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FROM RITUAL TO MEDITATIVE PIETY: DEVOTIONAL CHANGE IN FRENCH PENITENTIAL CONFRATERNITIES FROM THE 16th TO THE 18th CENTURY

Andrew E. Barnes

Abstract

*Penitential confraternities were Catholic lay secret societies popular in southern France from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. They were so called because initially they ritually practiced self-flagellation as an act of collective penance. However, over the centuries the devotions they performed underwent a transformation. In the sixteenth century all of their devotions were ritualized and tied to a specific locale, the prime example being self-flagellation which members performed a regular basis in their chapels. By the eighteenth century, in response to the new spiritual values of the Counter Reformation, these ritual devotions had given way to the practice of meditation and charitable acts. Research on altered states of consciousness suggests that the performance of rituals generates a different psychological experience from that of practice of meditation. Ritual performance generates experiences of *communitas*. It rewards corporate religious activity in ways that meditation does not. It can be argued that the rituals performed by confraternities early in their existence were crucial for the maintenance of group and organizational cohesion. If this is so, it is possible to see that the replacement of ritualized devotions by meditative ones was a factor in the breakdown of organizational cohesion such as developed after 1750. In this way the transformation of devotions had an indirect role in the later decline of the confraternities.*

The aim of this essay is to call attention to a shift in the pattern and nature of devotions performed by French penitential confraternities between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries and to present some preliminary conclusions concerning the causes and consequences of this shift. Penitential confraternities practiced, at least in theory, ritual self-flagellation both as penance and in imitation of the passion of Christ. These devotions were performed in secret societies whose members, in public and in chapel, clothed their individuality in variously colored robes and hoods.

Such societies had their beginnings in the second half of thirteenth century Italy. By the early decades of the sixteenth century they had diffused into France. In the seventeenth century they emerged in southern France as one of the more popular forms of Catholic religious expression among men. By the end of the century even the smallest villages in the *Midi* boasted their own local *gazette* or chapel of penitents and in large cities such as Toulouse, Lyon, Avignon and Marseille numerous chapels existed. In such cities confraternities grew as large as one thousand members. Most confraternities were smaller, averaging between

one and five hundred members. Claims by twentieth century local historians that every family of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had at least one of its members in a penitential confraternity may be an exaggeration, but it is clear that these confraternities were extremely popular particularly in the cities (Agulhon 1968:86-160; Vovelle 1978:204-208; Barnes 1983:43-94).

Three things are worth stressing in seeking to characterize penitential confraternities throughout their history. First is their autonomy. They usually built free-standing chapels near, but distinct from, the monasteries of religious orders. To avoid public scrutiny they performed the bulk of their activities at night or in the early morning. While they paid lip service to the commands of local church officials, penitential confraternities believed that the grace generated by the good works they performed and the indulgences they garnered made them the chief vehicles for the salvation of their members. Their struggle to retain their autonomy in the face of the centralizing efforts of the Counter Reformation episcopacy, is a major theme of their history (Froeschlé-Chopard 1980:193-197; Barnes 1983:298-324; Hoffman 1984:36-41,103-104). Second is their exclusiveness. Marie Froeschlé-Chopard (1980:211) notes that though they were laity, members of penitential confraternities described outsiders as *seculiers* and posted guards at the chapel door to prohibit outsiders from entering. Third is their egalitarianism. Weissman in his study of the penitential confraternities of Florence emphasizes the degree to which the chapels of confraternities offered an escape from conflict over social status in the outside world. As he points out, once they had donned their robes and hoods, all brothers were considered equal (1982:80). In Italian confraternities, as in French, there was a tendency over time for some brothers to become more equal than others, a tendency Robert Michels once observed to be characteristic of all organizations. But it is important to stress that the confraternities worked hard to maintain the idea of the equality of all confreres, particularly in later centuries when their popularity brought a progressively more heterogeneous mixture of individuals to their doors (Agulhon 1968:143-160; Barnes 1983:73-86).

The confraternities established in France during the sixteenth century centered their devotional activities around the performance of the rite of self-flagellation. Yet by the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries confraternities began to appear which did not practice the rite. And even in those that practiced self-flagellation, it is clear that by the eighteenth century it no longer held a central place in their liturgies. In place of self-flagellation was a growing dependence on meditation as a devotional tool and

a growing commitment to social services such as caring for the sick and burying the poor as a way to please God and to seek salvation. By the early eighteenth century almost all the particular ritualistic practices performed by confraternities in earlier centuries began to disappear, as confraternity leaders attempted to respond to the lack of participation in devotions by shortening or discontinuing activities. Unsympathetic clerical contemporaries saw this development as evidence of the spiritual decadence of confraternities. Historians, trying to explain the popular decline of penitential confraternities in the second half of the eighteenth century, have tended to concur with this analysis, maintaining that spiritual decadence was the source of the decline (Guibert 1978:33; Agulhon 1968:116-128). On the contrary I argue that far from a decline of faith, what had occurred by the early part of the eighteenth century was a transformation from one type of spirituality to another.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries lay devotional life was permeated by what can be called Counter Reformation spirituality—that particular combination of meditative devotion and social activism first advanced in the sixteenth century most prominently by the Jesuits (see Evennett 1975). The appearance of this new spirituality stimulated the discarding of older, more ritualized devotions. One of the key attributes of the older devotions was that they generated experiences of what Victor Turner (1966) labeled “*communitas*.” This played a crucial role in the maintenance of social and organizational cohesion. In other words, the performance of rituals such as self-flagellation had brought members together as a group and kept them together by the liminal experiences they induced. Meditative devotions and the performance of charitable work took members away from the group and, in a sense, made the group superfluous. Their emergence as the dominant type of devotions performed by confraternities was the source for the lack of interest in remaining collective rites. Clerical commentators took this lack of interest as an indication of decadence which eventually became a factor in the confraternities’ decline.

The change in devotional patterns is aptly illustrated by a comparison of the obligations outlined in two sets of confraternal statutes, one written in the sixteenth and the other in the eighteenth century. The penitents of the Holy Cross of Avignon were founded in 1226 by Louis VIII while he was on crusade against the Albigensians in the south of France. The confraternity disappeared at some point during the fifteenth century but was reestablished in 1523. In 1577, during the height of the French Wars of Religion, it decided to re-edit its statutes.

The new statutes reveal two things. First is a concern by the members of the reestablished confraternity to maintain continuity with the past. Thus, each year the confraternity celebrated by receiving communion on the feast of Saint Andrew the Apostle (November 30th) in honor of the day in 1433 when the chapel was miraculously saved from a flood. Second is the importance attached to the rite of self-flagellation as an act of penance. Earlier versions of the confraternity's statutes are unavailable, but the wording of the 1577 edition suggests that the major innovation from previous practice was performance of the rite of flagellation every Monday, Wednesday and Friday of Lent. This change conforms to a tendency evident in other sets of statutes edited during the second half of the sixteenth century (the period in France when Protestantism made its greatest assault on Catholicism), namely, to emphasize the importance of Lent as a time of penance and to signify this importance by an increase in the performance of self-flagellation (Darmange at 1903).

The penitents of Saint Henry were established in 1717 by the bishop of Marseille, Henri de Belsunce, to serve as a model to show the other confraternities in the city how a confraternity should be organized and run. (Barnes 1983:62-76). Belsunce modestly named the confraternity for his own patron saint. Two editions of the statutes of the penitents of Saint Henry are extant, the original statutes of 1717 and a revised edition from 1731. It was unusual for a confraternity to re-edit its statutes after such a short period, and the appearance of the 1731 statutes seems to indicate that during the late 1720's the penitents of Saint Henry broke free of episcopal influence, with the 1731 statutes certifying the decline of the role of the spiritual director, i.e., Belsunce, in confraternal affairs. The two editions of the statutes of the penitents of Saint Henry thus provide an example of episcopal expectations and lay response to it (Statutes-M1717; Statutes-M1731). The devotional obligations required of members of both confraternities have been summarized and listed.

Barnes: From Ritual to Meditative Piety

Religious Obligations of Confreres

Outlined in the *Statutes of the Pénitents Gris de la Sainte Croix d'Avignon* (1577)
and the *Pénitents Gris de Saint Henry de Marseille* (1731)

Penitents of the Holy Cross

Penitents of Saint Henry

Daily

Attend Mass
Recite five pater nosters,
five *ave marias*

Weekly

Attend chapel services
Sunday morning (Office
of the Virgin)

Attend chapel services
Sunday morning (Office
of the Virgin)

Perform rite of self-
flagellation on Friday
Fast one day a week

Perform one half-hour medita-
tion after services
Attend Mass on Sunday
morning at chapel

Monthly

Communion the first
Sunday of each month

Recitation of the Office of
the Dead the first
Sunday of each month.

Lenten

Change to Office of
Holy Cross

Attend Lenten activities
at the parish church

Attend sermon each
Sunday after services
(likewise in Advent)

Perform rite of self-
flagellation each
Monday, Wednesday,
(& Lenten Fridays)

Chapel every day during
Holy Week

Participate in barefoot
procession on Holy
Thursday afternoon

Participate in adoration
of the cross on Good
Friday afternoon

Other

Commune on all church
feast days.

Commune on feasts of
St. Henry, the Assumption
and Nativity of the
Virgin, All Saints, &
Epiphany

Attend chapel daily
during octaves of the
feasts of Corpus Christi
and All Saints

Processions & services on
feasts of the Invention
of the Cross (May 3) &
Exaltation of the Cross
(Sept. 14)

Several aspects of the devotions performed by the penitents of the Holy Cross deserve note, because they were typical of the piety of confraternities established during the sixteenth century. The special character of Lent as a season of penance was emphasized both by an increase in the use of flagellation and by a change in the liturgy from the Office of the Virgin to the Office of the Passion. A relative lack of concern for charity is also evident in the earlier statutes. When earlier confraternities did perform some charitable act, it was usually ritualized and performed in the context of the celebration of some liturgical event. For example, during Holy Week the penitents of the Holy Cross distributed bread to all poor confreres, and on Good Friday they offered bread to all poor beggars who appeared at the door of their chapel. Earlier confraternities also made great use of processions and pilgrimages. In this regard the penitents of the Holy Cross, who went on procession only three times during the year, appear not to have been typical. Processions on the feasts of their patrons, processions on Maundy Thursday and processions and pilgrimages on occasions of local distress such as plague and drought were a major aspect of the devotional life of confraternities. The places to which confraternities made processions, the churches and the shrines, were of local spiritual significance. They were sites in which, as Natalie Davis (1981) would put it, holiness resided. As such they provided a way for the confraternities to add to and become a part of local spiritual life (Christian 1981).

Significantly, the confraternity's chapel was the *locale* for its devotions. As Froeschlé-Chopard observed, "A confraternity and its chapel were inseparable (indissociables), the destruction of the former meant the disappearance of the latter" (1980:168). Weissman in his study of Florentine penitential confraternities

emphasized that their chapels were special places outside of ordinary space and time. Thus, they had to be ritually entered and exited (1982:90-95). The same can be said for the chapels of French confraternities. Each time a member entered the main chapel of the penitents of the Holy Cross, he was required to prostrate himself before the host displayed on the altar and to say, "May the name of Our Lord God Jesus Christ be forever blessed and praised, his holy Death and Passion be forever in our memories." He then was to recite an *Ave Maria* and kiss the ground in the shape of a cross before rising to take his seat (Darmangeat 1903:63-64). Except for the three processions performed annually, all devotions performed by the penitents of the Holy Cross took place in their chapel. The building itself was sacred for them, as can be seen from the ceremonies on the feast of Saint Andrew the Apostle. The piety of the earlier penitential confraternities was tied to the locale in which it was performed. The liminal environment created within the chapel encouraged the performance of rituals such as self-flagellation. And when confraternities left their chapels, it was to visit and to share in some of the holiness of local churches and shrines.

In contrast, aside from weekly services, monthly participation in the recitation of the Office of the Dead and communion on major feasts days, the penitents of Saint Henry were rarely in their chapel. Gone were the vast array of activities the earlier confraternity performed during Carnival and Lent. Gone were the daily prayers. Gone were the processions. Gone were the rituals for entering the chapel before services. Most importantly, gone was the performance of the rite of the discipline which had been the central rite in the devotions of the penitents of the Holy Cross. Instead of flagellating themselves, members of the penitents of Saint Henry spent one half hour after services on Sunday morning meditating, presumably on themes supplied by the prior—the layman annually elected to lead the confraternity (Statutes-M1731).

But this is only half the story. As the preamble of the 1731 statutes explains, the purpose of the confraternity was to bring about the sanctification of its members by providing them with a means to exercise the "*plus parfaite charité*," toward their fellow man. The chief act of devotion for members was the care of the sick and poor in the *Hôpital de Saint Esprit*, the main municipal hospital in Marseille. Each Sunday after Mass the prior selected four confreres to serve for the week as visitors of the sick. The duties of the visitors were to visit the hospital daily and to sit by the beds of the terminally ill. The visitors were expected to help care for these patients, to bring them water, to run their errands

and serve as pallbearers for the corpses of those who died. But most importantly they were to:

oversee with prudence the precious moments of the poor sufferers, within whom they should seek to inspire a tender confidence in the Father of Mercy, mixed with an extreme regret for having given him offense; to produce in them acts of faith, of hope, of love, of resignation to the sorrows of their agonies and their death, but also of their coming union with the death and Passion of Our Lord through which their sins will be expiated (Statutes-M1731).¹

The statutes of the penitents of Saint Henry reflect to a remarkable degree the main tendencies in Counter Reformation spirituality. H. O. Evennett has written perhaps the most perceptive summary of this spirituality:

Broadly speaking, its genius took individual rather than corporate or liturgical form. It was highly sacramental: not biblical in the Protestant sense of a personal formation based on a direct reading of Scripture, its great masters were all impregnated with the Bible and its meditative practices were largely focused on the life and passion of Christ. . . . It was exacting, in that it demanded continuous heroic effort at prayer and self control and self-improvement and good works: practical, in that it closely linked active good works and self-improvement, and assumed the placing of a high value on the former in the sight of God for Justification (1975:41).

This spirituality found its greatest embodiment in the work of the Jesuits. In contrast to more traditional religious orders for them, "Action was prayer, and prayer led to action" (Evennett 1975:75). Evennett traced the activism of the Jesuits of the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius Loyola, which were "the systematized de-mystified quintessence of the process of Ignatius' own conversion and purposeful change in life," or, "Saint Ignatius himself in tabloid form" (1975:45,46). According to Evennett the "Exercises" provided the Jesuits with a "new high powered spiritual weapon capable of almost explosive results to men at all levels of spiritual need" (45, 46). Through them, he suggests, the Jesuits were able to effect the spiritual regeneration of Catholicism (1975:47).

Evennett's observations about the Jesuits are pertinent, because available evidence suggests that it was their spirituality that infused penitential piety and led it away from the practice of ritualized devotions, even though they did not undertake spiritual direction by serving as chaplains or confessors to confraternities. To a certain extent this influence was the result of the efforts of one Jesuit, Emond Auger. During the 1570's and 1580's, Auger moved throughout France, preaching the value of penitential devotions in deferring Protestantism (Yates 1947; Martin 1973). Loyola counseled his followers not to overindulge in the

traditional monastic practice of self-mortification, since the work they were to do required healthy bodies (Evennett 1975:75) and it is clear that Auger brought this attitude to the confraternal statutes he wrote.

His aims are best exemplified in the statutes of the penitents of Annunciation of Our Lady, the confraternity Auger developed for Henri III in Paris in 1583 (reproduced in Cimber and Danjou 1836). There is no mention of self-flagellation in these statutes. In fact, in comparison with the devotional obligations outlined in other statutes written at approximately the same time (for example, those of the penitents of the Holy Cross of Avignon), the statutes are surprisingly moderate. It is significant also that the confraternity placed no special importance on performance of devotions in its chapel. Confreres were allowed to perform devotions there, or "at any place where they might be" (Cimber and Danjou, 1836:448). While devotional obligations were light, charitable obligations were extensive and demanding. Members of the confraternity were expected to participate in a number of charitable works that ranged from caring for condemned prisoners to providing food and clothing for twelve paupers once a year on Maundy Thursday to providing dowries for deserving, impoverished young girls (Cimber and Danjou 1836:450; Yates 1947; Yates 1954).

The confraternity of the Annunciation of Our Lady represented the efforts of Henri III and Auger to introduce penitential confraternities to the north of France (Yates 1954; Boucher 1970). It existed for only a short time and it is hard to assess its influence on the later development of penitential piety in France. However, a discussion of its statutes provides an interesting indication of the directions in which Auger would have liked to turn penitential confraternities, especially since all the other confraternities Auger established were in the south of France where penitential devotions were already popularly associated with the practice of self-flagellation. Auger sought to provide an option between meditation and flagellation. As it is stated in the statutes (written in 1603) of the *pénitents bleus* of Saint Jerome of Toulouse, established by Auger in 1575:

The same day [Friday] at four hours after midday, the brothers will assemble for the recitation of Vespers. . .and after having heard an exhortation, they may make some particular devotion as they desire, or perhaps meditate on several points of the Passion of Our Lord, or perhaps contemplate the holy Virgin in her suffering and sorrow at the foot of the Cross (Thouron, 1688:154-155).²

In the seventeenth century, the statutes of the penitents of Saint Jerome were widely copied by other confraternities (Guibert

1978:44). In the diffusion of these statutes it is possible to see the movement away from the practice of self-flagellation toward meditation and charitable acts.

But the Jesuit influence went further. By developing and popularizing other new devotions, the Jesuits created meditative alternatives to earlier ritualistic practices. One of these new devotions is particularly important. In 1648 the Jesuits introduced among the laity who attended their church in Rome a new devotion aimed at relieving lay anxiety over death and the hereafter. Participants in this new devotion to "Jesus dying on the Cross and his Sorrowful Mother" met weekly, usually on Fridays, to meditate and then discuss some aspect of Christ's death on the cross in order to prepare themselves to deal properly with their own eventual demise. This practice was the source of the other name for the devotion, the devotion of the *Bonne Mort* or "Good Death." Insofar as it had a liturgy, the practice was based on performance of the Office of Death. Instead of performing religious rites and ceremonies, participants in the devotion of the "Good Death" were to expend their pious energies in the performance of holy acts of charity such as consoling the sick and burying the poor. The Jesuits organized the participants into a confraternity. Similar associations, members of which were known as *agonisants*, spread to Jesuit churches throughout Catholic Europe (Beringier 1902:2/406-411). It appears that under the robes and hoods of penitents, members of the confraternity of Saint Henry were actually *agonisants*.

Henri de Belsunce had strong ties to the Jesuit order; at one time he had been a Jesuit novice (Beringier 1887). It is not known whether he introduced confraternities of *agonisants* to Marseille, although at that time such confraternities were being established in all the parishes in the city (Saint Albans 1713). So it is not surprising that Belsunce chose to make his new episcopal confraternity of penitents a confraternity of *agonisants*. What is more interesting is that, when laymen reorganized the confraternity in 1731, they made no effort to introduce the use of the discipline or the other rites that had characterized penitential devotions in an earlier age. Records on membership do not exist, but apparently the confraternity had no problem attracting members. The 1717 statutes set no limits on membership, but the 1731 statutes expressed a need to limit membership to one hundred and thirty (Statutes-M1717; Statutes-M1731). Had potential members seen self-mortification as a necessary aspect of penitential piety, they would have hardly joined the confraternity so readily. Thus, it is possible to take the confraternity's apparent

success as an indication of the successful implantation of the new spirituality.

