religion, and culture. Since the 1960s, like so many other European countries, Sweden has been transformed by changes in economic structure (the country has gone from an economy based on agriculture to industrialisation and information technology) and by increasing migration from non-European countries. As a result, it is possible to find almost every cultural and religious variation in Sweden today. From this point of view, Sweden could be described as a multicultural and multi-religious society.

In *Religion and Globalization*, Peter Beyer (1994), demonstrates convincingly that these changes have also had a great impact on most religious communities around the world. His analysis also shows that religious groups respond differently to the so-called globalisation process. On the one hand, there are groups that argue that globalisation is something positive that will liberate humanity. On the other hand, there are groups that argue against this same change as negative and evil. Zygmunt Bauman demonstrates a similar tendency when he writes that the changes brought about by globalisation liberates some people and enslaves others.

> For some people it augurs an unprecedented freedom from physical obstacles and an unheard of ability to move and act from a distance. For others, it portends the impossibility of appropriating and domesticating the locality from which they have little change of cutting themselves free in order to move elsewhere. (Bauman 1999: 18.)

Irrespective of mixed feelings, it is clear that the new information technologies have had a great impact on most religious communities. New religious groups and religious minorities especially, for example, Muslims living in the west, use the Internet to distribute information and seek out possible ways of interpreting their religion in a new context (cf. Bunt 2000; Larsson 2002). Today it is easy to find almost any interpretation of a particular religious tradition on the Internet, and in most cases it is the individual who will judge whether a webpage offers good or bad suggestions, a fact that creates both possibilities and problems. Using a computer with a modem, for example, it is easy for believers to stay in contact with other groups or local traditions, regardless of time or physical boundaries. Thus, for example, it is possible to send a question concerning practical or theological issues to an imam in Iran even from a Stockholm suburb (cf. Thurfjell 1999). According to Nezar AlSayyad and Manuel Castelles (2002: 4), this development seems to be giving birth to a placeless culture created through the increasing interconnectedness of local and national communities. This outcome is closely linked with both the process of globalisation and the new information and communication technologies.

At the same time, many religious groups are afraid that this new technology will also harm religious authority and tradition. However, this kind of anxiety is not unique to the Internet: the development of other technologies (for example, the printing press or the telegraph) created similar responses (cf. O'Leary 1996: 784–85; Skovgaard-Petersen 1992). But equipped with a computer with access to the Internet, it is easy for the believer to find interpretations that question local authorities and present alternative worldviews. As a consequence, there is a general fear among many groups that the Internet will support a movement that will replace knowledge with information, as demonstrated on the webpage of the *Muslim Student Association* (MSA).

> Warning (especially for Muslims)
>
> There are many early hadith scholars and teachers to whom we are indebted for introducing the critical science of collecting and evaluating ahadeeth. These teachers each collected many different ahadeeth. They did not allow students to quote from their collections until the students had actually come to them and learnt from them directly.
>
> Today, the situation is different. The collections of ahadeeth have for the most part stabilized, and with the advent of the printing press, the collections are easily mass-produced. There is a blessing in all this of course, but there is a real danger that Muslims will fall under the impression that owning a book or having a database is equivalent to being a scholar of ahadeeth. This is a great fallacy. Therefore, we would like to warn you that this database

> is merely a tool, and not a substitute for learning, much less scholarship in Islam. (http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/reference/searchhadith.html; 11.7.2002.)

Even though the *hadith* database set up by the MSA provides access to the four Sunni collections, the believer is advised not to confuse this information with knowledge of Islam (*ilm*). From this point of view, the Internet could be described as a double-edged sword: on the one hand it can help believers to find "sound interpretations", while on the other it may also make available readings not based on so-called "sound traditions". However, another group may regard a rejected interpretation as correct and authoritative.

Although information taken from the Internet may sometimes be confusing for the outsider, this illustrates the complex nature of modern religious life. And from an academic point of view, it is of great benefit to be able to follow and analyse the countless variations of theological discussions that take place on the Internet. How theologians and "ordinary" believers go about trying to establish an interpretation or solve a practical problem is generally very difficult to follow in the real world. Thus, for researchers who are interested in analysing how religious traditions are transmitted, questioned and understood in a specific local context, the Internet is a source that offers important and fresh material. However, to be able to use this material, it is essential to develop new methods and theories for analysing religious activities on the Internet.

Ritual theories and community

In his classic work, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) maintains that religion is essentially the foundation upon which society rests. To Durkheim religion is defined as:

> ... a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church... (Durkheim 1995: 44.)

In line with this definition, rituals are also viewed as essential parts and manifestations of the community and its practice. To Durkheim, rituals are consequently seen as rules of conduct that prescribe how humans must conduct themselves with sacred things (Durkheim 1995: 38). In sum, a religious system and its rites confirm society, and the society verifies the religious system and its rituals. From this point of view a community and its religion are in a symbiotic relationship with each other.

Even though Durkheim's is far from being alone in his attempt to define the essence of ritual, he is still one of the most important names in the study of religions and within the so-called functionalistic school of anthropology (cf. Zuesse 1987). To Durkheim and other analysts, such as Victor Turner (1920–83) and Arnold van Gennep (1873–1957), religion must be seen as the product of a society and its modalities. This perspective places great emphasis on the collective nature of humanity, but according to Luckmann modern man is set free from most of the bonds tying the individual to specific religious institutions, the community or the prevailing local context. Contrary to Durkheim, Luckmann argues that invisible religiosity is something set apart from the religious community and its institutions; it is rather the individual who creates his or her own religious outlook. According to this theory, people in the west have become liberated and autonomous in their relationship with religious institutions, which as a consequence seem to be of little or no importance for how the individual forms his or her identity. This theory could, of course, be questioned in many ways. Is it, for example, possible to liberate the individual from the collective? Can the dominating institutions be seen as autonomous from the prevailing local context, whether religious or secular?

Even though Luckmann discusses neither the globalisation process nor the new information and communication technologies, these developments have a bearing on the theories developed in *The Invisible Religion*. For example, both the globalisation process and the new information technologies make it easier and safer for the individual to formulate and live as he or she wants. Today, almost any way of finding meaning in life can be found on the Internet. These advances present new possibilities for seeking out and finding alternative ways to understand and question old "truths". Although the great majority of people seem to perceive this turn as positive, a growing number consider the same tendency to be negative or even evil, because it creates frustration, stress and uncertainty (Giddens 1999: 13). But it is also possible for a single person to have mixed emotions and feelings about the possibilities created by the new technologies.

As I have already argued, the development of new information and communication technologies has become an essential and vital part of the global economy (Castells 2001). Evidently this very same process has also affected cultural and religious provision. Today, for example, it is possible to find all kinds of food, music, films and religious worldviews in any large western city. If we compare the situation of today with the supply side of, say, ten or twenty years ago, it is clear that a dramatic shift has taken place. This change has not yet been thoroughly analysed or explained from the perspective of the study of religions. Contrary to the general hypothesis of secularisation, that is, that humans have lost their religious beliefs because of the modernisation process, analysts who adhere to the so-called

"rational choice school" argue that the growth of the supply side will make it possible for modern humans to find a religion to suit individual needs (cf. Young 1997). If this is correct, as I think it is, Luckmann's theory of invisible religion appears acceptable and challenging.

What about on-line rituals?

In relation to the development discussed above and Luckmann's theory of invisible religion, it is essential to ask how modern humans perform their rituals? Certainly this is a large and in many respects unanswerable question that could be developed along many different lines. In the following, I shall therefore focus solely on what I call on-line rituals. Since this is, to my knowledge, a new or at least rather recent term, it is essential to clarify what I mean by "on-line rituals". In using the term "on-line ritual" I shall be referring to a ritual (sacred or profane) performed in cyberspace and attended by participants who are linked to each other via computers communicating in real time (chat) or with a time delay (e-mail communication). In line with this definition, and in relation to the analysis of information and communication technologies, it is possible to distinguish between at least two different kinds of on-line religious rituals:

1) Rituals that could be linked to an established physical organisation, for example a Church or a temple.
2) Rituals with no link, or a weak link, to a physical and established organisation.

Irrespective of this typology, it is often difficult to make a clear distinction between the categories. The selection and interpretation made here depend on how we define the essence of a religion or a ritual, a question related to the academic problem of how to define religion and religiosity.

Generally, virtual rituals are characterised by a large degree of freedom and openness with respect to interpretation and flexibility. For example, if it is suggested that one should light a candle and the ritualist does not have one, it is possible to light a virtual candle. But in all rituals, it is the intention and expectation of rituals that count. From this point of view, there seem to be no difference between on-line and off-line rituals. However, in on-line rituals the speech act is replaced by, and transformed into, a written text (cf. O'Leary 1996). But the virtual milieu should not be seen as different from physical space. How a person reacts to an on-line ritual is therefore influenced by his or her off-line activities and cultural context. From this point of view, a researcher who wishes to analyse on-line rituals must pay attention to local and cultural variations and traditions. Thus it

is important to combine on-line research with traditional fieldwork, interviews and participant observation (Kendall 1999).

Even though there are important differences between off-line and on-line rituals, especially the lack of physical interface between the participants, religiosity articulated on the Internet must be seen as original and authentic in its own right. Stephen O'Leary even argues that it is important to invert the question and ask what participants gain by performing their rituals on-line.

> Certainly, important elements of traditional ritual are lost without physical presence; but perhaps we should invert the question. Rather than assuming preemptively that the loss of physical presence produces a ritual that is unreal or "empty," we might ask what ritual gains in the virtual environment and what meanings the participants are able to derive from these practices, such that they will gather again and again to perform cyber-rituals together while paying a premium fee for their connect time. (O'Leary 1996: 795.)

As mentioned before, most ritual theories seem to rest on the assumption that a ritual should be seen as an act or performance mirroring the basic values of a specific community, whether religious, cultural or political. If this presupposition is correct, as I think it is, it is important to ask whether it is possible for the Internet user to feel with other Internet surfers, even though they have never or rarely meet in person. This question is also important, since it is frequently said that the new information and communication technologies remove the possibility of establishing and creating feelings and emotions on-line. This way of putting the argument is often used to explain why, for example, pornography, racial discrimination and so-called sects are so wide spread on the Internet. Thus it is not individuals or even society that should be blamed, but the media. And if we want to solve the problem and create a better society, it will be necessary to restrict or ban the Internet. In their analysis of the media debate that followed the mass suicide that took place among the members of *Heaven's Gate* in 1997, Lorne Dawson and Jenna Hennebry (1999) noted exactly this mode of argument: it was the Internet that was both blamed and presented as an explanation for how such religious groups could persuade young people to commit suicide.

Even though most analysts regard the authentic off-line community as something very different from an on-line community, some writers, like Howard Rheingold, appear to think that on-line communication is no different from a genuine off-line *tête-à-tête*.

> People in virtual communities use words on screens to exchange pleasantries and argue, engage in intellectual discourse, conduct commerce, exchange knowledge, share emotional support, make plans, brainstorm, gos-

> sip, feud, fall in love, find friends and lose them, play games, flirt, create a little high art and a lot of idle talk. People in virtual communities do just about everything people do in real life, but we leave our bodies behind. You can't kiss anybody and nobody can punch you in the nose, but a lot can happen within those boundaries. To the millions who have been drawn into it, the richness and vitality of computer-linked cultures is attractive, even addictive. (Rheingold 2001: 274.)

If Rheingold is correct, it is of course also possible for individuals to perform religious rituals on-line. Today, for example, a lot of religious, political and sexual minorities are using the new information and communication technologies to create feelings of community, identity and belonging, a fact that could be seen to support Rheingold's hypothesis about virtual communities (cf. Correll 1995; Larsson 2002). However, at the time of writing, this is a brand new field of academic exploration and research: the process of analysing the Internet from this kind of perspectives has just begun.

On-line rituals

In this section, two examples of on-line rituals will be analysed and discussed. Even though the selected *blot* and *dhikr* rituals are illustrative of on-line rituals, they should not be viewed as typical or representative of a general typology. Nonetheless, it is, for example, possible to describe them as asynchronic rituals: that is, there is a time delay involved in this type of computer-communicated ritual. Individuals therefore perform these two on-line rituals either by downloading information, in this case an audio file containing a *dhikr* ceremony, or by posting an electronic message, here to a Neo-pagan group to ask them to perform a *blot* ceremony. Compared with synchronic rituals, which are performed in real time in discussion rooms or chat milieus, the rituals involved here can all be performed whatever the time or place. From this point of view, theses examples can be straightforwardly linked to Thomas Luckmann's theory of invisible or private religion. Via a computer with a modem, the Internet surfer can easily, safely and privatly perform or listen to a ritual, even though he or she does not belong to or follow this specific tradition.

The first example is taken from the homepage of *The Order of Lidskjalf*. This site belongs to a Neo-pagan group founded in the city of Lund, Sweden, in 1990. The order, which focuses on late Iron-Age Scandinavian culture, especially the religious aspects of society, was first initiated by archaeology and history students at the university of Lund. The name, *Lidskjalf*, is taken from Norse mythology, and it is the name of Odin's watchtower in Asgård.

> Lidskjalf in the myths was the place in the fortress of Odin, where the whole world could be viewed. The order of Lidskjalf wishes to continue to see the past, present and future from a shared platform in our modern society. We feel that the sense of pride that comes from learning about cultural backgrounds in all forms is essential for the raising of new generations that are to become aware and truthful citizens. Lidskjalf urges people to take great pride in their history, but always respect the thoughts and existence of others. Though hate and anger often can be influential parts of human creativity, it's better to stand fast with a sober and critical mind than to lose oneself to naive ideas that bring us to the extremes of either xenophobia or political correctness. (http://www.algonet.se/~richjohn/lidskjalf/; 11.7.2002.)

The main aim of this group is to revitalise the Old Norse religion and bring back the pre-Christian culture that dominated Scandinavia before the rise of Christianity. In analysing this material, it would be comforting to think that Old Norse religion was different from our modern conceptions because of the time gap. Nevertheless, it is easy to find examples of how Old Norse rituals are being transformed and adapted by Neo-pagan groups to suit modern life (Larsson 2002: 84–85; Skott 2000). *Lidskjalf's* guestbook also illustrates how the new information and communication technologies can be used to support and help group members and potential supporters.

> I just would like to know, that how can I join a Viking religion group from Finland, and how can I meet some Finnish Vikings? I am lonely here, there's only two of us in my friend group who believe the real truth of Gods. (http://www.algonet.se/~richjohn/lidskjalf/; 11.7.2002.)

However, irrespective of physical distance or time, it is possible for everybody who visits the homepage of *Lindskjalf* to perform an on-line *blot*, a Viking sacrifice. The visitor is recommended to choose a sacrifice and to decide which god (Tor, Oden or Frej) to honour by selecting one of the following goods: mead, apples, seed, a pig, a cow, a horse, a thrall, a missionary, a prisoner, or something completely different. The reason for the sacrifice should also be mentioned in the electronic message posted to the group.

The on-line *blot* illustrates clearly that individuals have great freedom to modify sacrifices to suit their own purposes and to develop a rite in line with their particular worldviews. From the variety of goods it is possible, for example, to perform a vegetarian *blot*, which was very likely uncommon or at least unusual among the Vikings. The fact that one may sacrifice a missionary also illustrates that many Neo-pagan groups are negative or even hostile to the Christian Church and to Christianity in general (cf. Skott 2000).

My second example is taken from a Muslim *sufi* homepage belonging to the *Naqshbandi* Order under the direction of Shaykh Hisham Kabbani, the Grand Mufti Muhammad Nazim al-Haqqani's representative in America. According to Garbi Schmidt, this Naqshbandi congregation is one of the most active sufi-groups on the Internet (Schmidt 2001: 227). Even though the second example belongs to another religion with different traditions, it also illustrates how Muslims, too, are using the information technologies to spread information about religion on a global basis. On this homepage, for example, it is possible to download and listen to a *dhikr* ceremony, an esoteric rite originally only obtainable by initiated members, but now available with detailed information to anyone with a computer. From this point of view, this *Naqshbandi* homepage (there are of course several homepages belonging to the *Naqshbandi* tradition) seems to illustrate a new kind of openness, a change perhaps brought about by the new technology.

The Islamic term *dhikr* means literally the remembrance, recollection or mention of one of Allah's ninety-nine names or formulae, like "God is Most Great" (*Allahu Akbar*). By repeating this or another of God's names or formulae over and over again, the Islamic mystic obtains esoteric insight or higher knowledge about Islam. In a technical sense, a *dhikr* rite could also be described as a litany. The *dhikr* could also be performed according to different norms and rules (for example, in a high or low voice), and there are many local variations (cf. Netton 1997). There are, for example, groups that do not allow the *dhikr* to be performed with music or movements, while others, like the whirling dervishes, actually perform a ritual dance as a central part of their *dhikr* ceremony.

Together with the downloadable *dhikr* ceremony, one can also obtain detailed and transcribed information about every step in the rite. Even though this information is basic, it contains vital information on every *maqama* (the mystical stages embodied in the ritual), as well as how many times a section should be repeated. The homepage also gives detailed information on the *Naqshbandis* and their way of performing the *dhikr*, important information for comparison with other groups.

Even though both rituals provide us with important information about the religious and ritual supply side on the Internet, we still do not know how these homepages are used or understood by individuals. To be able to say something about this aspect, it is necessary to combine Internet research with traditional interviews and participant observation. Nonetheless, on-line rituals located on the Internet should not be neglected in the modern academic study of religions; on the contrary, this is one of the most important aspects of modern religiosity.

Conclusions

In sum, the new technology is a powerful tool that makes it possible for the believer to remain anonymous, invisible or private in his or her search for religious truths. On the one hand, the on-line rituals chosen could all be seen as clear illustrations of a private form of religiosity. On the other hand, it seems that the new information technologies have also created new possibilities for establishing communities, that is, virtual communities cut off from time or physical space. Even though the whole idea of virtual community must be analysed more thoroughly and illustrated with further empirical data before it can be carefully used, this type of community appears to be different from pre-modern forms. From this point of view, modern on-line rituals appear to depend on a new kind of community, a community very different from the church-oriented religion that Luckmann discusses and describes in his work on invisible or private religion.

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MARIA LEPPÄKARI

Protestant Pilgrimage to Jerusalem

Preparations for the Kingdom of God in Apocalyptic Rhetoric Strategy

The vast majority of sacred shrines and holy sites host pilgrims united by strong degrees of cultural homogeneity. But Jerusalem differs on this point – it draws pilgrims from a vast multitude of nations and cultural traditions since the city is considered holy by three major religious traditions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The representatives of these traditions go partly to different places at different times where they are engaged in different forms of worship. Often these visits are marked by clashes at the holy places. Indeed, as Glenn Bowman so aptly puts it, "Jerusalem does not, in fact, appear so much as *a* holy city but as a *multitude* of holy cities – as many as are the religious communities which worship at the site – built over the same spot, operating at the same moment, and contending for hegemony" (Bowman 1991: 98).

What makes Jerusalem holy for "Charismatic Protestants"* today is not so much about something found in the city, but something brought to it from outside, which is matched up there in the presence of monuments as markers of sacredness. The various Jerusalems which Bowman speaks of "function as signs in the diverse discourses on religion, power, and identity of the visiting groups" (Bowman 1991: 98).

The diverse types of pilgrimage to Jerusalem – Jewish, Muslim, Orthodox and Catholic – are not discussed in this paper. My focus is on specific developments concerning contemporary Protestant pilgrimage. In order to understand the discordant variety of present-day Christian, charismatically inspired, pilgrimages to Jerusalem the several experiences of the Holy Land must be illuminated through Christian imaginings of the places. This would naturally require an inquiry into, and an integration of biblical texts with, the topic of study, since that is where we find the sources of

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* Instead of Evangelical Christians (in America) I prefer using "Charismatic Protestants" referring to a unity composed of a multitude of denominations and independent churches. These representatives share one common feature, namely, the religious interest in Jerusalem. See also Ariel 2002: 2.

Protestant devotion to Jerusalem. Though Christians around the world share the same biblical sources, their interpretations of them, especially in relation to the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, differ. Here the different cultural milieux and their historical processes play an important role. It is, however, impossible to deal with such a topic in a study of this length. The distinctions between the three major strains of Christianity lie basically in the interpretation of their substantial differences between the epistemologies and soteriologies (Bowman 1991: 101–19).

One other type of journey to Jerusalem is not dealt with here, that is *religious tourism*. "Religious tourism" is a term used in discussing the prospects and problems offered by the large numbers of people who visit pilgrimage shrines and other religious attractions. The term as such has less theological and traditional implications, encompassing a broader range of motivations for visiting places with religious reference. Despite this neutrality, the religious tourist can come as a causal tourist and, as a result of emotions experienced, return home either as a pilgrim or return for another visit (Nolan and Nolan 1989: 42–43). In this paper I shall demonstrate how the impact of the apocalyptic religious imagination becomes considerable in the process of developing mainstream representations of Jerusalem in contemporary Protestant pilgrimage to the city itself. I will attempt to show this by illuminating the use of apocalyptic rhetoric strategy in a particular case by referring both to the *International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem* (ICEJ) and the *International Christian Zionist Center* (ICZC). The empirical material presented here was collected during my several periods of fieldwork in Jerusalem (1998–2000) as I attempted to collect data for my doctoral thesis.

Representations of Jerusalem as *force majeure* to protestant pilgrimage

The place of Jerusalem in Christian Theology today can be traced all the way back to the foundation of Christianity. But theology and religious practice do not always go side by side. The sacrality of Jerusalem for the West should be illuminated from the perspective of the many public and physical representations of Jerusalem: the monuments, dedications and folklore traditions relating to Jerusalem, expressions that might otherwise seem incomprehensible, but are nonetheless endowed with a significant religious value (Leppäkari 2002a: 212–13). The Jerusalem experienced by each group rises less from the city's physical presence than from the public and learned images of the holy city. To a considerable extent, according to Bowman, Jerusalem is a place where pilgrims who have inherited or developed certain images of this city during enculturation elsewhere can embody those

representations and engage them as aspects of the material world (Bowman 1991: 99). These public representations would not be of any importance, however, if they did not simultaneously allow people to interpret them and prescribe them with meaning and significance.

In Christian tradition, one must remember, pilgrimage is voluntary. The term "pilgrimage" or *peregrinatio* refers to the wandering of people across the fields (*per agere*) indicating vagabondage. Adopted by early Christianity, the term changed in sense from the pejorative to positive, meaning the journey of the faithful who left their families and ordained life in order to seek salvation and union with God. These wanderings of the early Church's *peregrini* were not, however, directed towards any concrete point. These wanderings were supposed to imitate the vagrancy of the Old Testament prophets and the behaviour of anchorites who retired to the desert in search of salvation (Grabois 1988: 65). St Augustine's term for the faithful was also *peregrinus*. While also connoting "traveler", *peregrinus* was simply someone who was away from home on a journey that eventually would lead the person to return to his or her native city (Dougherty 1980: 36–38). Gradually, early Christian pilgrims abandoned this practice of wandering and went to specific sanctuaries and shrines for their devotional exercises. It is in this process of legitimating religious pilgrimage and developing a particular image of Jerusalem and its sacred history that rhetoric comes into picture.

The language of the endtime

The principles of rhetoric seek to discover the purpose of any discourse, together with the means used to achieve this end (Thurén 1990: 43). When studying apocalyptic rhetoric we must first try to determine the kind of situation the speaker appears to have in mind and where he or she stands; the attitudes, values and needs of the audience which invites the person to give a speech or produce a text. We must also try to understand what the speaker seems to want to do in relation to these attitudes and values. Very often, millenarian religious belief is popularly regarded as something "dangerous" or "abnormal". This does not, however, need to be the case. Most present-day Christian lovers of Israel are *passive millenarians*. They do not literally seek to take redemption into their own hands even if they use a rhetorical endtime discourse including words such as "war", "warriors", "battle" and "weapons". Until concrete actions occur, this is just a way of expressing their religious concern about the future, though this concern is extremely serious for pilgrimage participants. (Leppäkari 2002a: 196.)

For this specific type of contemporary, charismatically charged Protestantism Jerusalem is equated with redemption. Jerusalem is at the centre

of their religious belief and adherence, prayer and thought. The destiny of the city is further intertwined with the redemption of mankind, and as such an existentially charged symbol, the city represents an on-line connection straight to God. For these Protestants the city becomes an endtime calculator, with the result that activities in present day Jerusalem are measured in an endtime perspective by taking into account images of past and future. Especially the current domestic and foreign policies of the state of Israel are considered a kind of monitor for measuring on which stage the redemptional process is currently being carried out. Things happening in the world, and especially in Jerusalem, are believed sooner or later to meet up with the prophecies of the Apocalypse.

We need to observe that the language of the apocalypse, for the participant, is a matter of life and death and, even more so, apocalyptic rhetoric is important since it is in this dualistic sense connected to the individual's most crucial life concerns. Jerusalem is then a symbol helping to create meaningfulness for believers, thus becoming one of the most important factors in the religiously motivated individuals' construction of life. To illuminate this cognitive make-up, I suggest we look for the different apocalyptic representations to be found in believers' expressions of religious adherence. This can be done by tracing apocalyptic representations, as they are understood within the concept of a "kingdom of God" and by examining how the latter is further understood as a synonym for Jerusalem.

The image of Jerusalem is important because of what happened there in terms of Christian revelation, but Jerusalem for the participants becomes even more important because of what will happen there in the future. These two things unite "Charismatic Protestants" all over the world. Their concern about the destiny of the city concurs with that of the Jewish population of Israel as they share a common enemy, Islam. As Mr Jan Willelm Van der Hoeven, one of the founding members of the International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem and presently head of the International Christian Zionist Center writes:

> ... through prayer and praise, bring down the wall of Islam and see the freedom for God's word forth to all those people for whom He died and rose again. [...] Then just as we saw comm[m]unism come down, so shall we see the wall of Islam crumble. We do not need bombs. We need the prayers and praise of our God to finish every obstacle that stands against Him fulfilling His word to His people. (Van der Hoeven 1996: 139.)

The charismatics not only encourage people to travel to Israel, but to make a *pilgrimage*. Pilgrimage to Jerusalem can then be seen as a religious statement about what is happening in the world today. Furthermore, it is an expression of their faith in the God of Israel. As Mr Van der Hoeven put it to the listeners of the *Livets Ord* (Word of Life) congregation in Turku when

he encouraged them to take part in the celebrations of the Feast of Tabernacles arranged by Christian Zionists in the region:

> It is God's biblical time to come to Israel. [...] Let's go to Zion! Don't come as a tourist to Israel... I don't read in the Bible: come and be a tourist [...]. You are sons and daughters of the living God of Israel. Come as Levites, walk before the army. These coming weeks as Israel is facing maybe a war, we do not know, it might well be. (Author's interview with Mr. Van der Hoeven in Turku, 13.07.2000.)

The Christian celebrations during the Jewish Feast of the Tabernacles are the major annual pilgrimage event taking place in Jerusalem for Charismatic Protestants. Today, the feast serves as a trademark for the ICEJ, a non-denominational pressure group with messianic expectations (Leppäkari 1999: 129–40; 2002a: 139–68). Members of the ICEJ identify themselves as Christian Zionists. This indicates that they have arranged themselves around the readings of several biblical books and believe that God has called them to bring the Jews (God's original chosen people) back from the Diaspora to rebuild the biblically promised Kingdom of God in Jerusalem, to settle Israel's biblically mandated borders and – in some cases – to re-establish the Jewish Temple. Christian Zionists believe in this work since they see it as part of God's global endtime plan. The celebrations arranged by the Christian Zionists during the Feast of Tabernacles enables the Protestant devotee to "comfort the Jews and to witness the work of God". This devotion sets off sparks of religious enthusiasm and encourages preachers to start up with their own "bless Israel" campaign back home. The Finnish branch of the ICEJ, to mention one example, arranges meetings around the country in various denominations such as Pentecostal, Baptist, Salvation Army, Free Church and in local Lutheran parishes. Nowadays, one can also participate in virtual pilgrimages and thus also "bless Israel" on the Embassy's homepages or by funding their projects.

During the Christian celebrations of the Feast of the Tabernacles the crowd of thousands of participants are over a period of seven days addressed in a large convention hall (the *Binyenei Ha'ooma*) and the Ein Gedi desert by various Israeli politicians and representatives of the ICEJ. Not too many excursions are made in the region, though it is popular among the Christian pilgrims to visit the sites where Jesus did his work. The Charismatic Protestants tend to be disengaged from the traditional holy sites revered by the Orthodox and Catholics, for both historical and theological reasons (Bowman 1991: 116). This becomes especially apparent in the worship at the Tomb of Christ. While major Orthodox and Latin churches have incorporated their belief by erecting churches on the tomb of Christ, the Holy Sepulchre, Protestants prefer to ignore the almost 2000 year long tradition and gather at the Garden Tomb, outside the old city walls. Here

Protestants assert they can witness Christ himself while imaging him *in situ* rather than in the monuments thrown up by two thousand years of devotion to his memory (Bowman 1991: 118). It can be argued in line with Bowman that the Garden Tomb displays the characteristics of Protestant Holy Land devotion. The garden-like appearance, and especially the lack of icons, allows the pilgrims on the spot to confirm their apocalyptic representations of Jerusalem and strengthen their belief in preparing for the Kingdom of God. Worth mentioning here is that Mr Van der Hoeven was for several years the Warden of the Garden Tomb and one of the initiators of the Christian Feast of the Tabernacles in 1980.

Intertwined images of the earthly and the heavenly Jerusalem

The type of Christian pilgrimage to Jerusalem discussed here allows the believer to visit his or her religious dream as incorporated in the earthly Jerusalem. During this physical visit, images of Jerusalem become vivid: all of us carry our own Jerusalems in our heads. Inner images or mental representations of the city are personal and coloured by each individual's emotions and experiences. But they also include socially learned patterns of thought, which have been created in combination with both public and cultural images of the city. In any event, every traveller to Jerusalem has their mental baggage stuffed with stories about the place. Every traveller possesses mental representations of the place before actually getting there. Depending on how the visit is experienced, interpretations become reshaped. Either the city corresponds to our mental images, or it does not at all resemble the "Jerusalem" we pictured in our minds. In the end, it is the *interplay* of the different mental and public representations of the place that shape present images of Jerusalem (Leppäkari 2002b: 156, 172–74; Leppäkari 2002a: 242).

In this mixture of representations, the earthly Jerusalem becomes mistakenly taken as the heavenly one. It is not always easy to distinguish the two versions of the holy city, the heavenly and the earthly. They are often confused in one single eschatological expectation (Cardini 2000: 758). Put more precisely, present-day Jerusalem is considered "holy" by the Charismatic Protestants, but not as holy as it will become when the Kingdom of God is established there.

In the case described here, we are dealing both with socially distributed patterns, which we were all brought up with, and inner patterns that are created through our experiences in connection with the working of our minds (Holm 1997: 81; Holm 1995: 136). Apocalyptic symbols and representations of Jerusalem further continue to shape meaning for believers.

Many Finnish sympathizers with Israel, for example, have never actually visited Jerusalem, but they still feel that the city is something out of the ordinary. For these religiously motivated individuals, Jerusalem – both the actual city and what it represents – is experienced as an identity-establishing phenomenon. The Israeli–Palestinian conflict is then affiliated to a larger apocalyptic redemptional context which coincides with personal redemption. Charismatic devotees enthusially declare political standpoints drawn on religiously interpreted references. In this way we can observe how apocalyptic arguments and symbols are drawn into clearly political conflicts.

Conclusion

The notion of Jerusalem in religious belief is constructed by the transmission of various representations concerned with the image of the city. For Western Christianity today, Jerusalem is not only important because of the things which Jesus of Nazareth, according to the tradition, did there. For many Christians Jerusalem is vitally important because of the apocalyptic promise Jesus left his followers with: I'll be back! Therefore, the position of Jerusalem in the religious end-time play is crucial, since apocalyptic representations of the New Jerusalem motivate contemporary believers to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and to partake actively in political disputes about the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Quite contrary to the early Christian pilgrims, modern Protestant *peregrini* consider themselves legitimated, if not urged, to pray and make a pilgrimage "for the sake of Jerusalem", to dwell in the midst of the earthly Jerusalem and make a political statement regarding the circumstances of the city and the host country (Dougherty 1980: 36–39). Jerusalem as *the place* for the millenarian kingdom of God has indeed become the believer's business.

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BRITT-MARI NÄSSTRÖM

The Rites in the Mysteries of Dionysus

The Birth of the Drama

The Greek drama can be apprehended as an extended ritual, originating in the ceremonies of the Dionysus cult. In particular, tragedy derived its origin from the sacrifice of goats and the hymns which were sung on that occasion. *Tragedia* means "song of the male goat" and these hymns later developed into choruses and eventually into tragedy, in the sense of a solemn and purifying drama.

The presence of the god Dionysus is evident in the history and development of the Greek drama at the beginning of the fifth century B.C. and its sudden decline 150 years later. Its rise seems to correspond with the Greek *polis*, where questions of justice and divine law in conflict with the individual were obviously a matter of discussion and where the drama had individual and collective *catharsis* (purifying) in mind.

In this respect Dionysus characterized the essence of the drama, by crossing and transgressing the border between the divine and the human world. When the gods interacted with men in the Homeric epics, they did so for their own selfish reasons, but in the classical drama they reflect and judge the activity of men. The drama thus reflects a change of paradigm from the world of myth to an ethical dialogue between men's world and the will of heaven.

Dionysus was the god of intoxication and ecstasy and his followers were called *maenads*, from the Greek word *mania*, "madness". He was able to inspire his subjects with what was called *enthusiasm*, a word that still survives in a much milder sense. The change of mental condition was represented in the *persona*, the mask, which denoted the crossing of the border between reality and fantasy. (Burkert 1995: 162.)