The devotions performed by the penitents of Saint Henry were, in fact, typical of those performed by confraternities established after 1600, especially after 1650. The statutes of these confraternities emphasize that charity not self-mortification was the path to sanctification. As the statutes of the penitents of the Mercy of Lyon (established 1636) explained:

It is most true, that though one possessed all the virtues imaginable, science, the language of the angels and of man, still if one does not know mercy and charity, all other qualities, no matter how eminent and relevant they might be, would not suffice to render one agreeable to the divine majesty (Statutes-L1739).³

It is worth noting that the penitents of the Mercy were the first major southern confraternity to abandon the ritual use of flagellation. During Holy Week, they instead assembled on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday to meditate on the mystery of Christ's Passion (Statutes-L1739). They were somewhat ahead of their time. In most of the confraternities established during the earlier decades of the seventeenth century it is possible to see the new spiritual values existing side by side with the old. For example, the *pénitents bleus* of Saint Joachim of Aix-en-Provence, founded in 1645 (statutes edited 1665), required members to flagellate themselves weekly and to receive communion every fifteen days. Yet they also took upon themselves the task of visiting the *pauvres agonisants*, that is, the terminally ill paupers of the surrounding parishes. To them they spoke of Christ's passion and the peace to be found in its contemplation. The confraternity maintained strong ties to the Jesuit monastery in the city and added to their recitation of the Office of the Virgin on Sundays and the Office of the Passion on Fridays the recitation of the Office of the Dead on the first Sunday of each month (Statutes-A1665). Thus it appears that they combined the traditional piety of penitential confraternities with the new piety of the *agonisants*.

As for confraternities established before 1600, it is possible to see, particularly in the eighteenth century, movement away from earlier devotional practices. For example, the *pénitents blancs* of *Notre Dame du Gonfalon* of Lyon in their original statutes of 1575 had required members to be in the chapel each day of Holy Week to recite the Office of the Passion, and if they so desired, to *faire la discipline* (Statutes-L1575). In their statutes of 1711 the invitation to take the discipline was replaced by a requirement that after the office brothers spend a quarter hour meditating on the Passion of Christ (Statutes-L1711). The *pénitents blancs* of Saint Lazarus of Marseille, founded in 1550, in their statutes of

1687, required members to flagellate themselves twice a year (Statutes-M1687). In their statutes from 1773, this obligation is gone, though what replaced it is not clear (Statutes-M1773).

By the eighteenth century the expression of faith through a series of specific rites performed within the circumscribed context of a particular location—such as occurred in the confraternity of the Holy Cross—had given way to an internalized piety, reinforced by meditation, which took expression in acts of charity like those of the confraternity of Saint Henry. In its emphasis on the value of symbolic humility and self-abnegation, the piety of the penitents of the Holy Cross harkened back to the medieval ideal first articulated by Francis of Assisi and sanctified by his reception of the stigmata. The piety of the penitents of Saint Henry measured its value by the social consequences of its expression: piety was doing and doing was helping others. In sum, over the centuries penitential confraternities evolved to embrace the spirituality of the Counter Reformation, implying a decline in the importance of ritual acts of piety and an increase in importance of internalized faith and externalized charity).

II

After 1750 both the popularity and prestige of penitential confraternities began to decline (Delumeau 1971:316-318; McManners 1981:231-233). Very few new chapels were founded. Existing chapels began to suffer financial hardship due to the lack of dues paying (Barnes 1983:226-244). Fewer members saw participation in their confraternities as essential to salvation (Volvelle 1978:202-212). External forces such as the rise of the parish church as a center of worship and the alienation from organized religion produced by the Enlightenment were certainly factors in this decline (Delumeau 1971:278-292); Agulhon 1968:132-136; Bossy 1971; Hoffman 1984). But contemporary ecclesiastical authorities traced the decline of the confraternities to another source: spiritual decadence (Agulhon 1968:124-132; Barnes 1983: 297-322). Such decadence is most clearly seen in the words of Guibert, who wrote his history of penitential confraternities primarily from diocesan archives. He writes:

The seventeenth century was for the associations of penitents a period of calm and prosperity; but it had not yet ended when already, within the bosom of the confraternities, there had appeared grave symptoms of decadence. Piety declined; devotions were made with much less regularity; the most demanding of the statutes ceased to be observed. Toward the middle of the following century, the institution had lost almost all of the spirit which for so long had animated it: of all of the acts and of all the works which had made these companies so popular there remained only the forms, the customs, the ceremonies, the *fetes* especially. Charity

alone was still alive within these ruins, but it had almost completely changed in goals because now it was exercised chiefly in regards to confreres. By the time of the Revolution, the religious principle of the institution had weakened to the point that many confreres no longer fulfilled their obligation to receive Easter communion (1978:33).⁴

Guibert and his ecclesiastical sources failed to realize that penitential piety was changing. There can be no doubt that he was chronicling the decline in the performance of the rite of self-flagellation. And it was being replaced by a different type of devotion.

Still, the question can be asked whether there was a connection between the transformation of devotions within confraternities and the confraternities' decline in the eighteenth century. Evennett suggested that the new spirituality was individualistic in its expression, but there is no evidence of any overt antagonism between the new devotions and the corporate religiosity of the confraternities. If anything, the theme of fraternity is proclaimed more loudly than previously in the extant records of confraternities during the eighteenth century and this commitment was given concrete expression in the emergence of confraternities as institutions of relief for the many indigents who begin to crowd their chapels (Barnes 1983:76). The new spiritual values which turned piety toward social change were also not directly antagonistic to corporate religious expression. In the minds of confreres the treasury of grace claimed by their confraternity still mattered to their salvation; the definition of good works necessary to generate that grace had simply changed from self-mortification to charity. It is true that seventeenth and eighteenth century churchmen were continually reminding confreres that individual salvation was not tied to participation in lay associations, but this warning was most likely a sign of the resoluteness with which confreres maintained such notions.

To search for overt or even subtle conflict could be to look for an answer on the wrong level. Weissman has made the case that the earlier ritualistic devotions performed by confraternities helped reinforce the feelings of brotherhood within them:

Through ritual self-abasement—the recitation of penitential psalms, the ritual reenactment of Christ's crucifixion, the adoption of garments symbolic of poverty and low status—and through psychic disorientation produced by mass flagellation, singing and wailing, the participants underwent a liminal experience that suspended the traditional social order and produced a spirit of concord and unity (1982:54).

Were the new meditative devotions equally effective in promoting a sense of brotherhood and concord? To answer, one

must have a sense of the differences between ritual devotions and meditative devotions as psychological experiences. To this end it is useful to turn to the psychological literature on altered states of consciousness.

Recent research in neuropsychology has indicated that the patterned, rhythmic, repetitious character of ritual performance causes psychophysiological change in performers. By stimulating the limbic region of the brain (the region of the brain that controls the secretion of hormones), ritual performance can generate a state of high arousal pleasurable in its own right (Chapple 1970:59-63; Lex 1979:134-138). Chapple and Lex show that continued stimulation can bring about further psychophysiological change, culminating in a state in which both the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems—the component parts of the autonomic nervous system which controls emotional change—are simultaneously active. The result is an altered state of consciousness in which the inhibitions within the minds of the performers are broken down and they perceive themselves in a state of union with everything about themselves. D'Aquili writes, "The simplest paradigm to explain the situation in humans is the feeling of union which occurs during orgasm" (D'Aquili 1985:23).

Further, stimulation of the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems by repetitive auditory or visual stimuli can activate the right or nondominant, intuitive side of the brain, presumably through monopolization of the activities of the left or dominant, rational side of the brain. Ornstein (1972) and Lex (1979:125-127) have argued that the result is a situation in which the right side of the brain becomes dominant, creating what has been labeled as a "gestalt" state of consciousness, characterized by high emotion, oceanic sensation and feelings of ineffability, in short, ecstatic experiences. D'Aquili (1985:25) goes further to suggest that both sides of the brain are active simultaneously. Thus, he can explain why ritual performers perceive themselves as capable of resolving unexplainable paradoxes during ecstatic experiences. D'Aquili continues:

... We are postulating that the various ecstasy states, which can be produced in humans after rhythmic auditory, visual or tactile stimuli, produce a feeling of union with other members participating in that ritual. This sense of union is diametrically opposed to intragroup aggression. In fact, the oneness of all participants is the theme running through the myth of most human ritual. Probably the sense of oneness and the vagueness of boundaries, which are experienced at certain nodal points in ritual, are what allow symbols used in rituals to be experienced as that for which they stand. The fusion of symbols and their referents at various points in human religious rituals is undoubtedly accomplished by the general feeling of oneness or unity that one obtains when a

ritual triggers certain parts of the nondominant parietal lobe. . . . This state may vary in intensity, but it always has the effect of at least eliminating intragroup aggression and unifying the social group (1985:23).

D'Aquili seems to be suggesting that the awareness of the sacred by the participants in a religious rite has a psychophysiological or a "biological" basis. The sacred is there for the participants not only because they *believe* it is there, but because in their state of consciousness they *sense* the presence of some transcendent unifying principle, which, of course, is the activity of the right side of the brain (also see Bourguignon 1979:233-247). Lex (1979:234-244) has made the case that the stages in the ritual process as first conceived by Van Gennep can be understood psychophysiologically as the attainment of an altered state of consciousness, the experience of this altered state of consciousness and the return to normative reality. D'Aquili (1985:27) follows her in interpreting the trance state induced by ritual performance as analogous to *communitas*. He explains biologically Turner's idea of the anti-structural or egalitarian moment which occurs during the liminal or second stage of a ritual. Psychologically understood, liminality is an altered state of consciousness which promotes a reduction of intragroup aggression and implies a concomitant sensation of oneness with the group. According to Chapple (190:308-312) among their several properties symbols can be said to encapsulate socially approved values and behaviors. These are the meanings latent in symbols. Lex has argued that it is during the liminal stage of ritual performance that the latent meanings within symbols become overt (1979:130,141-144). While she does not say so, it seems she is implying that during the liminal stage bonding occurs between the values encapsulated in symbols and the intuitive awareness generated by right hemisphere activation. In other words, during altered states of consciousness the performer understands intuitively the necessity of the social obligations latent in symbols.

The research of D'Aquili and Lex gives substance to the term, "psychic disorientation," used earlier by Weissman. It is easy to see that the rite of self-flagellation, with its rhythmic call, liturgical response and rhythmic use of the discipline could induce an altered state of consciousness. But the other rituals performed by the confraternity, the processions and pilgrimages, the adoration of the Cross, were also liminal experiences (Turner 1974). There is some evidence to indicate that confraternities were aware of the ability of the rite of self-flagellation to create group cohesion. For example, the penitents of the Holy Circumcision of Lyon (1570) established as their central

devotional obligation the requirement that each night members retire before a household image or altar and there, in the company of at least one other confrere, conduct a mental scrutiny of their behavior that day. The practice was to culminate in a self-scourging for the sins they had committed (Pecquet 1972). The daily self-examination of conscience was a Jesuit devotional technique and its adoption by the penitents of the Holy Circumcision can be taken as an early indication of Jesuit influence on penitential devotions (Evennett 1975:47-48). What is even more interesting is that at this early date it was combined with ritual self-mortification and that confreres were allowed to perform it only in the company of other members. To this was added the requirement that members periodically perform the rite of self-flagellation collectively in the chapel (Pecquet 1972). It is clear that the framers of the confraternity's statutes were aware of the significance of collective performance of flagellation for group cohesion and that they structured their devotions so as to promote the generation of an experience of *communitas* and subsequent group identification.

But what of meditation, did it similarly promote feelings of *communitas*? The lack of precision in the words used by scholars to discuss altered states of consciousness makes an answer difficult. Terms such as "trance," "ecstasy," "mysticism," "rapture" are used almost interchangeably. Further, as Lex has complained, needless debate has been engendered because of the superficial resemblances between various altered states of consciousness (Lex 1979:137-138; also see Schuman 1980:349-353). At present there is no conclusive data concerning the similarities and differences of ritually induced and meditatively induced altered states of consciousness. But existing research suggests the two may be psychophysiologicaly different (Lex 1979:138). Ritual induces an altered state of consciousness through intensive, and as Lex argues, extensive sensual excitation (199:134-135). Such states are the result of, in Ludwig's words, "sensory overload or bombardment" (Ludwig 1969:11). Meditation induces an altered state of consciousness by blocking out sensual perceptions. Studies of brain waves during meditation have indicated that it generates an increase in alpha waves, that is, the type of waves produced when the eyes are closed or other types of sensory perception impaired. Schuman (1980:345) notes:

Most of the psychophysiological data support the view that meditation is associated with a low arousal psychophysiological state. Signs of reduced arousal in meditation may include greater synchronization and slowing of the EEG; lowering of respiratory rate and/or minute volume; some decrease in heart rate; and a decrease in spontaneous electrodermal activity and/or reactivity. Additionally,

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some studies have found changes indicative of a slowing of energy metabolism, including decreased oxygen consumption, decreased carbon dioxide elimination and a decline in blood lactate (Schuman 1980:345).

This point is important because, as Lex (199:140) and D'Aquili (1985:24) indicate, part of the experience of *communitas* is the sensate awareness of other participants, the intuitive consciousness of others in contrast to the intuitive consciousness of self. Lex (1979:141) writes:

Implicit in liminality is a recognition of contrast between part-whole (figure-ground) perception of individual and collective experiences. This schizoid state is the condition of man, for acknowledgment that both alternatives exist is necessary so that individuals may deliberately shift from one mode to the other...

Deikman notes that, while awareness of the environment may be an aspect of lower forms of meditation, in higher forms the environment is transcended with a "concentration which is not conscious of objects" (1969:26). He says:

Exalted states of mind and feeling. . . may be grouped in three divisions: the untrained sensate, trained sensate, and trained-transcendent. The most important distinction would appear to be an experience grounded in customary affect, sensations, and ideations, and an experience that is said to transcend such modalities.

Maupin (1969:193) likewise characterizes the highest stage of meditative awareness as presenting a:

nonstriving attitude [in which] the subject is able to take a calmly detached view of any thoughts and feelings which emerge. Concentration seems to be very easy and complete. A frequent accompaniment of this pattern is extensive loss of body feelings.

A final verdict on this question must await further study. But existing research seems to indicate that meditation does not promote the experience of *communitas*. Indeed, instead of leading performers toward greater communion with the group, it leads them away from the group toward intuitive communication with the unifying principle of one's spiritual universe. To quote Deikman (1969:26): "In the transcendent state multiplicity disappears and a sense of union with the One or the All occurs."

The conclusion should not be surprising. Numerous scholars have remarked on the tendency of meditative experiences to produce a sense of detachment, an eagerness to be free of earthly involvements. Gannon and Traub (1969:227-247) note that during the great age of meditative devotions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Catholic Church hierarchy was

constantly on guard against movements such as the *Alumbrados* of sixteenth century Spain and the Quietists of seventeenth century France who took meditation to the extreme of advocating complete divorce from social concerns. Evennett (1975:48) argues that Ignatius Loyola sought to structure his meditative exercises in such a way as to keep those meditating in the here-and-now and not wandering off in the void of their own unconsciousness. Cognet (1959:62-68) suggests the same for Francois de Sales. Merton (1967:9-10) thought that one of the more remarkable aspects of Zen meditation practice was that it did not produce a sense of detachment and individualism, a feat he assigned to the powerful symbology of their ritual. Maupin (1972) thinks this is a result of Zen masters.

Whether the meditative exercises undergone by members of penitential confraternities were powerful enough to produce such feelings of detachment is uncertain. But the ease with which Maupin (1969) produced such feelings during experiments on meditation with American college students counsels against dismissing as ineffective the short, unstructured meditative periods advocated in confraternal statutes.

It seems appropriate to conclude that the shift from ritual to meditative devotions had as one of its aspects the shift from devotions that promoted experiences of *communitas* to those which promoted feelings of detachment. Confraternities did not discard all rituals. They continued to make processions and pilgrimages, to chant their liturgies and to receive communion collectively. But they ceased to perform the rite of self-flagellation, the rite which had been so central for the generation of group cohesion in earlier times.

The conclusion that the transformation of devotions was an indirect factor in the decline of confraternities also seems appropriate. Over the centuries the memberships within confraternal chapels progressively became more socially heterogeneous. Also, external forces such as the family and the parish church began to exert a greater pull on confreres. Yet the performance of rituals which would have overcome these factors, which would have reinforced the feelings of brotherhood within the chapels, gradually declined as confraternities transformed their liturgies to respond to the spiritual values of the age. Without this ritual reinforcement fraternalism began to decay and with it the commitment of confreres to their confraternities.

III

Members of confraternities were conscious of the decline of their associations. However, they perceived it in terms of a breakdown in group cohesion. For them the problem was that brothers spent their time fighting among themselves and because of this gave very little attention to the confraternity and its activities as a whole. As it was explained in the minutes of a general meeting of the penitents rouges of the Holy Cross of Marseille in 1724 (*Registre des Penitents de Saint Croix*, f. 120)⁵:

This meeting has been proposed by frere Jean Gris, rector, who has observed with sadness the dissension which has been developing for some years among the vast majority of the brothers, not only because of the laxity of some, but also because of the discord and division which has occurred many times as much because of the acts of brothers as because of the confusion in our statutes. . .

The attitude expressed in the minutes of the penitents of the Holy Cross is typical. The problem was with the statutes whose procedures for handling debate and dissension were not sufficiently sophisticated. The solution they adopted was also typical. Henceforth:

In order to satisfy the confreres and maintain good order, there will be a meeting of the governing council the first Sunday of each month in which there will be discussion of all that has happened in the chapel during the previous month, temporal as well as spiritual, in order to prohibit the possibility of division and discord among us (*Registre des Penitents de Saint Croix*, f. 121).⁶

The one trend in confraternal statutes more eye-catching than the decrease in ritual devotions is the increase in procedures to regulate and reduce internal discord. Internal discord was not a major concern in the statutes of earlier confraternities. The penitents of the Holy Cross of Avignon dismissed it in a single article which simply stated that there should be no enmity between confreres and that those brothers who refused to be reconciled in their differences should be expelled (Darmangeat 1903:65). The statutes of the penitents of the Holy Spirit of Marseille (1558) required that before each of the four annual communions brothers should line up and then, according to rank, reconcile, "*les uns les autres*." Those who refused to perform this rite were expelled (Statutes M1558). This rite is interesting because it explicitly relates the regulation of internal discord to the performance of rites which generated feeling of *communitas*. In contrast the statutes of the penitents of Saint Henry established an elaborate procedure. In case of a disagreement between brothers, two confreres were assigned by the prior to

mediate the disagreement and if that failed, the prior was granted the power to convoke a general assembly of all the confreres to decide on the matter (Statutes-M1731). By the eighteenth century dissension had become too great a problem to be resolved by an act of symbolic fraternity. To this purpose, meditation—perhaps part of the problem—was no solution at all.