Dionysus was also regarded as a young god in earlier scholarship, emerging from wild Thrace with all his rage and madness. But the lists of gods and goddesses of the oldest literature in Linear B show that Dionysus belonged to the oldest gods in Greek religion. His sudden appearances depend rather on his epiphanies in Greek myths, where he arrives at a town or village, spreads ecstasy and madness around him and finally disappears. (Detienne 1989: 2–26.)

The plot of the *Bacchae* of Euripides exemplifies Dionysus's revelations, in which he acts both protagonist and director. The Bacchantes cry at the beginning of the play for the god to reveal himself to them and also to their train. He appears, however, in the *persona* of a young and beautiful man, a stranger from Asia Minor in the midst of his worshippers, who praise the ecstasy and the blitheness of the mysteries (*telete*). His antagonist, King Pentheus of Thebes, tries to capture or expel the stranger and the foreign sect from his country, but every contact makes him more and more curious to "behold" what these mad Bacchantes and their religion mean, in spite of the fact that he is not initiated. Dionysus helps him to "behold", i.e. to have visions of "two suns, two towns of Thebes" and so on. Pentheus leaves the world of men and crosses the border to the other side in his efforts to witness the rites of the Bacchantes. However, Dionysus also provides another vision, in which Pentheus appears as a lion in a tree. Crying in fury they pull down the tree and tear him into pieces after which his own mother carries his head in triumphant procession towards Thebes. Not until her father forces her to look towards the heavens, does the Dionysian world disappear from her eyes and she realises what has happened.

To behold the holy objects was thus the central rite in the mysteries of Dionysus, which parallels the rites of the Eleusinian mysteries, where the participants also were called *epoptai*, "beholders" and where the objects were a newborn child or an ear of oat. Euripides mentions other rites in his tragedy: the Bacchantes dance in the mountains in ecstasy and, most striking of all, their attacks on wild animals and even on males in the vicinity. Most of the descriptions of the bloodthirsty Bacchantes, who act like beasts of prey, originate from *The Bacchae*. One may suspect that the panther, one of Dionysus's guises, may have inspired the picture of how the Bacchantes behaved, in art as well as in literature. (Otto 1965: 110.)

Tragedy still represents Dionysus as the transgressor of borders. He appears both as man and as woman, and he makes the manly Pentheus appear as a woman. Distances do not exist any longer and there are no distinctions between sexes; the god is far away and near, both mad and the wisest of the wise. Women and men become like wild animals, living in wild nature, tearing wild animals into pieces and devouring them raw, like animals.

At the same time Dionysus cooperated with the goddess of agriculture, Demeter. She brought bread and he brought wine, two products that separate mankind from animals. Still there is a difference between them: the oats of Demeter brings bread and belong to civilisation, whereas the grapes of Dionysus represent both culture and nature in the wine, crossing the borders between man and god. The wine gives joy and eases pain, but muddles and destroys and ultimately leads to crimes and misfortunes.

The Dionysian mysteries in Southern Italy

In Greece the civic rites of Dionysus were connected with the growth of vegetation and the production of wine. There existed a large number of festivals in honour of the god, especially during the spring and the autumn. One such festival was the Anthesteria, when the New Year's wine was tasted in memory of the holy wedding between Dionysus and Ariadne. This festival was dominated by women and the wife of the basileus, the king-archon of Athens, played Ariadne's role in the drama. We do not have any evidence of Dionysus's role at this festival; perhaps the god was represented by a symbol or a *persona.* (Nilsson 1975: 121.)

His mysteries are supposed to have developed as early as the sixth century B.C. in Greece (Burkert 1995: 166). At the same time, the god seems to have gradually changed his appearance from middle-aged man to a young and beardless one. This change probably introduced an erotic theme into the rites, reflected in *The Bacchae* of Euripides, where King Pentheus complains about the new god who seduces women, and although the Bacchantes avoided human men and appeared as chaste in the myth, their relation to the god are filled with erotic allusions (Keuls 1985: 382–71).

It was predominantly women that enacted the most striking expressions of the orgiastic side of Dionysian religion. To judge from their dress and their cultic accoutrements, they seem to have belonged to the upper classes and Euripides's drama gives us the same impression. (Keuls 1985: 360.) For these women, the Dionysian rites, featuring ecstatic dancing on the hillsides with flaming torches and the feeling of being possessed by the god may well have been experienced as a release which contrasted with their customarily restricted way of life. Anthropologists have observed that ecstatic cults fulfil a social function by providing suppressed groups with a licensed and controllable outlet for frustration (Turner 1969: 175ff.).

The Dionysian mysteries, as well as maenadism, spread to Magna Graecia, the Greek colony in Southern Italy. Evidence of the cult in Italy dates from the fourth century B.C. (Burkert 1995: 294–95). According to Livy, who mentions the rites as Bacchanalia, the mysteries were introduced by a Greek arriving from Etruria and then spread like wildfire among the Romans, exploding in a scandal in 186 B.C., then the Roman senate banned the mysteries as criminal and lascivious. The mysteries had originally been a cult for females only and up to that point, everything followed a chaste and honourable ritual. A chosen priestess, Paculla Annia by name, had changed the rites and initiated her own son and later other men. She had also changed the rites from being performed in daylight into nocturnal sessions. This was the beginning of the decay, according to Livy to a point, where every human crime was permitted and where Roman matrons performed obscene rites with their hair undone. The initiation of young men

had been changed into sexual debauchery such as rape by the Bacchic priests and so on. After the banning of the Bacchanalia, the affair took a more serious turn when people began to accuse one another of being participants and about seven thousand people were finally condemned to death and executed. If this number is correct, victims of this suppression of the Bacchanalia were far more numerous than the Christian martyrs during the first three centuries of the Christian era. (Livy 1955: viii–xix.)

There are, however, some objections to Livy's account. His stories of mysterious abductions and horrible torture, as well as other forms of exploitation, seem to be exaggerated, if not pure inventions. The suggestion of homosexual contacts is not known from any form of Dionysian mystery, as far as we know. However, a senatorial decree on a bronze tablet strictly regulated the cult and banned rites performed in secret or outside the city. The number of participants was restricted to five persons and no man from Rome or Latium was allowed to mingle with the female Bacchantes, according to this decree. (Beard 1998: 290.)

Becoming a *bacchus*

There was some grain of truth in Livy's account, such as the information about preparation before initiation. The initiate had to abstain from certain foods and from sexual intercourse for ten days. A purifying bath preceded the sacrificial-like ceremony of a pig or cockerel. After that, the initiate swore a solemn oath never to betray the meaning of the mysteries and to serve Dionysus forever.

The initiation itself meant overcoming the fear of death. Dionysus was able to carry his mother, Selene, out of gloomy Hades and he would also be able to save the individual from the Underworld. He had also saved Ariadne from death, when he carried her off from the arms of Hypnos and made her his wife. Ariadne's temporary death illustrated the experience of physical death by the individual who had been initiated into the mysteries. For this reason, Dionysus's wedding on Naxos is represented on many sarcophagi, which represent him as the lord of nature and nature's reviving power. (Turcan 1999: 312–14.)

Other symbols on these sarcophagi were the centaurs, pulling the chariot of Dionysus and Ariadne, which sometimes carried medallions of the deceased. The centaurs were other symbols of immortality and were mythological beings that carried the spirits of the dead to heaven. Grapes were also represented together with the wine, symbolizing the crossing of the border of this world to the next. This symbol survived in the Christian Church as denoting Eternal life. (Turcan 1999: 314.)

Based on the many sarcophagi with motifs of Dionysus and his attributes, we may conclude that his mysteries were popular among the Romans in Late Antiquity. The ban and the restrictions of 186 B.C. did not hold, especially not in Southern Italy.

Villa de Misterii

The Villa de Misterii was excavated in 1929–30. In his first report, the Italian archaeologist Amadeo Maiuri described and reproduced the magnificent pictures of the frescoes. The frescoes of the Triclinium were called the room of the mysteries, since the wall painting illustrates scenes from the Dionysian mysteries. Most scholars have agreed about this explanation, but the French historian Paul Veyne has suggested that the frescoes do not feature Bacchic rites, but rather the wedding of an upper-class girl (Veyne 1998: passim).

This article will not provide a detailed discussion of Veyne's hypothesis, which goes back to the first interpretation of the frescoes. The triclinium was principally used as a wedding-room, especially as two little bedchambers, *cubiculi*, were connected with this part of the villa. Formulas and symbols of love and marriage were also used in the mysteries, which makes any interpretation ambiguous; there is nevertheless strong evidence to suggest that the frescoes depict scenes belonging to the mystery religions.

Most scholars, even Veyne, agree that the central figures in the background portray Dionysus and Ariadne, who are partly destroyed. The god is resting in Ariadne's lap and evidently drunk or, as Veyne puts it, overwhelmed by strong passion for his wife. A composite statement would be that the god's facial expression reflects ecstasy, whether of intoxication or love or both. His legs are resting limply and one sandal is lying to his left. Nevertheless, Dionysus dominates the picture together with Ariadne, who was a strong symbol for the awakening of the soul.

The fresco to the left, which could possibly be the first picture, illustrates the preparation of the mysteries. A woman is entering a room where a boy is reading from a roll of parchment to two other women. Some scholars have interpreted the boy as Dionysus himself reading to his mother Selene and her friend Ino. On the other hand, this boy could be the young child who in the mysteries was called " the holy child" and whose parents were still alive. From the mysteries of Isis and Serapis, we know a young figure with a roll of parchment, usually called the *ierogrammatus*, and he also appeared in the Dionysian mysteries. Beside him a woman, holding a parchment in her bosom and a stylus in her hand, looks vacantly at her right side as if she was waiting for the mysteries.

The cult of Dionysus changed its character in Southern Italy. From a rather simple organisation with only one leader, a hierarchy developed into high priestesses and a priest and those who carried a *cist*, the box containing the most holy things, such as the *liknon* or the *phallos*. Some people in the cult were called *bacchoi* or *bacchai*, while others were exalted into holy *bacchoi* or *bacchai*. In this hierarchy, a secretary and treasurer were important figures and probably these two are depicted as the woman and boy in the first picture.

Perhaps they belong to the same picture as the young woman on their left side, who is carrying a basket with bread to the sacrifice. She carries a wreath of laurel and belongs to those participants who were called *stephanophoroi*. She forms a link to the next fresco, which seems to portray a sacrifice or the preparation of a ritual meal of water (or milk or wine) and bread, something that was served in the mysteries of Mithras. Three women are preparing this meal and one of them has her back turned to the spectators, thereby hiding this part of the mystery. These women seem to belong to the performers of the cult (Simon 1961: 124).

The next link represents a silen with a lyre, which marks the crossing of the border between the human and the divine worlds. He is wreathed and seems to be striking up a wedding hymn for the couple in the background. The lyre is the instrument of Apollo, not yet of Dionysus, but the borders between the Apollonian and the Dionysian were fluid in Southern Italy (Nilsson 1975: 125). The *sileni* were veritable drunkards in myth as well as in art, but this one appears sober and dignified. He represents the wise *sileni* who mediate the power of the magic music and even of the mystery itself (Brendel 1966: 214).

Satyrs, too, belonged to the company of Dionysus and a young satyr playing the syrinx, while a young girl is breastfeeding a goat with light fur, is following the silen. Another goat with dark fur stands beside it and these two animals probably represent the victims in the sacrifice. This bucolic scene hints at the cult of Dionysus, where the title of shepherd refers to one particular kind of official, especially in the south of Italy, called *boukolos* or *archiboukolos* (Simon 1961: 126). Nevertheless, the suckling of the white goat unsolved and we never hear about women suckling animals, whereas exposed babies like Attis are suckled by a goat.

The next picture depicts a young woman, fleeing, scared of something. Her fear is caused by the phallus, which may be dimly seen in the *cist* behind the wedding couple according to some scholars, while others suggest that the flogging scene on the other wall frightens her. But is she really frightened by some unseen object or does she appear with her cloak fluttering around her head like a prophetess or a priestess who is going to cover her head before a holy rite or pronouncement.

In the next scene, three satyrs are grouped together and the youngest one holds the mask of Akratos, the aspect of the unmixed wine and the genius of the Bacchantes (Brendel 1966: 228). This represents intoxication, with its aspects of divinity and violence. The oldest of the satyrs holds a bowl, over which the third is leaning. This could be a kind of divination, where the reflexion in the wine or water is interpreted in certain ways (Brendel 1966: 230; Simon 1961: 152–54). In my opinion, it could represent a sacred drink, denoting the young man's initiation into the mysteries, since the mask or rather the *persona* itself is another symbol of initiation. Dionysus himself appears among the participants and is about to inspire them, the very meaning of the noun *enthusiasm.* The change from the normal conditions to Dionysian ecstasy is emphasised by the *persona,* in which the border between man and god disappears and becomes absorbed in the term *bacchus.*

The central scene, where Dionysus himself with an ivy wreath and a *thyrsus* wand is leaning, his head in a woman's lap. As mentioned earlier, most scholars agree that she must be his wife, Ariadne. At their feet, a woman is kneeling with a *cist* covered with a veil, but it is obvious that this contains a phallus. Dionysus was sometimes represented in this form and carried in a wagon during the ceremonies of Rural and Great Dionysia in Attica. It probably protects against the winged black creature on its left, since a phallus often carries a protecting function. A phallic *lar* was often depicted at the entrance to doors and statues of Priapuos were set up in gardens in order to protect them.

The *cist* has the form of a *liknon,* a simple flail, which was also used as a basket and sometimes used like a modern baby-carrier.

The thought that the purified souls ascended like chaff belongs to the mystery language. The child, the oats and the flail were components of the understanding as well as protective and fertilizing phallus, as far as we know from the testimonies of church fathers like Clemens of Alexandria (Nilsson 1975: 21–37).

This is the centre of the mysteries, which took place at night as the women have flaming torches resting on their shoulders. The three pictures in the background thus portray scenes directly connected with the mystery itself. There is one mysterious figure left on this wall, the dark fury. She is one of the most discussed figures among the frescoes. Perhaps she is whipping the woman to her left, who is resting her head in another woman's lap (Nilsson 1975: 123; Simon 1961: 133). Behind this is concealed a fertility-rite of the same kind as the whipping with thongs at the Lupercalia, and perhaps the blows are a part of the initiation of the Bacchant (Simon 1961: 135).

Such a rite is not known in any description of the Dionysian mysteries (Turcan 1999: 309). The fury is rather one of the phantoms that frighten the

initiates, during the ceremony. Probably she represents the part of the mysteries that illustrates death as terrible and cruel. No one of the frescoes in Villa de Misterii portrays the scene where the wild titans tore Dionysus as a child into pieces, but this picture could be a reminder of the horror that was once the source of the mysteries of Dionysus.

The fury has a wand in her hand that she draws behind her back, frightened of the phallus in the basket. There are parallels to this wand, such as the story of Circe in Homer's *Odyssey*. Her dress with short skirt and high boots was worn by hunting women, but was also the standard attire of punitive demons of the kind known as Phoinai. As demon she could be Dike, the goddess of justice, who reported man's crimes to Zeus and belonged to the Underworld (Nilsson 1975: 125). According to anoter suggestion, she represents Lyssa, the personification of lunacy, which also involved the Dionysian fury.

The kneeling woman with her head in another woman's lap is the next picture. She is stripped to her waist and her eyes are closed; the nakedness and the closed eyes express the newborn state of the initiate at the end of the initiation. There is serenity and expectation in her figure, expressed by her relaxed fingers – if she had been whipped, they would have looked more tense – and her calm face.

The other woman is already initiated and is probably serving as a mystagogue, the one who teaches and instructs the initiate. She holds her left hand protectively over the young woman's head and her right around her shoulders. Her eyes are looking upwards but not fixedly on something, as if she is waiting for the mysteries to be fulfilled.

On their left are standing two women. One of them is stark naked, except for a veil wrapped around her body, and is holding cymbals in her hands, as if she is marking the rhythm in her dance. The other woman in her darker clothes carries a *thyrsus*, which like the cymbals is a ritual item of the Dionysian cult like the dance. The dancing woman represents the bright side of the mysteries, while the dark one represents the darker element. These figures probably have nothing to do with the mysteries as such, but represent a contrasting effect, introduced by the artist (Nilsson 1975: 126).

In the next scene, a bride is being adorned by her mother or a servant. This means that the initiate has experienced the mysteries and passed through the ritual. The bride was a common concept in the mystery religions and the secret rooms where the ceremonies took place were often called the bride chamber (see Näsström 1990: 85). This scene depicts the phase where the initiate enters the same state as the other adherents. She is wearing a saffron yellow dress, another allusion to Dionysus, as saffron belonged to him. Two cupids are also present; one of them is holding a mirror up to the bride, which is quite natural in the situation, when a bride

is being dressed. The mirror belongs to the mysteries, however, as the evil titans lured the infant Dionysus from his wet-nurse with a mirror to a place where they tore him into pieces. The mirror formed part of the paraphernalia in the mysteries of Dionysus.

The final fresco shows a woman, dressed as a bride, with her right hand resting on her cheek and the left on the elbow rest of her chair. This picture represents the end of the fulfilled mysteries. The bride has been initiated into the secrets which were know by the other mysts and this is the last of the frescoes in the Villa de Misterii.

Other interpretations of the frescoes are possible however, such as Veyne's suggestion of a wedding among the aristocracy. We have already pointed out the parallels between an initiation and a wedding and we could also add the similar symbols of a wedding as a mystical event, especially as expressed in the wedding of Dionysus and Ariadne. These symbols were transferred into Christian art, as with the vines and ivory creepers symbolizing eternal life and used as decoration on tombstones. Christ was also depicted with one foot pierced by an oat and the other by a vine. A part of paradise was also symbolised by a vine. The vine, in particular, had great significance, as it was connected with Holy Communion where the bride and mystical union with God merged one ritual into another.

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JØRGEN PODEMANN SØRENSEN

The Rhetoric of Ritual

"Till the present day, the History of Religions has survived on a baggage of unclear ideas." This *dictum* by Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss in the *Année Sociologique* for 1902–03 (repr. Mauss 1983: 138) is certainly less true today than it was a hundred years ago. But when it comes to the "unclear ideas" they had in mind: religion and magic, prayer and incantation, sacrifice and offering, myth and legend, god and spirit etc., we have to admit that unclear ideas are still around and often blur the description of empirical observations. And what is worse: our discipline tends to abandon – not this inherited vocabulary, but – the theoretical discussions which might lend some clarity to these notions or perhaps supersede them with new and less ambiguous concepts. During the hundred years that have passed, attempts have been made both to abandon and to clarify the traditional stock of ambiguous and overlapping concepts, and in this way at least, a number of important critical points have been made – perhaps so many that we have more or less lost the ambition of Hubert and Mauss: to establish "natural classes of facts" (Mauss 1983: 138) to supersede the unclear ideas. They had done precisely this for sacrifice in their famous essay from 1898, probably still the best general work on the subject. What they set out to do in 1902 was to extend their theory to what was – and sometimes still is – called magic. They were aware that their researches tended towards a general theory of rites, but their primary concern in the *General Theory of Magic* they published was with the social setting of so-called magic. Since they had convincingly shown the collective nature and basis of sacrifice (with general implications for communal ritual), it was important for them to ascertain whether the private rites they called magic would conform to the pattern already established for communal rites.

Hubert and Mauss were aware that the distinction between magic and communal rites was not, as some later anthropologists believed, a matter of efficacy. Efficacy is a constituent of ritual as such, and they rightly defined rites as "actes traditionels d'une efficacité *sui generis*" (Mauss 1983: 12). The main result of their inquiry was that generally speaking private, individual rites conform to the pattern already established for communal rites, i.e. the "magician" uses (or usurps) the collective representations also

employed in communal ritual. The only substantial basis for a distinction between magic and communal ritual, then, remains the social setting. Communal rites are communal; magic rites are private, but in both cases the rites make use of collective representations in very much the same way. *Vis-à-vis* this state of affairs, Hubert and Mauss perceived two "natural classes of facts": communal rites and magic rites. Thus, in an endeavour to replace unclear ideas with more clear-cut ones, they ended up supporting one of the most dubious distinctions ever made, that between magic and religion.

Disregarding for a moment all the difficulties we might nowadays have with the idea of "natural classes of facts", would it not be equally, or even more natural, to perceive *one* class of facts: rites, or the use of collective representations for the sake of efficacy? That would mean to pursue the other line of inquiry, of which Hubert and Mauss were aware, but which was not their immediate concern, that of a general theory of ritual, communal as well as private. It would also mean that we need a name for that use of collective representations for the sake of efficacy which constitutes ritual no matter what is its social context or setting. The name I propose for this purpose is the rhetoric of ritual. Rhetoric refers to form, but not only to the various embellishments of speech through alliteration, metaphors etc. An important and in fact much more fundamental part of rhetoric, classical and modern, is the whole staging of the speech and the points to be made. Greek and Roman rhetoric distinguished *heuresis/inventio*, the research for an adequate topos, as an important part of an orator's preparations. The word *topos*, lit. "place", is difficult to translate into one modern concept. It may in fact sometimes be translated as "commonplace", for orators often had recourse to banalities and shared motifs. It may even sometimes coincide with the Durkheimian notion of "collective representations". But above all, the *topos* is the motif that stages the argument. It is, of course, also a topic on which the orator speaks, but what the orator looks for in his research is not just some subject matter to speak about; it is a leading topic, which may serve as a point of departure or even as the plot of his speech.

The rhetoric of ritual is clearly different from the rhetoric of politics or law. In parliaments and public assemblies, as well as in the courtroom, the aim of rhetoric is to convince or persuade. Ritual, however, is formally constructed to achieve its aim directly, without human intermediaries. Ritual is performance and enactment, not information that will motivate listeners to promote its aim. It is true that a ritual may deeply impress participants and possibly motivate them in various ways. But that is not the formal aim of ritual. In an earlier contribution, at the Donner Symposium of 1991, I argued that the formative principle of ritual is efficacy (cf. Podemann Sørensen 1993: 20). Local and individual confidence in the abil-

ity of a ritual to produce a certain outcome varies a great deal. But rituals are invariably designed to work directly on the world, without human intermediaries. The rhetoric of ritual is thus a rhetoric of efficacy, not a rhetoric of persuasion. And ritual efficacy is a matter of rhetoric, not necessarily a local belief, and certainly not a fact that the scholar should account for beyond the study of rhetoric.

In her two important books on ritual, Catherine Bell speaks of ritual efficacy also in the sense of positive latent functions (Bell 1992: 210, cf. 140f.; 1997: 81–83). She is inspired by Bourdieu (1982: 121–34) who points out that the real importance of the male circumcision ritual is not what it does to the boy, but the fact that it contributes to shape a world, in which male and female are thoroughly distinguished. The "true efficacy", as it were, of the rite is thus its contribution to social structure. This contribution, however, heavily depends on the public acceptance of a formal rhetoric, according to which this rite is the act that makes the boy a man. Public acceptance is, at least in some societies, a variable, and it would therefore not be superfluous to distinguish between the formal efficacy of ritual rhetoric and the actual role of ritual in shaping a culturally postulated social world.[1] The latter field of study is certainly an important one, but one of the points in speaking of the rhetoric of ritual is to single out exactly those formal features of ritual texts and actions that postulate efficacy.

The simplest type of ritual rhetoric is the mere postulate that the ritual is able to cause the desired outcome. An ancient Egyptian spell for the preparation of an amulet for the protection of a child thus addresses any ghost that might attack the child:

šp.k! s3.w pw!	Vanish! This is a ritual protection! (Erman 1901: 39.)[2]

The explicit reference to ritual protection and, by implication, ritual efficacy within the ritual is highly unusual. The regular rhetoric of efficacy may be equally simple, but is much more implicit. The following Danish ritual from 1665 against mice, which eat up people's stores, is my favourite example: on a piece of tin or copper is engraved the picture of a rat with a mouse in its mouth. In order to activate the piece before it is buried in the middle of the yard, wrapped in a rat's skin, the following spell is recited over it:

Ieg tuinger alle Mus	I coerce all mice
i dette Hus,	On this farm,

1 There are rituals, e.g. marriage, where the two kinds of "efficacy" coincide, but also rituals where they are much less closely related.

2 For the transl. cf. Roeder 1915: 119.

at ingen paa sit Sted	That none in its place
skal blive til Fortræd	Shall do any harm.
(Ohrt 1917: 320.)	

This ritual text implicitly stages the speech of the user in a position from which he may exert control over nature, at least as far as the mice are concerned. The sentences that state the purpose of the rite also serve to situate the speech and the action of the ritual in a privileged position that makes for its efficacy. This way of implicitly situating speech may be compared to a feature characteristic of fiction: the so-called presupposition error. Consider the following opening passage of a novel:

> "Olga!" the baron exclaimed, suddenly looking across the Corso towards a tall, elegant lady, whose features and dress betrayed her Russian origin...

In these passages some acquaintance with the baron and the whole scene of the story (obviously somewhere in Italy) is implicitly, but erroneously, presupposed in the reader. Olga is unknown to the reader, but obviously known to the baron. The reader is already anxious to learn more about this mysterious woman from an earlier period of the baron's life and hardly notices how two definite articles and a proper name got him into this story. The implicit presupposition of the reader's closeness to the milieu of the story situates the narration and makes for the reader's realistic and sympathetic interest in the events of the novel.

Ritual texts have no reader in the sense fiction has, but they nevertheless implicitly situate themselves and the ritual action they accompany in an analogous manner. I shall speak of such implicit claims to a privileged, efficacious position of speech and action in rituals as *situating elements.* There would be little sense in setting up a rhetoric of ritual if these situating elements were always as simple as we have just seen in the mouse-formula. But as a matter of fact, such naked postulates of efficacy are very rare and represent an absolute minimum of ritual rhetoric. The vast majority of rituals elaborate and support this postulate in numerous ways. Some of them are already well known from comparative studies of ritual, e.g. the use of myth in ritual. Whenever a myth or some element of a myth is re-enacted or otherwise displayed in ritual, this serves to situate the action at the beginning of things and sometimes also to provide an example of the outcome of the ritual. Myth in itself often embraces both the chaotic state of not yet being and the resulting cosmic order. These aspects of myth, ritual, and result are very explicit in texts recited at the Maori sweet-potato planting ritual: a small part of the field is delimited as a sacred field, and this is where the ritual, prototype or exemplar potatoes are planted. They are carried in a basket to the field, which is addressed in the following manner:

Be pregnant, be pregnant!
Right into the country, right out to the sea...
(Prytz Johansen 1958: 147.)

This is a representation of the intended outcome of the ritual, expressed in terms, which are continuous with the mythical exemplar of the ritual, but also emphasize how results of the ritual on the sacred field will spread throughout the country. The imperative is a postulate of efficacy, quite analogous to "I coerce all mice..." It is further elaborated as the text continues:

This is a carrying which carries,
This is a lifting which lifts.
Who is lifting?
It is Rongo who is lifting,
Rongo-uakina, Rongo-who-steals.
(Prytz Johansen 1958: 147.)

These lines elaborate the situating element of the ritual, insisting that the action going on is the primeval deed of Rongo, when he stole the sweet potatoes, hid them in his penis and impregnated his wife with them. The act of carrying the potatoes into the field in a basket is "a carrying which carries", i.e. an efficacious carrying because it is formally situated as Rongo's primeval deed, which first brought the potatoes to the Maori. The logic of this rhetorical staging of the action is that at the very beginning of things it is possible to act upon the world. The ritual assumes the character of a new creation, because it situates itself at the turning point from where things come into being.

Constructors of such rituals may almost be said to follow the advice given to the daoist adept in the *Daode jing*: "Deal with things in their state of not yet being" (Ch. 64, transl. in Waley 1977). Although ritual is not ultimately the subject of the *Daode jing*, it is conceivable that the book exploits traditional ways of thinking about ritual. The idea of dealing with things in their state of not yet being is closely connected with the daoist idea of *wu wei*, "non-action" or "non-intervention". In classical daoism, *wu wei* is contrasted with the Confucian idea that a very conscious work of cultivation, based on ancient traditions, will restore order in the society and the world. To the daoist mystic it is important not to engage in any effort to save society or the world, but to let things happen, as it were, of themselves. In this way the *dao* will prevail and the mystic will achieve the bliss of union with the dao, "without really trying", i.e. through *wu wei*. There is, however, a Confucian text in which *wu wei* appears in the context of a theory of ritual:

> The master said: "If there was a ruler who achieved order without taking any action (*wu wei*), it was, perhaps, *Shun*. There was nothing for him to do but to hold himself in a respectful posture and to face due south. (*Lun Yu* 15, 5; transl. in Lau 1986: 132.)

An idea common to Confucianism and Daoism is that in ancient times, the sage kings ruled without effort, by their mere *de*, "virtue". This text envisages a prerequisite for the rule in question: the correct ritual posture. In his classic interpretation of Confucius, Herbert Fingarette (1972) pointed out how crucial the idea of ritual efficacy was in Confucius' vision of a harmonious society. While later Confucians seem to have adopted an almost functionalist view of ritual, Confucius himself insisted on the efficacy of traditional rites. His belief in the ritual competence of the ancients and its potential as a means of government appears from another passage in the *Lun Yu:*

> Someone asked about the theory of the *ti* sacrifice. The Master said: "It is not something I understand, for whoever understands it will be able to manage the Empire as easily as if he had it here", pointing to his palm. (*Lun Yu* 3, 11; transl. in Lau 1986: 69.)

Being in a position to manage the Empire as if it was in one's hand is a ritual position, very much like the position of *Shun* on his throne, facing south, in the correct ritual posture. It is this position which is characterized as *wu wei*, "without taking action". To Confucius and his time, the secret of this position was lost, and all there was to do was to study the tradition and adhere to it in all one's doings in order to restore the harmony of the past.

In Daoism, *wu wei* becomes a matter of the inner life and the attitude of the sage, but it is still understood as a position that allows the dao to be realized in the world. It imposes nothing on the world, but makes for a new beginning and thereby a fulfilment of the immanent order of the world. This is well expressed in the daoist paradox of doing non-action and thereby leaving nothing undone, "(wei) wuwei ze wu buwei". In chapter 48 of the *Daode jing*, Arthur Waley rendered the paradox and its immediate context thus:

> The practice of Tao consists in subtracting day by day,
> Subtracting and yet again subtracting
> Till one has reached inactivity.
> But by this very inactivity,
> Everything can be activated.
> (Waley 1977: 201.)

Again, this text is not specifically about ritual, but deals with daoist practice in general. Anyway, if we take "inactivity" *(wuwei)* in Waley's interpretation as the turning point, the privileged position of ritual speech and action, we may understand the text as a statement on the universal efficacy of counting down to this ritual point zero.

As we have seen in the Maori planting ritual, such a rhetorical countdown is possible through the use of myth, which is about the beginning of things. When the ritual situation is identified as the very beginning of potatoes, the ritual situates itself at the turning point from which new potatoes may be produced. The Maori planting ritual is a communal and calendrical ritual, and the literature of our discipline is rich in examples of a similar character, in which a mythical exemplar or prototype secures the efficacy of the rites. But the same countdown to a mythical exemplar pattern is also found in crisis rites for more particular purposes, e.g. in what is still sometimes called magic. Let us consider an ancient Egyptian formula to prevent crocodiles from attacking a person or a head of cattle in the water. It exploits the myth of Osiris, who was thrown into the Nile by Seth:

> Osiris is lying in the water, the Eye of Horus being with him and the great Sun-beetle spreading over him. (...) O ye who are in the water! Your mouth shall be sealed by Re, your throat shall be choked by Sekhmet, your tongue shall be cut out by Thoth, your eyes shall be blinded by Hike! Yonder four mighty gods who were in charge of the protection of Osiris, they are the ones who will be in charge of the protection of what is lying in the water, all men, all cattle that lie in the water, on this day of protection. (Sander-Hansen 1956: 31–32.)

The regressive, situating element of the ritual formula is the myth of Osiris lying in the water, protected by the four gods. The productive element almost takes the form of a legal argument that, pursuant to the mythical precedent, anybody who falls into the water will be under the protection of the four gods. The crocodiles are adressed euphemistically as "ye who are in the water" as a dramatization of the reciter's command of the situation, not, of course, to engage in an act of persuading or intimidating the crocodiles.

Such coercive formulas or spells are often contrasted with prayer to make up that distinction between religion and magic which has haunted ritual studies since the days of Sir James Frazer. This distinction is really a matter of religious polemics. Frazer refers to early man's belief in magical efficacy as "this truly Catholic creed" (Frazer 1936, I: 235), contrasting it with the later religious attitude in prayer and offerings which seek to win the consent of gods for their purpose. Probably unwittingly, he thereby paid homage to the central Protestant idea of "Ohnmacht des Gebets", the powerlessness of prayer, as the ultimate religious situation of man. One of

the most disastrous consequences of this distinction was that prayer, and sometimes ritual in general, came to be regarded as an act of persuasive communication with superhuman agencies. But the seafaring nation to which Sir James belonged has a Common Prayer Book with a chapter for use at sea. It prescribes the following prayer to be used in storm:

> O Most powerful and glorious Lord God, at whose command the winds blow, and lift up the waves of the sea, and who stillest the rage thereof; We thy creatures, but miserable sinners, do in this our great distress cry unto thee for help: Save, Lord, or else we perish. We confess, when we have been safe, and seen all things quiet about us, we have forgot thee our God, and refused to hearken to the still voice of thy word, and to obey thy commandments; But now we see, how terrible thou art in all thy works of wonder; the great God to be feared above all; And therefore we adore thy Divine Majesty, acknowledging thy power, and imploring thy goodness. Help, Lord, and save us for thy mercy's sake in Jesus Christ thy Son, our Lord. Amen. (*Book of Common Prayer* n.d.: 352.)