It is worth stressing that the solution opted for by the penitents of Saint Henry was among the more sophisticated and rational among extant statutes. The minutes of confraternal meetings make it clear that over the years the regulating of internal discord gradually became the most pressing problem confronting confraternal leaders. Yet because leaders wanted to maintain the illusion of fraternal harmony, they adopted such stop-gap measures as legislating statutes that mandated absolute obedience to the decisions of the layleaders at the cost of expulsion (Statutes-M1773) or that outlawed "cabales" with a similar penalty (Statutes-M1739a). Such statutes did not inhibit expelled confreres from taking their cases to ecclesiastical authorities and on occasion to civil authorities. In the end internal discord provided the opening through which external authorities could step in and establish control of confraternal affairs (Barnes 1983:197-322).

I suggest that the growth of internal discord was actually a reflection of the decline of group cohesion. The decline in group cohesion was in turn a result of the turn away from the performance of rituals which had helped stimulate the sense of group cohesion. Without the reinforcement of rituals which symbolically made them all the same, confreres became too conscious of their differences. Men were attracted to penitential confraternities because they had initially offered the potential for a type of experience which could be gained nowhere else. The Counter Reformation clergy was extremely effective in wiping out any form of ritually produced enthusiasm (Berce 1976; Hoffman 1984). This fact may explain the eighteenth century appearance in southern France of free mason lodges where penitential chapels had once flourished (Agulhon 1968). Presumably, the liminal experiences induced by the secret rites of the masons were not as intense as those induced by performance of self-flagellation. But in the second half of the eighteenth century the lodges of the free masons were the only places where such experiences could be obtained.

The spiritual values of the eighteenth century, which questioned the utility of collectively performed rituals for salvation and put a premium on individual acts of faith, played an indirect role in the decline of confraternities. But these values

had emerged in the sixteenth century before the rise in popularity of penitential confraternities, so it is incorrect to see them as the direct cause of the decline. It was only after they had led confraternities away from the practice of the types of devotions which could meld the heterogeneous mix of individuals within confraternities into a group, that they affected life within the chapels. It is interesting that the confraternity of the penitents of the Most Holy Name of Marseille (the penitents Bourras as they were popularly known), the one confraternity in Marseille which maintained the older devotions, including the use of the rite of self-flagellation, was the only confraternity to navigate successfully the decline of penitential confraternities after 1750 (Statutes-M1739b; see also Jullien 1865). It continued to be prosperous and to attract members right up to the dissolution of all religious associates in 1792. And members continued to meet clandestinely during the height of the Revolution. The penitents Bourras incorporated meditative devotions into their activities. But they never gave them pride of place. Thus they responded to the new spirituality without paying the price it had exacted from other associations.

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NOTES

¹En menageant avec prudence les moments précieux des pauvres agonisants, auxquels ils tacheront d'inspirer une tendre confiance au Pere de Misericorde, melée de l'extrême regret de l'avoir offensé; leur faisant produire des actes de foy, d'esperance et d'amour, de resignation aux douleurs de l'agonie et a la mort même en union de la Mort et Passion de Nôtre Sauveur pour l'expiation de leur pechés.

²Le meme jour à quatre heures après midi, s'assembleront pour dire leurs Vespres. . . et après avoir ouï une exhortation, ils pourront quelque particuliere devotion a leur souhait, ou bien mediteront quelque points sur la passion de Notre Seigneur, our bien contempleront la sacrée Vierge parmi ses souffrances et douleurs au pied de la Croix.

³Uk est très veritable qu'avec toutes les vertus imaginables, avec la science, et la langue des anges, et des hommes, si nous manquons de miséricorde, et de charité, toutes les autres qualités, pour éminentes et relevées quelles soient, sans elle ne scauroyent, nous rendre agreable a la divine maiesté.

⁴Le XVIIe siècle fut, pour les associations de Pénitents, une période de calme et de prospérité; mais il n'avait pas encore pris fin que déjà se révélaient, au sein de ces confréries, de graves symptômes de décadence. La piété diminuait; les exercices se faisaient avec moins de régularité; les articles les plus rigoureux des statuts tombés en désuétude. Vers le milieu de siècle suivant, l'institution n'avait presque plus rien de l'esprit qui l'avait longtemps animée: de toutes les vertus et de toutes les oeuvres dont l'exercice avait rendu ces confréries si populaires il ne restait plus que des formes, des usages, des cérémonies, des fêtes surtout. La charité seule était encore vivante sur les ruines; mais elle avait presque partout changé d'objet, and, au lieu de se répandre au dehors, elle s'exerçait surtout à l'égard des confrères. A l'époque de la Révolution, le principe religieux de l'institution s'était affaibli à ce point que beaucoup de confrères ne remplissaient même pas le devoir de la communion pascale.

⁵Laquelle assemblée a été proposée par le frère Jean Gris, père Recteur, qui est avec douleur quel voit gemier (gémir?) depuis quelques années la plus grande partie des frères non seulement pour le Relâchement de quelques uns mais encore a cause de la discorde et division survenue plusieurs fois tant par le défaut des frères que faute d'explication nos statuts et règlements.

⁶Pour Contenir les frères et maintenir le bon ordre, il sera tenu tous les premiers dimanches du mois un Régiment particulier pour seclaircir de tous se qui s'est passé dans la chapelle et parmi les frères tant pour le temporel que pour le spirituel afin d'éviter qu'il n'y ait point de division ni de discorde parmi nous.

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BAPTISM AS DEATH AND BIRTH: A PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF ITS IMAGERY

Lucy Bregman

Abstract

Christian baptism, the subject of much recent investigation, centers upon two major images: death with Christ and new birth. This paper summarizes scholarly research on the meaning of these images in the New Testament and other ancient sources. It then introduces Lifton's psychological theory of death symbolism and the construction of death equivalents and applies this to the ancient Christian images and their patterns of associated meanings. Such symbolism aids in apprehending death and integrating it into an ongoing affirmation of life. Ancient baptismal death and birth imagery appears to have worked powerfully and meaningfully in this way.

I

Christian baptism is one of the West's most familiar rituals. Yet, within the last generation there has been a rethinking of its meaning, its role and its practice today. This rethinking is the result of the demise of Western "Christendom," with its model of baptism being analogous to citizenship. In the past baptism could function as a rite of passage for every newborn infant, inducting him or her into a Christian society. But today, what is it, or what should it be? These questions have led both Roman Catholics and Protestants to the New Testament and other ancient sources to find out what baptism meant for early Christians. Their efforts have produced a fine scholarly literature on the subject, along with suggestions for revitalizing baptism today.

The positive achievements of this scholarship include breaking through some time-honored assumptions and theological stalemates. In studying the earliest sources, it soon becomes apparent that the Augustinian view of baptism as cleansing for original sin is an idea which does not seem to have been important in the first Christian centuries. Moreover, to consider what baptism meant for the New Testament authors helped guide scholars away from Reformation-era dichotomies. It is simply not helpful to turn the Apostle Paul into a post-Tridentine Roman Catholic, or a "faith-alone" antisacramentalist Protestant, when such alternatives developed much later in Christian history. As we shall see, not everything in all ancient sources is considered equally relevant and some themes have not been re-valORIZED at all. Yet the general consensus of these scholars is that the earlier

sources reflect a richer, more theologically adequate vision of Christian initiation than what later came to be the norm.

Often, even the most academic authors have an additional purpose: to guide denominations in revising baptismal liturgical practice and policies. There is at present no agreement about what shape baptismal practice should take and the issue of infant versus "believer" baptism still dominates many discussions. With the general de-emphasis of Augustine's argument on behalf of infant baptism, proponents of this practice have been put somewhat on the defensive. Even if infant baptism continued to be the empirical norm, it is no longer an automatic theological norm for Roman Catholics or for many Protestants. Behind revisions on this issue looms the vastly changed sociological situation of churches in North America and Europe, not to mention to increased participation of Third World Christians in shaping theology and practice. If baptism is no longer a rite of initiation into Christendom, but entry into a church that functions as one institution out of many in a complex and secular society, personal commitment will count for far more. Theologies of baptism come to life in a fresh way in Asia and Africa where there are many adult converts for whom baptism represents a major break with the past. Perhaps this is one reason for the current prestige of the ancient period of Christianity—only for its first few centuries was the Christian church a voluntary organization, unaffiliated with the state and therefore in a rough way sociologically parallel to such situations in Asia and Africa today.

This paper will deal with baptismal theology, spirituality and imagery rather than with practice and church policy on baptism. It is easier to say how baptism was understood theologically by New Testament authors, than how it was experienced by converts of the first Christian centuries. Any psychological analysis of baptismal imagery is based on the findings and methodology of contemporary Biblical scholars and historians of ancient liturgy and therefore depends upon the limitations of their sources. No time machine exists to fling us back to the second century, to conduct pre- and post-baptismal interviews with random samples of catechumens. This does not mean that no definite answers can be given to the question, "What did baptism mean to Christians in the ancient church?" The theology and its imagery do tell us much, certainly about what church leaders led members to expect and about the problems they encountered. And if the goal of much of the current scholarship is a theology of baptism that can help guide contemporary Christians, then this kind of information will indeed be quite valuable.

Baptism was once a powerful and meaningful rite of initiation. To summarize the current scholarly findings on ancient Christian baptism, it was a rite: 1) of specifically *Christian* initiation, which often required a time of preparation and instruction so that candidates would know what to expect from Christian life; 2) in which imagery was linked both to Christ and his death and to a new birth from water and the Spirit; 3) designed for, and performed upon, adults, although children and infants apparently were baptized in the ancient period; 4) taken very seriously, by both church officials and potential candidates. Because standards for post-baptismal conduct were extremely rigorous, postponement of baptism was common and church leaders fumed against it. On the other hand, catechumens who were martyred prior to undergoing the rite were considered "as good as baptized."

Baptism's symbolism seems to have resonated deeply with the experiences of many candidates and provided imagery for them to reinterpret or redirect their lives. It worked through the twin Christian themes of sharing in Christ's death and receiving a new birth from the Holy Spirit. Extant first-person narratives ("testimonies") reveal this. Starting with the Pauline writings in the New Testament and continuing throughout the ancient period, we have many indications of what baptism meant and how candidates for baptism should expect it to alter their lives. Its powerful imagery of death with Christ and new birth invites a psychological investigation, especially now that contemporary scholarship has uncovered so many of its religious and social meanings.

The interpretation suggested in this paper contrasts in its emphases with the view of baptism familiar to most students of myth and rituals in Mircea Eliade's *The Sacred and the Profane*. He starts from "the universally disseminated aquatic symbolism" (Eliade:135) and sees the particularities of Christian baptismal meanings as fitting comfortably within the framework of such primordial, natural water symbolism. True, "in the Christian valorization of the waters there enter certain new elements connected with a history, specifically with "sacred history" (133), but these new elements do not really modify the archaic motifs of "watery death," of watery immersion as a return to creative, primordial chaos. Eliade admits that such themes cannot be found in post-Biblical Judaism, but he invokes the principle of Jungian archetypes, of unconscious and universal symbols, waiting to be rediscovered (136). Thus anywhere water appears in a rite of initiation, it will carry certain psychological meanings, regardless of time, place and explicit theological statements.

How does contemporary scholarship evaluate this interpretation? Biblical scholar Rudolph Schnackenburg (137f.) believes that views which focus upon "the action of the rite," are erroneous, at least with regard to the Biblical materials. Going down into water and emerging from it is not, especially in the Pauline accounts, the central theme of baptism. Not only does this "liturgical" understanding neglect the eschatological aspect of the rite (intrinsic to its origins with John the Baptizer), but it underestimates the specifically Christ-centered meaning given to baptism. Baptism in Pauline thought is a rite of mythic identification with Christ. In Schnackenburg's summary:

That which happened to Christ happens also to Christians; dying and rising with Him becomes a rule in the Christian life, which works itself out in all areas and in every aspect of life (157).

Crucifixion, death, burial and being raised by God are, in this view, the primary theological meanings linked to baptism. Emphasis on water and its sacred power is a later development, with Tertullian its major exponent.

Schnackenburg's outlook typifies that held by the contemporary re-thinkers of baptism. Water is de-emphasized, as is an interest in liturgy per se. On the other hand, debates arise over how much of the "what happened to Christ" is meant to apply to the current situation of baptized Christians and how much is left to the eschatological future. Is "risen with Christ" a fact of Christian experience *now*, or does it await the consummation, the Day of Christ? In Romans 6:3-11 Paul seems to prefer the latter view, while other Biblical materials, such as Colossians 2:9-15 hold that "you were also raised with him." For this reason many scholars insist that Colossians and Ephesians are deutero-Pauline, because they display an "unqualified statement of the mystery-religion notion of sharing the fate of the cult-deity" (Fuller:23). In other words, such writings are theologically inferior because they have lost Paul's eschatological tension between the present and the not-yet. Perhaps a more positive approach to this development is to admit that "Incorporation' language has a logic of its own" (Beker:273). As images of incorporation are applied successfully to one area of experience they will be expanded to take in others. The supposedly deutero-Pauline writings simply carry this process a bit further than Paul himself.

These views reveal a puzzling complexity in the rite of baptism itself. If the meanings intended by the rite are to link the baptized with Christ, to make Christ's crucifixion and resurrection the central motifs for a new identity "in Christ," then

the specific imagery for Christ's death must be significant. Yet such meanings and imagery do not seem fully congruent with the rite's action. Schnackenburg leaves one with the impression that, had Paul been left free to design an initiation ritual for Christians, it would have employed nails and a tomb, but probably not water. Unlike the Lord's Supper, which directly imitates the paradigmatic actions of eating and drinking, baptism could never duplicate crucifixion. What the Tertullian-Eliade "water" approach overlooks is the specific imagery of crucifixion. Yet even Paul sometimes refers to baptism as "washing" and no one has suggested that immersion in water was ever questioned as adequate to symbolize "crucifixion with Christ."

We now turn to the language of baptism as a birth. This language probably aided in baptism's transformation into a birth rite in the anthropological sense, a rite of passage appropriate for all new citizens of Christendom. But its Biblical origin betrays no concern with this function. Instead, the text from John's Gospel which links baptism with birth "unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" also deliberately evokes the contrast between spiritual and natural birth. "Nicodemus said to him, 'How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?'"(John 3:4-5). The ancient church leaders explored this contrast and intensified it in their baptismal homilies. Through this image of baptism as birth from the Holy Spirit, a new protagonist entered the mythic drama of baptism: Mother Church. Tertullian, for instance, cites the trinitarian baptismal formula and then says:

There is a necessary addition, the mention of the Church: because where there are the three, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, there is the Church, which is a body of three (Tertullian, Ch. 6, 17) ¹

Sometimes, the figure of Mother Church overpowers the Trinity in the vivid imagery used in conjunction with baptism. By 370 C.E., in the words of Zeno of Verona, the baptismal font becomes "the fountain, the sweet womb of your virgin mother" (Hamman:65). The contrast with "natural birth" was prominent in this imagery. Zeno continued:

You are to be born, not by the ordinary rules of childbirth—mothers groaning in the pain of labor and bringing you into the miseries of this world, weeping sullied and wrapped in sullied swaddling clothes, but exalting in joy, children of heaven, children free from sin (Hamman:64).

However enthusiastic many scholars are toward the ancient period as a whole, no contemporary revitalizer of baptism has

advocated a return to these images. Instead, such ideas appear strange and vaguely repugnant to many of us. The earlier, more "Christ-centered" focus is what today's scholars and theologians wish to emphasize, selecting this as most normative and primary out of the profusion of ancient themes.

II

How can a psychological perspective help clarify these diverse images of and within baptism? What is at stake in selecting or stressing one image over others? One psychologist helpful in an exploration of baptism's imagery is Robert J. Lifton. In *The Broken Connection: On Death and the Continuity of Life*, Lifton examines how death and death symbolism function in conjunction with virtually every aspect of human life. Unlike Ernest Becker, whose *Denial of Death* assumes from the start that all symbols act to defend the psyche from reality, Lifton believes that symbolism works constructively and non-defensively. Particularly, imagery of death and immortality allows human beings to acknowledge finitude and mortality, while affirming continuity in nature and history (Lifton:17). One's own death, Lifton believes, is simply not the end of everything, as modern culture and most psychoanalytic theory has falsely imagined it. Death can be and has been affirmed as connected to ongoing life, symbolized within a wider context of vitality and hope. This approach insists that for human beings death is always both biological and psychic; it includes our experiences of embodiment and relationship. Lifton's view is explicitly opposed to the Freudian claims that death can only be "denied" and that the contemporary Western attitude toward death is therefore "normal" (Lifton:47).

Like Freud, Lifton looks to childhood as a source of imagery. According to Lifton, the psyche very early in life constructs "death equivalents," clusters of imagery drawn from universal, pervasive childhood experiences. These "death equivalents" provide an intuitive sense of what death is like in contrast to vitality. All of us carry such clusters of imagery within us and these enable us to appropriate whatever cultural ideas about death and immortality are available. This approach permits Lifton to incorporate into his theory empirical studies of ways children manage to interpret and symbolize death, studies which the more simplistic "denial" view usually ignored or treated as superficial.

There are three clusters of death equivalents (Lifton:53), each paired with its corresponding mode of vitality:

separation-connection
disintegration-integrity
stasis-movement

Insofar as a person experiences him or herself as separated, mutilated or immobilized, he or she can build an image of what death must be like. Out of images forged in early childhood come the raw materials for cultural expressions of death-and-life symbolism such as those found in initiation rites, including Christian baptism.

Separation focuses upon the fear of abandonment and loss. Just as birth in psychoanalytic literature is a "separation," so birth prepares us for the subsequent separations and losses until death, the final separation from life and relationships. Yet the life of a human individual requires separateness in order for real relationships to be established. The child learns to experience both. Throughout childhood to leave and to die are linked together, so that anxiety over abandonment and fear of death (one's own, as well as the other's) are part of this cluster. Current clinical work with the dying, such as that of Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, assumes this model of death-as-separation and holds that the major fear of dying will be overcome when one does not feel abandoned by others. For Lifton there is no birth without "birth trauma"—to be born carries with it a legacy of anxiety and insecurity.

The second death equivalent and its cluster of imagery has attracted the lion's share of psychoanalytic attention. "Disintegration" means threat of mutilation, bodily dismemberment or castration, all of which are for Lifton symbolic expressions for death. This view is just the reverse of the classical Freudian one which interprets the fear of death as a disguised expression of the fear of castration. Exaggerated anxiety over disintegration makes the body itself a source of unlimited and intolerable humiliation. But for Lifton experience of bodily hurt is necessary for "the emergence of an inclusive body image," one which includes "finitude, limitation and boundary" (Lifton:63). He believes the child can accept the potential of disintegration and vulnerability for the sake of being solidly embodied, of being a self physically unique and unconfused with any other self. Readers familiar with Becker's *Denial of Death* will marvel at the way Lifton begins with the same "data" or Freudian motifs but interprets them non-defensively. For Becker, the child finds the body's vulnerability intolerable and flees from it into fantasies of omnipotence. In contrast, Lifton deals with the distressing side of

embodiment in the light of his belief that acceptance of one's own mortality and embodiment is a human possibility.

The third death equivalent, "stasis," includes all images of sleep, enclosure and immobility. When a child answers the question, "What does it mean to be dead?" with the words: "Can't move, can't see, can't hear, can't breathe" (Lifton:63) death is being imagined in terms of stasis. Children often believe death to be a reversible condition, like sleep. In contrast to stasis, life is signified by movement and activity. Lifton notes that psychoanalytic theory has had relatively little to say about such imagery, although he associates this cluster with several pathological conditions, such as clinical depressive syndromes, in which "can't move, can't see, can't hear, can't breathe" becomes the sufferer's mode of being.

Some might argue that psychological interpretations such as these are implausible when applied to the imagery of ancient persons, whose family lives and childhoods are unknown to us. Psychoanalytic meanings are falsely universal in form; they reflect certain social-historical family patterns not "human nature" per se. Lifton, who leaves a great deal of room in his theory for cultural and historical factors, would still find in childhood a universal source for death equivalents and their accompanying clusters of images. Those who opt for an Eliadian interpretation have already assumed that far more sweeping patterns of "universal" and "unconscious" meanings are, so to speak, buried in the baptismal waters. However, Lifton's theory turns our attention to the way persons might draw upon early experience to invest ritual and theology with deep emotional significance.

III

Lifton's sorting of death imagery into these three clusters can help us examine baptismal death and birth in more detail. Moreover, Lifton's theory may cast light on certain puzzling features associated with the rite's meanings. Each of the three death equivalents draws on somewhat different childhood experiences and anxieties: abandonment, mutilation, enclosure. This approach makes the difference between death by immersion in water and death by crucifixion a real one. The first evokes the abolition of all separateness, a return to pre-birth conditions in an attempt to undo the rupture of birth. The second relies directly upon disintegration symbolism. Baptism as death/birth in primordial waters can be interpreted as reassuring, as a return to a condition prior to the death/life polarity. In contrast, death

imagery which evokes mutilation cannot work this way. Instead of reassuring participants in the rite, the imagery would seem to intensify the anxiety of symbolic death by linking it with pain and violence. In the terms of Lifton's polarities, one could see life and vitality assigned entirely to the baptismal image of resurrection, the eschatological act of God in Christ.

Yet scholars insist that crucifixion imagery dominated the apostle Paul's personal appropriation of baptism's significance: "I have been crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20), "always carrying in the body the death of Jesus" (2 Cor. 4:10) and hoping "that I may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death" (Phil. 3:10). This theme, vital to later Christian spirituality, is Paul's peculiarly intense and inward version of the general baptismal principle cited by Schnackenburg: "that which happened to Christ happens also to Christians." And "that which happened to Christ" culminates in a death best imagined as disintegration rather than separation or stasis. Violence and anxiety over the body's vulnerability are intrinsic to this imagery. To see martyrdom as equivalent to baptism makes perfect sense in terms of this death symbolism. Moreover, since baptism is "death to the sinful self" (Rom. 6:6), the Christian struggle against sin, the flesh and the "rulers of this age" can all be amalgamated into the image of violent destruction.

It may be that Paul stressed these themes of death, struggle and the "not yet" quality of Christian existence because some of his opponents denied them. In Corinth some viewed baptism as equivalent to full salvation, incorporation into Christ's resurrection and glory *now*. To counter this view, Paul discovered another connection between baptism and violent death. He reminded his opponents that the Israelites of the Exodus were all "baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. . ." yet many of them "were overthrown," "destroyed by the Destroyer" in the wilderness (I Cor. 10:2-10). Here Paul substitutes an even more threatening image of violent death to heighten the death-to-sin imagery he finds inherent in baptism's meaning. Yet, the completeness of the rite, its ritual action of immersion and emergence, should not deceive us into confusing it with completed salvation.

I strongly suspect that many contemporary scholars dislike the allegedly deutero-Pauline writings, Colossians and Ephesians, for their weakening of this caution. These writings are much milder than the "authentic" Paul in their vision of suffering and weakness as the Christian's current state. In them, baptism appears closer to completed salvation, for the baptized are already "risen with Christ." "Risen with Christ" seems—for some

contemporary theological writers, if not for ancient people—to permit a kind of triumphant transcendence of suffering in the present. The contention is that the true Pauline vision treats crucifixion, not resurrection, as the Christian's present reality:

There is a crucial and mysterious 'dark' residue of suffering and death in God's created order that will be resolved only by the final resurrection of the dead in the glory of God (Beker:233).

Disintegration and anxiety over the mortal body's weakness and vulnerability are not escapable even for the baptized. Although an attempt to eliminate traces of triumphalist spirituality from Christian life may be a product of the twentieth century more than of the New Testament itself, Paul's own statements about his life as "given over to death" seem steeped in such a view. In Liftonian terms this use of death imagery affirms the connection between death and life without breaking it down into a simple opposition.

But can Lifton's approach help clarify how baptism, with its death-as-disintegration imagery, became linked not only to crucifixion but also to circumcision in early Christian thought? Colossians 2:11 reads "In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ." This image is a substitute for "crucifixion," since the next phrase is "and you were buried with him in baptism." As one scholar explains: "Here is a circumcision which entailed the stripping off not of a small portion of flesh but the whole body a gruesome figure for death" (Beasley-Murray:152).

The author of Colossians 3:3 writes to the baptized, "You have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Note that all this is found in an allegedly more "triumphalist" section of the New Testament! Circumcision, providing a gruesome figure for death, also invites its own associations. First, later Christian teaching about baptism often linked it to circumcision as a rite of entrance into the covenant people and defended infant baptism on the ground of a supposed parallel to circumcision. Yet the above imagery hardly suggests this kind of parallel; rather, it seems to focus on anxiety about bodily integrity and vulnerability, and may also imply hope for ascetic triumph.

Second, there is the traditional Freudian association between circumcision and castration. We recall Lifton's attempt to revise psychoanalytic views on castration in the light of his theory of death equivalents. A strict Freudian interpretation would begin with fear of castration and treat circumcision as an expression of that fear. Freud's own writings on Christianity as a "son religion"

take for granted his view of the primordial murder of the father by the sons whose guilt seeks relief in the substitution of Christ, who bore the full punishment meted out by the Divine Father (Freud:154). This theology of the atonement as a propitiation, as a punishment of the son by the father relieves the guilt of mankind, yet symbolically emasculates those who identify with the son. Such an interpretation may apply to later versions of Christianity but it is foreign to the imagery and theology of both Romans and Colossians. In contrast, Lifton's approach is not to focus on Oedipal conflict, but to see how death imagery helps persons connect death and life throughout their own life cycle. Lifton would also acknowledge that an image of death as circumcision could evoke thoughts of worry about castration, the threat to masculinity and power and control over death. It is especially relevant, in this regard, to find the author of Colossians concerned with how ascetic triumph over the body, including circumcision, could be a mask for pride and self-assertion. The true and invisible circumcision, "not made by hands," brings both humility and an awareness of vulnerability.

Yet certain uses of death and life imagery undoubtedly sever the two, creating patterns of intensified opposition. Some of the ancient interpretations of baptism-as-birth seem to do this. Birth from water, the Holy Spirit and Virgin Mother Church may correspond more closely to the action of the rite, but something of the Pauline ambiguity was lost when this became primary. For example, when Paul used "birth" language, he spoke of being "again in travail" until Christ could be formed in his erring converts (Gal. 4:19)! One suspects that had Paul wanted to use birth imagery for baptism, he would have linked birth as a painful yet joyful experience with Christ's gruesome yet liberating death on the cross. Where Zeno and others saw dichotomy, Paul would have found paradox.

In Pauline thought a great deal of negative imagery is associated with the weak and vulnerable "mortal body" and no amount of contemporary reinterpretation can overlook it. The resurrection body will be the glorified body, no longer mortal, weak, or dishonorable. Until then, the body we know is a source of weakness and tied symbolically to pain and death. And yet the New Testament contains many nuances in references to both mortal embodiment and natural birth.

Zeno's popular form of baptismal birth imagery is in direct contrast to human birth. Virgin Mother Church replaces actual women as the one "good mother," who never separates herself from her children, or gives birth to them "sullied and weeping" into a world of pain. The birth of baptism, then, is a birth without

birth-trauma, a birth that nullifies the separation which Lifton maintains is intrinsic to natural birth. And just as anxiety over separation is overcome at the level of the rite, so Virgin Mother Church permits no image of maturity that includes a corresponding image of independence from her offspring. Newborn children of baptism will remain suckling infants indefinitely. Modern scholars fail to note the appeal that a baptism uncontaminated by fear of death would have had for the ancient world. Today, in an age when voluntary personal religious commitment is becoming a norm, the image of perpetual infancy fails to resonate either with current sensibility about individual autonomy or the fundamental ambiguity of Christian existence.

When coupled with Lifton's use of the psychoanalytic tradition Zeno's repugnance for natural birth and motherhood raises another interesting issue. Circumcision was Judaism's primary initiation rite for infants and adult converts. By continuing to use John's rite of baptism for their initiation ritual, Christians chose an act that was gender-neutral. Hence, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." There is neither "male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:27-28). This thought would not be possible were circumcision the rite of entry. Although Christianity appealed to women for many reasons, the gender-neutral rite of initiation was particularly attractive. It confirmed their hopes that within this movement women could gain respect as persons and become active participants in all areas of worship and ministry.

From this perspective, it might appear that any return to "male" patterns of imagery such as circumcision, would be a step backward. Seemingly, a liturgical emphasis on baptismal waters, birth, etc., would continue the original gender-neutral form of initiation. But Lifton's division of death imagery into the three clusters causes one to suspect that the "disintegration" pattern is ordinarily more salient for men. Boys, being more physically active, are also more anxious about bodily limits, bodily harm and punishment for excessive activity. Classical Freudian views tie all these concerns together under the label of castration anxiety. Tentatively, we might say that although the rite of immersion in water is gender-neutral, the Pauline focus on bodily mutilation and disintegration which accompanies crucifixion re-introduces a kind of male bias at the level of imagery. This bias highlights the fact that "dying with Christ" is an identification with a male figure. Baptism's link with circumcision, even when indirect or symbolic, serves to strengthen this bias.

The focus on birth and water accompanied by the explicit presence of Virgin Mother Church reveals what can happen when additional meanings are overlaid upon a gender-neutral rite. Following Bettelheim (120), some psychoanalytic interpreters might see the intensified contrast between "birth from women" and "spiritual birth" as the product of male envy of women's power to give birth. Lifton would reject this interpretation but still note that hostility against women as mothers and fear of their potential for abandonment and engulfment might be at work in the birth imagery employed by Zeno. Certainly, anxiety and disappointment over natural mothering could have laid the ground for the development of an idealized Virgin Mother Church as a major figure in baptism. It is important to remember that neither this nor any other male bias in baptismal imagery kept ancient women from appropriating baptism's meaning or participating enthusiastically in the rite. Yet the cost of appropriating this imagery may have been more intense and unambiguous than Paul's original imagery and may have prompted women to seek "spiritual" lives. The unusual legend of Thecla includes a baptism scene steeped in disintegration and mutilation imagery, and features her continuous confrontation with death by martyrdom and her total rejection of sexuality.²

I have tried to illuminate a few of the ways being crucified with Christ and the action of the baptismal rite may have worked psychologically to evoke clusters of emotionally powerful imagery. This imagery, arising out of early experiences with death equivalents and their corresponding polarities, could have helped baptism become a transforming event for Christians in the ancient church. It provided a way to symbolize a fresh start, yet one in which being alive in Christ was balanced by an awareness of death and its power in the midst of life. It seems to have worked, not only as a rite of initiation into an unpopular religious movement, but as a symbolic expression of many of the themes Lifton and other psychologists see as critical for human beings to encounter and express. It remains to be found whether new understandings of baptism as the rite of Christian initiation can help restore this depth of emotional and spiritual significance for persons today.

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NOTES

¹This quotation sounds surprisingly like Jung's speculations on the incompleteness of the Trinity. Jung, like Tertullian, added a fourth Person, turning the Trinity to quaternity. As in Jung, Tertullian's fourth is feminine! For Jung's reflections see "Psychology and Religion," *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, Vol. 11. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.

²The story of Thecla is found in "The Acts of Paul and Thecla," in *The New Testament Apocrypha*, Ed. M. R. James. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960. The story includes a scene of self-baptism under the most dramatic circumstances. Thecla, the pious virgin and disciple of Paul, is thrown to the wild beasts of the arena. They refuse to devour her. Nearby, there is a pool filled with ferocious seals. She flings herself in, crying out "I do baptize myself on the last day!" But it was not her last day; the seals were struck dead by lightning and floated to the surface while Thecla miraculously survived to face new threats to her life and chastity.

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MIDWINTER NIGHT'S DREAM: "THE EVE OF ST. AGNES" AS SACRED RITUAL IN THE OLD RELIGION OF THE BRITONS

Judith Arcana

Abstract

Keats not only used classical Greek myth in his poetry, but he also employed elements of the old religion of Britain known as the Craft, Witchcraft, or Faery. Keats incorporated elements of the old religion in "The Eve of St. Agnes" to present as his "plot" a specific ritual: the initiation and transformation of the maiden into the mother. Moreover, by weaving together two strands of imagery, Christian and Faery, Keats has presented the triumph of the old religion over Christianity as his theme. This article includes a brief review of the response of critics to the ritualistic and mystical aspects of the poem, as well as a discussion of other studies of ritual in literature that contrast with or complement this presentation. The body of the essay is a Faery reading of "The Eve of St. Agnes" in which the author explicates the poem by identifying and delineating both the structure of the ancient ritual as Keats interprets it and the interplay between Faery and Christian imagery. Major characters in the narrative are analyzed—Angela the Crone, Madeline the maiden-to-be-mother, Porphyro the young god and the beadsman, the lone representative of the Christian church.

Scholars have spent much time and ink tracing the results of Keats' delight in Chapman's Homer. Indeed, classical mythology is nearly omnipresent in Keats' poetry. But when he was not traveling in those realms of gold, he was at home with the old religion. In Britain, the old religion was called the Craft, Witchcraft, or Faery, and those who kept the rites were called the old ones, witches and faeries. The basic mythology of the Craft was very similar to that of nearby cultures in Europe, North Africa, Scandinavia and the Middle East. The goddess appeared in her trinity of maiden, mother and crone, and the young god was her son, her lover and her consort—their life cycles turning with the seasons and the waxing and waning of the moon.

Keats became familiar with the rituals of the Craft in reading literature filled with its language and stories. Ian Jack in discussing the writing of "The Eve of St. Agnes" says the poem "is the work of a man who had read 'The Faerie Queene' and *Romeo and Juliet*, Milton's minor poems and Browne's *Brittania's Pastorals*, 'The Anatomy of Melancholy' and 'The Castle of Indolence,' the romances of Mrs. Radcliffe and the skilful fabrications of Thomas Chatterton" (191). Other critics¹ have also found Keats' mythical sources in his reading, noting especially the works of writers² who were heirs to the Celtic Faery tradition. But scholarship is not the soul of poetry and Keats brought more to the "Eve" than underlined texts; he inherited the history and

lore of his people spiritually and emotionally as well as intellectually.

This sort of inheritance presents a problem for scholars of myth and ritual in literature, who want evidence for or proof of such connections. Joseph L. Blotner has proposed three possible solutions to this problem in his study of *To The Lighthouse*. First, the critic may assume that "the artist knowingly used myth as a basis for. . . creation," and deliberately included it in the work. This critical approach is exemplified by Robert J. Brophy in his study of myth and ritual in the poetry of Robinson Jeffers. Brophy argues that Jeffers has deliberately adapted Euripides. A second critical alternative is to decide that such patterns "welled up out of the artist's subconsciousness. . . as an archetyp[e]. . . or a fragment of the collective or racial unconscious" (Blotner:243). This perspective is implicit in the work of N.J. Girardot who traces initiation rites in the fairy tale of Snow White. A third position, which Blotner himself has chosen, is to interpret the work in terms of the myth; we may bring myth or ritual "to the work at its reading," and apply it "from the outside, so to speak" (244). Edward P. Vargo, in his work on ritual in John Updike's fiction, "applies" the concept of ritual to a structural analysis of the novels, on occasion defining the work itself as ritual.

In actual usage, critics extend and combine Blotner's useful categories. Vargo, for instance, also considers Updike's ritual to have been born of his religious concerns and his resultant "attempts to visualize the experience of the transcendent" (Vargo:16). Likewise, Brophy argues that Jeffers is not only a deliberate adaptor, but "has the same perception of the physical world as that from which ancient ritual and mythology grew" (9). Among Keats scholars, Charles Patterson (14-19) cites sources of myth and folklore in Keats' reading and also asserts that the poet could "take possession of subconscious materials reaching back to the primordial." Patterson feels that Keats' poetry is enriched by his "external knowledge of the daemonic³ together with his inner affinities with it and subconscious proclivities for it" (20-21). Similarly, Dorothy Van Ghent feels that "the myths and legends and ritual circumstance that constantly attracted Keats in his reading were those in which his own interior landscape ha[d] been culturally crystallized" (22).⁴ Discussing Keats' *La belle dame sans mercy*⁵ and citing "reverberations of Celtic mythology that recur again and again in great medieval romances," Van Ghent says that "the dramatic situation in the poem is far less imitative or dependent upon a specific literary 'source' than it is intuitive and hereditary" (128-29).

Patterson and Van Ghent have combined at least two, perhaps all three of Blotner's categories in their analyses of Keats' cultural inheritance of myth and ritual. They acknowledge the influence of the poet's own scholarship, but insist upon the importance of the historical collective unconscious. Likewise, I argue for a reading of "The Eve of St. Agnes" in which we apply our own late twentieth century knowledge and interpretation of the old religion to Keats' early nineteenth century use of its rituals and personae.⁶

The impulse Patterson calls "subconscious" and Van Ghent calls "intuitive" must have been very strong indeed when Keats was writing. "The Eve of St. Agnes" is superficially Christian in its imagery, for it carries a strong subtext of Faery ritual and celebration that contradicts the apparent Christianity. In fact, the Faery subtext is the source of much of our emotional response to the poem, especially to the secular core of Madeline's and Porphyro's relationship. This is the same struggle, between two sets of essentially antagonistic images, that Anca Vlasopolos found in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Vlasopolos explains that the play, "like the ritual which informs its structure, maintains a dual frame of reference, Christian and pagan" (21). Noting that the Christian holiday of St. John's Day was overlaid on a pagan "fertility rite," the critic points out that the lovers' flight to the woods, "where they act out the pagan rite" (29), is prerequisite to the essentially Christian and urban resolution of the plot.⁷

Whereas Shakespeare seems to have used the rites of the old religion to represent a temporary state of chaos and sexual license, Keats' "pagan" rituals transcend those of Christianity, and eventually carry the lovers—and the poem—away from the Christian realm entirely. It may be that "Keats' widely known. . . antipathy to Christianity" spurred his search for an "alternative to traditional religion" (Sharp:9, 34-35) and led him back, however unconsciously, to the Craft. Or perhaps it is his own spiritual struggle we see here, for the Christian and Faery imagery repeatedly submerge each other throughout the poem until the old religion finally triumphs, rising with the wind of that storm in which the lovers escape the cold faith of the beadsman.