There is nothing here to offend the principle of "Ohnmacht des Gebets". In fact, the prayer is one long exhibition, or better, a dramatization of this idea. It is also conspicuously a countdown: those who pray characterize themselves as miserable sinners, whose only refuge in their distress is the Lord. Before him they stand, empty-handed and powerless, without any religious merit, nay even with the humble confession that they have been religiously forgetful and are right now extemporizing the worship that was always due. The regressive, situating element of the ritual is this countdown to the very powerlessness of prayer, the turning point in the Christian relation with God and in that tension between sin and grace which in the relevant Christian tradition is the source of salvation. The productive element is the wish to be saved, backed up by the example of Christ as the universal soteriological paradigm in the sense of the fourth gospel.

Just as the Egyptian formula identified the present crisis with a mythological pattern, the Anglican prayer reduces distress at sea to a traditional pattern of sin and salvation. In both cases the patterns of religious representations were mobilized to count down to the turning point and obtain ritual efficacy. The religious representations were not information, communicated to crocodiles or to God, but means to secure that efficacy. Rituals may represent communication even with superhuman beings, and to a person sincerely engaged in prayer it is, of course, an act of communication, just as to the Maori, the planting of the ritual potatoes *is* Rongo's primeval act of impregnating his wife with the stolen potatoes. But viewed from outside, both the supplicant and his god are part of the ritual, which has no further addressee.

In fact, to address a superhuman being as happens not only in prayer, but also in hymns and incantations, is already to situate speech and acts somewhere beyond the normal human condition. It is to obtain a privileged, and therefore efficacious, speech situation, which may imply that the matter in hand is reduced to its "state of not yet being". There is, however, also another, equally well known way of counting down. The liminal period in rites of passage has much in common with mythical beginnings, above all with the state of not yet being. Victor Turner (1967: 93–111; 1969) has given an excellent description the rich symbolism of liminality: inverted structures, suspense of distinctions and borderlines, situation of the ritual object "betwixt and between", in an intermediate ("interstructural") stage between the clearly defined structures that make for its preritual and its postritual status. Representations of antistructure and communitas situate the act as anterior to the changes aimed at in the ritual and serve to dramatize the openness and susceptibility of the ritual object. Strange enough, the opposite procedure is also a possibility. Meticulous control of every detail in a ritual may also serve to dramatize the openness and extreme vulnerability of the situation. Controlling what is usually left to itself demonstrates that natural order is no longer or not yet established, and in this situation efficacious or creative action may be taken, often by representing an exemplar of the desired change or renewal.

Turner's analytical descriptions are well known and need no exemplification. I would also like to add that the formal analytical devices they offer have served us well for many years. At the theoretical level, however, Turner tends to think of liminality as a fact of social psychology (Turner 1969: esp. ch. 5), and he may even seem to approach the standpoint of liberal theology, that human psychological needs prove, if not the truth, then at least the relevance of religion.

Within the framework of the rhetoric of ritual, no such assumptions are necessary. Liminal symbolism is nothing but the countdown to the turning point that makes for ritual efficacy. The study of the social and psychological impact of such a rhetoric on participants in a ritual may then be left to its own premises. The rhetoric of ritual furthermore unites two theories or analytical devices that have served us well in ritual studies: that of the myth-ritual relationship and that of liminal symbolism. Both may be regarded as the rhetorical countdown to the turning point, from which a new beginning is possible.

There are in fact numerous other ways to situate ritual speech and action in that efficacious turning point. One of them is sacrifice. Sacrifice is a ritual in which some material, an animal, part of a harvest, some kind of food or equipment is consumed – killed, eaten, destroyed, given away. The sacrificial material provides a fixed point for the rhetoric of sacrifice. It is made to refer to those who sacrifice, to the general order of the world, to

the source of the blessings they hope to obtain. Across Northern Europe and Asia, from Sami-ætnam to Hokkaido, a bear sacrifice represents human participation in the divine and divine presence among humans. (Paulson, Hultkranz and Jettmar 1962: 190–91, 288; Paproth 1976; Kitagawa 1961.) The bear is the sacrificial victim, the divine recipient of the sacrifice, and the human ambassador among the gods. It is rhetorically made to represent the whole process of exchange between gods and men that make the world go round. The famous Purusha hymn in Rigveda X, 90 exposes, in the form of a myth, a very similar theory of sacrifice. The primeval, exemplar sacrifice is made up of the order of the world, but it also produces the order of the world; and Purusha is both the sacrifice, the recipient of the sacrifice, and the order produced by the sacrifice.

A sacrifice of quite analogous circular sophistication was carried out every day in ancient Egypt, as part of the daily temple liturgy: the sacrifice of Maat (Hornung 1971: 209–12; Assman 1990: 184–95), a goddess, but also the Egyptian concept of the immanent order and principle of the world or the essence which qualifies things for existence. Maat is the worship of the gods, the divine capacity for creating and upholding the world, and also the ordered world resulting from the creative and upholding activity of gods as well as from the daily worship. The long chapter that accompanies the rite[3] makes ample cross-references to the various ways in which maat makes the world go round. The aim of making the sacrifice point in all these directions is to situate the act at the turning point, from which the world may be operated.

Still other ways of counting down to the turning point are purification and fasting. I am indebted to one of my students, Kate Østergaard Jacobsen (1996), for having pointed out that the muslim fast in the month of Ramadan is not just a pious excercise, but serves to situate the body in point zero. The fasting serves to prepare the night, and what goes on during the night is what is going to be. Every night in Ramadan – and particularly the 27th – imitates the *lailat al-qadr*, the night in which the Koran was sent down, or we might almost say the night of the incarnation of the *logos*. The fast is the ritual means of counting down to that critical moment, where everything that happens will determine the future. In that situation it becomes extremely important not only to recite the Koran, but also to eat and to eat well, and this is in fact what is done during the night. In a certain sense, every ritual is, to a greater or lesser degree, a regress to the *lailat al-qadr*, the point zero or the new beginning which is the source of all ritual efficacy. And in that sense, ritual is pure action, bound to produce whatever it represents because it is situated at the very beginning of things, it deals with things in their "state of not yet being".

3 Daily Temple Liturgy Ch. 42, published with translation and commentary in Moret 1902.

From ancient Egypt to modern Japan, purity is one of the most widespread expressions of ritual competence. The act of purification is, of course, a way of reducing things to an original state and ensuring that no alien influence is present in the crucial, efficacious moment. But it is often more: when hot water is sprinkled over the participants in a shinto ritual, a symbolic gesture serves to load the water with the blessing of the *kami*. The resulting purity is not just absence of dirt, but a positive quality. The water used to purify priests and statues in ancient Egyptian temples was taken from the sacred lake belonging to each temple, or from the Nile. Both were conventionally identified with *Nun*, the primeval ocean. The resulting purity would thus also be a primeval quality, and a competence to work new beginnings. In this positive sense, ancient Egyptian priests were engaged in pure action, and in fact the most common term for "priest" is *wᶜb*, "pure". When the *wᶜb ᶜ3*, the "great priest" or "great pure one", officiating in the daily temple liturgy, aproached the naos of the god with the words *jw.j wᶜb.kwj*, "I am pure",[4] it implied also that he had become primeval, he was acting in the primeval darkness of the sanctuary and dealing with the world outside in its "state of not yet being".

And now, to conclude this sketchy comparative excercise, this is what I think ritual is: an activity formally situated at that point zero where every move and every word become efficacious because they deal with things in their "state of not yet being". The role of religious representations in ritual is to dramatize the countdown to that turning point and sometimes also to express and secure the order of things the priest wishes to see when he reemerges from the primeval darkness of the sanctuary. There are multiple ways in which rites thus rhetorically situate themselves at the turning point, from which things may be produced, renewed, or controlled. This paper could not account for more than a few, theoretically significant varieties, and neither have I been able to discuss details of any single interpretation. What I may perhaps hope to have demonstrated is that the framework of the rhetoric of ritual may serve not only to unify important theoretical issues and analytical devices in ritual studies, but also to clarify and reformulate a consistent approach to the comparative study of ritual. If unclear ideas have really haunted our discipline for more than one hundred years, these aims might not be without importance.

4 The Daily Temple Liturgy, chs. 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 17, 24, in Moret 1902.

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ERIK REENBERG SAND

Rituals between Religion and Politics

The Case of VHP's 2001–2002 Ayodhya-campaign

The present paper deals with rituals in a political discourse, namely the rituals employed by the right wing, Hindu nationalist movement, Vishwa Hindu Parishad (hereafter VHP), in its campaign for a Rama temple in the north Indian town of Ayodhya. As is probably well-known, VHP is part of a group of organizations known as the Sangh Parivar, or *sangh*[1] family, which also includes the presently ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (hereafter BJP), and the ultra-nationalistic organization Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, or RSS.

The sources used are different from those ordinarily used within studies of the history of religions, namely running coverage in Indian newspapers combined with the web pages of the organizations concerned, especially VHP. Considering the fact that a large part of the discourse about the rituals dealt with actually takes place in the media, these sources are, of course, unavoidable.[2]

There is nothing new in pointing to the importance of rituals in the campaigns of VHP. From the point of view of an "inclusive operational definition of ritual that does not separate religious 'ritual', as addressing postulated beings, from secular ceremony", Jan Plaetvoet (1995) has in a very general way dealt with VHP's use of "rituals of confrontation" in its Ayodhya campaign. Although he notes some of the characteristics of these rituals, such as their simultaneously unifying and divisive intentions, the weakness of his approach is its general aim, namely to show the usefulness of his very broad ritual definition. Thus, on the whole, we do not obtain a closer understanding of the specific religio-political character of these rituals.

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1 Exept when using them as scholarly concepts, I quote Indian words and names without diacritics and in the form they are presented by my sources.

2 All references in this paper are to the Internet editions of Indian newspapers. The bulk of my references are to *Rediff.com*'s news page. In these cases, I quote only the dates of the report. Wherever I quote other newspapers, I refer to them by the following abbreviations: IE (*Indian Express*) and TOI (*Times of India*).

Of more use are both Peter Van der Veer (1994: 119–28) and Richard H. Davis (1996), who both have pointed to the importance of the concept of pilgrimage (*tīthayātrā*) and religious symbolism in VHP's success in mobilizing Hindus. Van der Veer took as his example the so-called *ekātmatāyajña* (or "sacrifice for unity") in 1983 in which by way of three major pan-Indian processions, from Kathmandu in the north to Rameshvaram in the south, from Haridvar in the north to Kanyakumari in the south, and from Gangasagar in the east to Somnath in the west, and 47 lesser subsidiary ones, they sought to underscore the Hindu unity of India, reaching out to an estimated 60 million Indians. A major unifying symbol in this campaign was the Ganges, whose water in each of the greater processions were transported around and united with waters from the local rivers, thus symbolizing the unity of India. Another symbol was Bharat Mātā, or Mother India, conceived as a deity, whose image was carried along in each of the processions.

Davis dealt primarily with the crucial Rath yatra in 1990 from Somnath in Western India to Ayodhya, an important element in the Ayodhya campaign, showing how it was "dominated by religious imagery – from the primary terms of the procession, through the ritual idiom of pilgrimage, sacrifice, and initiation, to the devotional responses toward Rāma's chariot" (Davis 1996: 51).

From a more political angle, Neera Chandhoke (2000), in a comparatively recent survey article about the Ayodhya campaign, has a very useful characterization of the VHP-rituals when she says that the history of India since the mid-1980s, when the Ramjanmabhoomi agitation was intitiated, has been marked by "a cynical abuse of the religious idiom" and also characterizes parts of the campaign as "politics as theatre, replete with symbolism and suffused with ritualism".

Although the use of the pilgrimage idiom is also found in the events which I am about to describe, I shall mainly focus on another overall ritual idiom which has been effectively used by VHP in its Ayodhya campaign, namely the set of rites employed in connection with the building and construction of houses and temples.

The Ayodhya conflict: A brief history

As I presume that most readers are familiar with the main features of the Ayodhya conflict, I shall here only present the most necessary facts.[3] The Ayodhya conflict is about the right to a piece of land in the small town of Ayodhya in northern Uttar Pradesh, on which, from 1528 and until Decem-

3 For fuller introductions, see e.g. Van der Veer 1994: 1–12; Platvoet 1995; Nandy *et al.* 1995: 1–55.

ber 6, 1992, there stood a mosque built by one of the generals of the first Mogul emperor, Babar, and known under the name the Babri Masjid, or Babar Mosque. According to Hindu mythology, Ayodhya was the birthplace of the Hindu hero, or god, Rāma, and, in the opinion of some Hindus, the Babri Majid was built on the spot of a former temple commemorating the birth of Rāma.

Exactly how old the conflict about the Babri Masjid may be is difficult to say. However, it seems to go back at least to the period of the British annexation in 1856 (Van der Veer 1994: 2). After being dormant for almost a centure, the conflict was reawakened after independence when, in December 1949, an image of Rāma was placed inside the mosque by a group of young Hindus. This image has been allowed to remain since then, while since 1950, several lawsuits about the right to the image, to its worship, as well as to the mosque itself, have been going on in the Allahabad High Court.

In 1984, however, the conflict changed from a local to a national one. Instrumental in this change was the Hindu nationalist organisation, the VHP, which had been formed in 1964 with the aim of uniting and strengthening the Hindus who, they thought, had earlier been divided into many different sects and casts.

In 1984, VHP launched a campaign for the construction of a temple of Rāma on the Babri Masjid site in Ayodhya. The initiative became known as the Ramjanmabhumi-campaign, meaning "the campaign for the birthplace of Ram". In October of the same year they staged a procession from Sitamarhi, "the birthplace of Sitā", Rāma's wife, to Ayodhya, where an oath-taking ceremony took place (*India Today* 25.3.2002: 28). After this, the procession moved on to the state capital, Lucknow, and further on to Delhi in order to obtain political support.

In 1986 one of the earlier mentioned law suits at the court in Faizabad was finished, allowing the Hindus to worship the images installed in the Babri Masjid in 1949. Although VHP was not a party in the case, they celebrated the decision as a victory and formed a committee to organize future actions in connection with the Babri Masjid question (*India Today* 25.3.2002: 28).

VHP's use of building rituals

The use of building rituals in the campaign for a Rāma temple in Ayodhya seems to have been conceived in connection with the Kumbha Mela festival in Allahabad in 1989.[4] Here it was decided to perform the ritual of

4 The following information has been culled from the article "Sri Ram Shila Pooja Plan" of the official website of VHP (http://www.vhp.org.); cf. e.g. Chandhoke 2000.

laying the foundation stone (*shilanyas*) of the proposed Rāma temple at Rāma's birthplace (*ramjanmabhumi*) later that year on November 9th. In this connection, it was also decided to launch a large country-wide programme of collecting and consecrating stones for the Rama temple from all over India and from Hindus abroad. For this purpose, the whole of India was devided into smaller units of about 2,000 people, and during September and October worship of stones (*shila puja*) was performed in 297,705 places all over India. From all these places, the stones were brought to 4,251 greater so-called divisional centres where great sacrifices (*mahayagya*) of 3–5 days took place. Finally, from these centres the consecrated stones were transported in chariots (*raths*) to Ayodhya, where the foundation ritual was allowed to take place on the disputed site by the Rajiv Gandhi government that by this move apparently wished to win some votes on the popular Rama theme.

The symbolism of this campaign is, of course, clear, namely to let the whole of India, even the most remote villages, contribute to the building of the Rāma temple. The same motive is also clear from the parallel running collection of funds for the project. Here VHP declares that in Bharat (i.e. India) "there are many individual donors who can undertake to finance the entire construction of the proposed grand temple. Since the temple is to be constructed at the birthplace of Shri Ram, every Hindu would like to participate because of his great devotion to the Lord. Bearing this popular urge in mind, it was decided to fix offering norms of Rs 1.25, Rs. 5 – and Rs. 10 per head, per small and large family respectively." Thus, the idea clearly seems to be that the whole Hindu nation should contribute to the financing of the temple, and, we may add, thus acquire a share of the merit. The other side to this is, of course, that VHP and the Ram Janmabhumi Nyas (hereafter RJN), with whom the 82.931.000 rupees collected are posited, may declare themselves as representatives of the Hindu nation. Furthermore, we notice that, as in the case of the Ekātmatāyajña, the basic idea behind the project of temple construction is the idea of Hindu unity, only the flow of sacredness and resources goes in the opposite direction. In the Ekātmatāyajña the flow was from a sacred centre (i.e. the Gaṅgā) to the periphery, whereas here it is from the periphery to the sacred centre in Ayodhya.

From the point of view of VHP, an advantage of this concept is that it provides a frame of reference for a series of repeated campaigns to pressurize the authorities into allowing a Rama temple at the disputed site in Ayodhya. The fact that rituals are traditionally involved in several of the practical preparations of a Hindu temple, leaves VHP with many possibilities for stopping and reopening its campaign, which has been characterized from the very beginning by threats and agression. Thus, in 1989 the campaign started with the preparation and consecration of the stones for

the temple and ended with the laying of the foundation stone at the disputed site. Since then, the production of carved stone pillars has been going on in VHP workshops in Ayodhya and Gujarat, thus helping to keep the campaign rolling. Since the *garbha griha*, or *sanctum sanctorum*, of the proposed temple was actually situated within the Babri Masjid (Sachar 2002), the removal of this became a necessity for the continuation of the construction process. This was the background of the *Rath yatra* in 1990 which was unsuccessful in the sense that Advani was arrested and VHP was not allowed to pull down the masjid. As is well known, however, they succeeded in doing this in December 1992, when a mob of more than 100,000 supporters broke through the police lines around the masjid.

The 2001–2002 campaign

In the remaining part of this paper, I shall deal with the most recent developments in the conflict which took place during the first three months of this year, and amply illustrate the theatrical and political nature of VHP's campaign as well as the focal role which rituals always seem to play.[5]

The campaign began on the 20th January 2001 during the Kumbha Mela in Allahabad where the so-called Dharma Sansad, or Dharma Board, of VHP decided to reopen the campaign for a new Rama temple and set the 12th March 2002 as the *terminus ante quem* for the removal of all obstacles towards the building of the Rama temple. The declared purpose of this deadline was to give the Central Government time to make the necessary decisions. The main obstacle to the building of the temple would seem to be the fact that the Supreme Court in 1993 had decided to put an area of 67 acres around the Babri Masjid, also called the undisputed or acquired land, under the protection of the Central Government.[6] For the building of a temple to take place, VHP demanded the restitution of this area, along with the so-called disputed land, i.e. the land on which the remains of the Babri Masjid were lying.

Politically, this move was no doubt an attempt to put pressure on the BJP-led central government, which, however, was bound both by the previously mentioned Supreme Court judgement to maintain the *status quo* in both the disputed and undisputed areas, until the question of the ownership of the disputed land had been settled, as well as by the fact that its coalition

5 The theatrical and dramatic character of these events is so explicit that, at one stage of the preparation of this paper, I thought of calling it "drama of ritual" and dealing with the events like a play with a list of *dramatis personae* etc.; cf. also Chandhoke 2000.

6 Out of these 67 acres, VHP had leased 42 acres from the State of Uttar Pradesh in March 1992.

partners and the opposition were against the building of a Rama temple on the disputed land. As might be expected, no substantial initiatives were taken on the part of the government, and on the 10th September, VHP further stepped up its campaign when its vice-president, Acharya Giriraj Kishore, told the press that they would in fact start the construction of the temple any time after 12th March 2002. Twenty thousand volunteers would daily for two months camp in Ayodhya and help in the construction, after which it would be finished. As a means of nation-wide mobilization, he also announced a major festival of recital of the name of Rama (*Sri Rama Japa Yagya*) which would take place from 18th October to 18th January.

As a further provocation, on 17th October some leaders of VHP, including the president, Ashok Singhal, and the international general secretary, Praveen Bhai Togadia, along with a couple of hundred Hindu activists, illegally forced their way into the makeshift temple in Ayodhya.

The next major occurrence in the drama was the so-called "Holy men's warning march" (*Sant chetavani yatra*), a motorized procession from Ayodhya to Delhi, starting on the 21st of January and reaching Delhi on the 26th. The procession was led by VHP-president Ashok Singhal, followed by about 3,000 sadhus and VHP-supporters in various vehicles. At the centre of the procession was an open truck on which a makeshift Rama temple had been constructed, guarded by a man dressed up as Lord Hanuman, Rama's loyal helper and servant. According to VHP's international secretary general, Pravin Bhai Togadia, the *yatra* was "aimed at expressing the legitimate demand of Hindus that the Government hands over the entire land to Ram Janam Bhoomi Nyas (trust) to facilitate the construction of the temple at the earliest". Togadia also clearly threatened the government in the matter saying: "We cannot wait beyond a point. Now, it will be a fight to finish" (21.1.2002). Passing through Lucknow, Kanpur, Etawah, and Aligarh, the procession reached Delhi on 26th January. On the 27th, a delegation from VHP met with the prime minister and demanded the land for the construction of the temple. As could be expected, Vajpayee did not yield to the demands of VHP, but instead promised to find out whether the court case relating to the disputed land could be expedited, and to let his law minister have a look at the legal aspects of handing over the undisputed land to the RJN.

On 30th January, a compromise formula between the BJP and VHP was announced. VHP was to drop its deadline for building a temple while the government, on its part, would ensure expedition of the high court case in progress. On February 7th, the Union Law ministry turned down the claims of VHP and RJN on the 67 acres of undisputed land. According to the ministry, the RJN "forfeited its legal claim on the land after it was acquired by the government". This was a serious drawback for VHP who, on 10th February reacted by reiterating its original stand of beginning temple con-

struction on 15th March by transferring the carved stone pillars (*shilas*) from their workshop in Ayodhya to the site of the shrine.[7]

On February 24th, VHP further escalated its pressure on the government by initiating a 100-day ritual of reciting the name of Rama, attracting thousands of "devotees" or so-called *karsevaks* to its camp in Ayodhya. This ritual was called *Purnahuti yagna* and was, according to VHP, to be seen as a "prelude to the commencement of construction of the Ram temple at the disputed site" (26.2.2002). Strategically, the ritual both gave VHP a longer deadline for putting pressure on the authorities, as well as an ongoing activity to attract its supporters and thus demonstrate its sympathy among the Hindu population. The response of the government was to increase the presence of security forces in Ayodhya by sending an extra 2,000 people from the paramilitary Central Reserve Police Force to Ayodhya (25.2.2002), as well as taking measures to prevent the arrival of new VHP-supporters by asking the Uttar Pradesh government to stop group reservations for trains stopping at the nearby Faizabad station. Finally, they also decided to ban all movement of stone pillars and other building materials within Ayodhya town.

Then on February 27th there occurred the awful tragedy in Godhra in Gujarat, where about 57 *karsevaks* returning from Ayodhya were killed by arson. This probably put things into perspective, and already on the 28th the UP chief minister, Rajnath Singh, ordered all *karsevaks* to be flushed out of Ayodhya. On the 28th, RSS agreed to mediate between VHP and the government, and on March 1st VHP announced its willingness to postpone its temple construction plan against a written assurance either from the government or RSS that worshipping of pillars would be allowed on the acquired land within three months. Instead of giving such a guarantee, the authorities chose to tighten security measures by sending 100 extra companies of paramilitary forces, locking up the gates of the VHP workshop in Ayodhya, and cancelling trains connecting with Faizabad. As a result, VHP on March 3rd again shifted its position, saying that it would "go ahead with its plan to shift the carved stones to the Ramjanmabhoomi site at Ayodhya on March 15" (Singhal). In the following days both VHP's international secretary general Mr Togadia and vice-president Kishore told the press that they would go ahead with the plan of shifting the stone pillars to the undisputed land on 15th March. According to one report (TOI 5.3. 2002), Kishore said that "the shila pujan yagna would begin on March 15th, and that within 100 days, construction of the Ram temple on the undisputed land would begin".

However, on 4th March a new and interesting development took place. The so-called Shankaracharya of Kamakoti Peetham in Kanchi, South In-

7 Cf. interview with Togadia (13.2.2002), and interview with Paramhans (14.2.2002).

dia, Jayendra Saraswati, stepped in as mediator in the conflict, presumably on the initiative of the government (Prasannarajan 2002). He held talks with several parties in the conflict, representatives of the government, VHP, All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB), the All India Imams Organisation, and others. The Shankaracharya came up with a proposal according to which VHP should accept the court decision regarding the disputed area. In return they would be allowed to transport the carved stones to the undisputed area and perform, what he called, a *bhumi puja*, and after June 2nd, they would have their 43 acres returned, after which they could start constructing the temple. This solution was, however, very sympathetic towards the claims of VHP, giving them the opportunity to build their Rama temple just close to the demolished masjid, in return for a promise to accept the rule of the court. On the 10th the AIMPLB rejected the Kanchi acharya's formula.

In the meantime, the Supreme Court on March 8th had fixed the 13th for hearing two petitions regarding the Ayodhya dispute, one seeking army deployment in Ayodhya and seizure of the stones laying at Karsevakpuram, the other concerning contempt of court proceedings against the VHP leadership. This naturally had an effect on VHP's plans to move the stone pillars to the temple site and a related ritual, whatever its name and objective. On March 11th we see representatives of the Sangh Parivar on retreat. Had Vajpayee hoped for a negotiated solution allowing a start of the temple construction, he now had to wait for, and accept, the ruling of the court in the matter. Thus a representative of the home ministry told the press that puja of the stones had already begun in the VHP-workshop, and if the court went against them, it was likely that they would take "just one stone to the *puja* site and consecrate it" (11.3.2002). A more radical attitude was taken by the potential main ritual agent, the president of the RJN, Ramchandra Paramhans, who in several interviews with the press said that he would not accept a court decision if it went against temple construction, and also ridiculed the idea of a symbolic puja, and said he would not take part in it. In an interview with *rediff.com*, he said that he would now donate the *shilas* at the Ramjanmabhoomi site on March 15th and take a receipt from the receiver, after which it would be their responsibility to protect the stones (11.3.2002; cf. also TOI and IE). In a joint statement by VHP and RJN on 12th March, it was stated that Paramhans would lead around 2,000 people to the undisputed land and offer one *shila* to the government against a proper receipt.

On the 13th March, the Supreme Court, with reference to the so-called undisputed land in government custody, ruled that "no religious activity of any kind by anyone, either symbolic or actual, including *bhumi puja* or *shila puja*, shall be permitted or allowed to take place" (TOI 13.3.2002). Afterwards, it turned out that in fact the Attorney General, Soli Sorabjee, who

is himself a Parsi, on the part of the central government had argued in favour of allowing a "symbolic" *puja* on the disputed site, something for which both he and the government were much criticized by the opposition and its coalition partners. It thus looked very much like a defeat for both the Vajpayee government and VHP.

Under pressure from coalition partners and opposition, Vajpayee on 14th March assured the Lok Sabha (Lower House) that the government would implement the Supreme Court order in "letter and spirit". In the afternoon, the president of the RJN, Ramchandra Paramhans, made a last attempt to put pressure on the government, telling the Indian press that he would end his life the next day if he were not allowed to leave the VHP workshop in order to donate a *shila*. As a devout Hindu, offering prayers was his birthright and by offering a *shila* he was not offending the Supreme Court directive for maintaining the *status quo* on the acquired land. Paramhans' threat seems to have been taken seriously by many important persons. Thus, he was visited in the evening by the titulary king of Awadh, Pratap Mishra, and had phone calls from home minister Advani, Vajpayee and other ministers. Negotiations were going on and the possibility of letting a small group perform a prayer the next day in the make shift temple appeared.

To judge from the description of the events on the 15th in the news magazine *Frontline* (Muralidharan 2002), Paramhans, although seemingly a little unbalanced and unpredictable, was the absolutely central person with regard to performing the rituals. Whether the whole thing would end peacefully or with violence and arrests was seemingly in his hands and dependent on his whims. Up to the last moment, he kept everyone, including the few hundred VHP-supporters who had managed to pass the police lines, in uncertainty as to what his plans were. It seems that he had an agreement with the administration to hand over a *shila* to them. The only question was where.[8] All the time, he and other VHP-leaders had insisted that it be done at the site of *shila-dan*, i.e. on the disputed land, but the district administration correctly insisted that this would be a violation of the Supreme Court decision. Furthermore, as he was not on good terms with the Divisional Commissioner of Faizabad, Anil Kumar Gupta, the central government had to fly in from Delhi Mr Shatrunghan Singh, an officer of Vajpayee's Ayodhya office. The whole thing ended peacefully, however, as Paramhans, when he and his followers passed by his Math, or monastery, which is just outside the disputed area, suddenly got the "inspiration" to perform the pillar donation there, after which he and the more

8 This was, of course, a highly charged move, since it symbolically transferred the responsibility and agency of building the Rama temple from Paramhans and RJN to the government.

important among his followers were allowed, in small groups, to pay their respects to Rama in the make-shift temple.

Analysis

Even though one could, of course, have gone into much more detail, I have described the recent events in and around Ayodhya at some length, because, I think, it is important to get a sense of how ritual, as applied by VHP, is imbedded in a political context. The events described also clearly have a dramatic or theatrical character (cf. Chandhoke 2000). They follow a more or less fixed scheme by which VHP puts pressure on the government and authorities representing the secular constitutional system. This scheme had been developed by VHP ever since its 1989-campaign, included issuing demands, deadlines, and threats, and was accompanied by mass mobilization of supporters, most of whom are young men recruited by the militant VHP youth-organisation, Bajrang Dal. The present episode in the Ayodhya-conflict naturally drew extra public attention in the light of the 1992 events when the masjid was actually destroyed. Furthermore, the fact that the government in charge this time was led by the Hindu nationalist BJP, who themselves had come into power on the Ayodhya issue, made the outcome much more insecure, and, in fact, it seems that at some points in the events, e.g. the negotiations by the Kanchi Shankaracharya, the government did try to influence matters to the advantage of VHP.

From an overall point of view, the campaigning of VHP may, of course, be characterized as a confrontation between religious sentiments, represented by VHP, who claim to represent the feelings of Hindus as such, and the secular state, involving both the government and the judiciary, which is responsible for taking care of both secular and minority interests. VHP is, however, overstating this conflict when they argue that their rights to perform worship and prayer are being subdued. The state is not prohibiting Hindus from praying, it is only restricting them from performing their prayers in sacred areas belonging to adherents of another faith, *in casu*, the Muslims. Furthermore, one must not forget, that on the part of leading members of VHP there is also a good deal of politics involved. In the recent episode there is little doubt that the local elections to the UP parliament played a role in the timing of the campaign.

Now, let us turn our attention to the rituals employed by VHP in its latest campaign. It seems that they fall into three categories. First, we have the earlier mentioned pilgrimage (*yātrā*) type. To this type belongs the so-called *Sant Jethavani yatra* from Ayodhya to Delhi with its procession of sadhus and the transportation of a copy of the make-shift temple of Rama guarded by a man dressed up as Hanuman. However, it seems that this

yātrā had more the character of a political demonstration than VHP's earlier *yātrās*, starting, as it did, at a sacred place and ending at the secular seat of government.

Second, we have common Hindu rituals of worship, such as fire sacrifices (*yagnas* or *havans*) and mantra recitals. These rituals we met in connection with the preparations taking place in the VHP workshop in Ayodhya, as well as in the great 100-day recital of the name of Rama, performed from 18th October to 18th January, and in the 100-day *Purnahuti Yagna* started on 24th of February. In Hindu tradition, rituals such as these are a kind of adjustable component often included in the scheme of festivals or performed as a result of an individual vow.[9] The same may be said of the way they are employed by VHP in its campaigns. Clearly they are a kind of tool-box from which the leaders pick when mobilising their cadres and putting pressure on the authorities. They are not always part of a fixed, greater scheme, but may be employed in improvisations during a campaign.

Third, we have the building rituals connected with the construction of the proposed Rama temple. It seems that they are of two kinds as evidenced by the original campaign in 1989. First of all, there are the rituals to consecrate the stones (*shilas*) manufactured and collected for the building project. These are termed *shila-puja*. Second, there are what in a broad sense could be called the foundation rituals. These consist of rituals of worshipping the earth and various deities, depositing various materials in a pit and the actual laying of the foundation stones. This group of rituals in modern practice goes under the name of *shila-nyas* and is generally based on the model of classical architecture (*śilpaśāstra*). This ritual was already performed at the climax of the 1989 campaign with the acceptance of prime minister Rajiv Gandhi. The only problem with this, as seen from the point of view of VHP, was the fact that it was performed on the undisputed land, and not at the place of the make-shift temple.

Judging from news reports, it is difficult to know whether the original intention of VHP was to perform a ritual, and if it was, which one. The original goal of the campaign seems to have been to try to force the government to hand over the land for the temple, either the disputed or the undisputed part, in order to continue the construction where it had stopped in 1989. Since, in the meantime, a lot of pillars for the temple had been carved in the workshops of VHP, it is quite probable that the ritual element considered by them may only have been some kind of consecration of the pillars. This idea first time crops up in connection with the RSS-led negotiations between VHP and the government on 28th February. One report

9 In this way they are similar to *pūjā* which is also an element of most Hindu festivals and ceremonies (Babb 1975: 31–67), only their "style" is more Vedic.

in this connection talks about a proposed *shila pujan yagna* or stone/pillar worship sacrifice (TOI 5.3.2002). Interestingly, the term *bhumi puja* appears for the first time during the negotiations by the Kanchi Shankaracharya, as his name for the proposed ritual. This ritual consists in a worship of the Earth in the form of the goddess Śrī or Lakṣmī and is often a substitute for, or element in the earlier mentioned *shilanyas*-ritual. Why a high ranking religious leader like the Shankaracharya should introduce this ritual into the negotiations, is difficult to say. Naturally, one possibility is that he did not care to find out what exactly VHP proposed to perform and from his preconception concluded that it must have been *bhumi puja*. Another possibility is, of course, that he knew very well, but found it better to identify the rituals with the more common ritual of construction. Whatever the reason, henceforward all reports, and even the following Supreme Court decision, talked about the proposed ritual as *bhumi puja*, and VHP did nothing to correct this misconception (5.3.2002; TOI 8.3.2002). Only on 12th March did the leader of the Bajrang Dal, Mr Katiyar, correct this and say that there was not going to be a *bhumi puja*, but only a donation of pillars (IE 12.3.2002). But that was the day before the Supreme Court hearing, when VHP naturally wanted to scale down the matter. After the Supreme Court decision, VHP further scaled down the ambition of the proposed ritual, and in the end Ramchandra Paramhans no longer spoke of *puja*, but instead consistently used the expression *shila dan*, or the "gift of pillars", for the ritual to take place on March 15th.