Though some critics have discussed the faery imagery or "magic" of the poem and a few have identified some of its elements with pre-classical Greek religion, no one has given "The Eve" a Faery reading. Marian Hollingsworth Cusac describes the narrator as an enchanter, the "story-teller who creates. . . weaves in a magic manner. . . [and] enchants us. . . into belief in. . . [his story's] witchery" (114). Like Keats, she has chosen the language

of the Craft to talk about "The Eve" but she is interested in the imagery of enchantment only as an organizing principle (119) in the poem, and does not deal with its meaning. Karen J. Harvey, working to understand Keats' reference to Merlin, studied Arthurian Merlin. She rightly points out that "there is a striking parallel of the position of Porphyro with the position of Merlin" (89). She notes that Porphyro is "just as charmed or enchanted as Madeline" and mentions the role of Angela, the "old crone" as a "guide" (90-91). Nonetheless, she is not interested in the antecedents of the Arthurian Merlin. She regards Porphyro as "trapped," and considers the "images of Faery in this poem. . . threatening" (92-94). Herbert G. Wright also views the Faery aspect of the poem as evil; he says that it is rooted in the strange fascination of "sinister magic and superstition" (14). His negative response to the Faery elements bolsters his theory that the poem has a tragic ending, that Porphyro and Madeline die in the howling storm.

More positive and extensive concern for the ritual aspects of "The Eve" is displayed by Bernard Blackstone who recognizes that Keats' imagery is drawn from the old religion and identifies Madeline with the Kore of the Eleusinian mysteries (45-48). He writes of the moon's influence and the moon-goddess and describes Porphyro's exotic table as "the ritual meal of non-animal, initiatory food." Dorothy Van Ghent also traces several strands of ancient ritual through the tapestry of the poem but goes further than Blackstone. She identifies Madeline with the Kore, daughter of the Great Mother (56), explains that "bride is really a goddess" (91) and points out that "some special food or drink is taken in connection with a visionary experience. . . an epiphany of the Great Goddess" (57). Van Ghent's framework, however, is Greek and she has focused only on Keats' heroes. Celtic imagery in "The Eve" focuses on Madeline, the maiden who becomes the bride through a ritual consummation with her consort. Van Ghent remains one of the few scholars who recognizes that "The Eve" is an example of what Richard Hardin calls narratives which "not only contain rituals" but "are about them, about the feelings they generate and the needs they serve, so that we may justly speak of a ritual ambience in these works" (855). "The Eve of St. Agnes" is about the conflict between Christian and Faery ritual just as it is about the feelings and needs of those whom the rituals serve, Madeline and Porphyro, Keats and the reader.

Throughout the poem, both Faery imagery and references to the old religion have been hidden in Christian symbols. The holiday of St. Agnes' Eve itself is a Christian overlay. Like many ahistorical saints young Agnes is an amalgam. Versions of her

story report her being burnt, strangled or beheaded because she rejected pagan suitors at age thirteen. Other stories say that she was sent to a brothel by her father, hence her association with prostitution (see Costelloe). But her image and rituals predate Christianity. Her Roman effigy appears to be a "Roman-Jewish version of the Holy Ewe Lamb (Agnus), virgin incarnation of the [Hebrew] Ewe-goddess, Rachel" (Walker:13). The "brothel" was probably a "house of sacred prostitutes"—priestesses of Aphrodite's *alacia*, since her Christian rituals reveal an identification with Aphrodite through associations with sex, love and marriage and with the divination, by young women, of the names of future lovers (13).⁸ Certainly no Christian holiday would encourage erotic dreams in young virgins.

Behind the Greek, Hebrew and Christian goddesses is an ancient goddess of love and sex who shares some Agnes/Aphrodite attributes: she is Bride or Brigit, older than Celtic Ireland. Her holy day was celebrated in winter, between the solstice (the birth of the light) and the spring equinox (when light and dark are in balance). January 21, St. Agnes' Day, begins a new month in the Celtic calendar called Luis, the rising light. Witches worshiped Bride/Brigit as queen of the land of Faery, in the trinity called the Three Blessed Ladies of Britain, identified with phases of the moon. Her feast was the Feast of the Flame and she was the essence of lust as fire. A perpetual flame was tended at her shrine. The Celts later called her the Queen of Heaven and Holy Dove, both common names for the Great Mother Goddess (Walker:116-18; Noble:89-92).

So when Keats chose to set his romance on the Eve of St. Agnes and to display "the sweet Virgin's picture"⁹ in his first stanza, he immediately introduced both Witchcraft and Christianity, striking a series of reverberations in imagery. The remainder of the religious imagery in the first few stanzas is entirely Christian and very cold. The beadsman recites his rosary, his breath like "pious incense. . . taking flight for heaven." He walks "along the chapel aisle" lined with "Knights, ladies, praying in dumb orat'ries." He takes on "harsh penance," praying for "sinners' sake" among "rough ashes." "Carved angels" with crossed wings hold up the ceiling in the banquet room. The atmosphere is "bitter chill," "frozen" and "icy." Only the imagery of Faery will bring the heat of Brigit's fire.

Stanza five suggests the condition of Keats himself, "shadows haunting fairily/The brain. . . [with] old romance." The poet is probably conscious of only a fraction of the origins of those fairy shadows as he introduces Madeline and calls her "Lady," a title of respect and worship in the old religion. Her own name is a form of

Magdalena or Magdalen, often associated with the town of Magdala in Galilee, but more importantly here, associated with Maiden and Maid (i.e., Virgin), as well as with Mary, Maia and Mari—all names of the goddess. "La Magdaleine" in the south of France is a cave containing carved mother images. A Christian explanation of its existence is that the Magdalene of the New Testament lived in that cave for thirty years without eating and drinking, sustained only by angel song (Walker: 613-16).

This Madeline has been taught the purpose and method of her fasting ritual by wise women, "old dames." The Christian overlay is very thin though Keats seems to imply that the rite is foolish superstition by referring to it as a "whim." Though the rite is purportedly connected to a Christian holiday, the Church surely disavows it. But in the old religion, "young virgins" would be trained by older women, taught to watch the phases of the moon, fast in silence, seek their visions and prepare for sexual initiation. In the Craft, "sexuality, as a direct expression of the life force, is seen as numinous and sacred" (Starhawk:12). Madeline would know that she was to embody the moon goddess and that her lover would embody the young god, her partner in the metamorphosis from maiden to mother (78).

Madeline's "vision of delight/And soft adorings" will mark her initiation into ripeness as a woman. She can scarcely hear the music, "yearning like a God in pain," just as the young god suffers for the mother, giving his essence to fertilize her. Her "maiden eyes divine" see nothing of her immediate surroundings; they are already focused inward.¹⁰ Hall (23) explains that "incubation rites, which enabled the passage of a person from one life stage to another" included sleeping in the temple to seek a dream or vision. Madeline is "Hoodwink'd with faery fancy," covered with the cloak of Faery, "all amort," dead to all but her vision. The unshorn lambs of stanza eight are pre-Christian symbols of sexual virginity, to be shorn or sacrificed as she becomes a sexual woman.

Porphyro enters with his "heart on fire." Burning with Brigit's flame, he has come to serve the bride. His friend, Angela, is an "old beldame," "gossip," or "crone," an aged creature who walks with an "ivory-headed wand." In the Craft, old witches were revered. "Gossip" was a title of respect, literally meaning "god speaks through a woman" (Hall:189). Crones, who often held wands as symbols of their magic and power, always acted as "medial women," those who see, speak and remember in a "patchy or dabbled" way, those who have been (as we sometimes still say) "touched." Crones are sacred guides "in times of difficult passage," in "emergency situations. . . where a new being is

emerging" (Hall:197). Though Angela's name and some of her words seem Christian, her character and role are Faery.

Porphyro understands Angela's function and position, for he invokes the oath of the sacred women when he questions her in stanza thirteen. "O tell me. . . by the holy loom/Which none but sacred sisterhood may see/When they St. Agnes' wool are weaving piously." He speaks to her of the old religion and Angela recognizes that he, too, is magic. She tells him, "Thou must hold water in a witch's sieve/And be liege-lord of all the Elves and Fays" if he is to be able to breach the castle of his enemies and to lay claim to the priesthood.

In stanza nineteen Madeline is first called a bride, one who will sleep in "pale enchantment" while "legion'd fairies" dance across her bed. This is the only place where Keats uses fairies in the sense of pixies—tiny, airy creatures of imagination. Then, as if to emphasize the contrast between these and the religion of Faery, Keats invokes the name of Merlin, whose power and wisdom are pillars of Celtic myth. Merlin is associated with the Faery Queen; he was her consort and one of her chosen magicians. Although thinly Christianized to serve King Arthur in later legends, the wizard antedates him in the Craft by thousands of years. Merlin's "Demon" is Nimue, or Morgan le Fay. She is associated with Diana and the moon. Christians said she was sent to take Merlin back into the darkness because he gave his allegiance to Arthur's cross (Walker:650).

So Porphyro is to take Merlin's role, serving the maiden-to-be-mother under the guidance of the crone. Angela, called "Dame," another title like "Lady," provides the "dainties" for Porphyro's offering and instructs him to play music for Madeline. She leads him to "the maiden's chamber" where he conceals himself, for Madeline may not see him until the proper time in the ritual.

Madeline, though by now a "charmed maid" and "mission'd spirit," is able to walk Angela "to a safe level matting" before she enters her room. This stairway scene is a part of the ritual; the maiden rises and helps the crone descend. Climbing the stairs, she is a "ring-dove," symbol of the virgin, sought by the hunter. In a full moon ritual, the young god, who is "The Hunter[,] draws near to the Brilliant One, She who awakens yearning in the heart and who is the end of desire" (Starhawk:166-67). In stanza thirty-seven, the virgin dove appears again, but in the Christian mode, "forlorn and lost with sick unpruned wing." These two dove metaphors are a good example of the intertwining of Faery and Christian views of virginity and sexuality in women.

Having closed her door and thus entered the "shrine," Madeline is "akin/To spirits of the air, and visions wide." She is

transported; her trance state is complete. Soon she is bathed in the glowing colors of stained glass windows illuminated by the moon. The rich red and purple lights flow over her body, foreshadowing the melting rose and violet of the lovers' embrace. But Christian imagery again intrudes. "Rose bloom fell on her hands" pressed together in prayer and "soft amethyst" shone "on her silver cross." The cross is stripped of its sexual, pre-Christian symbolism. She wears the halo of "a splendid angel," prepared for heaven and "pure. . . free from mortal taint." No witch would understand the concept of "mortal taint," for in witchcraft, "flesh and spirit are one" (Starhawk:8). Despite the Christian overlay, Madeline's prayer is "drawing down the moon." As the maiden-to-be-bride she draws power as she opens herself to the light of the enchanted moon. She seeks the Moon Mother's blessing: consummation through oracular prophecy. Her desire is for her companion, her lover, as she channels "moon energies of water [emotions] and the inner fire [sexuality]" (Hall:93; 209). Porphyro is as silent as she. His vigil is part of his preparation. He watches her remove her jewels, loosen her clothes. As her gown falls to her knees, she becomes a mermaid—the virgin of the sea, Mari, Marina, often associated with the faery folk in England, frequently as Merlin's lady (Walker:651; cf. Briggs). "She dreams awake, and sees. . . St. Agnes in her bed," the image of the bride. Porphyro grows faint as he watches her, but "his heart revives." He barely breathes until she sleeps. A prurient view of this scene is inappropriate. It was "common practice [even] in the medieval craft. . . for the High Priest and Priestess to enact the parts of God and Goddess, who were believed to be physically incarnate in the rites." The young god "embodies longing and desire for union with the prime, nurturing force" (Starhawk:95-97) and priestesses "presided naked" (3) in "divine ecstasy, [which] becomes the fountain of creation, and creation is an orgasmic process" (25).

While Madeline sleeps, Porphyro prepares the altar with voluptuous colors and luscious foods, including those sacred to the Great Mother: apple, quince, plum, gourd, the honey of "lucent syrups" as well as cinnamon, the incense of the sun. In the old religion in northern Britain and Scandinavia, food is often put out for the goddess to beg her favor, for the realm of the Winter Queen is full of danger, as Porphyro well knows (Hall:212-13). In some rituals this food would be eaten by the lovers after their sexual union; in others the food serves as a sacrificial offering to the Great Mother. Dorothy Van Ghent (98-100), explaining that Keats' poetry frequently uses a "primitive cluster of associations" of food and sex, notes that he "inevitably" includes food in his "erotic sequences." Van Ghent is sure that Porphyro and

Madeline do not eat the food that he sets out and that Keats meant it for a sacrifice, (citing a "canceled line" in which Keats so indicated). And she is right, for it is Porphyro who will be "eaten." The body and spirit of the young god are taken into the goddess. He is the "food" that makes the maiden into the mother. He enters the maiden sexually and she as mother gives birth to him. In Greek ritual, his body and blood would have been strewn over the earth itself to fertilize the growth of all that lives, and the priestess would eat his severed genitals. But Porphyro's service to the great goddess is more Keatsian than Dionysian.

Now ready to offer himself, Porphyro finds that Christian metaphor cannot wake Madeline. He calls himself a hermit, and Madeline his "heaven" and "seraph," but she is not aroused. He lies beside her, but her "midnight charm" remains a "stedfast spell" and Madeline sleeps on. He sleeps with her awhile wrapped in his own "phantasies." Often in such a ritual, lovers make ready for sacred union by fasting, meditating and breathing together, as Porphyro and Madeline do in this scene (Noble:63). When he awakens, he takes up her lute, as the crone has instructed him. And he wakes her by playing "*La belle dame sans mercy*," a Christian song about the power of the Faery Queen. When Madeline opens her eyes, he sinks to his knees in worship, waiting to be bidden forward. Her state in stanza thirty-four is deep trance, not sleep. She weeps and begins to "moan forth witless words with many a sigh." The "full moon inspires the oracular priestesses to poetic prophecy—orgiastic, ecstatic speech that flows like a river or bubbling spring" (Noble:92).

She begs him to return to the warmth and beauty of her vision, for he now appears cold, recalling the "sculptured dead" in the beadsman's chapel. "Initiation is a symbolic death and rebirth, a rite of passage" and initiates must be "willing, in spite of fear, to go on, not to run away" (Starhawk:160-61). Van Ghent comments that "the high religious character of the act that is to be performed is reflected in Porphyro's sacred fear as he enters Madeline's chamber (97). In Celtic tradition the fiery cauldron of the goddess (her womb or vagina), was able to restore slain warriors to life. Madeline sees Porphyro as dead and calls him to the heat of her body (see Starhawk:83-84; Walker:150-54).

It is Faery imagery which determines the character of the consummation scene in stanza thirty-six. If the lovers are Christian, Porphyro is a villain, Madeline a victim and Wright may be correct in regarding this poem as a tragedy. But Stillinger (1971:54-62) is really the only critic who makes much of this interpretation and he holds a common moral position. He thinks Madeline is raped, but blames the victim for the crime.

But if we continue to read these characters through the imagery of Faery, the young lovers are together in intent, enacting a timeless ritual and their union is blessed by the Great Mother. Van Ghent asserts that what is otherwise "a mean and brutal trick is converted by the mythical substrate and the sacramental approach of the lover into a high religious act" (100). In the Craft the god does not overcome the goddess; he surrenders "to the power of his own feeling" (Starhawk:100), which is exactly what Porphyro does. He is intensely excited by the perfume, the music, the brilliant altar with its magic food, the secrecy and danger, the moonlight and Madeline's naked beauty. He loves her; he has risked death to come to her. He is young, eager and literally enchanted. As priestess-initiate, she has deliberately dreamed him there; she has conjured him.

Readers respond emotionally to the Faery subtext of the poem, despite the conflict presented by Christian imagery and morality. For instance, once "St. Agnes' moon hath set," and the storm begins to rise, Keats made Madeline respond to her situation like a deflowered Christian maiden.¹¹ But she is still framed in Faery imagery—with Porphyro repeatedly calling her his "bride" and begging to be allowed to serve her—in the metaphor of a heart-shaped vermilion shield, symbol of Venus in Rome and Morgan le Fay in Britain. Then she is his "silver shrine," the maker of his "miracle," as Keats suddenly interweaves the two lines of imagery again. Keats even has Porphyro refer to himself as a "rude infidel."

Thus, Faery prevails, both for the emotionally involved reader and for the lovers. Madeline and Porphyro are granted "a boon indeed." They can escape under the cover of "an elfin-storm from faery-land," for maidens "whistled up the wind." Celtic Faery goddesses could control the weather and the north wind had the greatest magical power (Noble:196). Moving to ride the wind, the lovers are "like phantoms," making "no human sound" as they slip "into the storm." The baron's guests see them, appropriately enough, as "witch and demon" in their nightmares, and they dream of the "large coffin-worm," for death has taken Angela. Her term as "aged crone" is over; Madeline has helped her to rest.

The beadsman's cold solitude represents the fate of Christian imagery and influence in the poem. He is the only wholly Christian character and he has no connection to the Faery rite. Angela, Porphyro and Madeline have all been part of the interplay between the two religions, moving back and forth in image, action and attitude from Christianity to the Craft. "Unsought for," the Christian beadsman sleeps among cold ashes as the lovers seek the warmth of "the southern moors."¹²

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NOTES

¹Including Bush (305-60), Finney (551-57), Gleckner (20), Ward (28-31), and Bate. Werner Beyer (3-52) makes a strong case for the influence of Sotheby's translation of Wieland's *Oberon* which was influenced by his reading of the Arthurian legends and his blending Celtic and European ritual traditions within the same mythology.

²Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Coleridge and Scott are good examples.

³Patterson uses the word "daemonic" to refer to "a special mode of intense perception" and "the qualities of. . . objects. . . known through that mode of perceiving" (3). He does not equate "daemonic" with "Faery" as I define and use the term in this paper, nor does he mention the old religion. But he includes fairy lore and the fairies as elements of the daemonic in Keats' poetry (19) and discusses "The Eve" as a poem suffused with "a sustained daemonic atmosphere," defining this atmosphere primarily through the imagery of Faery. However, he believes that the lovers leave the daemonic world when they escape from the castle (111-18).

⁴While these critics discuss and analyze writers' sources of myth and ritual, some scholars make no such investigations, attempt no justification. Robert F. O'Reilly simply states that Gide's *L'Immoraliste* "remains essentially incomplete unless viewed in its mythological context" and says that "the mythopoetic underpinnings. . . have their source in Western literary traditions" (346). Louis Crompton makes no case for Hardy as a student of the old religion when he depicts Clym Yeobright as "a figure in a religious ritual" and associates him with Apollo and Balder (290). Robert Harrison, whose article on "the cyclical myth" and its relation to Keats' "Endymion" clearly delineates the mythic progress of the hero, has expertly demonstrated that "each book of 'Endymion' corresponds to a stage or movement" of the myth (230). But he has apparently decided that he need not substantiate his basic assumption: that Keats knew, or subconsciously owned, the story of the hero's mythic quest.