If we compare VHP's use of rituals with the same rituals in a more traditional Hindu setting, it is obvious that they differ in several respects. First of all, the occasion and time for the performance is different. Whereas in the traditional context, the rituals are normally fixed according to the calendar or personal vows, the rituals we are dealing with here are much more flexible and fixed according to political considerations, and with regard to the overall Ayodhya campaign. Second, the motives for the performance are different. In the case of traditional Hindu rituals, they are normally personal, i.e. they are performed either out of duty or because of personal merit. In the case of VHP's rituals, there is no individual performer. The people acting consider themselves, rightly or wrongly, as acting on part of a greater personality, namely the Hindu majority or Hindu nation,[10] and their motives are partly religious and partly political. Furthermore, whereas in the case of traditional rituals, the motive may either be material or soteriological, in the VHP case the rituals mainly serve as a means of propaganda and recruitment, as well as to mark the participants off against

10 According to representatives of the local religious institutions, this has consequences for the legitimacy of VHP. Since VHP has no part (*locus standi*) in the running law suits, they question their motives for running the campaign; cf. Muralidharan 2002.

the secular authorities and adherents of Islam, and other non-Indian religions.

Typically, the VHP-rituals are used as occasions for fixing future deadlines in order to put pressure on the secular authorities. The fact that the rituals are normally placed in the future, of course, contributes to their often flexible character. This is clearly attested to in the case of the proposed ritual dealt with in this paper. Here we saw that the exact name and character of the ritual was not the important thing. It shifted from consecration of pillars (*shila puja*), over *bhumi puja*, to end with the donation of a pillar (*shila dan*). The main thing was apparently to maintain the threat and the anxiety with regard to what was going to take place. In a sense, one could also say that what we are dealing with here is an example of a ritual which is being negotiated in public space. What exactly it is is not as important as the fact that the discourse is going on.

If, finally, we look at the question of the efficacy of these rituals, it follows from the difference in motives that their efficacy is not so much to be found in material or soteriological results, but more in their ability to create political and popular attention, intimidation, and sometimes even violence. In this sense they must surely be judged to be very efficient. With regard to the building rituals, their success, of course, will have to be judged also on whether or not a temple is actually built.

In this connection it is, furthermore, interesting that the material suggests that in some respects the representatives of the secular political system and the judiciary seem to be more convinced of the efficacy of the building rituals involved than the VHP-leaders. E.g. VHP, the Kanchi Shankaracharya, and the Attorney General argued in favour of accepting a "symbolic *bhumi puja*", on the undisputed land, whereas members of the opposition, the governments coalition partners, and the Supreme Court would not accept any ritual, "symbolic or actual", to quote from the Supreme Court decision. Although it is more than possible that VHP is speaking against better knowledge,[11] these politicians and judges are, of course, right in the sense that as building rituals these rituals create a precedence and in a way may be said to establish the claims of VHP to the contested land, disputed or undisputed.

Conclusion

To sum up, the rituals dealt with in this paper are rituals between religion and politics. They are certainly not political rituals in the sense given by Catherine Bell, i.e. they are not rituals "which are used to construct, display

11 This seems also to be testified by Ramchandra Paramhans who declared that he would have nothing to do with a symbolic ritual (11.3.2002).

and promote the power of political institutions" (Bell 1997: 128). They may be said to share contextual features with the rituals of countercultural and antimodern movements dealt with at the end of her paragraph about political rituals. Thus, the rituals of VHP are also instruments of the construction of an ideal Hindu society and part of an encounter between Hindu-nationalist tenets and the secular, political establishment. However, the rituals employed by VHP can not be said to represent a separate ritual genre, since they are not different from similar, traditional Hindu rituals. What makes them different is their context and their motives, the fact that they do not serve ordinary material, eschatological, or soteriological aims, but rather political aims, as well as the fact that the ritual agents in this case do not seem to have a satisfactory juridical legitimacy to perform the rituals.

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MIA RIKALA

A Rebirth for the Pharaoh*

Reflections on the Classification of the New Kingdom Divine Birth Cycle as a Ritual

The interpretation of rituals enacted, or *represented,* in the temples of Egypt is limited by the often sparse survival of evidence; most of our knowledge of the Egyptian temple cult comes from the temples of the Graeco-Roman period. This paper deals with an aspect of ancient Egyptian divine kingship, the divine birth cycle, and the question of its rituality. The focus is on the well-known but somewhat enigmatic event of engendering the divine child (i.e. the king), as depicted during the New Kingdom period. Following the various types of ritual classification, one might be tempted to interpret the divine birth cycle as a political ritual designed to legitimize the pharaoh's rule. At the same time, it coequals with various aspects of religious renewal, such as the annual re-creation, and rebirth of the pharaonic state through its socio-ideological self, represented by the king. In this respect, one might categorize divine birth as a festival or calendrical rite. The purpose of this paper is to explore various ways of interpreting the divine birth cycle as a ritual, or as a religious representation of a different type. The first part of the paper focuses on the setting and particularities of the divine birth cycle and its relationship to certain Theban festivals during the New Kingdom period, thus creating a basis for the discussion of its rituality, which forms the second part of the paper.

Part I

The pharaoh had a central role in ancient Egyptian society, for he was perceived as a divine ruler. This divinity referred, among other things, to the *ritual status* of the king as the sole mediator between gods and men and his responsibility for the maintenance of the cosmic order, which the Egyptians called *maat*. It has been argued that the king, by being ritually

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his mythical counterpart (i.e. the demiurge), ensured that the primeval pattern of creation was reproduced to uphold and renew the world. This cosmology of Egyptian kingship drew from divine genealogy. Traditionally (from *ca* 2450 B.C. onward), this meant that the king was both the god Horus and the Son of Re, the former identifying the king with Horus, son and heir of Egypt's mythical ruler, Osiris, and the latter representing his position within the divine hierarchy as the creator's son (cf. Assmann 1991: 240ff.). However, during the New Kingdom (1539–1075 B.C.) the importance of the local Theban god, Amun, acquired universal significance, and the state god of Egypt became Amun-Re.

The setting

For reasons yet to be determined, several New Kingdom rulers – starting in the reign of Hatshepsut – depicted their divine engendering by Amun-Re in the birth cycle represented in temples in the modern Luxor area (there is evidence from Hathsepsut/Deir el Bahri, Amenhotep III/Luxor, Ramesses II/Ramesseum, and a king from, presumably, the 20th Dynasty/Karnak). The pictorial and textual composition presents the divine descent of the royal child, showing Amun engendering the mortal queen with the royal child. This sacred union, *hieros gamos*, resulted in the birth of the royal child, who was recognized by the supreme deity as his own. The highly idiosyncratic preserved copies of this story include narrative captions at the beginning, as well as the words exchanged by the deities throughout the cycle, which is divided into fifteen or seventeen scenes.

The form of representation is similar to a play, with deities taking their typical roles in the framework of established groupings, and thus seemingly alluding to a sacramental interpretation of a ritual. Here we see the supreme god, Amun-Re, who visits the queen in the guise of the living pharaoh; at Deir el Bahri, it is Hatshepsut's mother, *Jahmes*, and at Luxor, Amenhotep III's mother, *Mutemwia*. As a result of his visit, the queen conceives and gives birth to the future pharaoh. Other gods participate in the event. Khnum sits at his potter's wheel and forms the body of the infant with its *ka*, its double, according to Amun's specifications, and in Amun's image. Thoth informs the queen of the pregnancy and the impending birth of the royal heir, much like the angel did to Mary in Christian tradition. The subsequent scenes include the birth, the nursing of the baby and his or her recognition by the divine father, who appoints the child as his successor on earth. Amun-Re then announces his decision to the gods, who approve of the choice and give the child their blessings throughout the course of the following scenes. (For a fuller description, see e.g. Brunner 1986; L. Bell 1985; Naguib 1990.)

Divine birth cycle at Luxor

Presented here in chronologically reverse order is the second – and the best studied – of the cycles, located near the sanctuary in the temple of Luxor, in the Birth-room of the temple (room no. XIII, NW wall; Porter and Moss 1972, II: 326). Adjacent to this depiction, which runs along three registers, there are scenes concerning the so-called *sed*-festival (this was the king's jubilee, typically celebrated after thirty years of rule, in which he re-establishes his supremacy by performing certain rites; we have, however, examples of multiple *sed*-festivals by prominent pharaohs, so that the thirty-year schedule was only the ideal). The Luxor cycle was published by Hellmut Brunner in the monograph *Die Geburt des Gottkönigs* in 1964 (2nd and revised edition 1986). The Birth Room's location near the sanctuary, where it has limited access, indicates the room's sanctity. This, of course, is a phenomenon typical of sacred areas everywhere. The "grammar" of Egyptian temples shows that it is customary to have increasingly mythological scenes the closer one gets to the sanctuary, as opposed to the more secular events (e.g. war campaigns of the pharaoh) depicted, for instance, at the first pylon and thus accessible to the common people (for the decorative programme of ancient Egyptian temples of the New Kingdom, see e.g. de Rochemonteix 1894).

Divine birth cycle at Deir el Bahri

The first known copy of the text – and "text" is here meant in a very broad sense – incorporating both the inscriptions and the depictions, comes from the temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el Bahri, which is situated on the west bank at modern Luxor. A large portfolio of facsimiles of the temple's reliefs was published at the end of the 19th century by Edouard Naville's team (*Deir el Bahari II*). New publications, save a couple of renderings of individual scenes, have not been attempted, although the physical condition of these reliefs is deteriorating rapidly. The divine birth reliefs are situated in the upper register of the middle colonnade on the north side (there are two registers: the lower level contains the so-called youth and coronation inscriptions of Hatshepsut). The southern side of the colonnade contains scenes of the famous Punt Expedition ordered by the pharaoh during his reign *ca* 1473–1458 B.C. The divine birth at Deir el Bahri differs from those of Luxor only in the first and last scenes. In the first episode, instead of the queen embracing Hathor as she is seen doing at Luxor, the Theban gods sit before Amun-Re who announces his amorous intentions and his plans to beget the next ruler. The last scene is only slightly different from its parallel at Luxor Temple in that it includes a larger selection of gods, but in essence the textual content is the same.

Hatshepsut's version of the divine birth cycle is the earliest known pictorial representation of an event of this kind, even though the theme of divine parentage is already known from a papyrus containing five distinct tales referring to the reign of the Old Kingdom ruler, Khufu (commonly known by the Greek version of his name, Cheops). This thematic parallel is a story recounted in *Papyrus Westcar* (*Berlin 3033*) dating back to the Middle Kingdom: the magician Djedi, after being summoned to court by Prince Hardjedef, Khufu's son, gives a prophecy of the miraculous births of the kings who will compose the next dynasty. These children are begotten by the sun god, Re, to a wife of one of his priests. (For a translation, cf. Lichtheim 1973: 219–22.)

A brief description of some Theban festivals

The following is a very brief description of a few festivals and when they were celebrated during the year. "Seasonal festivals" (*ḥbw tp trw*) were celebrated according to the calendar of three four-month seasons – Inundation (*Akhet*), Emergence (*Peret*), and Harvest (*Shemu*) – as opposed to "festivals of heaven" (*ḥbw nw pt*), which were celebrated according to the astronomically determined sidereal calendar, or according to the lunar calendar derived from the phases of the moon (cf. Shafer 1997: 25). Thus, it can be seen that the Egyptians had civil, astronomical, and lunar calendars. In principle, the king led all festival celebrations, although someone else presided at most non-royal festivals. Most festivals also featured a joyful procession of gods. (Shafer 1997: 27.) The reason for presenting selected festivals here is their relationship to the study of divine birth and the goddess Hathor.

The Opet *festival*

Since the New Kingdom, Luxor Temple (called *Ipt rsy*, "Southern sanctuary", in Egyptian; hence the name of the festival) was the mythological power base of the living, divine king and the foremost national shrine for his cult. The *Opet* Festival, which took place during the second month of the inundation season, *Akhet*, was the longest in the Theban festival calendar. *Opet* lasted eleven days at first, but was gradually lengthened to 24/27 days under the Ramessides. (Naguib 1990: 71ff.) During the festivities, the reigning monarch was identified with the royal *ka*, the divine kingship was reborn and the individual king's right to rule was reconfirmed (L. Bell 1997: 157ff.). During the festival, Amun of Karnak, accompanied by his consort Mut and their son, the moon god Chons, journeyed to his southern sanctuary at Luxor Temple in a procession headed by the pharaoh. The

key elements of the festival were the procession, the king's meeting with his divine father, Amun-Re and his subsequent procession back to Karnak.

The records of the procession are sketchy but complemented by a fair amount of early pictorial and textual material surviving from the reigns of Hatshepsut, Amenhotep III, and Tutankhamun. There is also additional architectural evidence provided by the monuments, particularly from the reign of Ramesses II. (L. Bell 1997: 157ff.) At first, the journey from Karnak to Luxor was made by land, and the bark shrine containing the cult-image of the god was carried on the shoulders of priests, who stopped at six rest stations situated on the road connecting Karnak and Luxor, the so-called Sphinx Alley partly visible even today. The return to Karnak was made by river, but the itinerary was later changed so that both journeys were made on the Nile, as shown by the reliefs of Tutankhamun's reign. These reliefs also show the presence of four bark-shrines, three to the Theban triad, Amun-Mut-Chons, and one for the cult-statue of the royal *ka*. (Naguib 1990: 71.)

Beautiful festival of the valley

The Valley Festival (*ḥb n ỉnt*, or *ḥb nfr n ỉnt*; also known by the name, "Ferrying of Amun-Re to the West", *ḫnỉ r ỉmntt n Ỉmn-Rʿ*) was a Theban version of a popular Hathor festival celebrated throughout Egypt from at least the Old Kingdom; the earliest mentions of the Valley Festival date to the Middle Kingdom (i.e., in the Mentuhotep II temple at Deir el-Bahri). While some temple reliefs record moments of the festival (Hatshepsut's Red Chapel at Karnak and her temple at Deir el Bahri), most of our knowledge of the different sequences is based on *Papyrus BM 10209* (Haikal 1970–72). The time of the year for this two-day celebration was the second month of Shemu (10th month of the year, also known as *Payni*) and the appearance of the new moon (Naguib 1991: 21–22).

In keeping with the theological system of Thebes, the major role in the Valley Festival was played by Amun-Re, the king of gods, who was also the national god in the New Kingdom. During the festival, Amun-Re's bark shrine (called the *userhat*, "powerful is the head of Amun") was transported aboard his riverine barge from Karnak Temple (which was on the east bank) to the west bank of the Nile. There, in his chapel near a limestone bay of Hathor at the sacred mountain at Deir el Bahri, Amun-Re took up residence. From there he visited the royal cult complexes of the west bank, especially the temple of the reigning king. (L. Bell 1997: 136–37). At first, Amun journeyed alone, but during the Ramesside era he was accompanied by his family, i.e. Mut and Chons, as well as his female double, Amanuet. Naturally the retinue was led by the pharaoh with his entourage. (Naguib 1991: 21–22.) The populace of ancient Luxor participated in this

festival in a joyful manner; this included, among other things, visits to the tombs of their relatives and feasting there (an occasion for the cult of the ancestors). In fact, Egyptian society has been described as consisting of the gods, the king, the blessed dead and humanity (Baines 1991: 129). Thus, the honouring of ancestors was also the king's duty and the procession on the west bank visited the mortuary temples of past kings (however, the main emphasis seemed to be on the temples of the ruling house).

Some Hathor mythology

The mythology behind the deities involved in these festivals might provide some clues as to why these festivals had major cosmological importance, while at the same time, it seems to be the general theme of any religious rituals: maintenance (the repelling of chaos) and renewal. According to Heliopolitan cosmogony, the creator god Atum (usually identified with the solar deity) begot the world by masturbation and ejaculation (see e.g. PT 600; Sethe 1987: 1652–59). Apparently, the cosmic order, *maat* (*m3ʿt*) was a bi-product of this event, and Maat as a goddess was also considered to be the creator's daughter. There is also the *Eye of the Sun*, his daughter Hathor. There is a group of texts or narratives involving Hathor in the form of the Eye (to be found in certain Graeco-Roman temple texts and the Onuris myth; e.g. Junker 1911, 1917). According to these, Hathor becomes furious after another eye took her place and she retires south, into the Nubian desert where she becomes a fierce lioness who destroys all life. This resulted in a series of natural catastrophes that fell upon Egypt, where perpetual night prevailed. The sun god, unable to survive without his daughter, sends his herald, the ibis-headed Thoth, to appeal to the angry goddess to return. She agrees and returns with her retinue of musicians, singers and dancers. The return was marked with joyous inebriation by the people. Another story recounts the *Destruction of Mankind* (in the Underworld book called the *Book of the Heavenly Cow,* known from several New Kingdom royal tombs) in which people rebelled against the ageing creator. Upon the advice of his council of gods, the Sun God sends his daughter, Hathor, to take his revenge on the people. Hathor is transformed into the fierce lioness, Sakhmet/Tefnut, and performs a horrible massacre. Fearing that the lioness would destroy all mankind, the Sun God sends Shu/Onuris and Thoth, once more, to bring back the goddess. They manage to calm the fury of the goddess by spilling red beer on the ground. Mistaking this for blood, the lioness drinks large quantities and becomes "appeased". The Sun God then orders mankind to celebrate the goddess with joy, dance, music and the drinking of beer (i.e. inebriety).

Part II

Religious representation of divine birth

Discussion of the nature of the cycle has usually been within the paramaters of the myth-ritual school, perhaps largely due to the unwillingness of Egyptologists to engage in the development of a holistic theory which would involve a certain amount of speculation, largely unacceptable within the exacting disciplines of archaeology and linguistics which still dominate the field. However, Comparative Religion shares some of the blame, and a focus on ancient Egypt has been pretty much lacking since the days of Claas Jouco Bleeker and Gerardus van der Leeuw, as if the material were somehow exhaustively dealt with. There are a couple of exceptions, most notably the work of Jørgen Podemann Sørensen (e.g. 1986, 1994, 1999). This is not surprising, as the difficulties involved in an interdisciplinary approach are well attested. However, interdisciplinary methods are more common in recent scholarship, and fortunately this is true also of current research in Egyptology and Comparative Religion.

While typically perceived simply as a ritualized myth, some Egyptologists have suggested the interpretation of divine birth as a *fictional ritual* (cf. Assmann), since it is unlikely that events such as engendering and birth were ritually enacted (Assmann 2001: 118). Statements such as this are surprising, especially considering the evident cosmological significance associated with the cycle (e.g. the presence of the supreme god, the demiurge Amun-Re), a fact itself alluding to a ritual interpretation. However, in defense of the "fictional ritual" view, it has to be stated, for instance, that the presence of the royal *ka* as a significant part of the cycle was recognized as late as 1985 when Lanny Bell published his seminal article concerning the nature of Luxor Temple.

The preferred interpretative method is an *analysis of the religious discourse* using intertextuality (we have a great number of interrelated sources, comprising parts of the entire theological discourse of 3000-year-old pharaonic Egypt) and the definition of a genre; here then the ritual can be treated as a language (cf. Lawson and McCauley 1990). However, it must be said that *a multiplicity of approaches* is needed (cf. Frankfort 1948; Podemann Sørensen 1994). This, however, is often the case when we are dealing with ancient and largely incomplete material. We now also know about the character of the temple of Luxor as the place of veneration not only of Amun but more significantly, of the royal *ka* (cf. L. Bell 1997; i.e. the immortal creative spirit of divine kingship, the divine aspect of the mortal king). Finally, while certainly interesting, the emotional aspects involved in this ritual are very much beyond our reach.

A. Criteria for a ritual interpretation of the cycle

It seems improbable that divine birth was merely a mythological depiction on a temple wall. Here I am taking a cognitive approach to the ritual theory and defining religious ritual according to E. Thomas Lawson and Robert N. McCauley as "those religious *actions* whose structural descriptions include a logical object and appeal to a culturally postulated superhuman agent's action somewhere within their overall structural description" (1990: 176). This tripartite focus on superhuman agent – action – logical object presents independent grounds for ascertaining the religious rituals that constitute a religious system in terms of the historical continuity of religious traditions and the participants' sense of their religious identity (even though the latter postulate does not seem meaningful here in the absence of the participants) (Lawson and McCauley 1990: 176). Critical to this is the understanding that all ritual acts have a characteristic structure (Lawson and McCauley 1990: 85). The structural description, reminiscent of the schematic presentation of linguistic phenomena, characterizes the relations of agents, their actions and those actions' objects. According to this, central to understanding the dynamics of a religious ritual are its universal principles, or functional universals as defined by Lawson and McCauley (1990: 123ff.).

First there is the *Principle of Superhuman Agency*, which refers to the superhuman agent's position in a ritual's structural description. Basically, all rituals involve superhuman agents at some point in their representation. Those rituals where superhuman agents function as the agent in the ritual (i.e. Jesus institutes the church) are always more central to a religious system than those where the superhuman agents serve in some other role, for instance as the recipient of a sacrifice. (Lawson and McCauley 1990: 124–25.) Secondly, there is the *Principle of Superhuman Immediacy*, which relates to the application of the first principle. This concerns the immediacy of the superhuman agent's involvement in the ritual, rather than the character of the involvement as in the first principle. This means that "rituals in which the superhuman agent is directly involved even in some other role than that of agent are more essential to the religious system than are those where the superhuman agent appears in the structural description only in some embedded, enabling action that has occurred previously" (Lawson and McCauley 1990: 126–27).

In other words, superhuman agents, i.e. the gods, always partake in the ritual, whether directly, or through preceding rituals. Finally there is the *Principle of Action*, which states that there must be a logical object to all ritual action. Something is always done to somebody or something in religious rituals, so that this somebody/something has been transformed into something else. In that sense, rituals have a certain instrumental dimension. The action itself can consist of complex elements and might be governed by conditions.

The application of these principles to a structural description of divine birth is the focus here and in my ongoing research. Even though divine birth, whether a ritual or commemorative ceremony, is now unobservable, most of *the functional universals* seem to be present or at least implied by the context of this representation. First, the *Principle of Superhuman Agency* in divine birth is represented by Amun-Re, who is in the position of the logical agent. He acts by bestowing godhood on the king, his son; the king is being deified. This is a clear marker of the fundamentality of divine birth as a religious representation. The presence of the supreme god in this rite denotes its centrality to the culture. It is a fundamental concept resulting in the fact that the king is divine and his father's representative on earth, i.e. it is another way of expressing his divine genealogy: the creator – his son. Amun-Re acts once, and the result should be permanent; so there is no logical need to repeat this action, other than commemoratively. Second is the *Principle of Superhuman Immediacy*: in this case, the superhuman agent's involvement is immediate and prevailing. Thus the relative centrality of the ritual within the Egyptian religious system must be emphatic. Lawson and McCauley assert that rituals in which superhuman agents are immediately involved enjoy a more prominent place in the religious system than those in which these agents only appear within an embedded, enabling action (regardless of their roles in the action). (Lawson and McCauley 1990: 126.)

Third, the *Principle of Ritual Action* is *implied* but as precisely what, or how, or by whom exactly, it is difficult to attest to. The premise is highly suggestive. The focus seems to be on the god, perhaps played by the king himself, and possibly on the queen taking the role of Hathor, Amun's consort (the primacy of Mut/Hathor as the consort of Amun as opposed to Amanuet is well attested: the role of Hathor seems to be more sexually stimulating whereas Mut denotes fertility, universality and sociality [te Velde 1997: 455–62]). This is not really a problem in the flexible mythology of ancient Egypt, since the concept of the goddess as the female engendering principle is present in all these female deities; however, it seems to be somewhat secondary to the male, e.g. the sex of the earth as male in ancient Egypt *versus* female in the other Mediterranean cultures. The symbolic role of the Egyptian queen as the "hand" (e.g. *drt*, "hand", is grammatically feminine) of the creator and the inspiration of the demiurge (e.g. references to such events as Hathor showing her vulva to her father, Re, in order to improve his mood) has been the focus of some recent studies, as is the role of both non-royal and royal women as the God's Wife of Amun (e.g. Robins 1983; Naguib 1992). Either way, the king is the object of the ritual, the divine newborn king, but it could be that he is also the agent, acting as Amun-Re on earth (the god took the king's form in order to gain access to the queen), and therefore being his own begetter. This would also coincide with the

Egyptian deity associated with Amun, *Kamutef*, "the Bull of his Mother", and the idea of Amun as the self-created demiurge (e.g. *Papyrus Leiden I 350*, Hymns to Amun, see Zandee 1948). Support for the ritual interpretation is provided *not only* by the husband–wife relationship between Amun and Hathor – two of the prominent actors in divine birth cycle, and a link to the Beautiful Feast of the Valley during which Amun visited Hathor in Deir el-Bahri – *but also* by the recitation phraseology *ḏd mdw in*, "utterance by" used throughout the text, and universal in liturgical speech/texts. (Egberts 1995: 402–03.) It is difficult to ascertain the particularities of the divine birth ritual which might have amounted to no more than the recitation of the text (Egberts 1995: 403).

B. Criteria for defining the ritual type of divine birth

Certain elements in the divine birth seem to denote rituality. Within the range of ritual genres presented, for example, by Catherine Bell (1997), divine birth could, by its character, belong to several categories: *calendrical rite* (both seasonal and commemorative), *rite of passage* (initiation, even) for the pharaoh and a *political rite* (legitimacy). Elaborating further, one observes that the annual repetition of the above-mentioned Theban festivals at a specific time of the year denote *calendric interpretation*. Also present are both types of calendrical rites: seasonal as in seasonal and annual repetition, as well as commemorative as in commemorating the first event, *sp tpy*, the creation of the world, the regeneration of the demiurge. The timing of the *Opet* Festival was the inundation season and this ideally coincided with the retraction of the Nile waters so that the land reappeared but could not yet be cultivated (incidentally, Egyptian cosmogonies describe the birth/appearance of the demiurge happening like that, hence, the concept of "the first time" referring to the event of creation when waters receded and revealed land after the domination of chaotic waters). Thus, the earth was still dormant and needed revivification. Saphinaz-Amal Naguib points out that the action of the joint renewed energies of the country personified by the pharaoh and of the demiurge was regarded as beneficial to the growth of crops and the prosperity of Egypt (1990: 73). Divine birth was a *rite of passage* for the king. The deification of the king meant *a rebirth for the pharaoh*; a re-creation of his divinity and a merging with the royal *ka* since his father Amun bestowed on him the "throne of the living *kas*"; the sacred union of Amun (father-son) and the Queen (mother-daughter) aim at the birth of a divine king, thus the focus is on the end result. Having received the recognition of his divine father, and the choice having been ratified by the gods, the king was in reality reborn (Naguib 1990: 73.) Divine birth was a political rite as well, since it legitimized and renewed the cosmic order,

helping in the realization of *maat*, whereby the king rules as the heir and deputy of the creator. It was the mergence of the king and his royal *ka* into one entity. The cosmic order was thus being realized on earth, giving the king the right to rule as his two bodies came together, *body natural* and *body politic* (cf. Kantorowicz 1957).

In conclusion, the present argumentation interprets the New Kingdom divine birth cycle as a commemorative ritual or ceremony. Also established here is the centrality of divine birth in the ancient Egyptian religious system. All action in the cycle is aimed at passing the authority of Amun-Re to the king. The condition for this action is the conception of the divine child and the preceding union of Amun-Re and the queen mother. Furthermore, the illustrious festivals related to this phenomenon seem to underline the cultural importance of this central theme in the religious system of ancient Egypt. The importance of the annual repetition of this event, unique in itself, which coincided with joyful festivities and the ferrying around of the images in splendid processions must have instilled both factual and emotional experiences serving to reinforce the king's divinity in its social reality: it is manifested in the activities of the Egyptian community which aimed at creating and maintaining the life of the Egyptian world (Finnestad 1989: 90).

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PETER SCHALK

"Conjuring Up Spirits of the Past"

Identifications in Public Ritual of Living Persons with Persons from the Past

Introduction

Karl Marx pointed out in the first chapter of *Der achzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte* ("The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon") from 1852 that just as people seem to be occupied with revolutionising themselves and things, creating something that did not exist before, it is precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis that they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service, borrowing from them names, battle slogans, and costumes in order to present this new scene in world history in time-honoured disguise and borrowed language. Thus, Luther put on the mask of the Apostle Paul. (Marx 1972: 115.) Marx called this also *Totenbeschwörung* or *Totenerweckung*, "conjuring up spirits of the past", and he saw two possible outcomes of it. It can serve the purpose of glorifying the new struggles, but it can also end up in just parodying the old. It can magnify the given task in the imagination, but it can also result in a recoil from its solution in reality. It can result in finding once more the spirit of revolution, but may also make its ghost walk again. (Marx 1972: 116.) There is a risk in repeating the past. It may just end up in comedy or even ridicule.

This putting on the mask of past generations or *Totenbeschwörung*, I refer to here as historical approximation/synchronisation. This historical approximation to, and synchronisation of, living persons with persons of the past is done as a conscious intellectual effort by ideologues to identify persons and events separated in space and time because of a similarity. The connecting with a special event of the past bestows status.

Approximisation refers to milieu/space and synchronisation to time. Such approximation/synchronisation requires a special mode of expression, which makes the replacement of room and the reversal of time plausible to the spectator. This mode of expression is myth/ritual or theatre, or both. Here we face both. We face the imitation of an original symbolic act, the handing over of sovereignty, but on a theatre-like stage, the "Court" around the present President of Lanka in 1995. Here the sober borders between theatre and ritual become blurred.

These approximisations and synchronisations by ideologues are usually performed in situations which are experienced as contingent, questionable or illegitimate. Marx spoke about revolutions. In our case, we face a war for annexation of territory.

Moral doubts or scruples about such situations are then reduced or eliminated by them. Ideologists may choose to identify living persons with outstanding characters known in the past, with characters of virtuous saints, martial heroes and victimised martyrs. To produce such an illusion of identity, the modern political scene must be transformed into a theatrical stage where modern politicians identify others or themselves with ideal historical models. Time is made reversible which is achieved by ritualising approximisation and synchronisation. Ideologues exploit what is inherent in ritual, but also in myth, theatre and literary fiction, namely the ability to reverse time. Therefore, what we are going to face is difficult to classify: is it myth, theatre, literary fiction? I know only with certainty that it is not a historico-critical presentation of a past event.

I shall now give an example of a recent approximisation/synchronisation by representatives of the PA Government of Lanka in the 1990s. The borders between present and past, between real and virtual, have been suspended in this example. The event is the conquering of Yalppanam (Jaffna) by the Lankan armed forces in November/December 1995. This event is approximated to, and synchronised with, the event of conquering of Yalppanam by the war hero Sapumal Kumaraya in the 15th century. On the modern political stage, the role of King was taken up by the President Chandra Kumaranatunga-Bandaranayka, and the role of Sapumal Kumaraya by her General Anuruddha Ratwatte (Anon. 1996a, 1996d, 1996e). The role of the conquered King Kanakacuriyan is by implication ascribed to the present leader of the Ilavar, to Veluppillai Pirapakaran, who also leads his military organisation known as the Liberation Tigers of Tamililam (LTTE). The Ilavar are those who go for independence or autonomy of Tamililam. Lankans are those who go for a unitary or united state of Lanka (Schalk 2002). The aim of the ritual public performance on the highest state level is to eliminate an experience of contingency surrounding war in a Buddhist country, killing to conquer an area, and establish a unitary state in a country that is already mentally fragmented.

Perpetuation of historical cultural elements

The main principle of the government, the Lankan People's Alliance (PA) already implemented during the 1990s, to reach peace through war against the Ilavar, i.e. against those striving for Tamililam, thereby categorically rejecting negotiation and mediation, has been criticised on the basis of

humanitarian, Hindu, Muslim and Christian values, and above all on the basis of Buddhist values. The Government's principle has, however, been celebrated and praised by Sinhala extremist nationalistic groups and individuals on whom the Government was dependent. Leading extremist Buddhist monks, who have transformed Buddhism into a nationalistic ideology and who have subordinated Buddhist values to political values, also supported the Government's strategy to win by war the competition for authority in the north and east. The Lankan Government, represented by Defence General Anuruddha Ratwatte, in a "Solemn Pledge to eliminate LTTE and Prabhakaran", spoke in glorifying terms about "the holy task of defending the integrity and sovereignty of our motherland" and about "the compelling and holy task of the heroic and patriotic members of the armed forces to destroy the Tigers"(Anon. 1996c). He evidently believed that he was conducting a "holy" war against the Ilavar. As he was a Buddhist and as he consciously played the Dutthagamani role of defender of the Buddhist state against Tamil invaders, I presume that he imagined his war to be a holy Buddhist war.

The PA Government had to deal with problems concerning the moral justification and legitimacy of this principle, and of the war itself, that it had launched against Ilavar. The use of the word "holy" was only one way to eliminate doubts about the moral justification of this war. Another way was to demonise the enemy by using the word "terrorist". A third way was to isolate the LTTE from the Ilavar, which was like isolating the head from the rest of the body. Another reaction of the Government was to stop the flow of all information to national and international media to avoid further questions about the legitimacy of this war. Still another reaction, also aimed at reducing the experience of contingency regarding this war, was to show that what had been done so far was in line with the demands of tradition, of history, of a predetermined outcome. The Government exploited the past, however, a selected, constructed, subjectively interpreted and imagined past, to defend a questionable act.