⁵"*La Belle*" is one of several poems in which Keats uses the imagery of Celtic Faery. Though this paper will not contain a discussion of the uses of Faery imagery in those other poems, I can make note of a few here. "*La belle dame*" is a telling of one of the most common tales of the old religion. The Faery Queen/Great Goddess/High Priestess enchants a young man and takes him with her to her home. His "thrall" is delicious and deadly (see Stone, Patterson, Van Ghent and Fass). Keats' classical variations on this theme include "Lamia" and "Endymion." His "Robin Hood" is a happier view of the sacred pair, set in the greenwood, site of Faery worship. Marian is the Merry Maid, the Maiden, even "Merriment" in this

poem, and Robin is the Green Man, the young god. The "fairest time of June" is the Summer Solstice, a major holy day in the old religion. The "seven stars," the Pleiades, include the Bee Queen, whose honey is sacred to the Mother, as are the oaks of the forest (see Noble, Starhawk, Walker and Stone). Keats' "Meg Merrilees" is herself a witch priestess, fallen on the hard times of Christianity but still conjuring with the moon on the moors. She is identified with "Margaret Queen," who is Morgawse, Faery Queen of the Isles, and the Morrigan, warrior maiden of the Gaels. Keats may have leaned toward the latter, since his Meg is a red-cloaked Amazon (see Stone and Walker). "The Epistle to John Hamilton Reynolds" describes an "enchanted Castle," a staple in Celtic lore and later fairy tales (see Phelps). The castle is a "Merlin's Hall," the center of power for the wizard who served the Great Goddess (see Stone, Walker and Noble). This "Hall" is a religious history of England in miniature, its oldest parts built by a witch and "many a mason-devil." Like "The Eve," this is a poem in which there is a Christian overlay: faery folk have converted by becoming nuns or they have been designated evil and made into devils.

⁶Compare Isaacs and Reese, who find "A Midsummer Night's Dream" to be patterned on a Dionysian celebration" (351) for discussion of Shakespeare's characters, Botton, Philstrate, Oberon, Theseus, as representative of figures in Greek rituals.

⁷Compare Florence Falk's "Dream and Ritual Process" in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. She considers dreaming itself to be a "rite of passage" (264) and analyzes the lay in relation to Victor Turner's *Ritual Process* and Clieade's *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries*. She also calls Oberon a "shaman figure," responding to the same elements (263) Vlasopolos and I find in the two poets' dream/ritual works.

⁸In this reference and subsequent references to Barbarba G. Walker, Vicki Noble, Merlin Stone, Starhawk, and Nor Hall, I am deliberately choosing a perspective that differs from that of such scholars as Frazer, Campbell, Nuemann, Graves, Eliade, et. al. Although both groups of scholars have interpreted the old religion from within Judeo-Christian culture, the former reveals the bias created by that cultural context and questions its prejudice. Their consciousness of academic ethnocentrism generates and encourages readings such as my own.

⁹Quotations from Keats' work are taken from *Selected Poems and Letters by John Keats*, edited by Douglas Bush.

¹⁰Contemporary studies of ritual trance describe and define the state in accord with Keats' descriptions. See Lex, especially pages 110-12.

¹¹See Lex, 115, regarding alternating emotional states in ritual trance.

¹²I am indebted to the criticism and suggestions of Frank Fennel and Ron Grimes and I thank them both.

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THE ZOROASTRIAN NĀHN PURIFICATION RITUALS

Jamsheed K. Choksy

Abstract

The Zoroastrian Nāhn rituals, based on a threefold purificatory process, are documented and analysed in the article using both literary sources and field study. On the basis of the documentation and analysis it is suggested that these rituals replicate the universal struggle between good and evil. They fulfill the need for communal unity and communicate the function of purification: the isolation and expulsion of evil. The rituals arise from the cosmic and ethical dualism of good and evil, purity and pollution, upon which Zoroastrianism is based. They reinforce belief in this dualism and unite the material and spiritual worlds in the battle against evil.

Abbreviations:

Av. = Avestan
D. = Dari
N.P. = New Persian
P.Gj. = Parsi Gujarati
Phl. = Pahlavi
Pz. = Pazand
Skt. = Sanskrit

Zoroastrianism, a faith based on the revelations of the prophet Zarathushtra (Zoroaster), was a major religion in the Achaemenian (549-330 B.C.E.), Parthian (247 B.C.-C.E. 224) and Sasanian (C.E. 224-651) empires of ancient Iran. After the Arab conquest of Iran, Zoroastrianism gradually lost many of its adherents. In the tenth century C.E., Zoroastrians from Khurasan migrated to Gujarat in India where they formed the Parsi community. Zoroastrians also continued to dwell in Iran, and communities survive to the present day in Yazd and Kerman. Both the modern Parsi and Irani Zoroastrian communities continue many of the beliefs and practices of their common ancestors.

The religion proposes a cosmic and ethical dualism based on separate and unequal spiritual sources of good and evil: The Lord Wisdom (Av. Ahura Mazdā, Phl. Ohrmazd) and the Destructive or Evil Spirit (Av. Angra Mainyu, Phl. Ahreman). These two spirits are believed to be irreconcilably opposed to each other. In the *Gāthās* or hymns believed to have been composed by Zoroaster himself, the prophet exclaims: "Now I will speak of the two spirits of whom, at the beginning of existence the holier thus spoke to the evil one: 'Neither our thoughts, nor our teachings, nor our wills, neither our choices, nor our words, neither our deeds, nor our

consciences, nor our souls are in accord” (*Yasna* 45:2). This opposition stems from the choice between good and evil made by these two spirits at the beginning of time (*Yasna* 30:3-6). According to Zoroastrian doctrine Ahura Mazdā is the righteous creator spirit or God, and is by definition a perfect, good, rational and omniscient being from whom no evil can proceed (*Škand Gumānīg Wizār* 8:101-10). Thus good and evil, the sacred and the profane, purity and pollution, life and death all originate from two separate sources: Ahura Mazdā and Angra Mainyu respectively. Ahura Mazdā created six beneficent immortal spirits to assist him and protect the material creation in perfection and purity. The Evil Spirit attempted to conquer the good in creation, and therefore the Lord Wisdom created human beings to combat evil in the material world (*Bundahišn* 3:23-24). Angra Mainyu invaded the material world and brought with him sin, darkness, disease, pain, pollution, decay and death (*Bundahišn* 4:10-28). Since all that blemishes God’s creation arose from the Evil Spirit, purification of the soul and body from these impurities constitutes a positive duty. This doctrine involves all Zoroastrians in fighting cosmic evil through the activities of daily life and purification rituals (Choksy 1986:170-71).

The present article is a documentation and analysis of the *Nāhn* purification rituals performed by Zoroastrians in India and Iran.¹ The *Saḍe Nāhn* and the *Sī-Shuy Nāhn* are the two simplest, threefold purifications deriving from the basic Zoroastrian purification ceremony called the Purification of the Nine [Days and] Nights (Phl. *Barašnūm ī nō šab*). Zoroastrians adopted the Arabic term *ghusl*, “ablution, washing,” for these two minor purifications after the Arab conquest of Iran in the seventh century C.E. (Boyce 1975:312).² The Parsis, after migrating to India from Iran by C.E. 936, adopted the Gujarati word *nāhn* “bath” to describe the *Saḍe* and *Sī-Shūy* rituals, and applied the term *ghusl* only to purification from nocturnal pollution.³ The *Saḍe Nāhn*, “simple ritual bath,” came to encompass the function of the Zoroastrian *ghusl* and was extended to cover purification during rites of passage such as initiation into the Zoroastrian faith (P.Gj. *Navjote*) or marriage. A more elaborate form of the ritual, the *Sī-Shūy* (N.P. *Sī-Shūy*, *Sī-Shūr*, D. *Sī-Shūz*, P. Gj. *Sī-Shyū*), “thirty washings,” was maintained for ritual pollution whose origin was clearly identifiable. The religious functions and importance of these two *nāhns* stem from the threefold purification process involving bull’s urine, dust and water, on which the rituals are based. They insure return of the unclean or polluted person (Phl. *rēmanīg*, N.P. and P.Gj. *rīmanī*) to a state of

ritual purity after exposure to conditions which render the person unclean or polluted.

The Saḍe Nāhn

This ritual is conducted either within the premises of a fire temple or at the candidate's home near a bathing place in which the candidate undergoes the *nāhn* proper. The *nāhn* is administered only during the daylight hours of the morning, afternoon, or evening, with the entire ceremony lasting half an hour. This *nāhn* requires the presence of one Zoroastrian priest or magus (Phl. *mowbed*, N.P. *mōbad*, P.Gj. *mōbed*) who has undergone the Purification of the Nine [Days and] Nights, maintained ritual purity and acquired greater ritual power (P.Gj. *moti khūb*) through performance of a sacrifice service (Av. *Yasna*) dedicated to Mīnō-Nāvar. This priest functions as the purifier (Phl. *yōjdahrgar*, N.P. *yozhdāsragar*, P.Gj. *yaozdāthrya*).

In this ceremony, as currently practiced by Parsi Zoroastrians in India, the priest takes with him unconsecrated bull's urine (Av. *gaomēza-*, Phl. and P.Gj. *gōmēz*, D. *pājōw*), consecrated bull's urine (Phl. *nērang*, N.P. *nīrang*, P.Gj. *nīrang* or *nīrangdīn*), fire ash (Phl. *ādurestar*, P.Gj. *bhasam*), and a few pomegranate leaves (P.Gj. *urwarām*) on a metal tray to the site where a *Saḍe Nāhn* will be administered. The following sacred instruments are also necessary: two shallow metal bowls for the consecrated and unconsecrated bull's urine, a full-bodied, high-necked metal vessel for water, and a small vase-like metal container for pouring water. Prior to the ritual all instruments are cleaned using fire ash and water. Next the priest dons a mouth-and-nose mask (Phl. *padām*, N.P. *panām*, P.Gj. *padān*) and leggings (P.Gj. *ijār*) and performs the *Pādyāb-Kustī* ritual by washing his hands, face, and feet with water and untying and retying the sacred girdle (Av. *aiwyānghana-*, Phl. *kustīg*, N.P. and P.Gj. *kustī*).⁴ The first short rite performed by the priest during the *Nāhn* involves purification (Phl. *pāk*, P.Gj. *pāw*) of the high-necked vessel using running water.⁵ Once this vessel is purified, the water it contains is also pure and consecrated. This water is then used to purify the small vessel, whose contents are used to purify the two bowls. These two bowls are then dried and consecrated urine is poured into one and a pinch of fire ash is added to it. Unconsecrated urine is poured into the other bowl, which is then placed inside the bathing place together with the large vessel filled with ritually consecrated water. A new set of ordinary clothing, consecrated by sprinkling with a few drops of consecrated water, is also placed in the bathing place for the candidate to wear after his or her purification.

The priest makes the candidate perform *Pādyab-Kustī* and recite the prayer of grace said before meals (Phl. *wāz ī nān xwardan*, N.P. *bāj-e nān khwardan*, P.Gj. *jamvānī bāj*).⁶ After recital of this prayer the priest places a pomegranate leaf on a small cloth and hands it to the candidate. Presence of the cloth insures that there is no connection (Phl. *paywand*) between the two persons, thus preventing direct contact between the priest, who is in a state of high ritual purity, and the candidate, who is ritually unclean (Phl. *rēman*, N.P. and P. Gj. *rīman*). The candidate is then instructed to chew this leaf. Next the candidate is instructed to drink a few sips of consecrated urine from the bowl. This bowl is also handed to the candidate on a cloth in order to prevent contact between him or her and the priest. Before drinking the consecrated urine a candidate recites in a suppressed tone (Ph. *wāz*, N.P. and P.Gj. *bāj*): "I drink this for purity of the body [and] purification of the soul" (Pz. *īn xuram pākī-i tan, yōždasr-i ruvān rā*). The words symbolize both the religious function of the consecrated urine and the candidate's desire for physical and spiritual purity during his or her life. These holy words are repeated thrice and consecrated urine is sipped on each occasion. Thereafter, the candidate completes the *bāj* by reciting the appropriate prayers.⁷ Having left the *bāj* he or she unties and reties the sacred girdle.

Next, the candidate is directed to recite the confessional prayer (Phl. *Petīt Pašēmānih*, P.Gj. *Patēt Pashēmānī*).⁸ Because he or she is undergoing a purification ritual, a candidate has to confess all sins to the Zoroastrian creator god Ahura Mazdā and repent of them, thus purifying the soul in addition to the body. If the candidate is unable to recite the confession from memory, he or she may read it aloud from a Zoroastrian prayer book called the *Shorter Avesta* or have it recited vicariously by the officiating priest. Vicarious recitation is condoned in the *Persian Rivāyats* where it is stated, "If a person cannot recite the confession daily, then he should ask another person to perform the confession for him" (*Persian Rivāyats* 36, 1.17).⁹ In such a case, while the priest recites the confessional prayer, the candidate must say the *Ahunawar* prayer repeatedly.¹⁰ After this the candidate for purification enters the bathing place, recites the short prayer formula: "With satisfaction for Ahura Mazdā [I do this]" (Av. *xšnaovra ahurahe mazdā*) and the *Ašem Vohū* prayer once.¹¹ This short invocatory formula is recited by Zoroastrians at the commencement of most religious actions, and it signifies that a devotee undertakes the action for Ahura Mazdā. Thereafter the candidate undresses, removes the sacred white undershirt (Phl. *šabig*, N.P. *shabī*, D. *sedra*, P.Gj. *sudra*, *sudre*) and sacred girdle

worn by all Zoroastrians, places the right hand over his or her head and recites the *Srōš Bāj* (a prayer invoking the messenger god Sraoša) including the *Fravarānē*, "Confession of Faith," and the *Kām Nā Mazdā* prayer up to the words "the material worlds of righteousness" (*Av. gaēvā astvaitiš ašahe*).¹² The candidate then applies unconsecrated urine over his or her body from head downward, thereby ritually expelling contamination and impurity from the body. Next, he or she bathes in consecrated water from the large vessel. Finally, the candidate dries himself or herself, dons the new set of clothes, including the undershirt and prayer cap, and reties the sacred girdle with recitation of the *Ohrmazd Xwadāy*, "Ahura Mazdā is [the] Lord," or *Kustī Bastan* prayer and the *Jasa Mē Avanghe Mazdā*, "Come to My Aid, O Mazdā!" prayer. This completes the ritual.

Study of the *Saḍe Nāhn* as performed over the past century reveals that this ritual has undergone considerable simplification among Parsi Zoroastrians. In the early years of this century the candidate sat cross-legged on a stone stool during the ritual so as to reduce contact between himself or herself and the earth, which is regarded as sacred.¹³ This custom of sitting on a stone stool was connected to the ancient practice of standing within a small pit or squatting on stones, both of which limited contact between the sacred elements and the impure individual, including the impurities present on and in that individual. This method of isolating impurity is still preserved in the *Barašnūm ī nō sāb* and *Sī-Shūy Nāhn* but is no longer implemented in the *Saḍe Nāhn*. The major difference between the *Saḍe Nāhn* of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and that which has been in practice during the past two decades is the great simplification of the ritual bath itself. Earlier, the priest, using a "nine-knotted stick," (*Av. graom nava pixam*, *Phl. graw kē pixag*, *P.Gj. navgirē*), handed the candidate unconsecrated urine for application over the body instead of placing it within the bathing place. This act was repeated three times. Next the priest presented the candidate dust (*Phl. xāk*, *N.P.* and *P.Gj. khāk*) three times for application and then water three times. Only thereafter was the candidate allowed to dress and complete the *Srōš Bāj*. This use of unconsecrated urine, dust, and water, along with their order of application, corresponds to the external purificatory process of the original threefold purification ritual, and is still employed in the *Barašnūm*. The omission of dust during the past few decades is probably because the *Saḍe Nāhn* had acquired mainly a social function, providing the degree of ritual purity necessary to perform only routine social and religious functions. It has lost much of its original religious role of providing the state of high

ritual purity required for the performance of the most sacred religious ceremonies. Unconsecrated urine and water came to be considered the only essential substances for social and ritual purification of the body surface. This development parallels the priestly custom of washing the body first with unconsecrated urine each morning prior to bathing in water, a practice which continues to the present day among most clergy and orthodox laity in towns such as Navsari and Surat in India. Similarly, the number of applications was reduced from three (representing the Zoroastrian creed of good thoughts, words and deeds) to one.

The *Saḍe Nāhn* is presently performed by Zoroastrians prior to the *Navjote* ceremony, on the day of marriage, and occasionally on holy days such as the *Frawardīgān* holidays or the Festival of All Souls and the festival of *Spenta Ārmaiti*. The *Navjote* ceremony marks the occasion when a child is initiated into the Zoroastrian faith. Every Parsi Zoroastrian initiate has to undergo the *Saḍe Nāhn* on this occasion to enter the community and religion in a state of purity. Since the *Navjote* ceremony is the occasion on which a new initiate is first invested with *kustī* and *sudra*, the *Saḍe Nāhn* here differs from the general procedure described above in so far as the child initially wears no undershirt and sacred girdle. On this occasion the *Pādyāb* consists only of reciting the introductory formula and washing the face and other exposed parts of the body. The Zoroastrian concept of entering both the religion and community in a state of purity parallels the Brahmanic ceremony of *Upanayana* (Skt.) in which the Hindu boy is invested with the threefold sacred thread and sprinkled three times with water. It also parallels Christian Baptism.¹⁴

The next occasion on which a Zoroastrian is required to undergo the *Saḍe Nāhn* is on the wedding day. Both bride and bridegroom must undergo this purification. During the *Frawardīgān* or *Muktād* holidays, on which the souls of the deceased are invoked, the *Nāhn* may be undergone on any of the ten days, but it is considered especially meritorious to undergo it in memory of a deceased relative during one of the last five days. This practice is still occasionally performed by orthodox Parsi women both during these holidays and on the festival of *Spenta Ārmaiti*.¹⁵

The *Sī-Shūy Nāhn*

In cases where there has been ritual impurity brought about by contact with carrion (Av. *nasu-*, Phl., N.P. and P.Gj. *nasā*) or bodily refuse (Av. *hixra-*, Phl. *hixr*, P.Gj. *hikhra*) the *Sī-Shūy Nāhn*, "thirty washings," is administered. In Iran this

purification may be undergone at home, but in India it is usually performed at a desolate spot such as the premises on which a funerary tower (Phl. *daxma*, N.P. and P.Gj. *dakhma*) is situated, or within the site at which the Purification of the Nine [Days and] Nights is conducted. The priest maintains a careful distance from the polluted individual, who is isolated within furrows (Phl. *kīš*, N.P. and P.Gj. *kash*) drawn to confine impurity and prevent its spreading to the priest and community.¹⁶ Three furrows are drawn around each enclosed area or pure space (P.Gj. *pāwī*) with there being ten such sets of triple furrows arranged from north to south in the case of Irani Zoroastrian practice and west to east in Parsi practice. Three groups of stones are arranged linearly within each set of furrows, three stones per group. Outside the first and last sets of furrows similar groups of stones are placed. These stones serve as mounts on which the candidate squats while undergoing purification. Stones, being a creation of the beneficent immortal Xšavra Vairya, are impermeable to pollution and thus serve to isolate the candidate and his or her impurity from the earth. Stone is regarded as a metal and according to the Zoroastrian cosmogony, it forms the sky which encircles the material world, trapping all evil and pollution within it.¹⁷ Further, as in the case of the *Sade Nāhn*, the officiating priest should have undergone the Purification of the Nine [Days and] Nights.