The reference to tradition has become the main way to rationalise killing and being killed in the process of defending the unitary state. By "rationalise" I mean, "give reasons for", but of course, reasons of a special type that legitimise and motivate killing and being killed in armed struggle against Ilavar for the unitary state. A unitary state is in this case a state with centralised power and a state that is culturally homogenous, in this case a homogenous and island-wide Sinhala-Buddhist culture.

Perpetuation of historical cultural elements is a characteristic activity of political organisations with intensive contingency problems. To stop questions, the Government must enforce traditionalism. It must try to show that it *perpetuates* cultural elements, that what it brings is sanctioned by tradition. We usually speak of a perpetuation of the Dutthagamani syn-

drome of Sinhala extremist groups, the will of which is executed by the Government. The new President, having a distant past on the Sinhala left, which has criticised this syndrome because of its aggressive anti-Tamil Sinhala nationalism, could not perpetuate it under the same name. She could perpetuate it, however, under the cover of something else on which I confer the designation "Sapumal Kumaraya syndrome". This syndrome has the advantage of connecting the city of Kotte/Jayawardhanapura in the South with the city of Yalppanam/Jaffna in the North and is therefore more appropriate for ideological exploitation than the Dutthagamani syndrome that does not explicitly include Yalppanam. The Sapumal Kumaraya syndrome connects the Government with the Sinhalatva or ethno-nationalist opposition, whose ideas about "the holy war" and "the Sinhala force" were expressed by Defence General Anuruddha Ratwatte. Sinhalatva means "Sinhalaness" and refers to an ideology that is Sinhala-Buddhist ethnonationalistic.

I shall describe below a syndrome that involves the past, present and future of the Ilavar. As a syndrome, it points at a political condition characterised by a particular group of symptoms indicating intensive experiences of contingency about this war. It is quite certain that the Pali canon, which is regarded as normative on the island, has no place for a holy or for a just war. It is therefore not plausible to rationalise war by reference to the canon. References have to be selected instead from a section of the past that has already been idealised as heroic.

The events

In November/December 1995, the Sri Lankan Armed Forces (SLAF) recaptured Yalppanam from the LTTE, who had taken it from the SLAF in 1990. On December 2, 1995, the Lankan army penetrated the Nallur kovil in Yalppanam. Pictures of the uniformed conquerors in the *kovil*, a Siva temple, were flashed all over the country and the rest of the world by the press affiliated to the Lankan Government. The conquerors had pierced the "heart" of the Ilavar. An eyewitness report of the exodus of the citizens from Yalppanam may be found in Emmanuel, 1997.

There followed a victory ceremony in Colombo on December 6, 1995, led by the President, who received from the hand of her Defence General, Anuruddha Ratwatte, a message dated 2939 in the Buddhist era, written on a scroll rolled up inside a red velvet container. The date refers to the number of years from the *nirvana* of the Buddha. The message said that in Yapa Patuna (Yalppanam) her authority and rule were established. The ceremony has been described in Pratap, 1995.

One first point is that Buddhist time reckoning was made the time reference for the military victory. I am not criticising the fact here that the Buddhist time reckoning used is an unhistorical fiction: I just wish to point out that Buddhism, by referring to the alleged date of the Buddha's *nirvana*, is made a dimension of a military victory that created 500,000 refugees and immense suffering. The use of this time reference indicated an alienation from Buddhism and a reversal of the spirit of Buddhism.

One second point is that the toponym "Yapa Patuna" was used for Yalppanam/Jaffna. This place name goes back to the time of the Lankan prince Sapumal Kumaraya (the later King of Kotte, Bhuvanekabahu VI [1469–77]). To Tamils, this King is known as Canpakap Perumal. He was the adopted son of Parakramabahu VI (1411–66), and he was installed in about 1450 as King in Yapa Patuna, at a time when the autonomous Kingdom of Yalppanam under the Tamil King Kanakacuriyan was weakened. The place name, Yapa Patuna, is connected with the establishment of Lankan rule in Yapa Patuna through Sapumal Kumaraya whose biological father was a known as Panical (Pannikkar). Pannikkar came to Kotte from a royal caste in South India and entered the service of the Lankan King. Sapumal Kumaraya can be regarded as of being of South Indian origin. He was Dravidian.

Sapumal Kumaraya is said to have broken the resistance of the fighters in Yapa Patuna, who were fighting from house to house, and to have made a triumphal entry into Kotte after the victory in Yapa Patuna. He was celebrated and remembered in a famous 15th century *kavi*, known in Sinhala as *Kovulsandesaya*, which was used as the literary and ideological basis for Her Excellency, when arranging the triumphant ceremony of the victory over Yapa Patuna in December 1995. The *kavi* describes the city, its prosperity, its crowds of dancing girls and mentions that the former Tamil King had escaped and gone into exile.

The *Kovulsandesya* is known by many Lankans and is easily available in many bookshops. It was written by Irrugalcula Parivenadipati, a Buddhist monk from Mulgirigala. In the Sandesaya, Krisna is invoked to bless Sapumal in his war. In another Sandesaya, the *Selahinisandesaya*, we learn about the victorious return of Sapumal to Kotte. He is described as Indra-like. This is read in schools.

It was not far-fetched of the President to make this *kavi* a charter of her own "royal" performance. She knew how to use symbolic action to convey the message of the establishment of authority in Yalppanam. She does not deviate in that matter from former Presidents, from "King" J. R. Jayavardhana, who placed himself in an unbroken tradition of rulers, and "King" R. Premadasa, who on each 2nd January repeated the royal coronation ceremony in the Dalida Maligava in Nuvara (Kandy). Her Excellency has followed this royal pattern by reviving the 15th century court

ritual in Kotte. Her "court" was also a royal stage that gave her appearance of being traditional.

There is another source about Sapumal Kumaraya's conquest of Yalppanam. The *Rajavaliya*, a chronicle in Sinhala, finally compiled in the 18th century, gives a vivid picture. Parakramabahu VI thought it not right that there should be two seats of government in Lanka. Sapumal Kumaraya was sent to Yapa Patuna to do away with the King there. This is the only reason given for his expansion by military conquest. Sapumal Kumaraya attacked several villages belonging in this context and brought prisoners to Kotte, but did not evidently succeed in eliminating the King. He was sent again to Yapa Patuna. On this occasion, he forced the forts, which had been erected in different places, to surrender. When entering the town of Yapa Patuna, he rode upon a dark horse. He created such carnage that the streets of the city were deluged with blood. He slew the King [Kanakacuriyan], took his consort and children prisoner, brought them to Kotte, and presented himself before King Parakramabahu, who conferred many favours on him and sent him to Yapa Patuna. Finally, Sapumal Kumaraya succeeded Parakramabahu on the throne. So far, the *Rajavaliya* (1900: 68–70). The motive given for the war with the King of Yapa Patuna was to establish a unitary state, the same motive as is given today by successive Governments striving to preserve the integrity of the unitary state that was established not before 1833 by the British administration as a colonial product. The *Rajavaliya* precludes that the state was not unitary. Furthermore, the *Rajavaliya* depicts Sapumal Kumaraya as heroic, which evidently implies that he flooded the streets with blood in the carnage. That he "slew" the King is an exaggeration. The King escaped – and came back.

There is also a damaged Tamil inscription from Yalppanam found in 1968 on the stone threshold of a teashop known as the Central Café in Main Street. It had been part of the Nallur Fort that the Portuguese had destroyed. Its parts had been used in new buildings in Paranki (Portugese) street, present Main Street. The inscription has been dated to the 15th century on palaeographic grounds. It tells us that Cankapotivarmar, also named Ciri Parakiramapaku Tevan, did something... in the year... The text has illegible passages. This King has been identified as Sirisanghabodhi, which was a dynastic title, distributed to several Kings, and as Parakramabahu, VI, who through Sampumal Kumaraya, established his Sinhala suzerainty in Yalppanam during some time between 1448 and 1467 (Indrapala 1971). We may therefore conclude that there is solid historical material about the conquest of Yalppanam by Sapumal Kumaraya in the middle of the 15th century.

The monarchy in Lanka was abolished by the British in 1815. The President of the PA Government is therefore not *de facto* a Queen, but in spite of this social and political reality, she and other Presidents have taken up

royal roles in state rituals. To give one other example: in keeping with an ancient royal tradition in Lanka, when the king was formally appraised of the successful conduct and conclusion of the great Esala perahera by officials of the Dalada Maligava and of the four devalas, the Diyawadana Nilame of the Dalada Maligawa and the Basnayake Nilames of the four devalas, called on President Chandrika Kumaratunga on August 19th, 1997 at the President's Pavilion in Kandy (formerly the King's Pavilion) to report to the Head of State that the *perahera* was successfully conducted and concluded (Ratnaweera 1997).

It is evident from the "royal" ceremony on 6th December 1995 that Her Excellency takes on the role of Parakramabahu VI, and General Anuruddha Ratwatte the role of Sapumal Kumaraya. In the propaganda literature, Ratwatte was explicitly referred to as the modern day Prince Sapumal (Anon. 1997a). The ceremony was formed with help of certain historians who had evidently offered their services to the politicians. We learn on December 6th from the Government paper, *The Daily News*, that historians had already looked upon the liberation of "Yapa Patuna of ancient fame", as a historical parallel to its recapture by Prince Sapumal in the 15th century by vanquishing the forces of "rebel chief" Arya Cakkaravartti, which is a title of the royal dynasty of Yalppanam. The names of these "historians" are not given. The ceremony on December 6th was a projection of regressive and aggressive symbolic thinking. Later, the title of "General" was conferred on Ratwatte at the Wickrama Samana (Gallantry Awards) ceremony on Independence Day, 1996. We may recall the *Rajavaliya*'s account of King Parakramabahu conferring many favours on Sapumal Kumaraya.

Veluppillai Pirapakaran, the leader of the Ilavar and the LTTE, has been given by implication the role of the formerly conquered Tamil King Kanakacuriyan in exile. The homology breaks down, however, when we see what Sapumal Kumaraya II, Anuruddha Ratwatte, found in Yapa Patuna. He did not find prosperity and crowds of dancing girls, but ruins and some hundred elderly and sick people who could not escape from the war. From the point of view of the Ilavar, the final military establishment of Lankan authority is an establishment of Lankan hegemony. The other side of authority, is, as we all know, hegemony. The "royal" ritual did not express authority in th eyes of the Ilavar, but rather the arrogance of power which neglected the aspirations of the Ilavar and treated them with contempt. The arrogance of power counteracts confidence-building as expressed in the winning-of-hearts-and-minds-programme initiated by the Government after the military victory in Yalppanam (see below).

The implicit connection of Veluppillai Pirapakaran with King Kanakacuriyan is explosive: Kanakacuriyan came back around 1467 from Indian exile with an army and re-established the Kingdom of Yalppanam. The

historical advisors of the President were evidently not well versed in history. Their historical paradigm to be repeated by the President includes its own destruction.

The question arises by itself: who will be the permanent Sapumal Kumaraya in Yapa Patuna who, like him, will establish a court model of Kotte, known as Jayavardhanapura, in today's Yalppanam? A Tamil, but not an Ilavan, a Tamil loyal to Her Excellency, is needed to satisfy the demands of the historical paradigm. As there was no fitting person, the paradigm had to be neglected and the Sinhala, Anuruddha Ratwatte, was forced to take up the role of Sapumal Kumaraya in December 1995. Douglas Devananda obtained the real power, however, by being made Minister of Development for the North. He is a Tamil, having his Ealam People's Democratic Party (EPDP) as a base. This Tamil party was loyal to the PA Government and acted as a military group against the Ilavar. (The webpage of the EPDP is http://www.epdpnews.com/) His situation and that of Sapumal Kumaraya show similarities. Both are Tamils loyal to the enemy of the Tamils, as indicated by the Ilavar. Furthermore, history shows that Sapumal Kumaraya had to abandon Yalppanam. Douglas Devananda lost his post when a new Government came to power after elections in 2002 and the Ilavar again established an office in Yalppanam in expectation of Kanakacuriyan II, Veluppillai Pirapakaran, returning triumphantly.

Academics' historicisation of Yapa Patuna

Now we come to the involvement of Sinhala-Buddhist ethno-nationalism in the event. The state controlled paper, *The Daily News*, reported on December 11, 1995, that the President had expressed her gratitude to the Mahasangha for their advice, support and blessings during the recent military offensive that established the writ of the Government in Jaffna. Visiting the Dalada Maligawa, she said that Sri Lankan leaders had always visited the Sri Dalada Maligawa to invoke the blessings of the triple gem on occasions of national importance. We were following that tradition by paying homage to the Sacred Tooth relic on this occasion when our security forces had liberated Jaffna. She did not say that the war to conquer Yalppanam was "holy", but her conscious connection of taking territory by military conquest with the veneration in the Dalada Maligawa is a very clear expression of an aggressive form of Buddhist ethno-nationalism or Sinhalatva.

It is an irony of history that Her Excellency symbolically established Lankan authority (hegemony) in Yapa Patuna by using a Tamil term for the Ilavar, *patuna, pattinam* in Tamil, referring to an emporion. The deep indulgence of some Lankans in Sinhalatva makes them blind to Tamil cog-

nates. It is commonly denied by Lankan scholars that *patuna* is *pattinam*, and so the word was allegedly "pure" and could be used in this victory ceremony by Her Excellency.

One important activity of modern Sinhala-Buddhist nationalists is to write a normative history that supports their own evaluation of the preservation of the unitary state as the ultimate aim. They anachronistically project their own contemporary Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism into the past and thus find what they are looking for, the unitary state that has allegedly always existed. This kind of circular reasoning about the existence of an imagined pre-colonial Sinhala-Buddhist unitary state is of importance in the "argumentation" for the preservation of the present unitary state. We cannot neglect the contemporary normative projections by Sinhala-Buddhist nationalists about their past.

Evidently, some Lankan intellectuals felt that this new situation of conquering Yalppanam by violence had to be made plausible to the public. Shortly after the royal ceremony of victory in Yapa Patuna, in *Sunday Island*, 31 December, a Lankan professor, Abaya Aryasinghe, who had earlier published a Sinhala nationalistic article (Aryasinghe 1995), again published an article, this time on the conquest of Yalppanam. Here he stated that, the Nallur kovil in Yalppanam was originally a Buddhist *vihara* placed at the spot where the Buddha visited Lanka for the second time. He also stated that the word *nallur* is not Tamil but that it echoes the Pali word *unnaloma* meaning allegedly "hair grown on the forehead of the Buddha". Such a hair relic of the Buddha was allegedly placed in the *stupa* that preceded the *kovil* at Nallur.

It is evident that the professor writing in *The Island*, which promoted the establishment of Lankan authority by military victory in Yapa Patuna, is a kind of ideological road-builder for General Ratwatte, who physically established the President's authority in Yalppanam. It seems that this professor is not alone, that he represents a trend aimed at re-establishing Lankan authority (hegemony) in Yalppanam and elsewhere in projected Tamililam by manipulating history. He had, as we have seen above, the backing of Her Excellency and of her Government in Jayavardhanapura, the former Kotte. The new (diluted) version of the devolution package from January 16, issued on Taipponkal 1996, definitely established Her Excellency's authority (hegemony) in Yalppanam by centralising power again instead of devolving power as in the original version.

There is no indication that the Buddha ever was among the Ilavar or the Lankans. The story of the Buddha's (three) visits, one of them in Nagadipa, also referred to by the professor, is a migratory tale that we find in many parts of India in places of pilgrims who glorified their favourite place by making it a place where the Buddha or Asoka had allegedly been. One victim of such migratory tales was Mahanama in the 5th century A.D.,

who took pious folklore about the flying Buddha for history. He projected what he heard into the chronicle *Mahavamsa*. The professor is not only an intuitionist, he is also a maximalist in believing that even the folklore parts of the *Mahavamsa* are history. The professor neglects genre analysis of the *Mahavamsa* by simply making all genres sources of history. There is no division, partition, or classification of sources in his presentation. There is no text criticism and no history of redaction in his presentation. Although the *Mahavamsa* has no canonical status, it is treated by him as if it had this.

Another victim of dreaming was the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim, Xuanzang, from the 7th century A.D., who is quoted endlessly as a source for the Buddha's visits to Tamilakam and for Makentiran's visit to Lanka. Mahanama and Xuanzang have been exploited as sources of a religiously founded Lankan nationalism.

The word *nallur* meaning "good village" is a commonplace name in Tamilakam, and is regularly connected with Shaiva or Vaishnava temples and not with Buddhist monasteries. There is a statistically identifiable connection between *nallur* and *kovil*. A city named *nallur* is a city of a *kovil*, a Shaiva, or Vaishnava temple. There are many cities called *nallur* in Tamilakam. If each one really did "echo" *unnaloma*, there would be many Buddhist influences in Tamilakam.

Furthermore, the word *nallur* has nothing to do with the Pali word *unnaloma* and *nallur* does not imply the slightest reference to Buddhism. *Unna* in the word *unnaloma* with a cerebral n, better known in its Sanskrit form of *urna* (with long u and a and with a cerebral n), refers to a hairlock on the forehead of the Buddha, being one of the 32 marks of the Buddha, but *nallur* (Tamil) and *urna* (*unna*) (Sanskrit, Pali) have no connection at all.

The *urna* (*unna*) is often depicted as a small circular mark between the eyebrows, indicating originally a special wisp of hair that is popularly, but wrongly, interpreted as a beauty spot, or as a *pottu* (Tamil, Sanskrit *tilaka*). On sculptures of the Buddha made by imperial Cola artists from the 9th–12th century A.D., we can see that they strictly followed the literary prescriptive tradition by either incising or applying a hair lock that hangs down in the form of a curl on the forehead of the Buddha. Therefore, *nal (nar)* is a Dravidian (Tamil) root meaning "good" and *urna* (*unna*) is Indo-Aryan (Sanskrit, [Pali]) meaning lexically "wool". *loma* is Pali and means "hair"; *unnaloma* is woolly hair that is more precisely understood as hair lock.

ur in the compound *nal-l-ur* is also a Dravidian (Tamil) word meaning "village". It is used as a suffix in many place-names and has nothing to do with *unnaloma*, which belongs to another language family, the Indo-Aryan. It is a mystery how anyone can see in *nallur* an echo of *unnaloma*. I cannot follow the professor's presentation and argumentation, but I cannot ignore it either, because of its strong political implication and motivation. It

is a typical example of modern Lankan politico-historical writing, which politicises even phonology and morphology.

Nachspiel

In March, 1997, a famous place-name, Parayanankulam, on the Metavacciya-Mannar road in the Tamil area was to be renamed Sapumalpura, "city of Sapumal". It was reported that a large army camp was being established there (*Colombo Calling* 1997). Tamil organisations, the TULF, the PLOTE, the EPRLF, and the TELO, warned in their protest that such renaming of roads and vehicles had been one of the original causes of the ethnic conflict. The Government now appeared to be dabbling again in such delicate issues. Ajit Rupesinghe also said such moves would make the Tamil people feel they were losing their rights and identity under an army of occupation (Selvanayagam 1997a–b). The leadership of the Ilavar used the incident to show that the move formed part of a colonisation programme for the Sinhalas, implying the displacement of many Tamils and the loss of acres of the finest vegetation. It was a programme of expansion into Tamil territory and therefore directed not only against the LTTE, but also against the Tamils (LTTE 1997d).

In May, 1997, we learned that 220 police officers stationed in the newly established Sapumalpura police station were reported to have deserted the service. They had surrendered their weapons to the Assistant Superintendent of Police and reached Vavuniya. The struggle for Sapumalpura goes on (Anon. 1997a). From the Ilavar side, the capture of Yalppanam and the renaming of Sapumalpura are incidents indicating an intensified programme of Sinhala colonisation by military force.

Following this contribution by Professor Abhaya Ariyasinghe, in a letter dated 10 January 1996, eighteen Sinhala Buddhist organisations urged the Sri Lankan President to pave the way for the families of landless Sri Lankan Army and Police personnel to be settled in the captured Tamil areas. The General himself, Anuruddha Ratwatte, speaking to ex-servicemen, praised them for their willingness to offer their services for the defence of the country and promised to give them Mahaveli land from Aralakanvila belonging to his ministry, regretting that he could not distribute land to them that belonged to other ministries (Anon. 1996b). The point is that Aralakanvila is within the projected area of Tamililam.

In September, 1997, an Ilavar report tells us that a Sinhala priest wished to declare Yalppanam a holy Buddhist city. The priest in question, Dhammaloka Nanasiha, demanded of the Government that the grounds of the recently built *vihara* at Aryakulam junction in Yalppanam should be expanded. It should be designated a holy Buddhist reservation and only Sinhala Buddhists should be exclusively settled there (LTTE 1997d).

In December, 1997, The Government paper *The Daily News* in a long article used the research into family lore of a Lankan called Quintus Jayatileka for political ends. Quintus Jayatileka could trace himself to Ambulugala Kumaraya, brother of Sapumal Kumaraya. Sapumal Kumaraya is depicted by the paper as "the 15th Century conqueror of Jaffna, from foreign invaders" and as the person who "restored the country as a unitary state" (Edirisinghe 1997). The reader is not informed that Sapumal's reign was broken by the return from exile of the Tamil King, Kanakacuriyan, and that the "foreign invaders" were indigenous Tamils. We can also study the use of the concept of the unitary state being used anachronistically for the political purpose of historicising this form.

To win heart and mind

After the conquest of Yalppanam in December, 1995, by the Sri Lankan Armed Forces, the Government developed a strategy for winning the hearts and minds of the Tamils in the conquered areas. The main strategy was and naturally remains relief, rehabilitation, and the starting of development projects: Sudu Nelum.

However, the Government seems sometimes to have misunderstood the mentality and value system of the Tamils, as on New Year 1997. Tamils felt insensitivity of the Government when the Government organised a weeping contest and a beauty pageant in Yalppanam in the grounds of Jaffna Central College itself at New Year, 1997. Tamil parties, including even the pro-government EPDP and PLOTE, boycotted the festival saying it was ugly and insulting to the people. TULF leader M. Civacittamparam said that the weeping contest in particular had hurt the feelings of the Yalppanam people. It was terribly insensitive to have such a contest when in the nearby streets people were really weeping for their loved ones and other losses. Tamil Congress leader Kumar Ponnampalam and TELO General Secretary M. K. Civajilinkam accused the government of acting calluously and fraudulently, when thousands were going through agony and heartbreak. Tamil Party sources said there eventually was no weeping contest as no contestants showed up, while the beauty pageant was also a farce because the girls were chosen arbitrarily (Selvanayagam 1997b). Another eyewitness reports a detailed and somewhat different version. It also mentioned that the EPDP objected to this arrangement and called on the public to boycott the festivities (Anon. 1997b). It adds, however, that Yalppanam 's only functioning newspaper, *Utayan*, was pressurised by the security authorities not to carry the EPDP statement. The PLOTE and the EPRLF issued statements in Colombo criticising the so-called New Year celebrations (Anon. 1997b). In Yalppanam, however, the same groups co-oper-

ated fully with the army in staging the function while the EPDP was left in the cold. The *tamasha* went off well with seven damsels participating at the beauty contest, according to the eyewitness. The first three were given gold chains as prizes. Lucky draw winners among the public received 25 radios and five bicycles as prizes. The highlight was the open *baila* session where the public and the military mingled together in dancing. People who a few years ago under the LTTE dispensation were dancing to Tamil songs ridiculing the soldiers were now hurrying along with the garrison to the beat of Sinhala *baila* songs. Melodies may change, but the eternal dance of life goes on (Anon. 1997b), commented the reporter.

How a beauty contest is performed we know, but how a weeping contest is performed is not so evident. There is no weeping contest in Tamil culture. What is probably meant is what in Tamil is called *oppari* that may be derived from *oppu* + *ar* + *i* meaning, "declaring the likeness (of the deceased with an ideal person)". It refers to a lamentation by women making doleful reference to the personal appearance and good qualities of a deceased. Sometimes the word is shortened to *oppu*, "resemblance (of the dead to an eminent person)". It is also called *alukaippattu*, "song of grief", during which a*lukaikkanninkal*, "tears of grief", are shed. Sometimes routinised lamenting women are hired who perform *kulikku maratittal*, "breast-beating for hire". The meaning of this lamenting, weeping, wailing, and breast-beating is to protect endangered members against a hostile force by means of aggressive threats. In a situation of powerlessness, this aggression returns upon the wailing person. The hand raised to strike comes down upon her as expressed in breast-beating. In no way, however, is there a contest between lamenting women. To the Lankan outsider, however, it may generate pleasure to hear some women lamenting louder than others and making a public show of their grief – and above all to enjoy the powerlessness that is expressed in breast-beating. We learn from the reports that no female lamenters had made themselves available to satisfy these expectations of the Lankans. Had the Lankan outsider known the additional meaning of lamentation as an aggressive reaction of defence, he would probably have thought twice before arranging a weeping contest.

Another incident in August, 1997, also counteracted the winning of the minds and hearts of the Tamils of Yalppanam. The incident was reported worldwide over Internet by the LTTE (1997b). A senior Sinhalese military officer told a meeting of Tamil headmasters and teachers in Yalppanam that he was ready to close down any or all of Yalppanam's schools if teachers ignored his tough new directives. Warning that "disobedience would not be tolerated", he gave out the military's new instructions: "Due homage must be paid to the Sri Lankan lion flag, and the Sinhalese national anthem must be sung daily in classrooms by both students and teachers" (LTTE 1997b). He added that Tamil teachers and students must bare their

heads in respect when passing Sinhalese military camps or sentry points and that registers of students attendance must be submitted by hand to the nearest military camp for their perusal; students absent for three days must be reported to military officials; no school functions could take place without permission from the military, or without military officials as guests to "grace the occasion". If these orders were not followed, he said, "punishment [would] be drastic, and [would] been an example to others". The officer ended his speech by asking his audience to go home and think about these points very carefully (LTTE 1997b).

These incidents seem to be minor to the outsider, but for the insider, who may have lost a child or a relative and/or property in the war, this kind of demonstration of power by the enemy can be used by the LTTE to mobilise resistance against the Sri Lankan Armed Forces.

The Ilavar reaction

The Sapumal Kumaraya event made the LTTE recall past attempts to colonise the North (LTTE 1995, 1997a–d). It referred in August, 1997, to the attempts by former minister of national security Mr Athulathmudali. He allegedly had a three-pronged strategy to decimate Tamils: to allow the Sinhala military to take control of the Vavuniya-Jaffna road; to create a vast Sinhala colony extending from Anuradhapura to the Mullaitivu coast (to bifurcate the north/east); and to snatch away the fishing rights of Tamils in the north/east (LTTE 1997b). According to the LTTE, the PA, or Chandrika government, followed this up in August 1997. The LTTE then drew attention to the re-naming of Tamil villages with Sinhalese names. Parayanalamkulam was renamed as Sapumalpura after the Sapumal Kumaraya event in December, 1995 (LTTE 1997b).

The actual capture of Yalppanam, with the subsequent victory ceremony, has left a deep scar in the memory of many Ilavar. They remembered and discussed the incident repeatedly, until it became a part of their state of mind, a humiliated mind calling for revenge. The ceremony was taken up as a human rights' violation in 1997 in the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, 53rd Session, Geneva, March–April, 1997 (Anon. 1997c).

On November 27, 1995, Veluppillai Pirapakaran made a speech in connection with Great Heroes' Day. At that time, the Lankan lion flag had already been hoisted over Yalppanam. He reacted very emotionally, as might be expected. The following is an official translation by the LTTE of a part of his speech.

> The Sinhala military devils may hoist victory flags in depopulated Jaffna which has been reduced to rubble. The Sinhala chauvinistic gangs in the

> South may light crackers in jubilation assuming that they have captured the kingdom of Jaffna. Chandrika may send peace signals believing that military hegemony has been achieved. In these circumstances we wish to make it absolutely clear that as long as the Sinhala army is occupying Jaffna the doors for peace will be firmly closed. The LTTE will not participate in the peace negotiations imposed at the point of a gun subjecting itself to military pressure. This is the message we wish to address to Chandrika regime. It will be nothing other than political stupidity if Chandrika government thinks that it can bring about peace and political settlement by occupying Jaffna and uprooting hundreds of thousands of people. The invasion of Jaffna is a gigantic historical blunder made by Chandrika regime. As a consequence of this act the Colombo government has closed all avenues for peace and plunged the entire island into grave conflictual situation. (LTTE 1995.)

Revenge the Ilavar got, indeed, in a Tamil *kuttu*, which refers to a droll, ludicrous event, a dramatic performance given on "Great Heroes Day" in Paris in November, 1996. The *kuttu* was performed on November 24th, 1996, as part of the of the Great Heroes' Day celeberation in Paris, St Denis. A group of actors then enacted the solemn ceremony from December 6th again on the stage, but this time as a farce. This recalls the beginning of Karl Marx's "Eighteenth Brumaire" where he says that Hegel remarked somewhere that all great world-historic facts and personages appear, so to speak, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce. So much for Karl Marx. In the case of the performance in Paris in 1996, we have a third appearance, a farce on a farce on a real historical event.

Young Ilavar who had gained an intimate knowledge of the personal characteristics of the two Sinhala leaders' public verbal and bodily performance staged the roles of the President and the General. The *kuttu* ended with the arrival of the Tamil freedom fighters and their struggle against the brutalising Sinhala army. The freedom fighters were victorious, of course. History repeats itself not only for the benefit of Sapumal Kumaraya, but also for the benefit of King Kanakacuriyan, who came back from exile with an army and re-established the Kingdom of Yalppanam. The young Ilavar on the stage made the President and her General prisoners and ordered them to do heavy labour consisting of carrying tombstones to the graves of the *tiyakikkal*, "martyrs", of the Ilavar. Parts of the public in the theatre became so emotionally involved that they rose from the seats, raising their fists, shouting and berating the two "prisoners". The Ilavar journal *Hot Spring*, issued in London, had on its front page a picture from the *kuttu* showing "the President" in a rage, and her "General". The *kuttu* was intended by Ilavar actors as a comedy and as a ridiculing of the Lankan President's retrieval of the past. They made a farce of what they regarded

as being a farce. The Ilavar took a political stand in doing so. The President, of course, did not regard her retrieval of the past as a farce. On the contrary, she thought it was meaningful to use a glorified past as a charter for an evaluation of the present. For her, approximisation and synchronisation served the purpose of glorifying new struggles, but for the Ilavar it was nothing but a parody of the old. For her, it magnified the given task in the imagination, but for the Ilavar it was a recoiling from a solution in reality. For her, it was a rediscovery of the spirit of Sinhala glory, but for the Ilavar it was nothing but a ghost walking again.

Conclusion: Reversal of values through approximisation/ synchronisation

The reversal of values that the Lankan PA Government has demonstrated, by giving priority to war in a Buddhist country, has created intense feelings of doubt with regard to this war. The Government tried to reduce them by references to concepts that are both "old" and unquestioned, to concepts that bring the Government's actions in relation to a long tradition that makes an anomaly part of a tradition. This reversal of values is transformed from appearing as arbitrary and idiosyncratic, or in any case questionable, to belonging to an old glorified Sinhala tradition concerning the defence of the unitary state. The President took the opportunity to publicly display her authority with a theatrical ritual show. Politicians, the military, and Sinhala nationalists are the main actors on the stage. There was a concious blurring of borders between categories such as myth, fiction and history, as well as between theatre and ritual.

The PA Government has projected a historical paradigm, the aspirations of which it yearns to fulfil. The key words for this activity are *approximisation/synchronisation*. Both are ideological constructions in order to relate the present "defeat" of the Ilavar to the victory of Sapumal Kumaraya over the Tamil king, Kanakacuriyan. The specific is made to appear as part of the general, the unique is made to appear as a repetition of history, but above all, the reversal of values is legitimised by synchronising it with an ideal event from the past. Lankan political historiography is full of examples of such synchronisations, the most famous of which is the synchronisation of Vijaya with the Buddha. This conscious and artificial synchronisation of events, inclusive of the synchronisation produced by Her Excellency, of General Ratwatte with Sapumal Kumaraya, is of course an indication that there is no moral argument for the war against the Ilavar, that this war has no basis in humanitarian, Hindu, Muslim, and Christian values, and above all not in Buddhist values. This war against the Ilavar is a demonstration that aims at rationalising the bringing of the

north and east under the administration of the Lankans in a unitary state. The President had closed the doors to reconciliation in the 1990s. After the defeat of her PA Government in the elections from 2002, a new development has started under the guidance of Norwegian mediators, who receive full support from the Ilavar and from the new Government, which however, has a weak position in Parliament. The outcome of this new development could not be foreseen in August 2002.

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JESPER SØRENSEN

The Question of Ritual

A Cognitive Approach

Introduction

Why does ritual continue to be an issue in religious studies and in anthropology? Why do we keep writing books and having conferences devoted to this apparently elusive subject? In this paper I will propose a cognitive approach to rituals, focussing on those aspects of rituals that are distinct from other types of actions, together with what cognitive responses these differences provoke. It will be argued that rituals violate basic causal assumptions and by doing so, trigger off cognitive processes in order to ascribe purpose and meaning to the action. In conclusion, this will be related to findings in ethology and evolutionary theory, arguing that ritual as a behavioural category plays an important role in the formation of symbolic thinking.

However, I would first like to discuss why rituals persistently provoke such heated scholarly debate. Why are rituals interesting? A pragmatic answer to this could be that *it is our most important raw material.* Besides texts, behaviour, and notably ritual behaviour, constitutes the primary source material for the study of religion. As a mode of activity, ritual provokes a search for explanation, for a rationale underlying the apparently irrational and non-instrumental behaviour performed and observed. Thus one of the primary features of ritual action is exactly the opacity of the behaviour in question. It is not obvious what reasons underlie the behaviour, and how its purpose is related to the actions performed. Thus when the functionality of an action recedes into the background, it is recategorised as an instance of ritualised behaviour motivated by other factors both formally and substantially.

This peculiar character of ritual action is recognised by both participants seeking out ritual and by religious experts searching for an answer to the meaning and purpose of particular rituals, as well as by scholars looking for the meaning and function of particular rituals and of ritual in general. In the study of religion, religious ritual as a behavioural category is of course more circumscribed than the broad folk-theory just referred to:

it concerns interactions with hidden and superempirical agents, it is prescribed by tradition, and it is a collective mode of action, even when performed in private. I will claim nevertheless that our intuitions about what constitutes ritual behaviour are informed by the folk-theory according to which ritual is a type of behaviour not easily ascribed to rational or instrumental causes. The reasons for ritual behaviour must be found elsewhere.

Why is ritual such an important category in the study of religion? I think the reason is that ritual is the primary and most accessible indication that people entertain religious beliefs – beliefs subsequently used as the explanation of the actions observed. Like other types of human action, rituals are explained by reference to the belief-states of the agents. They are seen as indicating that people entertain certain beliefs, as they are believed to act upon these. However this seems to be a circular argument. On the one hand, ritual actions are used to claim the existence of religious belief motivating the actions (actions pointing to the existence of beliefs), and on the other hand these purported beliefs are used to explain the ritual actions observed (beliefs explaining actions). This is of course a standard mode of inference in explaining ordinary, non-ritual behaviour, but as we shall see in the following, the special character of ritual actions questions the utility of this approach. Problems arise when people do *not* refer to beliefs when asked why they perform a particular ritual and what it means – at least these beliefs will not explain the form, content or structure of actions performed. The circle is broken and the ritual can no longer be seen as an index of specific and commonly held underlying beliefs, nor can the rationale underlying ritual performance be explained by reference to such beliefs. As we shall see later, this does not imply that there is no relation between ritual and belief-states, but merely that we need to move beyond the circular argument in order to describe how they are connected.

Thus traditional explanations of rituals point to the underlying beliefs and explain ritual actions as social expressions of more or less conscious but culturally shared beliefs. A way out of this circularity connecting individual belief-states and ritual action is to claim that rituals do not find their *raison d'être* in individual beliefs, but somewhere else. Even though more sociologically inclined explanations have not fundamentally challenged the premise of individual beliefs underlying ritual actions, they have added another explanatory level. It is argued that rituals form a necessary part of social life, ensuring the continuation and persistence of the group by expressing more or less consciously held fundamental values and structures of the group. People perform rituals motivated by beliefs, but the real function of rituals can be found elsewhere, namely in the effect the rituals have on social cohesion through their employment of common symbolic structures. Through in-depth analysis, the observer is believed to be able to "crack the code" and relate the symbolic elements found in

the ritual to a general symbolic system that in some aspects corresponds to external social structure.

Theories focussing on the symbolic character of ritual actions have been challenged on several points. In *Rethinking Symbolism*, anthropologist Dan Sperber (1975) argues against the notion that ritual actions should be seen as expressions of symbolic systems in need of interpretation. He argues that the relation between ritual actions and underlying explanatory systems, whether internal beliefs or external semiological structures, are much more complex than hitherto acknowledged. The symbolic interpretation given by the observer is, according to Sperber, a mere extension of the activity found in the ritual itself, and symbolic interpretations will therefore never explain *why* a ritual is performed nor *what* it does, but merely add to the ever-growing numbers of local exegeses.

More recently, Caroline Humphrey and James Laidlaw (1994) have argued that the relation between intentions entertained by the agents and the actions performed are radically transformed in ritual actions, in comparison with ordinary action. When engaged in ritual performance, people only entertain intentions in relations to the whole ritual sequence, whereas the constituent actions are stipulated by tradition and therefore intentionally underdetermined. In ritual, there is no direct feedback between the result of actions performed and how the ritual is performed.

Ritual as a special behavioural category

Above, we found two points in which ritual actions are to a significant degree distinct from ordinary actions: 1) The performance of rituals cannot be explained by reference to underlying symbolic and explanatory systems or belief-states; 2) the relation between participants' intentions and the actions performed is radically altered. In this paper I wish to point to a third important feature of ritual actions. On a cognitive level, rituals imply that intuitively held assumptions and domain-specific expectations regarding the causal properties of the entities involved are disconnected (Sørensen 2000). In recent years cognitive psychology has established evidence that human cognition is constrained to a certain extent by domain-specific categorisation. Humans entertain different intuitive and unconscious expectations regarding different domains of reality, such as physical objects, animals, theory of mind, and social categories. The exact number of these domains is disputed, as is their basis, whether innate or acquired, but this need not concern us in the present context (for discussion see Hirschfeld and Gelman 1994; Sperber, Premack and Premack 1995; Whitehouse 2001).

Contrary to ordinary actions, in which a large number of such intuitively held assumptions guide our expectations, rituals explicitly downplay

or violate some of these assumptions and thereby provoke a search for meaning through either perceptual characteristics or more or less reified symbolic interpretations. When stones can think and act, birds are spirits and human souls can leave the body, ordinary and automatic domain-specific inferences are violated. This not only enhances memorability and transmission, as argued by Pascal Boyer (1994, 2001), but it also provokes the invocation of alternative hermeneutic strategies available in order for participants to extract the meaning or purpose of the ritual sequence. It is these alternative strategies I will discuss in the following.

The difference between ordinary action and ritual action can be illustrated by means of two simple models depicting the two types of action as event-frames (Fillmore 1982; Sørensen 2000). An event-frame is an idealised, mental construct of a given action-sequence containing the relevant elements and their internal relation. In the models described below, an event-frame is depicted by an analytic distinction between three phases of the actions involved. A phase before the commencement of the action (conditional space), the proper action itself (action space), and the effect of the action (effect space). A premise of the following argument is that agents performing an action will have a broadly equivalent representation of an action, its conditions, and its consequences.

Figure 1 depicts the non-ritual action of breaking a window by throwing a stone through it. In the conditional space, all sorts of intuitive background knowledge about windows, human agents, and interactions between these are present. Windows are physical objects that do not move by themselves but are subject to physical causation; humans can act on their own volition and can interact with most physical objects through their body. In short, it contains knowledge derived through a combination of experience and intuitive ontological assumptions. This might seem trivial and so it is in the sense that it is not present in our consciousness in normal circumstances. But it has crucial effects on the way we represent actions involving the window: that it can be broken by a physical object, that it is subject to physical force, that humans can perform certain movements and thereby influence the window etc. Thus the action of breaking a window is informed by knowledge about windows and human agents and knowledge about what type of actions can interfere with windows, i.e. the causal expectations and assumptions relating action and the conditional space through what can be called a diagnostic process.

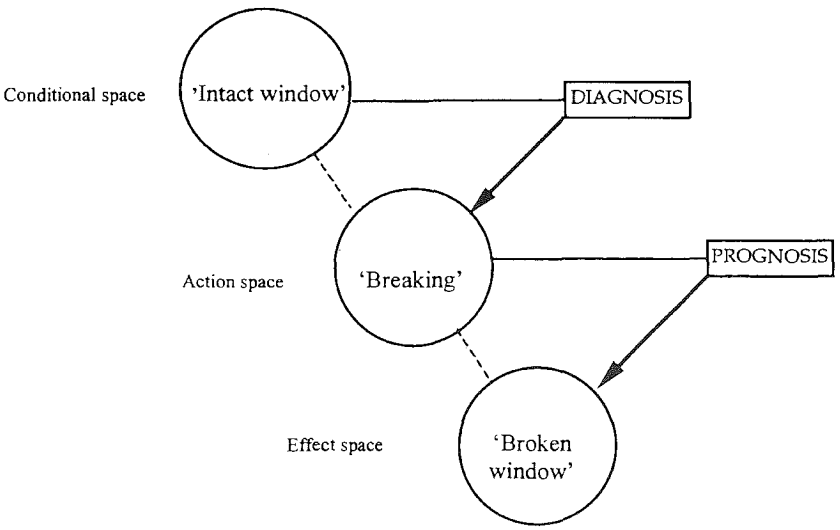

Figure 1. Non-ritual event-frame

Similarly, a prognostic process relates the action to representations of the effect of the action, in this case the window being broken. Again, all sorts of causal expectations are present, for instance that it is the physical force of the stone that breaks the window, that the shattered glass will fall down etc. Even though these assumptions are not present in our consciousness, they guide our behaviour. This is evident in cases when an action fails to produce the desired effect. The failure of the stone to break the window will not be represented as caused by the window moving in response to my throwing a stone, or the stone "deciding" not to hit the window. Rather I will infer that I need to pick a larger stone, use more force, and/or move closer in order to break the window, all inferences based on windows being classified as a specific type of physical object.

The purpose of this sketchy analysis of an ordinary action is to highlight some aspects of what happens when actions become ritualised, i.e. what distinguish ritual from non-ritual actions. I have already mentioned how the relation between the agent's intention and the actions performed is radically transformed in ritual actions (Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994). Here I will focus on how ritual actions can be characterised as based on a similar radical transformation or even violation of intuitively held causal expectations.

If we compare ritual actions to the non-ritual actions described above, we find a significant transformation that can be illustrated by figure 2:

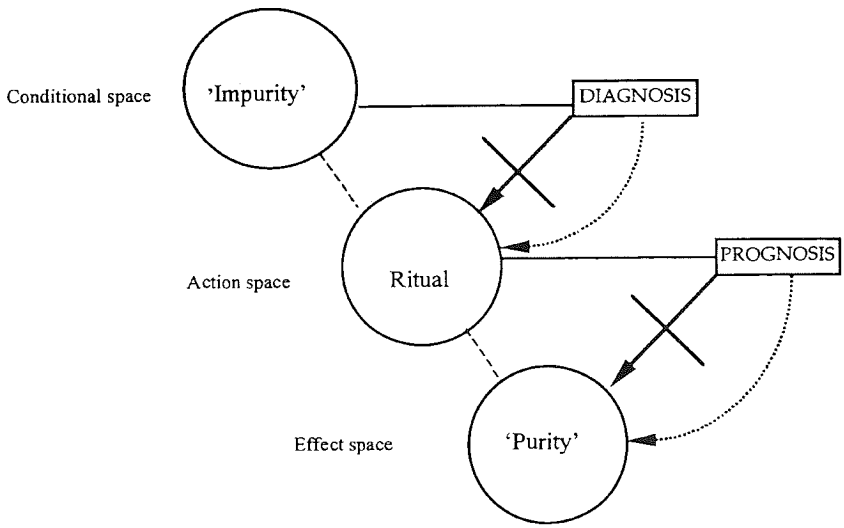

Figure 2. Ritual event-frame

In the model, the non-ritual action of breaking a window with a stone is changed into the ritual action of effecting a transition from a state of impurity to a state of purity by means of a performance of a specific ritual. The most important change is that the intuitively held and domain-specific inferences relating the condition space to the action space, and the action space to the effect space are severed. Participants have little or no domain-specific intuition about how the states of affairs preceding the ritual are related to the actions performed in the ritual, or about how these ritual actions produce the desired effects. Instead, two strategies for relating the action to the condition and the effect are utilised. The first consists in the numerous iconic and indexical relations that it is possible to establish between aspects of the condition, action and effects spaces (depicted by the dotted line connecting the spaces). The obvious ecamples are usually described as "magical rituals", as when the Azande attempts to cure a man suffering from leprosy by means of a ritual involving a creeper shedding its "skin" as a part of its natural process of growth (Evans-Pritchard 1937). As the plant survives and prospers through this loss of outer extremities, so the man suffering from similar loss of outer extremities should survive and prosper. In this case, the iconic relation between the perceptual characteristics of the man and the creeper is highlighted, and in fact motivates the ritual procedure. However, rituals not usually described as magical also contain this feature, as when blessing involves physical contact or the ingestion of specific objects. In these cases, the action can be interpreted as

a metonymic relation between the status of the person performing the blessing, the actions performed, possible objects utilised and its purported effect (see Sørensen 2000 for an analysis of magical rituals).

Thus we find both the so-called laws of sympathetic magic described by James Frazer – not restricted to magic but found in some form in most rituals. The violations of domain-specific expectations and inferences prompt a cognitive search for other available clues to the meaning of the action, and relations of similarity and contact are easily accessible. In the words of the German ethologist Hans Kummer, the strong causal inferences given by domain-specific intuitions are replaced by weak causal relations based on perceptual similarity and spatio-temporal contiguity (Kummer 1995). We shall return to ethology and its importance for the study of ritual below.

Another hermeneutic strategy used to relate the condition, action and effect spaces is that of symbolic interpretations. In figure 2 this is depicted as the curved arrows substituting the severed domain-specific causal connections. In symbolic interpretations of ritual actions, the prognostic and diagnostic processes are uphold by symbolically expressed links between the spaces. The most obvious example is of course established dogmas connecting certain states to certain rituals purported to effect specific changes. At the other end of the spectrum, it also covers idiosyncratic interpretations made "on the fly" to explain the meaning of some ritual. In between these extremes we have the more or less creative use of established cultural models used by participants to make sense of the actions they engage in. The vast terminology employed by New Age groups is an excellent example of such free-floating cultural models used to interpret ritual actions.

To summarise: when people engage in ritual actions, such as the consummation of bread and wine insufficient to satisfy hunger, and attempts to inflict pain on an opponent by means of manipulation of a doll, we intuitively know that something special is going on, i.e. that the action performed is a special type of action. Usually we just name such actions "symbolic" in order to point to their special features. I will argue that this definition is premature. The primary mistake lies in the confusion of the sign itself, in this case the ritual action, with the way the actions is interpreted. The ritual elements are not in themselves symbols. They can be interpreted *symbolically*, but this is not the only way ritual actions are interpreted or understood. Iconic and indexical connections play a significant role in most ritual actions, facilitating a more direct and less contextually informed interpretation based on the recognition of relations of similarity and contact. Besides these two hermeneutic strategies, there is a third strategy, in which the ritual action is not interpreted at all, but only performed because "our ancestors did so". However, even in such cases, the ritual is performed on

certain specified occasions, and the failure to perform the ritual often effects representations of the dire results of *not* performing the action.

These hypotheses concerning the special properties of ritual action (as an ideal type) favour a procedural approach to the ongoing construction of ritual meaning and purpose by participants. Whereas the purpose, intention and thereby meaning of ordinary actions are processed by a combination of domain-specific and cultural knowledge, ritual actions radically downplay intuitive, domain-specific processing. This leads to the application of three alternative hermeneutic strategies:

(a) Use of perceptual characteristics of the actions, notably relations of similarity (icons) and contagion (indexes).
(b) Symbolic interpretations, from idiosyncratic to culturally reified models.
(c) Contextual interpretations based on the broader context in which the ritual action takes part.

A result of this analysis is that instead of arguing whether rituals are in themselves symbolic and expressive or rational and instrumental, we can focus on the aspects of ritual action that differ from ordinary actions and outline possible cognitive processes carried out by ritual participants. Even though some rituals might actively exploit one or other of the hermeneutic strategies available to participants, all rituals can be interpreted by all three strategies, and I believe that investigations into the history of ritual practices will expose a constant flux between the different hermeneutic strategies.

In the following, I will restrict myself to a discussion of the first two strategies and their internal relation.

From iconic and indexical to symbolic interpretations

Above I described two strategies, that of interpretation by means of iconic and indexical relations and that of symbolic interpretation, as two equally applicable strategies utilised by participants to make sense of ritual actions. However, this is not an accurate description as the two modes of interpretation are unequal in a number of ways. In short, one can say that iconic and indexical relations are more easily and more automatically processed; they utilise very fundamental cognitive processes used in basic level categorisation; and they do not require a significant amount of background knowledge. In contrast, symbolic interpretations are slower and less automatic; they use higher level and more complex cognitive processing; and they require a significant amount of background knowledge, as the sym-

bolic interpretation relates elements of the ritual to symbolic structures found outside the ritual, for instance in myths or dogmatic systems. In order to make this difference more explicit, let me use an example from a classic study in ethology, Konrad Lorenz's *Das sogenannte Böse* (1963). Lorenz argues that ritualisation in animals can be defined as the redirection of instinctual actions from their former function to that of communication. Among greylag geese, a mating pair strengthen their mutual bonds by performing in unison the same sequence of actions normally used to fight an enemy, but without the presence of any enemies. According to Lorenz, the aggressive action is redirected so as to communicate reciprocal bonding between the two geese and it is thereby transformed from a direct instrumental function of fighting off an adversary to a communicative function of confirming the bond between the mates. Now, the concept of communication can be misleading as it implies a conscious attempt to transfer information. In this case, it is the direct and most likely unconscious exchange of signals in contrast to the intentional exchange of symbolic sign prototypical of human communication. The example illustrates how ordinary actions, when deprived of their ordinary function (in this case aggression), will provoke a search for other perceptible features that can give functional purpose to the action. It is the iconic structure of the actions performed in unison by the two geese that becomes highlighted when the enemy is absent. By performing the actions in unison, the bonding is directly acted out rather than symbolically expressed. The strong causality involved in the aggressive behaviour addressed against an enemy is transformed into the weak causality involved in the perceptual similarity of the actions and spatial contiguity of the bonding pair.

This is not intended as a mere analogy from the animal kingdom. I believe there is a strong affinity and possibly direct evolutionary connection between the ways in which animals and human beings process and construct iconic and indexical relations, and how these become highlighted in ritualised behaviour. I also believe that there is a direct relation between the ways animals and humans ritualise otherwise functional behaviour, and that thorough studies of human rituals will expose a ground of "deep meaning" based on iconic and indexical features (cf. Eibl-Eibesfeldt 1989; Burkert 1979, 1996). This evolutionary origin might explain why iconic and indexical interpretations are more easily and more rapidly processed than symbolic interpretation. They have been with us for a long while and are therefore deeply embedded in our cognitive architecture. I shall return to this question below.

But there is one aspect that distinguishes the way humans use and interpret rituals from that of other animals: the tendency to apply more or less consistent symbolic interpretations to the actions. Even though such symbolic interpretation can be understood as a "side-effect" not intrinsic

to ritual itself (Staal 1979), this side-effect has had crucial importance for the survival and grounding of ritual actions in the larger social and symbolic fabric of society. When actions are ritualised, they not only facilitate the relative highlighting of iconic and indexical interpretations but also the application of new or already existing symbolic interpretations. Such symbolic interpretations are loosely constrained but not determined by the iconic and indexical features just described. This implies that it is possible to extract a basic meaning structure from the actions performed that will constrain, but not determine, subsequent symbolic interpretations. When the bread of the Eucharist is consumed, it is difficult to ignore that something is taken into the body and that it is a transformation by "eating", even though this need not be highlighted in the symbolic interpretation chosen, or can be given very divergent symbolic interpretations. The rapid change of interpretations of the same ritual found in the history of most religions testifies to this non-determinacy. This does not imply that there are no constraints imposed on new interpretations by the actions performed, but as the constraints are relatively loose, extrinsic factors will enter into the development of symbolic interpretation, e.g. dogmas and narratives.

This flux, and even struggle, characterising interpretations of ritual actions begs the question of why rituals have such a dominant place in most religious traditions. Why perform rituals if they notoriously provoke conflicting interpretations? This is of course a complex question, to which several answers have been provided during the last 150 years. To make a crude summary, two basic positions crystallise within the functionalist approach to ritual and religion. The first conceives rituals as a conserving force in society and in the history of religion. Rituals are relatively stable through history and their primary function is to address and solve social crisis, while most other aspects of religions can change. The second position conceives ritual as an innovative force, as a means of transcending social structure, as when the creative or subjunctive mood replaces the indicative, to paraphrase Victor Turner (1990). Both positions have important insights. Rituals constitute a conserving force by their relative stability through both time and place. Rituals *should* be unchanging, as they are stipulated acts whose efficacy is ensured by their origin. Thus the cohesive social force of rituals should not be underestimated, not because all participants share the same interpretation – they don't – but because they perform the same public actions and thus iconically confirm social adhesion. Pushed to the extreme, the question can be posed whether we are really dealing with *ritual* rather than religious traditions. On the other hand, rituals function as an innovative force exactly because their possible meanings are underdetermined by the actions performed. Rituals provoke the construction of new interpretations. In fact, such new interpretations are the inevitable

result of the relative stability of rituals compared to the relative flux of social structure and history. Thus rituals are both conserving and innovating and a substantial number of schisms found in the history of religion boil down to questions of the right performance of rituals and their correct interpretation. As rituals provoke a search for meaning or purpose, religious traditions and cultures can either actively discourage explicit interpretations of ritual actions, as we see among the Baktaman of Papua New Guinea (Barth 1975), or seek to control interpretations by restricting them to specific authorities, as seen in most literate traditions. In both cases the potential disruptive force of mutually opposing interpretations can be held at bay, even if the innovative, creative and possibly disruptive forces of new interpretations cannot be ruled out.

From action to meaning: How ritual action furthers symbolic interpretations

The relation between ritual action and more or less authoritative interpretations is further complicated by the fact that rituals tend to downplay and de-emphasise the symbolic elements they contain. Language is the most central ritual element connected directly to a conventional symbolic system with a relatively fixed interpretation. However, many rituals tend to downplay the symbolic reference of the words used in favour of the iconic elements of prosody, and the indexical elements of enunciation. How words are pronounced and who pronounces them have relatively more importance in rituals than in everyday language, at the same time as archaic and even non-sense words flourish. In ritual, language itself is ritualised as its direct reference is loosened. Ritual language is separated from the web of symbolic reference that constitutes everyday language and, in a manner similar to poetry, this enables novel interpretation.

The question naturally arises of why ritual has this function of separating elements from their ordinary symbolic reference? Why is ritualisation an excellent method to achieve new meaning? I believe the answer can be found in the role of ritualisation in human evolution. Rituals not only lead to a constant reinterpretation of the basic semiotic and symbolic inventory of religious traditions, but can, on a more fundamental level, be understood as the most important bridgehead leading from iconic and indexical to symbolic representations. In *The Symbolic Species*, physical anthropologist Terrence Deacon argues that the origin of language is grounded in a unique human ability to produce symbolic representations, and that this ability developed in a co-evolutionary process involving the convergent development of internal brain structure and external language structure (Deacon 1997). In his argument, ritual plays a significant role as it contains

a feature necessary for the first construction of symbolic reference: the repetition of certain actions not directly related to a functional aim, in this case, sounds. By containing constant repetition, ritualisation enables symbolic reference to emerge as concepts acquire meaning through stable relations to other concepts. (Deacon 1997: 402–10.) Thus language is a kind of transformed ritual, in which interpretations are relatively locked by the cross-referential structure of the system.

However, language did not eradicate ritual. Ritual persists despite the existence of much more efficient means of communication. Ritual is in itself not an expressive and symbolic medium, but rather a type of action that constitutes one of the necessary conditions for the development of symbolic reference. Of importance in this context is that its role as an evolutionary bridgehead between iconic and indexical reference on the one hand and symbolic reference on the other, can be reversed. By means of ritualisation, conventional symbolic reference is dissolved into the constitutive parts of indexical and iconic relations, thereby facilitating the reinterpretation of otherwise fixed structures of meaning. Ritual is not only one of the origins of symbolic structure, but also contains the possibility of constantly reinventing, restructuring and reinterpreting the constituent actions and structures of society by dissolving conventional symbolic reference into its iconic and indexical parts.

This is of course a very sketchy evolutionary outline, which needs to be worked out in detail. I nevertheless believe it sheds light on some aspects of ritual that can be of assistance in our current treatment of rituals found in diverse religious and cultural traditions. I will end this article with a short list of propositions summarising the preceding argument:

1) Ritual should not be seen as a kind of language, even if the two things share certain characteristics. Language is dependent on a system of conventional symbolic reference meant to communicate, whereas ritual is a type of action meant to *do* something.
2) Ritual and ritualisation as a mode of behaviour is found among animals and humans alike and therefore forms a very basic, possibly innate, behavioural modality in humans. This explains why it is spontaneously produced and found in all human groups.
3) By violation of domain-specific expectations, rituals provoke the search for other possible clues for the purpose or meaning of the ritual action.
4) Two strategies are involved: (a) basic perceptual features are utilised to construct iconic and indexical relations; (b) symbolic interpretations are formed, constrained but not determined by these basic structures. In the case of religious rituals, symbolic interpretations tend to be drawn from a culture's stock of religious representations and facilitate new religious interpretations to emerge.

5) Finally, rituals not only enable the construction of symbolic interpretation, but also facilitate the dissolution and deconstruction of already established interpretations. Rituals can in this respect be understood as generators of symbolic meaning, not because rituals have symbolic meaning by themselves, but because they are actions that violate intuitive expectations and deconstruct established symbolic reference and thereby give rise to alternative hermeneutic strategies used to construct representations of meaning and function.

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MICHAEL STAUSBERG

Ritual Orders and Ritologiques

A Terminological Quest for Some Neglected Fields of Study

Ritual studies is an ever-expanding field of scholarly enquiry. In 1985, Ronald Grimes, one of the main exponents and creative agents in that field published a bibliography covering some 1633 items (Grimes 1985). The number must have multiplied by now and I guess that nobody would dare to venture on an update of that bibliography. Simply too much has been published since then. Therefore, any general statement on the state of the art of ritual studies may seem either naive or hazardous. Thus, my tentative remarks in what follows must be taken with a good dose of caution.

The topic I want to address in these pages lies at the crossroads between ritual studies and ritual theory.[1] In order to get an idea of the field of study I would like to focus on, it may be useful to distinguish between the following general approaches to the study of ritual. To begin with, ritual theory in the strict sense, i.e. with explanatory ambitions etc., tends to focus on RITUAL as such: what IT is, what IT does, how IT works ("functions"), and why IT is as it is.[2] Softer varieties of ritual theory, e.g. approaches that wish to foster a better "understanding" of what goes on when rituals are being performed, may focus on RITUALS in a semi-empirical and semi-theoretical fashion. As a matter of fact, to a large extent ritual "theory" seems to be the result of theoretical reflections on matters of empirical research.[3] Apart from that, we find studies of this and that phenomenon (e.g. time, space, violence, aesthetics, media, etc.) in relation to rituals ("ritual and time","ritual and space", etc.). Then, of course, we have a good dose of studies on different "types", "classes", or "groups" of rituals. Most popular, I would guess (in the absence of any statistical evidence), are studies of "sacrifice", "rites of passage", and "initiations", with "healing rituals" and "pilgrimages" as ever more successful runner-ups.[4] Correspondingly, there

1 For an extensive survey of current approaches to ritual theory see Kreinath, Snoek and Stausberg 2003.

2 For a penetrating critique of such approaches see Handelman 1998 and 2003.

3 That seems to be the case with Victor W. Turner and most of his students.

4 In his bibliography from 1985, Grimes discusses sixteen "Ritual Types" (rites of passage, marriage rites, funerary rites, festivals, pilgrimage, purification, civil ceremony,

is a number of studies about any variety of any class of rituals among the so-and-so people ("initiation among the NN"). Moreover, there are plenty of books about the rituals of this and that religion or people[5] – in colonial times often published under such titles as "The customs and ceremonies of the NN". Last but not least, there is an overwhelming amount of studies devoted to the presentation or analysis of single rituals.

As any reader must have noticed, this is a very rough sketch, indeed. The sketch is merely the background to another field of scholarly inquiry for which I will suggest the overall term of "ritologiques". "Ritologiques" studies what I will call "the orders of rituals", that is, interrelated units of rituals. In this paper, I will draw attention to this field by pointing to some scattered contributions that have already been undertaken in this direction.

Ritual density and ritual systems

It goes without saying that I am far from the first person to note that something ought to be done here. With her tremendous wide reading, Catherine Bell has – as I discovered when I was preparing the first draft of this paper – already pointed in the direction that I would like to invite the reader to explore. Bell phrases her observations as follows: "How rites relate to each other within a ritual system and how such systems differ from each other may be one of the most undeveloped areas in the study of ritual. Too often attention has focused on either one dominant ritual or a comprehensive cataloguing of all ritual activity." (Bell 1997: 173.) Bell proposes to discuss that problem as part of what she calls "ritual density", a topic that she defines in the following terms: "why some societies or historical periods have more rituals than others" (Bell 1997: 173).

To my eyes, however, far from being new that question seems to be a recurrent topic in ritual theory. It was discussed extensively in earlier stages of the history of ritual studies, under the dominance of functionalist paradigms. Probably, this problem was even one of the reasons why rituals started to attract as much attention as they do. Thus, way back in 1962, the topic Bell ingeniously terms "ritual density" had been phrased by Max Gluckman – who, for this issue, explicitly refers back to Arnold van Gennep – thus: "I try to produce a general proposition to explain one problem set by van Gennep: Why is it that in tribal society there is on the whole greater ritualization of transitions in social status, and greater ritualization indeed of social relationships in general, than there is in modern society?"

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rituals of exchange, sacrifice, worship, magic, healing rites, interaction rites, meditation rites, rites of inversion, ritual drama).

5 I am currently involved in a work of this kind: a systematic account of Zoroastrian rituals (Stausberg 2003).

(Gluckman 1962: 2.) In other words: the question of "ritual density" ultimately raises the question of the specific qualities of "modern society". Ritual theory here is a theory of modernization, and to talk about tribal rituals ultimately helps to explain our own ("modern") society.[6]

But Bell raises two other interesting questions: (a) how do rituals relate to each other within a ritual system and (b) how do such systems differ from each other? The latter question obviously points to a comparative study of rituals, but how about the former? The question of the interrelations of different rituals points at precisely that "dimension" of the study of rituals that I want to address in this paper. At the same time, it should be pointed out that the notion of "system" that Bell employs seems to be a very loose one.[7] If I understand her correctly, Bell points to the hypothesis that rituals are related to each other within a somehow coherently structured whole.

Religious ritual systems

With E. Thomas Lawson and Robert N. McCauley we come across a theory (of religion/ritual) in which the notion of "system" is of major importance: (in the 1990 version) their theory centres around the notion of "symbolic-cultural systems" in general and "religious ritual systems" (or simply "ritual systems") in particular.[8] However, even Lawson and McCauley who are usually rather sensitive to matters of terminology do not seem to pay much attention to the overall notion of "system".

While they claim that the theory they outline "is a theory of religious ritual competence rather than [...] a theory of actual ritual acts" (Lawson and McCauley 1990: 77), their book nevertheless contains some interesting remarks on "the relation of those [= religious (MSt.)] rituals to one another and to the religious system overall" (1990: 121). Lawson and McCauley, however, restrict their focus to the question: which rituals are more "central", more "essential", and more "fundamental" than others within a religious system (1990: 125)?[9] They argue: "All religious rituals involve super-

6 Nevertheless, it may still merit further investigations if "modern" (Western) society is less ritualized than non-modern societies, or if it is merely ritualized differently.

7 The same can be said about e.g. Clifford Geertz who talks a great deal about "cultural systems", but at the same time restricts the meaning of the word "system" when he states: "Cultural systems must have a minimal degree of coherence, else we would not call them systems; and, by observation, they normally have a great deal more. But there is nothing so coherent as a paranoid's delusion or a swindler's story" (Geertz 1983: 17–18).

8 In what follows, I am not concerned with their theory as such. For a critique see Levine 1998. See also Houseman and Severi 1998: 188–92.

9 It is to be noted that they explicitly write about "religious systems" in that context – not, as I had expected, about "ritual systems".

human agents at some point or other in their representation" (Lawson and McCauley 1990: 124). As they hold that the involvement of the "superhuman agents" is the distinguishing feature of a (religious) ritual, "the most central religious rituals are always those where the gods themselves directly act. The more directly active a superhuman agent is in a ritual, the more fundamental that ritual will prove to the overall religious system" (1990: 125).

This *Principle of Superhuman Agency* is constrained by another "principle", the *Principle of Superhuman Immediacy*. "The principle can be summarized as follows: the fewer enabling actions to which appeal must be made in order to implicate a superhuman agent, the more fundamental the ritual is to the religious system in question" (Lawson and McCauley 1990: 125). Moreover, they argue "that rituals in which superhuman agents are immediately involved (regardless of their roles) will always enjoy a more prominent place in the religious system than will those in which those agents only appear within an embedded, enabling action" that had occurred previously (Lawson and McCauley 1990: 126). Therefore, "Jesus establishing the church", according to Lawson and McCauley, is a more "fundamental" or "central ritual" for the "religious system" of Catholic Christianity, than the Eucharist (where the agent appears within the frame of action that has been set previously).

Of course, no historian of religion would seriously call "Jesus instituting the church" a ritual.[10] In the generally accepted line of thought, we would call that for example a myth. It is certainly counter-intuitive and against scholarly consensus to call it a "ritual". In order to transform a "myth" into a "ritual" and mask this transformation and then hide the essential weakness of their argument, Lawson and McCauley invent the category of "hypothetical rituals",[11] most of which were "situated at the outset of a religious system's history" (Lawson and McCauley 1990: 127), that is, *in illo tempore*.

Moreover, Lawson and McCauley's line of reasoning seems circular to me. Thus, they keep on alternating premise and conclusion. Compare the following two statements: (1) [Premise:] "If the successful completion of a ritual is a precondition for undertaking others, [Conclusion:] then the first ritual will me more central than the others to the religious system in question" (Lawson and McCauley 1990: 126). A little further below in the very same paragraph, however, conclusion and premise change order: (2) [Premise 2 = conclusion 1:] "In general the more fundamental a ritual is to a religious system, [Conclusion 2 = premise 1:] the greater the probability

10 The question of whether there was ever anything like "Jesus instituting the church" from a historical point of view is a different matter.