The rites of the *Sī-Shūy Nāhn* are similar to those of the *Sade Nāhn* in all respects except the following: 1) the sacred instruments are made both pure (P.Gj. *pāw*) and consecrated (P.Gj. *yashte*);¹⁸ 2) Irani Zoroastrians undergo this *Nāhn* while fasting (Boyce 1977:111); 3) the priest stands outside the furrows and hands the purificatory substances to the candidate using a nine-knotted stick; 4) unconsecrated urine, dust and water are each applied nine (3 x 3) times followed by a final threefold application of water.

The candidate squats on the first set of stones and drinks the consecrated bull's urine in three prescribed ritual sips after taking *bāj* and stating that the action is being performed for purity of the body and purification of the soul. In Parsi practice the candidate is also made to chew a pomegranate leaf prior to sipping this liquid. Thereafter the candidate enters the first pure space formed by the furrows. On the stones in this pure space and those in the second and third spaces the candidate purifies his or her body with unconsecrated urine. Dust is applied to the body in the next three pure spaces, and water in the seventh, eighth and ninth spaces. This completes twenty-seven ablutions. Thereafter the candidate enters the last set of furrows and performs three final ablutions

with water. During these cleansings the candidate moves, naked and in a squatting position, from north (the direction of hell) towards the south (the direction of heaven) in Irani practice, and west to east (towards the purifying sun) in Parsi practice. The impurity is diminished by each successive ablution and confined within the furrows (Vendîdād 9:28). The entire ceremony takes half an hour and is conducted during the daylight hours, usually in the open, so that the sun's purifying rays may aid in the purification of the candidate by expelling the Corpse Demoness (Av. *Druxš Nasuš*, Phl. *Druz ī Nasuš*) who personifies ritual impurity.¹⁹

This *Nāhn* is mentioned in the *Persian Rivāyats*, which state that it is to be undergone by an Zoroastrian who has been polluted through contact with carrion (*Persian Rivāyats* 88, 1.2-6). In this case, even after a *Sī-Shūy Nāhn* has been administered, the person is still fairly polluted and cannot approach water or fire until the *Barašnūm ī nō šab* has been administered (*Persian Rivāyats* 135, 1.1-7). This fact indicates that the *Sī-Shūy Nāhn* is not regarded as sufficiently efficacious to purify completely a believer who has been polluted through direct contact with carrion. In Zoroastrian belief only the *Barašnūm ī nō šab* suffices to purify such an individual. The *Sī-Shūy Nāhn* was also undergone by corpse bearers (*Persian Rivāyats* 107, 1.5-9).²⁰ Further, this ritual was used in instances when women swallowed carrion through biting their garments during menses and when facilities for the Purification of the Nine [Days and] Nights were unavailable after a woman had given birth to a stillborn child (*Persian Rivāyats* 207, 1.1-3, 232, 1.18-223, 1.9). In Iran this ritual is still administered to orthodox Zoroastrian women in Yazd and Kerman after childbirth or miscarriage (Boyce 1975:313; 1977:111).²¹ In these cases actual administration is performed by another woman who has undergone the nine night purification, while the priest stands nearby, but out of sight, chanting the requisite prayers. The *Sī-Shūy Nāhn* is also administered in Iran to corpse bearers. Here too the priest stands at a distance reciting prayers while the actual administering of the ritual is performed by a layman. This practice prevents loss of the priest's ritual purity due to possible contact with the corpse bearer, who is considered extremely impure and polluted due to his regular contact with corpses. Irani Zoroastrian men and women occasionally undergo this *Nāhn* on holy days such as the annual festival of *Spenta Armaiti*. Among the Parsis it used to be administered to women forty days after accouchment, prior to which time they were not permitted to approach the hearth fire, enter a fire temple, or attend social functions. All persons who

had contact with such women were expected to undergo this purification. However, by the beginning of the twentieth century this ritual had been largely replaced by the *Sade Nāhn* and it is now only administered on rare occasions to extremely orthodox Parsi women who have carried carrion within their bodies through stillbirth or miscarriage.

A major variation which is common to both Irani and Parsi Zoroastrians (and thus probably occurred prior to the migration of Zoroastrians to India), is the visual separation of the priest from the polluted individual whenever the candidate is a woman (*Persian Rivāyats* 601, 1.2-5). This is also the practice when a *Barašnūm ī nō šab* is administered to a woman, but in both cases it violates the requirement that pure sight (Phl. *pāk čašm*) from the officiating priest, the "pure purifier," (Phl. *pāk yōjdahrgar*) fall upon the polluted woman. This pure sight of the priest was believed to be essential for purification, just as it is still necessary for consecration in high rituals, because the priest functions as a healer during the purificatory process.²² The change probably occurred for reasons of modesty and to prevent a man who was not the woman's husband from gazing upon her naked body.

Interpretive Comments

Numerous methodological problems exist in the interpretation of purification rituals. Among them are the tension between emic and etic analyses and the significance of belief systems associated with the rituals.²³ The problem of emic versus etic analysis arises from attempts by observers to elucidate both the manner in which members of various groups or communities define themselves and the beliefs which form the bases of ritual acts performed by these groups. Etic interpretations are themselves "second and third order ones to boot. (By definition, only a native makes first order ones: it's his culture)" (Geertz 1973a:15). As a result, Geertz questions, "If we are going to cling—as, in my opinion, we must—to the injunction to see things from the native's point of view. . . what happens to *verstehen* when *einfühlen* disappears?" (1976:222)

The answer to Geertz's question is found in the Neo-Tylorian view that ritual acts should be interpreted within the context of belief: their meaning is found in the values assigned to them by participants (Goody 1961:157). Indeed, orthodox Zoroastrians believe that the primary importance of all religious rites lies not in the ritual actions and liturgies, but in the belief systems associated with the ceremonies. It is the belief accompanying the behavior rather than the behavior itself that is important. The

Zoroastrian religious system and its doctrine of purity and pollution provides devotees with knowledge of the essential conditions by which life must be lived and purification undergone.²⁴ Therefore, the hermeneutical position of this author is that analysis and interpretation of the *Nāhn* rituals should be directed at elucidating the doctrinal significance of the rituals. Geertz (1973a:30) has suggested that "the essential vocation of interpretative anthropology is . . . to make available to us answers that others . . . have given, and thus to include them in the consultable record of what man has said." It is in this spirit that the following interpretive comments on the *Nāhn* rituals are offered "from the native's point of view" in the hope that *empfinden* will persist and *verstehen* flourish.

Emile Durkheim's hypothesis (1954:37) that religious beliefs presuppose a classification of all things into two oppositional groups, the sacred and the profane, is valid for Zoroastrianism.²⁵ According to Zoroastrian belief, holiness and impurity are quite literally at opposite poles of the spiritual universe.²⁶ Only in the material world do good and evil, sacred and profane, intermingle because the profane has invaded that which is sacred. Doctrine directs that the sacred be purified by the vanquishing and expulsion of all evil and pollution. Rituals also serve a communicative function (Leach 1968:524). For Zoroastrians the *Nāhn* purifications communicate and reinforce the duality of good and evil by directly equating this duality with purity and pollution. Mary Douglas (1966:2; 1968:339) has observed that rituals of purity and pollution create unity and order in experience. In the case of the *Nāhn* rituals the communicative function, in conjunction with the other rites undergone by all participants, creates unity and order in experience.

Zoroastrian purification rituals are, however, not directed solely at creating unity and order in the material world. The *Dēnkard* "Acts of the Religion," a Pahlavi encyclopaedia of Zoroastrian beliefs, states, "In taking care of material things a thousand rituals are nothing. In taking care of spiritual things one ritual is that [essential] thing" (*Dēnkard* 576, 1.22-577, 1.2).²⁷ Purification rituals are undergone primarily to attain a symbolic, religious state of virtue and purity. Therefore, the consecrated items, sacred instruments and *Nāhn* rituals have religious symbolism and spiritual roles linked to them (Choksy 1986:184-86). This symbolism and spiritual function integrate the rituals with the cosmological and eschatological aspects of Zoroastrianism. It is this role that has determined the importance and insured the survival of these rituals through the centuries.

Gōmēz and *nīrang* are products of the bull. As products of this sacred animal, both liquids are regarded as pure substances and not excrement or bodily refuse, because Zoroastrian doctrine holds that all plants and animals arose from the body of the primordial bull after it was slain by the Evil Spirit (*Bundahišn* 6E:1-6). The Evil Spirit's act of destruction was thus transformed by Ahura Mazda into one of creation. Therefore, both consecrated and unconsecrated bull's urine are believed to be powerful weapons against the demons and their pollution, especially the Corpse Demoness. Being unconsecrated, *gōmēz* cannot purify the soul and is not drunk. However, it is symbolically potent enough to eradicate ritual pollution from the physical being of a person undergoing purification and hence is applied over the body. Further, the use of these products insures assistance of the beneficent immortal, Vohu Manah ("The Good Mind"), protector of the cow, in the struggle against pollution and evil, which are believed to arise from the Evil Spirit and his demons (*Bundahišn* 3:14).

The addition of fire ash insures the assistance of fire, Ahura Mazda's offspring.²⁸ Further, Asa Vahista ("Best Righteousness"), another beneficent immortal and the guardian of fire, is thereby enlisted in the attack on evil and impurity (*Bundahišn* 3:15). The pomegranate leaves represent the realm of plants and symbolize fertility and immortality. In purification and all other religious rituals these leaves also symbolize the presence of the beneficent immortal, Ameretāt, "Immortality" (*Bundahišm* 3:19). Dust represents the earth with its purifying and regenerative powers, and it brings Spenta Ārmaiti ("Holy Devotion"), a beneficent immortal, the earth goddess and mother of humanity, to the aid of the candidate for purification (*Bundahišn* 3:17). The use of water in the two rituals represents wholeness and health, and symbolically invokes the aid of Haurvatāt, "Wholeness," the beneficent immortal who protects water (*Bundahišn* 3:18). Similarly, Xšavra Vairya ("Desirable Dominion"), another beneficent immortal, is symbolically represented by the metal blade on the end of the nine-knotted stick used to draw the furrows and by the stone mounts (*Bundahišn* 3:16).²⁹ Humanity, the supreme creation of Ahura Mazda and the means by which the Evil Spirit and his pandemonium will be smitten and vanquished, is represented by the candidate undergoing purification (*Bundahišm* 3:12). The purifier, as a priest and righteous man in a state of ritual purity, is Ahura Mazda's direct representative on earth, the bearer of religion and the performer of the rituals necessary for vanquishing evil. The threefold ablutions and three stone mounts are believed to represent good thoughts, good words

and good deeds; they may also symbolize the three saviours (Av. *Saošyās*, Phl. *Sōšyans*) through whom purification of the world from evil will be brought about in the final millennium of human history.³⁰

Therefore, during the two *Nāhn* purification rituals Ahura Mazda and his six beneficent immortals are believed to be symbolically present and involved in combating the Corpse Demoness, who is the manifestation of all pollution, harm, death and destruction inflicted by the Evil Spirit and his demons on the corporeal and spiritual realms of Ahura Mazda. Doctrine blends with action in the *Nāhn* purification rituals to produce a religious structure that unites the entire universe in a single symbolic whole. Hence, this conflict between purity and pollution during the rituals represents in microcosm the cosmic battle between Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu, good and evil, and purification of an individual is regarded as furthering the eventual expulsion of evil from the spiritual and material worlds.

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NOTES

¹Zoroastrian purity laws prohibit the presence of nonbelievers at purification rituals because all non-Zoroastrians are regarded, by doctrine, as being ritually unclean. Since the present author is Zoroastrian who has been properly initiated into the faith, he was permitted both to observe and participate in the *Nāhns*.

²It should, however, be noted that in Islamic practice the *ghusl* is an ablution performed after more serious defilement, including sexual intercourse and nocturnal pollution.

³The term *nāhn* is a contraction of *snān-* (Skt.), "ablution, bath," from the root *sna-*, which has the Av. cognate form *snā-* "to bathe, wash."

⁴Originally, this ablution, which is still required everyday of all Zoroastrians, was performed using unconsecrated bull's urine. Although Parsi Zoroastrians now use water, Irani Zoroastrians retain the original custom. See Boyce (1975:296-97).

⁵See Kotwal and Boyd (1977:23-24) for a detailed description of this process.

⁶For the text and translation of this prayer see Boyce and Kotwal (1977:58-73).

⁷Ibid.

⁸The word *petīt*, "penance, repentance," is a contracted form of Av. *paitita*, "expiation," from the base *paiti.ay-*. For the text and translation of this confession see Dhabhar (1927:54-61; 1963:100-22).

⁹These *Persian Rivāyats* (known as *Dārab Hormazyār's Rivāyats*), are a collection of treatises pertaining to matters of religious observances sent by Irani Zoroastrians to their fellow Zoroastrians in India, from C.E. 1478-1773.

¹⁰The *Ahunawar* may be recited in place of any other prayer because it is regarded as the most potent of Zoroastrian holy utterances. It translates: "As [is] the master, so is the judge to be chosen in accordance with righteousness. Establish the power of actions arising from a life lived with good purpose for Mazdā and the lord who was made shepherd for the poor."

¹¹The *Ašam Vohū* prayer is: "Righteousness [is] good, it is best. According to [our] wish it is, according to our wish, it shall be. Righteousness belongs to Best Righteousness."

¹²Zoroastrians are enjoined never to recite any prayer bare-headed; hence the necessity of covering the head with the right palm. The *Kēm Nā Mazdā* prayer is: "Whom, O Mazdā, have You appointed protector for one such as me, if an evil one shall dare to harm me? Whom but Your fire and [good] mind by whose actions, Lord, righteousness is nourished. Proclaim this teaching for my conscience. Who shall be victorious to protect through Your teaching those who are the offspring in my house? As world-healer, promise us a judge. Then let hearing come to him with good mind, O Mazdā, to him whosoever You wish. Protect us from the fiend, O Mazdā and Spenta Ārmaiti! Perish, O Demonic Lie! Perish, O Demonic Offspring! Perish, O Demonic Miscreation! Perish, O Demonic Begotten-Being! Perish, O Lie! Crawl away, O Lie! Disappear, O Lie! In the north you shall perish. You shall not destroy the material worlds of righteousness. Reverence [with] which is devotion and religious zeal." For a translation of the *Fravarānē* see Boyce (1975:253-54).

¹³Modi (1922:96-99) describes the ritual as performed in the 1920's.

¹⁴Purification of the initiate occurs in all three religious traditions. However, unlike Hinduism and Christianity, Zoroastrianism does not regard water as a primary purifying agent, because this liquid is extremely vulnerable to pollution. According to Zoroastrian doctrine water can be used for purificatory purposes only after unconsecrated urine has first been applied to expell all impurities from the surface of the body.

¹⁵*Frawardīgān* is the festival dedicated to the immortal souls (Av. *fravaši-*, Phl. *frawahr*) of human beings. It is celebrated during the last five days of the

twelfth month and the following five days. The goddess Spenta Ārmaiti is protector of women. To honor her, Parsi women undergo the *Saḍe Nāhn* during her festival. Zoroastrian women in Iran undergo the *Sī-Shūy Nāhn* on this occasion. Also see Boyce (1975:313).

¹⁶This arrangement is given in *Persian Rivāyats* (600). Boyce (1977:111) states that in Yazd, Iran, this ritual was administered using furrows drawn for the *Barašnūm ī nō šab*.

¹⁷According to Zoroastrian theology there is a hierarchy of metals with regard to their purity and resistance to impurities: gold is the purest and most resistant to pollution, followed by silver, copper, tin, brass, lead, steel, stone, turquoise, ruby, amber, earth, wood and clay. The arrangement of the list appears to be influenced by economic factors. Thus, the use of stone mounts in the *Sī-Shūy Nāhn* satisfies both ritual and economic considerations. Also see *Vendīdād* (7:73-75) and *Persian Rivāyats* (239, 1.8-10). References to the sky as being of hardest stone are found in *Yasna* (30:5) and *Dādestan ī Dēnīg* (90). For a detailed discussion of the nature and function of the stone sky see Bailey (1971:120-48).

¹⁸See Kotwal and Boyd (1977:23) for this process.

¹⁹*Xwaršēd Niyāyišn* (1.12-14) describes the purificatory function of the sun. For a translation of this passage see Dhabhar (1963:34-36).

²⁰It was not possible for corpse bearers to undergo the Purification of the Nine [Days and] Nights after each funeral. Hence the purificatory effect of the *Sī-Shūy Nāhn* was deemed sufficient to prevent the spread of pollution through the usual activities of this social group. However, corpse bearers had to undergo the nine night purification prior to entering a fire temple. For the last decade neither purification has been regularly undergone by Zoroastrian corpse bearers in India, because the laws governing ritual purity and pollution have gradually lost favor with an increasingly secular Parsi community.

²¹In Hinduism there is the requirement that mothers undergo a purificatory bath forty days after childbirth. This practice may be connected in its basic tenets to the Zoroastrian *Nāhns* due to the common Indo-Iranian heritage of the two religions.

²²Also see Boyce (1975:313). In the *Nīrangdīn* ceremony when the bull's urine is consecrated, this pure sight is believed to be vital for success of the ritual.

²³See Evans-Pritchard (1965), Geertz (1976), Leach (1968) and Turner (1967) for evaluations of anthropological approaches to the study of religion and ritual and the problems of interpretation they pose.

²⁴Geertz (1973b:129) presaged this interpretation with reference to religious belief in general.

²⁵However, this dichotomy is not universally applicable to all forms of religious belief (cf. Goody 1961:149-51).

²⁶Ahura Mazdā is on high, in eternal light, whereas Angra Mainyu frequents the depths, in eternal darkness (*Bundahišn* 1:1-5). Further, hell lies towards the north (*Vendīdād* 8:71, 9:26, 19:1). The separation of holiness and purity into opposite poles is also mentioned by Douglas (1966:7).

²⁷*Yasna* (48:5) and *Vendīdād* (5:21) contain similar passages.

²⁸*Ātaxš Niyāyišn* (1.5) mentions the connection between Ahura Mazdā and fire. For a translation of this passage see Dhabhar (1963:67).

²⁹Also see n. 17.

³⁰On the role of the three saviors see *Bundahišn* (33:29, 33:32, 34:3-33).

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CHORDS OF TRADITION, LENS OF ANALOGY: ICONIC SIGNS IN OKIEK CEREMONIES

Corinne A. Kratz

Abstract

This paper concentrates on ceremonial structure, using a semiotic framework to isolate and discuss one of the basic means of creating the cohesion, coordination and significance of ceremonies. Four examples drawn from the initiation ceremonies of Okiek in Kenya are used to illustrate the importance and variety of roles played by iconic signs in ceremonies. Verbal and material icons are included in the examples. Iconic relations are shown to 1) help define the ceremonial frame; 2) create semiotic fields of similarity within which distinction and relations can be made; 3) present an image of continuity and tradition which can serve to perpetuate and legitimate ceremonies and the social relations they represent; 4) define and focus relations which can then be given further significance and elaboration; 5) contribute to the texture and power of ceremonial enactments.