11 These are not to be confused with the purely theoretical rituals invented by Vedic ritualists (on which see Staal 1989: 88).

that it will be presupposed in the performance of other rituals" (Lawson and McCauley 1990: 126). While these games of twisting logic create the appearance of scientific "predictions" (although they are nothing more than implications within the logical structure of their arguments) are rather unsatisfactory, Lawson and McCauley also turn to "religious systems' histories and variations" (1990: 127) as a further criterion of a ritual's centrality in that system. However, as I find their conclusions rather shallow, I don't want to discuss this criterion in detail. In general, it seems that they tend to project an argumentative logic of theory building towards the phenomena to be observed, and their insistence on a clear centrality of some rituals gives a "theological flavour" to their reasoning. (See also Houseman and Severi 1998: 191.) All this makes their theory much less relevant to the field of study to be explored here than it may look at first sight.[12] Could system-theory contribute something to reflecting on different "architectures" of systems?

System-theory and ritual systems

At least in Germany, inspired by the sociologist Niklas Luhmann,[13] system-theory has had a strong influence on many fields within the humanities (see Gripp-Hagelstange 2000),[14] including the study of religion in many forms (from theology to *Religionswissenschaft),* while it seems not to have had any impact on ritual studies at all.[15] Thus, it may be useful to spend some preliminary thoughts on system-theory and "ritual systems". In the first chapters of what is perhaps his most comprehensive work – *Soziale Systeme: Grundriß einer allgemeinen Theorie* (1987 [1984]) – Luhmann gives a survey of what he considers to be the basic principles of recent system-theory, and some of these features may be tentatively applied to "ritual systems".[16]

12 The critique articulated here against this particular aspect of their approach (i.e., the question of its relevance to what is proposed here) should not be confused with a judgement on the general value of their theory (this matter being beyond the focus of this paper).

13 By now, there is a considerable amount of secondary literature on Luhmann available, including some introductory books (e.g. Reese-Schäfer 1992; Gripp-Hagelstange 1997). A search in my local University library (www.ub.uni-heidelberg.de) has resulted in some 78 hits with Luhmann in the title.

14 Luhmann has created his own jargon, and some scholars have already produced Luhmann-glossaries (Beraldi, Corsi and Esposito 1998; Krause 2001).

15 The exception confirming the rule is Günter Thomas (see Thomas 2003).

16 The following remarks are not more than a sketch. A full discussion would constitute an article in its own right, and would clearly go beyond the goal of this paper. Luhmann did not show much interest in rituals. Indeed, Luhmann himself would probably reject the following thoughts, for they partly contradict his evolutionary scheme.

First of all, Luhmann's theory is a theory of open systems (1987: 22), and that may be an appropriate point of departure for an analysis of any ritual system. The starting-point of system-theory is the difference between a system and its environment. Every system by necessity is distinguished from its environment, and all systems construct and maintain themselves by creating and upholding a fundamental difference to their respective environments (Luhmann 1987: 35). In the case of ritual systems this point is easily taken: ritual systems are obviously constructed and maintained in such a way as to make clear that what falls out of these systems is "non-ritual", i.e. part of their environment. Boundary maintenance is part of system maintenance (Luhmann 1987: 35), and thus any "ritual system" should be eager to uphold its distinctiveness from other systems (= ritual/non-ritual).

Luhmann further distinguishes between the environment of a system ("non-rituals" as compared to "ritual"), and different systems within that environment (Luhmann 1987: 36–37). This is a very interesting point for ritual studies, because the increasing awareness that rituals do not necessarily belong to the functional sphere of "religion" has created some confusion among students of religion. Supposing that there is something as a "ritual system", however, "religion", "law", and "sports" may all be social systems in the environment of a ritual system. According to Luhmann, the distinction between system and environment that is at the heart of the construction/maintenance of any system is then repeated *within* each system. This leads to the formation of sub-systems, and the main system turns out to be the environment for the resulting sub-systems. In this way, the internal complexity of the system is strongly increased. This can take the form of internal differentiation and hierarchy (Luhmann 1987: 37–39), and these features can readily be observed in ritual systems.

This observation corresponds to another fundamental principle of system-theory: the distinction between element and relation. As differentiated and complex unities, systems consist of elements that are related to each other. In other words: in systems, one finds neither unrelated elements nor "pure" relations without elements. Contrary to received wisdom, Luhmann argues that elements are not to be regarded as the independent building blocks (basic units) of systems, but rather that it is the system that qualifies its elements *as elements.* Every element of a system may in itself be a highly complex composite unit, but viewed from the system it is regarded as a non-soluble unit. Therefore, Luhmann argues, higher-order systems may actually be structured in a less complex way than the lower-thought may be of extreme relevance to an analysis of ritual systems and to ritual theory in general. To begin with a prominent example from the realm of theory: basic to Catherine Bell's theory of what she (in a somewhat confusing analogy with ethnological jargon) calls "ritualization" is the idea

that "ritualization is a way of acting that specifically establishes a privileged contrast, differentiating itself as more important or powerful" (Bell 1992: 90). From Luhmann's point of view, that would hardly make sense and would need to be re-described in the following terms: it is the ritual system that qualifies an element – e.g., an action – as such (i.e., as a ritual action), and not the other way round. In other words: the strategy of ritualization needs to be linked to a ritual system in order for a specific way of acting to appear as "ritualized action". In a way, Bell describes something very similar to Luhmann, but on a much lower level: she describes, how an action constructs its environment (or differentiates itself from an environment). From Luhmann's point of view, however, for any element to qualify as such – for an act to become "ritualized", i.e. an element within a ritual system – a system is required. Moreover, Luhmann's thoughts may be applied to an analysis of ritual systems: partaking of food, for instance, is a very complex mechanism, but by becoming an element of a ritual system (by becoming "ritualized", as Bell would put it), it may be regarded as a non-soluble unit, and in many instances, within a ritual performance, it may be reduced to a very simple gesture. When viewed from that perspective, rituals that at first sight may seem very complex and intricate, such as some "Vedic" rituals, actually show a reduced form of complexity when compared to the units they are composed of.

Complexity, then, is another basic principle of system-theory, and complexity, as the reader may have anticipated from the previous discussion, is here conceptualized in terms of elements and relations. Contrary to what many of us would expect when confronted with the notion of complexity, however, Luhmann suggests calling a number of related elements "complex" if it is no longer possible to connect each and every element with each other. Thus, a higher degree of complexity involves increasing restrictions on inter-connections. Complexity requires selection, for it selects which elements can be connected with each other. Therefore, increasing complexity necessarily goes hand in hand with a reduction of complexity and the corresponding selective conditioning of this reduction (Luhmann 1987: 45–47). Only complexity, Luhmann argues in a seemingly paradox fashion, can reduce complexity.[17] This seemingly paradoxical argument, it appears to me, can again be fruitfully applied to an analysis of ritual systems, for the design of apparently very complex rituals (or ritual systems) clearly presupposes an enormous reduction of complexity. There is no *anything goes* in complex rituals, but there is a very clear "logic of design" (Handelman 1998) in rituals (or ritual systems) that considerably restricts the range of possible connections between their single "elements" (be it rites, rituals, or sequences of/in rites/rituals). Moreover, from a

17 "Nur Komplexität kann Komplexität reduzieren" (Luhmann 1987: 49).

functional point of view, one wonders if one may tentatively formulate the hypothesis that the most complex rituals are generally held to possess the greatest power to reduce environmental (= non-ritual) complexity.

While it is generally assumed that systems must in some way or other "adapt" to their environments, Luhmann makes the point that complex systems also have to adapt to their own level of complexity. That is, they must be able to deal with their own improbabilities and inadequacies. Therefore, they have to create instances to deal with these problems, for instance by producing agencies or facilities that aim at reducing divergent behaviour. Thus, complex systems are forced to self-adaptation, that is, *they themselves* have to adapt to *their own complexity* (Luhmann 1987: 56). Now, this is a particular well-known aspect of many ritual systems, especially those that have developed a professional infrastructure: they have to establish complex strategies of education, controlling (see Rüpke 1996), and correction of mistakes (see also Gladigow 2003) in order to reproduce their own level of complexity.

One further basic principle of system-theory is what Luhmann calls self-reference.[18] This concept refers to the unity that each system constitutes for itself, as distinct from the unity it constitutes in an outside view by an observer. The unity of a system is not just there, but is the result of an operation that creates a self-referential relation. In that way, the constitution of a system always goes along with a reference to this very process of its self-constitution, and self-referential systems operate with self-contact as their main contact with their environment. In this mode of operation, these systems are necessarily closed systems. (Luhmann 1987: 57–60.) Apart from communication, all social systems, Luhmann argues, have to continuously define their specific mode of operation; they have to fix their identities in order to determine what is essential for their self-reproduction – and what has to be reproduced in order to maintain the system as such. Therefore, the self-referential (and autopoietic) reproduction of the system has to stick to those typical features of the elements that define the system as such (Luhmann 1987: 61). For ritual systems, this hypothesis implies that they can only be reproduced if they reproduce rituals (with "ritual" constituting the typical feature of the elements that in turn define the identity of a ritual system). That may sound rather banal, but it isn't, because it implies that a ritual system cannot be reproduced by non-ritual means, e.g. by scholarly discourse about rituals, or by conferring intellectual or symbolic "meaning" to rituals in a medium different from ritual itself. The idea of self-reference seems to imply that a ritual system necessarily goes along with a reference to it being a *ritual* system.

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18 Related concepts are self-organization and autopoiesis.

At the outset, I warned the reader that the above argument was more a sketch than anything else – maybe inviting one or other to further explore possible applications of system-theory to the study of rituals (be it ritual studies or ritual theory). The foregoing remarks were an attempt to illustrate the possibility of such an application already on the level of the basic principles of system-theory (as developed by Niklas Luhmann). Clearly, there is much more to system-theory that could be made use of. In order to avoid misunderstandings I should clarify that I certainly do not claim that system-theory is the one and only, or even a major, key to the study of rituals. Nevertheless, I find it useful to apply system-theory for an analysis of ritual systems instead of using the notion of "system", as is done more often than not in ritual studies and theory, in a vague and almost metaphorical sense (in the sense of a loosely structured and apparently coherent whole).

Structuralism and "ritualistics"

If system-theory offers a possible theoretical approach to the study of how rituals are related to each other (within a ritual system), then how about structural or structuralist approaches? While Luhmann integrates the notion of "structure" into his theory (see Luhmann 1987: 377–487), he rejects the theoretical premises of structuralism. This is not my concern here, for I am merely interested in some contributions to the exploration of a certain field of studies that I feel has been unduly neglected in recent work. Taking into account the massive project of the structural study of myth that, for myth, has explored a field of study similar to what I have in mind for rituals (namely inter-related complexes of myth), a brief look at structural (or structuralist) contributions to the study of rituals may be worth the effort.

As Claude Lévi-Strauss states very clearly in a famous essay that was first published half a century ago (in 1953 and reprinted afterwards in his *Anthropologie Structurale*), the concept of "social structure" (and "structure") in general does *not* refer to empirical reality, but to those *models* "which are built up after it" (Lévi-Strauss 1963: 279). Structures, in other words, are second-order models of reality. According to Lévi-Strauss, moreover, the best model will be that "which is *true*, that is, the simplest possible model which, while being derived exclusively from the facts under consideration, also makes it possible to account for all of them" (Lévi-Strauss 1963: 281). Furthermore, Lévi-Strauss distinguishes between two situations in which the scholarly endeavour of making such models finds itself: either the scholar will construct a model that corresponds to phenomena which are not perceived as a system by the society concerned, or he comes across models that the culture in question has already developed itself and offers as interpretations (to its members, and to outsiders)[19] (Lévi-Strauss 1963:

281–82). Contrary to Luhmann, Lévi-Strauss does not dismiss such models *a priori* as irrelevant and he finds them occasionally even superior to those made by professional anthropologists. Therefore, he feels that the work of these indigenous theoreticians – "each culture has its own theoreticians" (Lévi-Strauss 1963: 282) – merits as much attention as those of his fellow anthropologists. Moreover, the errors that may be contained in these indigenous theories – errors, that is, from the standpoint of structural science – belong to the "facts" that the scholar is observing (and they may even be amongst the most significant facts).

As a matter of fact, when it comes to rituals, it would be naive to deny the indirect contribution of indigenous, local ritual theorists. Of course, our indigenous colleagues express their ritual theories in emic terms, and some of the languages they use may not even have a single term corresponding to our emic term "ritual"[20] which, in the course and context of scholarly discourse, has come to be considered an etic term (much like related terms such as "religion", but also like seemingly unrelated terms such as "politics", or "economics"). In ritual studies, the contribution of indigenous ritual theories and theoreticians – or experts, to use a less ambitious term – is evident in a number of ways, partly depending on the available methods and disciplines. Thus, most anthropological studies necessarily make use of local experts, and it is only recently that this procedure, which was simply considered as a natural fact not worthy of further notice (apart from prefaces) two generations ago, has attracted the attention it deserves (see e.g. Bell 1993). Some cultures or religions that have developed a fairly complex and professional ritual system have – with Luhmann we would argue: of necessity – produced indigenous disciplines of ritual studies. This is partly the case with Zoroastrianism,[21] but the most conspicuous example is of course Vedic India and what Frits Staal has aptly termed the "(Indian) Science of Ritual" developed by indigenous authorities (Staal 1982; 1989: 349–67). I would suggest calling these forms of indigenous (systematic, theoretical, speculative) reflections on rituals – being as it were the art of the ritualists – "ritualistics".[22] In many ways, though, there is a

19 Luhmann (1987: 377) severely objects against this second alternative. In his view, this position endangers the freedom of scientific analysis.

20 Kreinath, Snoek and Stausberg 2003 contains a survey of a good number of languages and their emic equivalents to our notion of "ritual".

21 Kreyenbroek 2003 discusses "the discipline of 'ritual studies' as taught by Zoroastrian religious authorities".

22 This must not be confused with Podemann Sørensen's (1993) suggestion of establishing "ritualistics" as a new sub-discipline of the history of religions. Admittedly, I do not find that suggestion very helpful because "rituals studies" is by now a recognized and recognizable scholarly project that can no longer be unilaterally appropriated by any single discipline, the history of religions being no exception.

continuum from "ritualistics" to "ritual studies" and, as the example of Frits Staal vividly illustrates, all the way to "ritual theory".[23] Moreover, liturgical studies is something like indigenous (ecclesiastical) "ritualistics", and the well-known work of Tom Driver (1991) may illustrate the intense interactions between "ritualistics" on the one hand, and "ritual studies" and "ritual theory" on the other.

The structure of rituals, music, and the structural study of "ceremonials"

But let us return to structuralism. Actually, considering the number of structural studies of myth or mythology, there has been very little effort to study rituals from a structuralistic point of view. As a matter of fact, Claude Lévi-Strauss clearly considered rituals secondary and inferior to myths. In the final passage of *L'homme nu (The Naked Man)*, the last volume of his *Mythologiques*, he suggests studying ritual "in and for itself", i.e. as "an object distinct from mythology" (Lévi-Strauss 1990: 668). However, he draws a rather unfavourable picture of rituals, going so far as to call them "a hopeless attempt, forever deemed to failure", and a "bastardization of thought" (Lévi-Strauss 1990: 675). In other words: there is no structural analysis of rituals, there are no *Ritologiques*, because ritual is simply not worth the effort. On the other hand, though, Lévi-Strauss has pointed to two (complementary) structural mechanisms employed by "rituals", which he calls "parcelling out and repetition" (Lévi-Strauss 1990: 672).

Lévi-Strauss regards rituals as inferior not only to myths, but also to music. Edmund Leach has followed up this comparison of rituals to musical scores (Leach 1976: 43–45).[24] Leach, who has fused the ideas of Lévi-Strauss with the tradition of British social anthropology, has given a much more prominent place to rituals than his French master, and the analogy with music has led him to articulate his famous thesis: "We engage in rituals in order to transmit collective messages to ourselves" (Leach 1976: 45). At the end of his book, Leach briefly sketches one example of interrelated complexes of rituals – what I here propose to call "ritologiques" – when he suggests to describe the Christian Mass, in general terms, as "a transformation of the Jewish Passover" (Leach 1976: 93).

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23 Interestingly (but far from accidentally!), the defence of the Indian origin of the "science of ritual" is an integral part of Staal's theory of ritual.

24 As things stand, the comparison (or analogy) of ritual and music is a recurrent topic in ritual theory. For some examples see Kapferer 1983: 255–62; Snoek 1987: 59; Staal 1989: 165–90; Cartry 1992 (see also below); Williams and Boyd 1993. The topic would certainly benefit from a more comprehensive study.

While Lévi-Strauss is the main inspiration for his theory, when it comes to ritual (despised by Lévi-Strauss), Leach recurrently refers back to Arnold van Gennep.[25] As a matter of fact, Arnold van Gennep's *Les Rites de Passage* (1909) – which started to have its overwhelming impact only after it was translated into English in 1960 – can be regarded as the first major attempt to analyze an intrinsic structure of rituals. Van Gennep, of course, does neither speak of "ritual systems" nor about "ritologiques", but rather about "the order of ceremonies", "ceremonial patterns" (1960: 10) or "ceremonial wholes" (1960: 191), that is ritual units consisting of several sub-units. These "sub-categories", as van Gennep also calls them (1960: 11), are what he calls "rites". Thus, the "ceremonial pattern" of rites of passage consists of "rites of separation", "transition rites" and "rites of incorporation".

Contrary to what is stated in most textbooks, however, van Gennep's "ceremonial pattern" does *not* consist of three, but of five steps (see Snoek 2003). Van Gennep himself gives a vivid description of that five-fold structure when he writes: "The basic procedure is always the same [...]: they [foreigners and natives (MSt.)] must stop, wait, go through a transitional period, enter, be incorporated" (1960: 28). Here, clearly, *five* steps are involved.

As I see it, a major limitation of this model lies in its spatial orientation. As the structure of the book clearly indicates, it is conceptualized according to the pattern of the territorial passage (discussed in the second chapter). True enough, this processual model has been very fruitful – also in this respect, Victor Turner seems to be heir to van Gennep – but as a monodirectional pattern it is of limited value if one wants to focus on more complex structures of interrelated rituals (what I suggest calling "ritologiques").

On the other hand, van Gennep's terminology indicates a very useful distinction: that between single "rites", "ceremonial patterns", and "ceremonial wholes". In contrast with this, the terminology employed in the recent scholarly literature has concentrated almost exclusively on terms deriving from either *rite* or *ritual*. Ronald Grimes, for example, distinguishes between the terms "rite", "ritual", "ritualizing" and "ritualization" (1990: 9–10). When going beyond single "rites", that is moving to the level of "some larger whole" consisting of several "rites", Grimes does not introduce a separate term – such as "ceremony", "ceremonial whole", "ceremonial", or "ceremonial wholes" – but rather (much like Catherine Bell) talks about "a ritual system or ritual tradition" (Grimes 1990: 10). "Ceremony" has, by now, I feel, come to denote a particular type, form, or style of ritual.[26]

25 The legacy of van Gennep is evident (in Leach 1976) from such topics as boundaries and rites of transition that Leach discusses repeatedly and in detail.

26 Grimes 1998 distinguishes between six types of ritual experience: *Ritualisierung, Anstandsregel, Zeremonie, Magie, Liturgie, Feier*. Here, "ceremony" is mostly set in political contexts.

Rarely does even one and the same author use his terms in a consistent manner and terms are often employed without any explanation given.[27] A rare exception is Jan Snoek who, inspired by Melford E. Spiro's *Buddhism and Society* (1971) and *Webster's New Twentieh Century Dictionary of the English Language*, systematically/analytically distinguishes between "rite" (as the minimal building blocks of ritual action), "ceremony" (as a smaller configuration of "rites" constituting a "ritual whole"), "ceremonial" (as "a [collection of] rite[s], performed in a close period of time, during which no breaks take place which are long, compared to the duration of a ceremonial as a whole" [Snoek 1987: 58]), and "Rite" for the "total cult" (Snoek 1987: 60) in use.[28]

Nowadays, however, "ceremony" has clearly lost its previous significance as denoting a unit ("whole") of several "rites" (or "rituals").[29] In empirical studies, of course, "ceremonies" and "ceremonials" (in the sense of Snoek) or "ceremonial pattern" and "ceremonial wholes" (in the sense of van Gennep) are very much studied – the present volume contains some examples – and I feel that ritual studies would benefit from providing a name for these objects of study. This could possibly help to create an awareness that we are moving on a different level of analysis. But before discussing such terms, we should consider some more recent contributions to this field of study.

Liturgical orders and the organization of rites/rituals

With his concept of "liturgical order", Roy Rappaport has made what is probably the best-known attempt at moving in the direction of our questions. In a way, Rappaport's concept of "liturgical order", referring "to the more or less invariant sequences of rituals that make up cycles and other series" (1999: 169), reviews van Gennep's notion of "ceremonial wholes",

27 Much to my surprise, I found that Michael Houseman and Carlo Severi occasionally make use of the adjective "ceremonial", e.g., when they talk about "complex ceremonial configurations" (1998: 185 [here I find the term appropriate]), "ceremonial behaviour" (1998: 187 [no explicit distinction is drawn between "ceremonial" and "ritual" behaviour!]), and "ceremonial situations" (1998: 204–05). Moreover, they sometimes use the substantive "ceremony"; thus, they refer to *Naven* as a "ceremony" (1998: xii), whereas, when referring to the *naven in toto*, they write about "the ritual as a whole" (1998: 203 [= heading of chapter eight]).

28 Although still found in major works of reference (see e.g. Lang 1993; Baudy 2001a and 2001b), the term "cult" has largely disappeared from the lexicon of ritual studies and ritual theory. Nowadays, it is mainly used (mostly in a derogatory manner) in the sense of "sects".

29 However, "ceremony", and "ceremonial" have also been used in a different manner, see e.g. Gluckman 1962: 24, 30.

and Rappaport here explicitly refers to van Gennep, "for he too was as much concerned with such sequences as he was with single rituals" (1999: 169). Because Rappaport's ideas are rather widely known and expressed clearly, I can limit myself to a brief sketch. With his concept of "order",[30] Rappaport has at the same time formulated a conceptual alternative to thinking in terms of "system" (and system-theory). By "order", Rappaport refers to "more or less coherent domains within which generally commensurable processes are governed by common principles and rules" (1999: 169). This may also apply to "the economic order". According to Rappaport, these "orders", which are not encoded by the actors, entail conformity on their part.

A certain limitation of this model, however, lies in the fact that Rappaport focuses primarily on the *sequential* ordering of performances, when he states: "they are orders in that they are more or less fixed sequences of acts and utterances, following each other 'in order'" (1999: 169). Of course, Rappaport's model is far more complex than can be sketched here, and I should at least mention two other dimensions of "liturgical orders": the hierarchical and the synchronic dimensions (Rappaport 1999: 170). But precisely in view of the complexity of the model that ultimately seeks to establish "liturgical orders" as "meta-orders, or orders of orders" (Rappaport 1999: 263), I don't quite see why Rappaport insists on the sequential aspect of "liturgical orders" as much as he does. While I agree that rites or rituals can be arranged (and analyzed) in a sequential manner (Gladigow 2003), this does not necessarily hold true for "liturgical orders" (i.e, the field of study that I call "ritologiques"). Moreover, I find that it tends to be unclear what Rappaport is referring to: single "rites" (or rituals), or a (sequentially arranged) multitude of such rites or rituals (that is ceremonies / ceremonials / ceremonial patterns / ceremonial wholes)? For instance, Rappaport writes: "When an actor performs a liturgical order he participates in it, which is to say that he becomes a part of it, thus investing it with meaning of a profundity far beyond the ordinary" (1999: 276). While this may be perfectly true, I cannot see how an actor can "perform a liturgical order" (that is, if such an order is more than a single rite/ritual). As a meta-order, I feel, a "liturgical order" *orders* the (sequential) coherence of single performances, but cannot be performed as such. This is as if Rappoport were torpedoing his own theory.

Apart from Rappaport, some further contributions (by two French anthropologists) come to mind. In his essay "Aspects of the Organization of Rites", first published in French in 1979 and three years later in an English

30 As a matter of fact, van Gennep had also used the word "order": "The purpose of this book is altogether different. Our interest lies not in the particular rites but in their essential significance and their relative positions within ceremonial wholes – that is their order." (van Gennep 1960: 191.)

translation (but nevertheless ignored by Rappaport), Pierre Smith tried to uncover similar order(ing)s. In his essay, Smith aims at formulating a non-reductionist model for theorizing rituals. Instead of viewing rituals as the display of something else – such as society, myth, symbols – Smith declares his ambition "to clarify their incredible complexity and their captivating strangeness [...] by trying to find the principles of their own specific elaboration" (1982: 104). He draws attention to two such principles. The first of them he calls "focalizing elements", i.e. "those acts around which the different sequences revolve and are organized" (Smith 1982: 104). According to Smith, these acts account for the performative efficacy of rituals, or – in his words: "a mysterious or mystical operation which cannot be reduced to the symbolism of the act performed" (1982: 104). Around these acts, Smith seems to construct a dialectical process: he suggests that what he calls "the kernel of rituals lies [...] in their encounter with [...] a certain type of 'snare for thought' [*piège à pensée*]" (Smith 1982: 106). In their turn, they only become "sacred" by their insertion in a preconceived ritual scheme. I did call that relationship "dialectical" in order to make it appear less contradictory, for I find it strange that Smith on the one hand emphasizes the "incredible complexity" of rituals and on the other hand, immediately afterwards, comes up with the idea of "the kernel of rituals", an idea that heavily reduces the supposed complexity of their "elaboration".

For this reason I find his formal analysis of the organization of rituals more promising. Here, Smith argues that every rite "is linked to circumstances which determine how it is performed, and these circumstances themselves form series. The various rites associated with circumstances of the same series tend to form a system." (Smith 1982: 108.) The "series" or "systems" that Smith tries to establish are based on the circumstances that the rituals are linked to. Smith distinguishes between "four universal series of circumstances apt to determine the characteristics of ritual systems. For every rite is tied either to periodical or occasional circumstances; and these circumstances can, in either case, primarily affect either the life of the collectivity or that of the individuals." (Smith 1982: 108.) Here, Smith makes use of well-established classifications of ritual. Annermarie de Waal Malefijt, for example, in her introduction to the anthropology of religion from 1968, had already distinguished individual from communal and periodic from non-periodic or occasional rituals (*apud* Snoek 1987: 78–79). According to Smith, the rites that are connected to a series of periodical circumstances "form a system along an axis of the syntagmatic type" (1982: 108), while those connected to specific, unforeseeable circumstances "form a system along an axis of the paradigmatic type" (1982: 109). Of course, both "systems" are interlinked in different ways and some types of ritual action, such as ritual killing, may occur in both "systems", where they acquire different nuances (Smith 1982: 110).

A decade later, in 1992, another French ethnologist, Michel Cartry, drawing on field-work in Africa, approached our problem from a different angle. While Smith's idea of ritual systems is based on criteria that are external to single rites – making it a sort of meta-system – Cartry focuses on "the multiplicity of reappearances of common features from one ritual to another" (1992: 26). To take one example: one and the same song may reappear in different rituals. Apart from this example, music is again taken as a general paradigm regarded as able to conceptualize advanced stages of ritualistic complexity: Cartry sketches the idea that the "interdependence of the elements in the ritual" may be "analogous to the form that links the parts, or voices, of a musical score" (1992: 29). While the occurrence-based systems which Smith presupposes appear as something "natural", with Cartry anthropology has turned reflexive in that he also raises the problem of the observer: inter-rituality (Gladigow 2003) is not a simple fact, but has to be uncovered by the observer in the field (or in the texts).

Conclusions: Ritologiques is the study of the orders of rituals

Cartry's essay is a good end-point for our brief survey, for Cartry is the first author who explicitly states that the analysis of our field of study is not just the uncovering of given facts (structures, systems, orders, or relations), but may also be the result of the scholar's active imagination. But what, after all, exactly is the field of study that I propose to devote more attention to? In the extant literature this field is referred to by one or more of the following designations: *ritual density, (religious) ritual systems, ritual tradition, ceremonial, ceremonial patterns, ceremonial wholes, liturgical orders, organization of rites, series of rituals*. Finally, I have introduced the terms *ritualistics* for a specific phenomenon and *ritologiques* for the whole field of study. The construction of the artificial word *ritologiques* makes clear that it refers to an etic discourse.

Let us go through the other terms one by one. The term "ritual density" – introduced by Catherine Bell – is useful, but restricted to a specific subfield of "ritologiques" and to a limited set of questions closely linked to the debate about "modern" and "non-modern" societies (i.e., the sociological "othering"). Compared to "ritual density", the term "ritual system" is broader and has attracted a number of scholars. The problem, however, is that the term "system" is usually employed in a very loose sense (thereby losing much of its potential).[31] To an even greater extent, this holds true for

31 This is why I have tried briefly to explore the application of system-theory (with its much more explicit notion of "system") to the study of rituals.

"ritual tradition" as well. Moreover, it is to be emphasized that both terms (*viz.* "ritual system", and "ritual tradition") refer to a specific unit, whereas "ritologiques" goes beyond these restrictions in that it also looks at the interrelations between different "ritual systems" or "ritual traditions" (examples: transformations, incorporations; see below). I have introduced the term "ritualistics" in order to refer to local, indigenous, emic ritual theories. Starting right from van Gennep, the terms "ceremony", "ceremonial", "ceremonial patterns", and "ceremonial wholes" go clearly in the direction of the field of "ritologiques". However, in view of the obvious semantic change of the word "ceremony", it would seem awkward to reintroduce these terms into scholarly discourse. The attempt would be simply doomed to failure, despite its illustrious ancestors. The term "liturgical orders" (invented by Rappaport) revives that heritage, but – apart from specific problems with Rappaport's theory – the adjective "liturgical" is probably not much of an improvement compared to "ceremonial", and the term "liturgy" raises similar (if not identical) problems to "ceremony", for both nowadays refer mostly to specific styles, forms, experiences or designs of rituals. Therefore, I will in future use the notion "orders of rituals"[32] – and maybe others will follow suit.[33] The term "organization of rites" – introduced by Smith – could be a reasonable alternative to "orders of rituals", but to my mind it smacks of a deliberate and well-institutionalized phenomenon, while "series of rituals" seems to resolve in that it refers to just one potential "order of rituals".

To conclude: *Ritologiques is the study of orders of rituals.* This study can proceed in different ways, employ different methods – and the orders of rituals may be of different kinds and have different extensions (by, e.g., remaining within or going beyond single religious traditions).

Prospects: Sketching some series of concepts

In several of the contributions to ritologiques (i.e., studying the orders of rituals), music has been referred to as some sort of conceptual analogy. This analogy merits a separate study, but would certainly not cover the whole field of ritologiques. Another dominant comparative paradigm has been language. Possibly rhetoric or architecture could be discussed as well. The choice of any analogy or metaphor opens up new analytical potential while at the same time restricting the range of perspectives. Moreover, there

32 That may recall the title of Soeffner 1992. That book, however, discusses very different matters.

33 The term "ritual orders", however, may evoke different associations (in the sense of "ritual organizations").

is always the risk that analogies and metaphors impose their own implicit structures on the field to be observed.[34]

Each of these disciplines has its own storehouse of terms that could be applied to the study of the orders of rituals (i.e., ritologiques). In this finale, I would like to suggest taking into consideration certain concepts which, I feel, could prove helpful for ritologiques. These terms are imported from recent literary theory (and therefore implicitly continue the line of ritologiques/linguistics analogy). What I find attractive about these terms is that they form series. That may improve their analytical application. Here, I will limit myself to the following series:

Transrituality / interrituality / / archirituals / pararituals / hyperrituals

It goes without saying that this series is constructed by replacing "text" by "ritual". Within the study of literature these terms were mainly designed by Gérard Genette. Just as "transtextuality" denotes all those (partly secret) forms in which texts relate to each other, "transrituality" is the way in which rituals relate to each other (and is thus almost identical to ritologiques). The notion of "architext" refers to the totality of all general types of discourse from which a single text derives. In a similar fashion, the concept of "archiritual" would refer to the totality of all types of ritual activities – including the basic genres – a single ritual relates to from a taxonomic point of view. Just as "paratexts" are those texts that are instruments in order to help the readers in reading the texts (such as prefaces and dedications) and may also have a decorative function, "pararituals" are those rites or sequences in rituals that fulfill analogous functions (such as preliminary dedications in "sacrifices"). "Intertextuality" refers to the actual presence of one text within the other, for example by way of quotation, plagiarism, allusion, or even in the form of palimpsest; correspondingly, "interrituality" refers to these phenomena in the realm of rituals.[35] This is to be distinguished from "hypertextuality", which refers to the derivation of a secondary text from a pre-text ("hypotext") by way of transformation (e.g. parody) or imitation (e.g. pastiche); similar phenomena are to be observed in ritologiques where they are referred to as "hyperrituality".[36] I find these terms particularly useful as they open up possibilities for describing (inter-) relations of rituals, ritual orders, in a non-derogatory way. On the other hand, we must be

34 See Grimes 2003: "When a metaphor drops below awareness, those who employ it begin missing some of its implications."

35 This has partly been explored by Gladigow 2003 (under the general paradigm of "sequencing").

36 There are also other meanings of the term "hypertext" deriving from different discursive contexts. In computer-studies, the term was introduced to refer to electronic ways of non-sequential writing. Similarly, among other things, ritologiques studies non-sequential ways of orders of rituals.

aware of the restrictions imposed by the textual paradigm when applied to the field of ritual. Therefore, we will have to keeping hunting for some complementary paradigms and metaphors.

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ING-BRITT TRANKELL

Ritual Works and Practices

A Case Study from a Muslim Community in Cambodia

Cathrine Bell's observation that Ritual Studies are emerging as a new academic field indicates that the study of ritual remains a challenge even long after the pioneering works by scholars such as Arnold van Gennep, Edmund Leach, Victor Turner, Mary Douglas and others (Bell 1992: viii).

Until recently, the idea that rituals usually involve certain kinds of social action which serve to distinguish ritual events from the ordinary everyday life has been emphasised in most theories of ritual. So, for instance, Maurice Bloch (1992) finds that ritual action provides an alternative to everyday social action. The function of the ritual is to assert a transcendental power over everyday experience and rituals therefore tend to be formalized, repetitive and conservative events. Against such a conservative background of "mystifications", possible contestations of power tend to be restricted and to limit the possible alternative outcomes of the ritual. But, as Stanley J. Tambiah (1985) has pointed out, a given outcome of the ritual cannot be taken for granted. Following Tambiah's point that ritual always carries the potential for change, recent contributions to ritual studies argue that "ritual plays a crucial rule in practice" (Kelly and Kaplan 1990: 141). Practice-oriented approaches in recent contributions to ritual studies (see Mitchell 1996 and Stausberg 2002 for general discussions) suggest a focus on the participants and their different understandings and interpretations of the ritual according to their own points of view. Such a perspective tends to reveal more pragmatic concerns, as well as the inter-contextual relations and complexities in ritual action (cf. Steedly 1993: 201). Understanding ritual as social practice and pragmatics is crucial to the analysis of all kinds of ritually displayed authority, including secular power of, for instance, the state and statecraft related practices. In such rituals, not only may the participants have varying interpretations, but, as noted by Jon Mitchell (1996: 492), it cannot be assumed that the "audience" for such rituals is inevitably convinced.

The same can be said of rituals of exorcism. Bruce Kapferer has suggested that instead of seeing such rituals "as produced by and expressive of conflicts and tensions, it might be closer to reality as experienced to

view the events leading to rituals and the rituals themselves as being both expressive of conflict and tension and productive of them as a dialectical process" (Kapferer 1979: 122).

In this paper, I want to show the importance for ritual studies of ritualised strategies for the negotiation of power and influence. My research on a spirit possession cult among the Muslim Cham in Cambodia* will serve as an empirical basis for a discussion of the open-ended and unbounded features of ritual in contemporary society, since the performances of this cult may be seen both as a kind of "state ritual" and as exorcism.

The Cham in contemporary Cambodia

In Cambodian society today the Cham find themselves exposed to the weakened state as well to the international structures of domination, including not only externally controlled market forces and a large number of international aid organisations and NGOs, but also the representatives of International Muslim associations by whom they are being targeted.

In contrast to the unbelievable wealth demonstrated by these agencies, the Cham find themselves not only impoverished but, maybe more importantly, also bereft of any fair chance of gaining recognition for their needs by those agencies and structures that control access to all of these modern arenas through which hopes of a better life can be materialised, such as development agency programmes for rural development, including the cleaning up of unexploded mines and other harmful material left from the war, as well as formal education or substantial health care.

Working in a Cham roadside community I was able to watch the floats of the white UN Landcruisers and similar cars with all their incredible high tech equipment passing our villages *en route* upcountry. As the cars passed by, leaving us with nothing but dust, I was occasionally asked by villagers whether "I knew anything about what plans the International Community had for them", which was to say that somehow they had expected to be on the agenda. Beginning with the sudden and massive foreign presence in the country during the UN intervention in 1991–93 (United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia, UNTAC), international aid organisations are still very visible. Although I got the impression that the young UNTAC staff had been much liked, not least for their youth and good humour and the promises for the future that marked their appear-

* Fieldwork in a Cham community in Kampong Chhnang province has been carried out, together with Jan Ovesen, intermittently between 1996 and 2002. It has been financed by grants from Sida/SAREC and the Swedish Council for Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

ance, at the same time as their wealth, means of transportation and general life-style gave the Cham a sense of otherness, of being aloof and invulnerable to the various contingencies and hazards of life. At the same time, families were found discussing where to send their children in order for them to find paid employment. Marriage deals with those lucky enough to have relatives in Malaysia were considered fortunate because such arrangements were believed to make dealings with the much feared immigration authorities easier. Finding themselves placed between two stools, confronted at best by the indifference of state bureaucracies and their representatives on the one hand, and the pressure to conform to (Arab) Muslims standards of religious life on the other, it is not clear to them who is to blame for their poor conditions, or how they might be improved. Rather than blaming the war, the Khmer Rouge, or any other external agency, they tend to take the blame on themselves. "I need to pray more, to be careful and to improve my *karma*. In the past the Cham have done sinful things and this is the result. Now, look at the fate that has come over us", one of the Imams lamented.

Islam and the local cult

The spirit cult is found among the group of Cham who identify themselves as the *Jahed*. Their version of Islam is superimposed on a basically Hindu worldview which is being recognised as "custom". The Muslim congregation gather in their small prayerhouses and modest mosques on Fridays for communal prayers and for the sharing of a communal meal offered to them by the married women on behalf of each household. This, along with other practices, tends to set them somewhat apart from other Muslims and they are therefore intensively targeted by missionary groups from International Muslim associations. The input of print capitalism in the form of standard Arabic prayer books, handed out free in the villages in order to replace their own handwritten ones, painstakingingly copied by generation after generation, makes them extremely vulnerable to this kind of mission.

I have elsewhere offered a detailed discussion of the cult (Trankell 2003; Ovesen and Trankell 2003), and therefore only briefly outline its main features for the sake of argument here. The spirit cult centres on the *cay* spirits who are the royal spirits from the ancient kingdom of Champa. The cult is a celebration of Cham mythical history retold in the *pi cay*, the songs of the spirits chanted by the predominantly female mediums while possessed. On one level, the cult of the *cay* spirits can be read as a "state ritual" celebrating the glorious past of the Cham nation. On another level, it can be seen as a healing cult, to which people turn in cases of illnesses for which

medical treatment has proved insufficient. At the same time, the cult stages the conflicts and sufferings of today in a setting reconstructing and invoking the past, and thus serves to articulate recent as well as contemporary social conflicts between individuals and families, as well as the situation of the Cham ethnic group in Cambodian society at large. The cult appears to have been in decline during the 1960s (Baccot 1968), and it became all but extinct during the Khmer Rouge regime from 1975–79. Since the 1980s, however, it has been increasing in popularity, and nowadays ceremonies are held almost every week. A founding myth relates the fate of the Cham King and is accompanied by a complex set of rites and ceremonies. In spite of a common recognition of the cult and of its importance as a foundation for Cham identity, members of the Cham community hold disjunctive views with regard to its "truth", its effectiveness and constitutive elements. Therefore the ritual has opened up an arena where the power and hegemony of the politico-religious leaders is being contested and coming under pressure from external social forces that advocate modernisation and an increased influence of commercial powers in society at large. Strangely, these processes seem to take place in combination with a re-enactment of the ritual among the Cham.

To the Muslim leaders religion is defined by the corpus of sacred texts, handed down by their literate and learned elite of scribes, the Imams, in the Cham's own language and ancient script. But religion is also manifested socially in the gathering of the community for the Friday prayers. The services and work carried out in the community by the Imams themselves is likewise considered important to the local understanding of religion and the local version of Islam, according to which communal prayers are carried out once a week, while delegating to the Imams the duty to carry out daily prayers on behalf of the congregation. Unsurprisingly, Muslim leaders and teachers insist that the beliefs and the rituals associated with the cult of the royal spirits have nothing to do with Cham religion. However, with one important exception, the On g'nur, the Imams all testified to the authenticity of the ritual, justifying it as part of Cham society and custom, and often referred to it by the term *prapeni*, tradition, in Khmer. The ritual was considered as "truth", and the mediums initiated in the cult considered "true mediums".

An exception to this view was expressed by the On g'nur, the main religious-political leader. Disappointed by the recent changes in the cult and the rituals, the On g'nur regretted, that at least in his opinion, the "true" ritual was lost in the *mahandori*, the big destruction, i.e. the Khmer Rouge period, along with much of what before that time still remained of "Cham civilisation and high culture". He therefore tended to dismiss the re-instalment of the cult as "pretending" and mainly "theatre" – "what else can you expect with such extremely unintelligent mediums serving the King of Champa?"

The Imams are expected to participate in the rituals to a limited extent only, to offer their blessings and prayers and partake of a meal of rice and cooked food offered to them in the late afternoon. This meal only serves to mark the start of the ceremonies. Having finished the meal, the Imams take their leave, before the mediums carry out the procession to greet the spirits and to pay respect to the "teacher", i.e. the spirit of the King of Champa representing the original sacrifice.

This limited official participation on behalf of the Imams, represent a change in relation to pre-revolutionary society, and it seems that the cult of the royal spirits has grown apart from the Muslim religion as practised in the local communities. In the 1950s and 60s, as described by the French ethnologist Juliette Baccot (1968), the participation of the Imam was considered important for the sacrifice of the buffalo and the distribution of the meat among high-ranking village and community leaders. According to Baccot, the right part of the sacrificed animal was for the Imam and the Muslim religion, while the rest was intended for the mediums and for important family members.

The fact that Muslim leaders were not expected to deal with the spirits does not mean that they were not involved in the rituals; they were often husbands of mediums of the same family as victims attacked by sorcery or suffering from being possessed by the spirits. The Imams had the right to divorce a wife who became a spirit medium, but I know of no case where this was practised.

The case

Through the cult, the Cham tend to take refuge in their memories of the distant past rather than in their more immediate memories of terror and political violence, during the civil war and the Khmer Rouge regime. Rephrased as songs of the spirits, the present and the past intermingle in narrating the difficulties, the conflicts and the struggle in the world of the spirits who live next to, and mingle in, the world of ordinary human beings.

Late in 2001, Om Riess was taken ill. As one of the main figures in the Muslim politico-religious establishment, he had spared no efforts to raise money for a new mosque placed in the very centre of his own village, an accomplishment which was no doubt expected to considerably enhance his reputation and general standing in the community. When we met him, he told us that he had become ill with high blood pressure sometime before the Khmer New Year in March 2001. Doctor Eng and another local "doctor" gave him pills that helped momentarily, but the condition soon returned and was worsened by insomnia and difficulties in breathing. Af-

ter fifteen days of ineffectual treatment, he consulted a few Cham mediums. They suggested a ceremony for either one day–one night or three days–three nights. To begin with he held a short ceremony, offering only white cloth and with the minimum of three mediums present at his house at late evening time to invoke the spirits and ask them for advice. This small ceremony was repeated five times, but the spirits were not happy, or the ceremonies seemed to lack something and he was not cured. During the process, however, mediums diagnosed influence from evil spirits. The case was discussed with people in the village and it was decided that in order to counter the evil spirits' influence, he should seek help from a *kru khmer* in Battambang who was an expert in treating spirit afflictions. He went to Battambang. The *kru khmer* collected herbs in the forest, boiled them and prescribed drinking the medicine for seven days. This helped momentarily, but after a week he grew worse again and did not sleep for two days and nights. He asked his relatives to take him home, as he was afraid he would die and wanted to be with his family. He went to the Calmette hospital in Phnom Penh, where the doctors diagnosed a heart condition. He got a prescription and took the medicine for five days, spending 90,000 Riels on the medicine. But there was still no improvement and therefore he did not trust the medical doctor, but went home and consulted the mediums again. They prescribed the sacrifice of a buffalo to the ancestors. It had been suggested that his problems were related to his project of building the new mosque in the village, next to his own house. It had been revealed that the site for the new mosque was a former Chinese cemetery, and therefore the *neak ta*, i.e. the Chinese ancestor spirits, were angry and had punished him by causing his illness. He had acquired the buffalo for the sacrifice, but since he had not become any better, he had sold the buffalo. Instead it was decided, after consultations with the mediums, that he should have a ceremony on 27 January 2002, with 35 mediums. Since November 2001 there had been some improvement, he could eat and sleep but dared not go far from his house. The mediums had said that he might not be cured by the ceremony, but that he would not die. The cost of the ceremony would be more than one million Riel, even without the buffalo sacrifice and with only two chickens.

Apart from the expenses for the ceremony, he still owes 600 U.S. Dollars to the constructors for building the mosque, but that should be paid next month. His friend, *hatep* El, helps him by selling chickens. He had already received some financial support (apart from our "seed-money") from Kong Som Ol, who on behalf of the Ministry of Cults and Religion, has contributed the tiles for the floor and five tons of cement. He also indicated that people from the neighbouring villages were after him, out of envy because of the fact that he had successfully managed to construct the mosque and that he had been attacked by their bad spirits and sorcery. He

complained that the attacks were not fair, since he had long since quit community and congregational politics, realising that his moral standards and physical condition were not what they used to be when he was younger.

We should note that the Cham view their universe as one where spiritual beings intervene in the world of humans. Those individuals who suffer from illnesses are seen as victims of evil and as being controlled by the evil forces that have somehow broken away from the accepted social order. Illness, Bell notes, "takes root when key social relations – among the living or the living and dead – are disturbed" (Bell 1997: 116). Suffering is therefore not related just to the individual and his or her own body, but to key social relations in the community. The *cai* rituals address moral and social dimensions of life not dealt with by biomedicine, including sorcery and bad luck (cf. Kapferer 1979: 111). Although Om Riess as Imam and village leader is really not supposed to have anything to do with the *cai* rituals, yet – being a Cham – he cannot avoid it as he finds himself diagnosed as a case of possession illness, supposed to have been possessed by the *cai* spirits.

During the divination and the diagnosis of sorcery and illness, the victim's social relations are carefully examined during nightly ceremonies, when his or her relations to kin and ancestors of the *chour-sambour*, "the family lines on both the father's and the mother's sides" are scrutinised. After Om Riess had approached the spirits through the mediums and gradually recovered, he promised the spirits to stage a ritual for them lasting "one night and one day", as well as sacrifice a pair of chickens.

Restaging the theatre state

The ritual is staged in a shelter which is raised specifically for the purpose in front of the patient's house. The shelter is said to represent both the Champa Royal Palace and the barge on which the King of Champa went to war against the Vietnamese, according to the myth (cf. Trankell 2003). The ritual is supposed to exorcise the spirit, heal the victim and purify the immediate family and kin of the suffering person.

The ritual constitutes an important element in the community's repertoire for cultural production and the rather elaborate ritual is carried out as a public event, which involves the major part of the community and also has a certain entertainment value. Women use the opportunity to earn some welcomed extra money by offering snacks and drinks for sale. Children are included in the ritual by being instructed how to support the musicians of the "royal orchestra" and to beat the rhythm of the music on bamboo stems, placed on the ground.

At the beginning of the ritual the "signs of power" are displayed, including banners and weapons (cf. Anderson 1990: 32–33; Geertz 1980). The

mediums usually perform dressed up in their traditional finery, which is supposed to be traditional Cham dress. In reality, the dressing up is in the out-of-the-ordinary and quite anachronistic combination of garments, jewellery and weapons that Morris has termed items of transmission (Morris 2000). Much to my surprise, Om Riess performed in the ritual dressed up in modern-style jacket and steel-rimmed reading glasses identical to those usually worn by his friend, anthropologist Jan Ovesen, combined with a black Muslim head dress Malay style and ordinary Cham check-patterned sarong.

For the successful completion of the ritual and the exorcism of the evil it is important that the spirits involved identify themselves by giving their names. Since Om Riess, supported by the mediums, performed in the dance, he was, in the opinion of the mediums, also possessed. But in the negotiations, the spirit possessing Om Riess refused to reveal his or her name. The mediums were not happy about this, and some of them were crying. Other signs of disagreement between the mediums also started to appear as they formed different interpretations of the situation. The younger mediums claimed that the spirits were unhappy with the situation and requested that the ceremonies be carried on until the name of the spirit had been revealed and its demands met. In reply to this, more moderate voices suggested that the ceremony be completed with the sacrifice of the chicken as agreed beforehand.

In escalating their demands, the younger mediums on behalf of their spirits voiced the demand that Om Riess quit his position as Imam to become a spirit medium, to prevent bad luck from striking the community. To this the voice of *Po T' Gon* strongly requested that demands be moderated in consideration of the situation and the fact that sacrifices had already been made by the victim and his family. Was it not true that he had already performed a number of sacrifices to honour the spirits? Was it not true that his wife had given herself up, and was now a medium? Was it not true that, apart from this sacrifice, the spirits had also already claimed his son as a medium? Justice and fair treatment was demanded on Om Riess's behalf. And so it went on, the songs and the sounds of strong voices raised and fell. The old and experienced mediums refused to give up their authority and did not give in. The reason that the spirit who was possessing Om Riess did not reveal his name, they claimed, was due to the "fact" that he was an ordinary ancestor spirit and not one of the *cai* spirits. The solution would be to invite the spirit to enjoy the ceremony and kindly accept the sacrifice. This was finally agreed upon. As the ceremony was closing, and the sacrifice had been carried away to the bush outside of the village, commotion was noticed in the neighbourhood and a message was sent to the mediums that someone else needed their support.

Cosmology, ritual politics and changing sociopolitical relations

Where rituals have political dimensions, as in the case related here, they indicate that the ritual as medium of communication "does not simply express or transmit values and messages but also actually creates situations" (Bell 1997: 136). Therefore the subordinations to power, the watching and participating in processions and the like are not only "reflections of the relationships of authority" – "they create these relations; they create power in the very tangible exercise of it" (Bell 1997: 136; cf. Kapferer 1979).

The imams and the village leaders act as mediators in the settling of social conflicts in the village, especially those relating to marriage and divorce, or between neighbours over land, or trespassing of cattle into the fields. But there are still conflicts over wealth and resources, name and reputation, sometimes suspicion and jealousy, unsubstantiated rumours and the like caused by the difficult conditions under which the people live. Such quarrels and uncertainties are brought to the mediums for divination.

To take one example, Om Riess's eldest son came and asked me for medicine since he was feeling weak. The reason for his uneasiness and physical feeling of weakness was that somebody had stabbed one of his cows in the back with a knife, so that it was bleeding. The Cham are personally attached to their cattle, so it was not difficult to understand his sadness. He did not know of the reason for stabbing the cow and nobody had told him. The family felt threatened and suspected that somebody was using sorcery against them, and subsequently asked the mediums to divine the case.

Although most of the mediums are women, quite a few are also men. Even some children have been initiated as mediums in the cult. The mediums themselves often bear witness to the fact that their social standing is somewhat ambiguous. This is perhaps not surprising given the fact that the communities are confessional Muslims. Nevertheless, the mediums, too, consider themselves faithful members of the Muslim congregation. Like most women, it is true that female mediums do not have their own direct access to Islam as a religio-political arena, but this is equally true of other women in the community. Female mediums, like other women, carry out the practices of Islam, such as for instance cooking for the congregational gathering on Fridays and carrying the food in proud procession to present the meal to their male relatives and receive public recognition for their contribution. The male mediums also consider themselves faithful to the religion and participate in the congregation in the same way as other members of the community. It is therefore not fair to say that the mediums are deprived of religion, i.e. of the Muslim congregational life.

The cult is transgendered in the sense discussed by Rosalind Morris (1995) as "gender twice over", which in this context is to say that gender is "good to think", and therefore used as a statement about something else found to carry priority over gender. I would like to suggest that one important aspect of the cult is one of continuity, in the sense that it connects people to their past.

The mediums therefore represent other social distinctions and differences in their society than that of a Hindu cosmology *versus* the Muslim religion. The pre-revolutionary society was still a stratified society with two caste-like formations, those considered to be descendants of the aristocratic warriors, and the peasants and commoners. Older mediums have their own quite specific experiences from pre-revolutionary society. During this period the rites were in decline, possibly due to the modernisation campaigns promoting rural development along with literacy and biomedicine. In general, the older mediums were recruited from the upper strata of former aristocrats and warriors, who in pre-revolutionary society served Khmer royalty as soldiers, bodyguards and policemen. It seems that in general the high-caste women, at least in the nostalgic retrospect, were held in great esteem for their education and knowledge of both culture and religion and represented a certain refined cultural genre and style. Today a few of them still remain with the core of the *cai* cult. The levelling of the community due to the war and the Khmer Rouge revolution has brought into the cult many young mediums from the lower strata of commoners and peasants, named *riess*, which means "citizen". Nevertheless, endless divinations are spent in search for the *cai* spirits in the family line until found. While mediums tell stories of how UNTAC revived all the spirits that had disappeared during the Khmer Rouge period, younger mediums still find it hard to gain access to the stories of their spirits, symbolic assets which are jealously guarded in the cult.

The link between poverty and sorcery/witchcraft has long been established in anthropology (e.g. Ardener 1970; Kapferer 1997). In Khmer society the Cham are known to practice magic and they are sometimes visited by Khmer people wanting to buy their knowledge (Vickery 1984: 181). The Cham communities are, however, also well known for their solidarity and kindness to each other when in difficulty, a kindness at times extended to Khmer (Vickery 1984: 181). Being unable to return to their own area at the time of the Vietnamese liberation in early 1979, the Cham received permission to settle in a few abandoned former Khmer villages. Chams identify themselves as *neak sre neak prey*, i.e. people making a living from fields and forest, and they proudly regard the white and sandy soil from which they produce their rice as their own second nature. In the early years of our fieldwork, however, some people were also able to make substantial income by crossing the railway to the west of the village in order to take on

logging work. In doing so, they had to face the financial and political demands of the remaining Khmer Rouge cadres. The area was, and still is, infested with mines and malaria, which were and are real threats to the people who go there. After the coup in 1997, many women in the Cham community found themselves deprived of their small earnings from selling drinks and snacks to travellers along the road, since travelling came to an almost complete halt as westerners fled the country. In addition, the military made new claims on as much as one third of the rice-fields, further diminishing their means of subsistence.

It is in this social, economic and political context that we must see the current flourishing of the Cham spirit possession rituals in general, and the actions of the mediums in particular. As I understand it, all the mediums aspire not only to social recognition for themselves but also to recognition and respect for their community. The discrepancies with regard to means and ends which I have described in this chapter make these aspirations difficult to achieve.

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Biographical Notes

Catharina Blomberg, M.A. (Cantab.), Filosofie kandidat, Upsala, 1970 (Comparative Religion); Bachelor of Arts, Cambridge, 1972 (Archaeology and Anthropology); Filosofie doktor, Upsala, 1977; Master of Arts, Cambridge, 1977. Matsume Fellow, Tokai University, Japan, 1978–79; Japan Foundation Fellow, Keio University, Tokyo, 1980–81; Visiting Fellow, Reischauer Institute, Harvard University, 1984; Hambro Fellow, Clare Hall, Cambridge, 1986–87; Japan Foundation Fellow, Keio University, Tokyo, 1991–92. Since 1974 lecturer in Comparative Religion, Religious Psychology, and Asian Religions at Upsala University, Umeå University, Göteborg University, and the Stockholm Institute of Theology. Since 1994 lecturer at the Stockholm School of Economics and the Japanese Institute, Faculty of Oriental Studies, Stockholm University in the History of Japan and Japanese Philosophy and History of Ideas. Address: Institute of Oriental Languages, Japanese Department, University of Stockholm, 106 91 Stockholm, Sweden. E-mail: Catharina.Blomberg@orient. su.se

Clemens Cavallin (1969–) obtained a B.A. degree in liberal arts in 1995, specializing in the history of religions. In the same year, he completed a five-year long education in painting at the Academy of Art in Göteborg, Valands konsthögskola. On May 31, 2002, he defended, within the discipline of the history of religions, his doctoral thesis, *The Efficacy of Sacrifice. Correspondences in the Ṛgvedic Brāhmaṇas*. He is presently teaching in the Department of Religious Studies in Göteborg, and pursuing research both in Vedic studies and in the field of millenarian movements within the Catholic Church. For more information see: http://hem.fyristorg.com/fonsvirus. Address: Dept. of Religious Studies, Göteborg University, Box 200, 405 30 Göteborg, Sweden. E-mail: clemens.cavallin@religion.gu.se

Andreas Häger holds a Ph.D. in sociology of religion from Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden. His research interests cover religion and popular culture. He currently teaches sociology at Åbo Akademi University, Åbo (Turku), Finland. Address: Dept. of Sociology, Åbo Akademi University, 20500 Åbo, Finland. E-mail: andreas.hager@abo.fi

Tina Hamrin-Dahl (Department of Comparative Religion, Stockholm University) is involved in a research project on South Africa which includes studies in Afrikaans in the university's Dutch Department and a study of Afrikaner nationalism. How do religiously based nationalist aspirations look in the current climate of globalisation? Tina Hamrin-Dahl has previously studied accusations of witchcraft in South Africa (see *Religionshistorisk årsskrift* 2002), as well as

Japanese religions and Polynesian myths and legends (see *Folkets Historia* 28, 2000, "Om Hawai'i och Abraham Fornanders insatser för det hawaiianska folket"). Tina Hamrin-Dahl (then Tina Hamrin) completed her doctoral dissertation in 1996 on the religion of dance and Japanese immigrants in Hawai'i. Address: Dept. of Comparative Religion, Stockholm University, 106 91 Stockholm, Sweden. E-mail: hamrin.dahl@bredband.net

Nils G. Holm, Professor of Comparative Religion, Åbo Akademi University since 1981. Dr.Theol. at Uppsala University 1976 in Psychology of Religion. Address: Dept. of Comparative Religion, Åbo Akademi University, 20500 Åbo, Finland. E-mail: nholm@abo.fi

Knut A. Jacobsen (Ph.D., University of California, Santa Barbara) is Professor in the Department of the History of Religions, University of Bergen, Norway. His research focuses on the Sāṃkhya and Yoga systems of religious thought, pilgrimage and popular forms of worship in India, religion and nature in India, and Hinduism in the diaspora. He is the author of *Prakṛti in Sāṃkhya-Yoga: Material Principle, Religious Experience, Ethical Implications* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999; Indian edition, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2002), several books on Hinduism and Buddhism published in Norwegian and a number of articles in journals and books published in India, the USA, Britain and the Nordic countries. Address: Dept. of the History of Religions, University of Bergen, Øisteinsgate 3, 5007 Bergen, Norway. E-mail: knut.jacobsen@krr.uib.no

Marja-Liisa Keinänen, Ph.D., has recently defended her doctoral thesis *Creating Bodies. Childbirth Practices in Pre-modern Karelia* (2003). Her main field of interest is gender studies, notably women's ritual practice in pre-Revolutionary Karelia, in Soviet- and post-Soviet Karelia. She is also a lecturer in the Finno-Ugrian religions and gender studies. Address: Dept. of Comparative Religion, Stockholm University, 106 91 Stockholm, Sweden. E-mail: Marja-Liisa.Keinanen@rel.su.se

Göran Larsson is working as a post-doctoral researcher in the Department of Religious Studies, Göteborg University, Sweden. He is employed by the research project, LearnIT, funded by the KK-foundation. He has published *Ibn García's shuubiyya Letter. Ethnic and Theological Tensions in Medieval al-Andalus* (Brill Academic Publishers, 2002) and *Virtuel religion. Globalisering och Internet* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2002). Currently he is doing research about Islamic knowledge and the transmission of theological knowledge among Muslim Diaspora communities in the West, especially in relation to new information and communication technologies. Address: Dept. of Religious Studies, Göteborg University, Box 200, 405 30 Göteborg, Sweden. E-mail: goran.larsson@religion.gu.se

Maria Leppäkari obtained her Doctorate in Theology at Åbo Akademi University in 2002. She is currently doing research at the Department of Compara-

tive Religion at Åbo Akademi University and teaching freshmen ancient religions in the Near East. Leppäkari specializes in contemporary apocalypticism and religious symbolism related to Jerusalem as an endtime city. During her research, she completed several periods of fieldwork in Jerusalem and studied at the Hebrew University. Address: The Åbo Akademi University Research Foundation, Tavastgatan 30 C, 20700 Åbo, Finland. E-mail: maria.leppakari@abo.fi

Britt-Mari Näsström is Professor of History of Religions at Göteborg University. She has written about Old Norse Religion in *Freyja – the Great Goddess of the North* (1995) and *Blot – tro och offer i det förkristna Norden* (2002). She is also interested in mystery religions in classical antiquity. Address: Dept. of Religious Studies, Göteborg University, Box 200, 405 30 Göteborg, Sweden. E-mail: b-m.nasstrom@religion.gu.se

Jørgen Podemann Sørensen is Associate Professor of the History of Religions at the University of Copenhagen. His main fields of interest are ancient Egyptian religion, the mystery religions and Gnostic currents in Hellenism and late antiquity, together with the comparative study of ritual. His published articles include: "The argument in Ancient Egyptian magical formulae" (1984); "Three Varieties of Ritual Drama" (1986); "The Myth of Attis: Structure and Mysteriosophy" (1989); "Ancient Egyptian Religious Thought and the XVIth Hermetic Tractate" (1989); "Native reactions to foreign rule and culture in the religious literature of Hellenistic Egypt" (1992); "Ritualistics: a New Discipline in the History of Religions" (1993); "Ritual Art: A Key to the Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead" (1996); "Isis Belongs to Your Image... The Idea and the Purport of the Image in the 5th Hour of the Amduat" (1998); "COOYN – the Late Egyptian Background of Gnosis" (2002). Address: Dept. of History of Religions, University of Copenhagen, Artillerivej 86, 2300 Copenhagen S, Denmark. E-mail: podemann@hum.ku.dk

Erik **Reenberg Sand** is Associate Professor of the History of Religions at the Department of Religious Studies, University of Copenhagen. His main fields of interest are Indian religions, especially the Vedic and Hindu traditions, Sanskrit studies, and Zoroastrianism. His English publications include articles on Hindu ancestor rituals in the Puranas, the rituals and history of the Maharashtrian place of pilgrimage, Pandharpur, and the discipline of the phenomenology of religions. Address: Dept. of Religious Studies, University of Copenhagen, Artillerivej 86, 2300 Copenhagen S, Denmark. E-mail: ersand@hum.ku.dk

Mia Rikala, M. Phil., is a doctoral student in the Department of Comparative Religion, University of Helsinki. She is also a student at the Graduate School of Asian and African Studies (Egyptology) at the University of Helsinki. Her main interests are ancient Egyptian religion and cognitive ritual theory. At present she is writing her doctoral dissertation on the ritual aspects of divine

birth in New Kingdom Egypt. Address: Dept. of Comparative Religion, University of Helsinki, P.O. Box 19, 00014 Helsinki, Finland. E-mail: mia.rikala@helsinki.fi.

Peter Schalk was born in 1944, obtained his Ph.D. 1972 and became full Professor in 1983. He holds the chair in Indian Religions at Uppsala University. His interests include in studying Buddhism among Tamils, Buddhism in Lanka and its spread to South East Asia, Buddhist iconography, Western images of South Asians, and religious expressions of martial conflicts in South Asia. He teaches Hinduism and Buddhism at Uppsala University. He is also vice-chairperson of the Donner Institute. His latest publication is *Buddhism among Tamils in Pre-Colonial Tamilakam and Ilam.* Parts 1–2. (Editor-in-Chief Peter Schalk. Uppsala: AUU, 2002.) Address: History of Religions, Uppsala University, Box 1604, 751 46 Uppsala, Sweden. E-mail: peter.schalk@relhist.uu.se

Jesper Sørensen (b. 1968) obtained an M.A. in Religious Studies from the University of Aarhus in 1996 with a thesis on the Theosophical Society analysed from the perspective of cognitive metaphor theory. In 2001 he received his Ph.D. from the University of Aarhus with a dissertation on magic analysed from the perspective of recent findings in cognitive science and semiotics. He is now Assistant Professor at the University of Southern Denmark, working primarily on evolutionary perspectives on ritual. Address: Dept. of Philosophy and the Study of Religions, University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Campusvej 55, 5230 Odense M, Denmark. E-mail: js@filos.sdu.dk

Michael Stausberg is Docent in Religionshistoria at Uppsala University and Privatdozent in Religionswissenschaft at the University of Heidelberg. He has taught the history of religion at the universities of Uppsala, Heidelberg, Tübingen, and Bern and is currently head of a junior research-group at the University of Heidelberg (Institut für Religionswissenschaft). His main fields of interest are European religious history, Zoroastrianism, and (ritual) theory. His books are *Faszination Zarathushtra* (2 vols., 1998), and *Die Religion Zarathushtras* (3 vols., 2002–03). He is the editor of *Kontinuitäten und Brüche in der Religionsgeschichte* (2001), *Zoroastrian Rituals in Context* (2003), and co-editor of *Riter och ritteorier* (2002) and *Theorizing Rituals* (2003). Address: Institut für Religionswissenschaft, Akademistr. 4–8, 69117 Heidelberg, Germany. E-mail: michael.stausberg@urz.uni-heidelberg.de

Ing-Britt Trankell is Reader in Cultural Anthropology at Uppsala University. She has done fieldwork in Northern Thailand in the 1980s and in Laos and Cambodia in the 1990s. She is currently doing research on the Cham, as well as on medical anthropology, in Cambodia. Her publications include *Cooking, Care and Domestication. A Culinary Ethnography of the Tai Yong* (Uppsala 1995); *On the Road in Laos. An Anthropological Study of Road Construction and Rural Communities* (Uppsala 1993); *When Every Household Is an Island. Social Organization and Power*

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> Further checks proved Peter's suspicions to be founded (1965: 163).
> The mission no longer depended merely on calling like it did during the last century and early part of this century (Kamma 1977:134).

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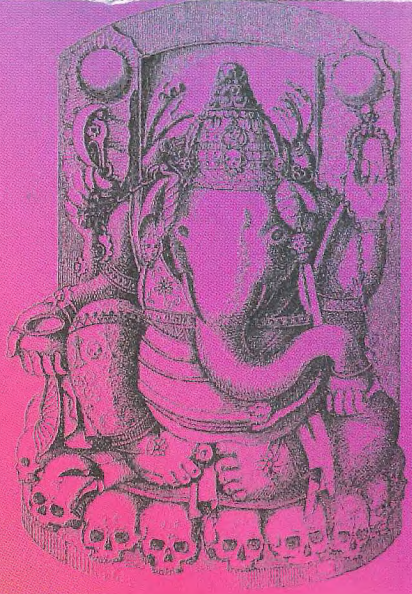

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