No solemnity of tone surrounds the few elders who drive the central posts of the *mabwaita* into the ground, nor does anyone else pay them particular attention. Yet their act both begins some Okiek ceremonies and enables their enactment by establishing the ceremonial space where ensuing ritual events take place. The *mabwaita* is a tree-like creation of posts and leafy branches bound with vines. It is for Okiek in Kenya what the *mudyi* tree is for Ndembu in Zambia (Turner 1967). To unpack its multivocality as a key symbol is not my task in this paper. Rather, I will concentrate on one sign mode, the iconic, and the various roles it plays in creating the pragmatic and aesthetic structure of ceremonies. The *mabwaita* is a good example of one aspect of iconic signs in ceremonies, namely, the way icons construct coherence and cohesion within and between ceremonies. This paper will outline some of the many layers of iconic relations within ceremonies, drawing examples mainly from the initiation ceremonies of Kipchornwonek and Kaplelach Okiek of Kenya.¹

Kipchornwonek and Kaplelach live in Narok District, making them the southernmost of Okiek groups living on the western Mau Escarpment. These two local groups, each with a population of about six hundred, live in adjacent forest areas, speak a Kalenjin language at home and subsist traditionally by hunting and gathering honey from their hives and from trees. They have had slightly different histories of inter-ethnic relations and economic diversification (Kratz: forthcoming). The major ceremonies they celebrate are life cycle ceremonies (shaving and naming a child, ear piercing and initiation) and weddings.

C.S. Peirce says an iconic sign is based on a relation of similarity between the sign vehicle and what it represents. The similarity can be a fairly explicit physical resemblance, as in a portrait, or a more abstract resemblance of relations between parts, as in a map. Peirce distinguishes two other types of sign relations, indexical and symbolic signs. The three are arranged in an implicational hierarchy, with the iconic having a logical priority. What this means is that every index necessarily includes an icon and similarly that a symbolic sign includes indexical and iconic modes.² The iconicity of these other kinds of signs is sometimes inconsequential from the view of scholars analyzing and interpreting what ceremonial enactments convey about social relations and cultural assumptions. Indexical and especially symbolic signs have generally been more helpful because of their revealing associations and multivocal wealth whose rich exegesis gives anthropologists a framework for ethnographic description.

Basic iconic relations are not only present in other signs, but are sometimes the foundation for their multivocality. For instance, the white sap of the *mudyi* tree, not its height or taste, is the semiotically relevant property for Ndembu. Using an iconic similarity with the sap, they bring milk into focus. A semiotic tapestry is woven around the simple iconic base by the indexical associations of milk and of *mudyi* and by linguistic mediation, sometimes in the form of exegesis. After briefly reviewing some types of iconic signs that have been discussed in studies of ritual and ceremony, I will turn to their binding role in ceremonial structure.

Icons of Society, Transformation and Repetition

Ceremonial analyses have paid most attention to the iconic aspect of signs which relates them to social categories or relations. Signs interpreted as social icons range in scale from a single object used during a ceremony, to a ritual event, to a ceremony as a whole. Material icons, such as clay figures, are used to instruct initiates in some cultures. Initiates may find their display cryptic, until their significance and implications for social roles and relations are elaborated verbally. One example from Bemba initiation ceremonies is the figure of a tortoise, likened to a stingy, inhospitable woman who hides her own food but looks for food in other houses (Richards 1956:207-20). The same ceremony provides examples of ritual events which are social icons. When Bemba girls are initiated, dances portray sowing and hoeing, recalling the responsibility of adult women for agricultural work and their own reproductive fecundity (102). Turner also analyzes

episodes of Ndembu healing ceremonies as enacting argument and reconciliation between co-wives (1968:258). In Maasai *eunoto*, which promotes junior warriors to senior warriors, the spatial organization and enactment of the ceremony as a whole is an iconic re-creation of the principle institutions and relations of Maasai social organization (Galaty 1983).

Another kind of iconicity discussed in ceremonial analyses was noted early by Frazer as homeopathic magic, i.e., iconic relations between ceremonial enactments and their transformative processes and goals. In some healing rites the desired cure is at once represented and effected by manipulation of material icons or recitation of verbal icons (Fitzgerald 1975; Tambiah 1968; Turner 1968:72-3). Navajo healing rites are a good example. In them, the creation of a sand painting iconically represents and rectifies the spiritual and social state of a patient (Wyman 1962; Parezo 1983). Tobriand garden rites also include such verbal icons (Malinowski 1934). Fernandez' work on Fang ceremony takes this sort of analysis furthest, discussing iconic relations between ceremonial structure and social organization, ceremonial enactment and transformative goals, as well as the affective power such relations can create (1972; 1974; 1982).

Repetition, often considered a constitutive aspect of ritual, highlights another pertinent kind of iconicity. Like Leach, some scholars take repetition in ritual as a point of continuity with animal behavior and consider it to be redundancy in a communicative sense. However, we ought not dismiss the other communicative functions of redundancy, for example, its conative, poetic and metacommunicative functions (Jakobson 1960). The importance of various kinds of repetition in knitting together a ceremonial system³ and in reiterating themes and important values is often noted. Systematic consideration of this kind of iconicity within and between ceremonies offers suggestive insights not only into how a ceremony hangs together as a whole, but into its affective and dramatic texture and its transformative work.⁴

Should repetition really be considered a kind of iconicity? The notion of repetition itself bears closer consideration. What is called repetition often conflates differences in the timing of recurrence and degrees of similarity. An act might be repeated in quick succession or repeated after some time. It may be relatively exact re-creation, or repetition with systematic variation, or repetition that preserves only enough general similarity to be regarded as the same. Many examples of repetition play indexical roles as well, anticipating ritual acts to come or pointing to those already performed in the same ceremony or in other ceremonies.

But as already noted, iconic similarity is a foundation for the index. This common base is what is emphasized here, though one should keep in mind distinctions between kinds of indexical relations (back-reference, cross-reference, anticipation, inter-ceremony, intra-ceremony) that build on the iconic bedrock.

At the risk of stretching the sense of the term "icon," I include all of the above as iconic, thus gaining a picture of the full array of relations of similarity which could contribute to cohesion and coordination in ceremonial structure in different ways. It may prove useful elsewhere, when sorting out those various roles or pursuing other analytical goals, to reconstruct the sense of icon in a way that eliminates some kinds of repetition. The notion of repetition itself seems most usefully applied within a ceremony, when something is said or done repeatedly within a time and space defined and limited by a single ceremonial frame. This usage does not eliminate iconic relations between ceremonies and objects that recur in different contexts.

Iconic Signs in Okiek Ceremonies

As a recognizable cultural performance a ceremony follows a general form and sequence. This outline for enactment specifies in general, sometimes in detail, the signs that will occur in different communicative channels and codes and their coordination and scheduling in the performance. It specifies what sequences of songs, genres of speech and moments of silence will fill the verbal channel; the ritual actors involved, costumes worn, acts performed; the spatial organization and movement needed to create the place of ceremony and the temporal scheduling and pace. Since every performance is in some ways unique, each enactment of a ceremony is iconic, though not identical, with those previously enacted. An enactment is also iconic with the general model of the ceremony.⁵

Okiek refer to this iconic continuity of tradition in ceremonial songs: "*ki bo kugo-e ak kogo-e*," (it was grandfather's and grandmother's) i.e., it has been this way through generations. The overall iconic similarity is one ideological basis by which Okiek explain and legitimate their ceremonial forms ("we've always done it like this") though discussion of specific parts of a ceremony shows room for change and variation within it. In interviews Okiek identify certain songs, costumes, even entire ritual events, as recent additions from the ceremonies of neighboring peoples. During a ceremony elders and sponsoring family confer on what and how things are to be done. They are at once affirming and re-creating the general model of the ceremony in these discussions,

as well as passing it on to the next generation of parents and adapting it for the particular exigencies of that performance.

Iconic signs in ceremonies occur in many forms ranging from the ceremonial form as a whole to ritual acts (e.g., recurrent blessings) and ritual objects (e.g., similar costumes worn by different actors). These are examples of iconic relations within a single code and channel, but iconic signs can cross codes or channels as well. When acts performed are also described in song or speech the iconic relation crosses between verbal and mimetic channels (see Fitzgerald 1975). Such cross-code ties not only help constitute the cohesion and density of ceremonial texture, they can also contribute to its affective and aesthetic power by concentrating and coordinating semiotic resources.

The distribution of iconic signs and their type of iconicity are important in considering the way they contribute to the texture and cohesion of a ceremony. For example, Okiek blessings in initiations are performed by two elders, each of whom spits honey wine four times before calling out a spoken blessing affirmed by the response of those assembled. The iconic repetitions in the four sprayings and in blessings performed at different points in the ceremony may play different roles in the pragmatic and textual structure of the ceremony. Similarly, an icon might relate virtually identical forms in repetition or recurrent forms with some slight change, as in the reiteration with alternative lexical expansions of grammatical parallelism (Fox 1977) or the repetition of an act by a series of ritual actors.

I illustrate some of these iconic relations and their various functions with four examples from Okiek initiations: the *mabwaita* shrine, costume, verbal themes and blessings.

Mabwaita

The *mabwaita* is part of the Okiek ceremonial frame, marking generally where a ceremony occurs. It has iconic relations both within a single ceremony and between different kinds of ceremonies. The *Mabwaita* is the place where most ritual events are performed during the first ceremony of initiation and so it contributes an iconic coherence to the events spaced over twenty-four hours. Generally, events that occur there are tied together by the *mabwaita*, but they are also paired iconically by their structure. There are two processions—parallel trips to the forest by young people and by women—bringing forest plants to encircle the *mabwaita* for the blessing. Initiates sit at the base of the *mabwaita* to be shaved in one event and excised in a later one. Girls call their friends from the crowd to come stand in their midst as they sing good-bye to them at the *mabwaita*. Later in the night

one young man questions the girls about their social debts⁶ as they stand in front of the crowd at the *mabwaita*. Everyone encircles it—initiates sit, young people stand. In each pair of events the relation of actors to the *mabwaita* differs, but the centrality of the *mabwaita* still unites them all.

Within a ceremony, the single *mabwaita* is iconic to itself in different ritual events.⁷ It is iconic with other *mabwaiyuek* (the plural form) constructed in other ceremonies as well. There are variations in the building of *mabwaita* in each circumstance; such variations are similar to variations in costume details. A *mabwaita* is built in the initiates' seclusion area during the first seclusion ceremony. While the overall structure is the same as the one built at home on circumcision day, the *mabwaita* at a boys' seclusion area has a bushy fringe of tall stiff grass tied around the base, while that in a girls' seclusion area is covered with mud at the base. During each of the seclusion ceremonies, the original *mabwaita* at home is refreshed with green branches and vines, renewing the reflexive iconicity it exhibited in the sequence of ritual events during the first initiation ceremony. Finally, at the last initiation ceremony, which brings initiates from seclusion, the home *mabwaita* is again renewed and then further extended with an arch which has one base in the *mabwaita*. The final acts of emergence take place at the arch and *mabwaita*.

The *mabwaita* also shares in two iconic relations which reach beyond the ceremonies most specifically connected with initiation. A *mabwaita* is built to begin an ear piercing ceremony in a manner parallel to that of the initiation ceremony. In fact, these two ceremonies in their entirety follow a similar sequence of events, iconically binding them; they are also indexically bound, for the ear ceremony precedes and leads to initiation. Finally, a miniature *mabwaita* is sometimes built in accordance with the prescription of a medical specialist. It is made near the house in the same spot as the *mabwaita* of other ceremonies, usually in conjunction with a libation poured to ancestor spirits and with other healing acts. The aspect of the *mabwaita* that this iconic link brings into focus is that it is one place where the spirits can be addressed and given libations.⁸ Also, participants hope that by constructing a small *mabwaita* the household will soon begin to enjoy the blessing and prosperity that having a ceremony (and thus children) implies. It is an iconic invocation of ceremony as a whole in a metonymic moment of the healing rite.

A family may have occasion to make a *mabwaita* several times while they are living in the same house; healing prescriptions and several ceremonies for different children may all call for a *mabwaita*. The result is not a small forest of *mabwaiyuek*

sprouting by the door but additional iconic layering of a single *mabwaita*. After the first occasion the old *mabwaita* is renewed and rebuilt again and again as long as the house is occupied. Fresh branches and vines superimpose and layer new occasions and *mabwaiyuek* over the original one, which may have become little more than a stump. A social icon is the foundation here: the strength, continuity and renewal of the *mabwaita* is as the continuity and perpetuation of the family should be. The species used to make the *mabwaita* are important to the icon; they are chosen for their hardness of wood and immunity to being struck by lightning or for their abundance and long-lasting greenness. Ideally, the *mabwaita* stuck down by the doorway should take root and grow—a family tree.

So far I have only considered the iconic relations of the *mabwaita* as a complete structure. There is also iconicity within it and iconic relations created between the *mabwaita* and other ritual structures. The *mabwaita* is made by sinking four stout poles into the ground, binding them round the base with two or four lengths of vine and then adding other leafy branches that are at hand or brought in the opening ceremonial procession. Two iconic repetitions thus define its basic construction and also its nature as a ritual structure. Two-fold or four-fold repetition (the acts of adding component poles and vines during construction) is one of the constitutive patterns of Okiek ritual.

Blessings are said two or four times; food is proffered four times before it is actually put in the mouth; the house is encircled four times to the right; a new name is called four times when bestowed. In some cases such repetition can be seen as ritualization of an everyday action such as feeding or calling someone—a heightening through iconic doubling or quadrupling. In other cases there is no clear parallel in daily life; the repetition is simply part of what makes an act ceremonial. Two and four are auspicious, holy numbers (*esinya*);⁹ iconic doubling of an act is itself like a blessing.

Four poles and two or four vines of the same species used for the *mabwaita* are used again later in initiations to build a second structure, *telocik*, inside the house at the hearth. The completed *telocik* looks like a table, in contrast to the tree-like *mabwaita*. But the use of the same materials and their positions in parallel ritual events juxtaposes them as a pair and brings out interesting comparisons and contrasts. The materials for both structures are brought in processions from forest to village. The processions are met by women who come singing to the *mabwaita* area to be blessed by elders with honey beer and words. In the first procession, early in the morning, young people bring bushy

saplings that will fill out the basic *mabwaita* structure built by elders. In the second, just before dusk, women cut and carry materials with which the *telocik* will be made. Two men make each structure in parallel ways, then the men bless them; elders build the *mabwaita* and men of the father's age-set build the *telocik*.¹⁰

The *mabwaita* outside is the place of blessing; it marks the start of the ceremony and stands in solid continuity and renewal ever after. The *telocik* inside creates the substance of blessings, marks the end of the ceremony and is eventually taken apart. Once the *telocik* has been constructed, it is put to use as a platform on which to brew a bag of honey wine, the liquor of blessings. This bag of wine will be the last consumed—only when all the rest has been drunk, the slaughtered cow eaten and guests are leaving. Some time later, when there is honey to brew a bit of wine again, friends come to drink, the *telocik* is taken apart and its poles and vines put under the bed. As ritual structures, *mabwaita* and *telocik* can be related within a set of basic symbolic contrasts that structural analysis has shown to be productive and widespread in many cultures, such as male/female, old/young, outside/inside, etc.¹¹ The *mabwaita* is coupled and contrasted with the hearth, also a place of blessing and libation that symbolizes a similar eternity of constant renewal in its fire and the glowing embers that bring it back to life and warmth. Within the ceremonial structure it is the iconic relation between ritual events that clarifies and focuses the connection between *mabwaita* and *telocik* and thus recalls the relation of the *mabwaita* to the hearth where *telocik* is built.

This discussion of the *mabwaita* has illustrated a number of ways iconic signs help to create not only continuity and coherence but also distinction and specificity in Okiek ceremonies. The basic *mabwaita* structure recurs often; it is the pillar of ceremonial space and center of ritual events. While its basic continuity binds together Okiek ceremonies in general as well as ritual events in a particular ceremony, slight differences in the *mabwaita*'s form show its specific location and ceremonial use. Similarly, differences in the main actors and their spatial relation to the *mabwaita* link different events as part of the ceremony's significant structure.

In summary, the *mabwaita* example illustrates repetition as iconic doubling to be one constitutive Okiek pattern of the auspicious and ceremonial. By framing some act in a ritual event, such repetition can also mark an ordinarily common act and the relations among those involved in it, much as a slow motion sequence in film can focus attention on an act of relation by

altering the normal pace of action and apprehension of detail. Finally, looking at the *mabwaita* within the sequence of one ritual enables one to focus upon and draw out iconic relations and symbolic contrasts between two ritual events, as in the *mabwaita* and *telocik*.

Ceremonial Costume

Chief ritual actors in Okiek ceremonies are marked by costume. People in central ritual roles wear either a beaded leather skirt (*ndetut*) or a fur cape (*injurubayt*) of hyrax or bushbuck over their shoulders. The first was part of women's traditional dress before cotton sheets and blankets were worn; the second, part of men's traditional dress, is still used on trips to the forest to hunt or collect honey. Skirt and cape are equivalent in ceremonial costume; both are worn by male and female. The beaded skirt is considered the primary form of ceremonial costume, the cape an acceptable substitute. Nonetheless, men prefer the cape and may complain at having to wear a woman's skirt if no cape is available.

The similarity of costume creates iconic relations that identifies ritual actors as a set and defines a field where differences in costume become social diacritics and signs of movement through ritual transformation. The same garments are worn by principal participants in other Okiek ceremonies as well. Along with other iconic similarities in performance, this costume helps constitute an occasion as an Okiek ceremony and it ties these marked events together on both an individual and cross-generational level.

In initiations at present, ceremonial costume should be worn 1) throughout the ceremony by parents of initiates and the initiates themselves; 2) during the two processions from forest to village by a pair of actors who lead the processions as they begin to gather needed forest products; 3) after midnight when two ritual leaders (*matirenik*) begin secret teachings (these two are in costume in all seclusion ceremonies until initiation is complete); 4) finally, if there is a cape or skirt not yet in use, the circumciser wears it at dawn during the operation.¹² Although the identical ceremonial costume serves to unite these actors, their roles are delineated by the different objects they hold. Initiates carry an uprooted sapling (*korosiot*) from the ceremony's opening procession to the time of circumcision or excision. The father and host carries a small gourd of honey wine with certain leaves or grasses in the mouth,¹³ as does the elder who blesses ritual events. A man who has initiated a number of his children might decide to dispense with the cape, but he always carries the calabash that

specifies his ceremonial role as father and relates him to the elder and he provides an ever-ready sip of beer for himself or friends. During the processions the adze employed ritually in gathering forest products is carried by the senior member of each pair. The circumciser wields the blade. In contrast, the initiate's mother and ritual leaders carry nothing.

This absence of carried objects both pairs and equates mother and *matirenik* in a way confirmed by another iconic relation between them: they are the adults who let their hair grow during the initiates' seclusion. Indeed, when initiates come out of seclusion, they are told to respect the ritual teachers and their spouses as parents. The iconic link of costume between mother and *matirenik* also points to the pragmatic semiotic movement that signals and accomplishes the social transformation of initiation. Initiates are taken from their childhood homes, removed from full social interaction in seclusion until the day they emerge from seclusion and return as young adults. Responsibility for and guidance of initiates passes from mother to ritual leaders when the secret preparation for circumcision begins. Then the *matirenik* begin to wear ceremonial costume.

The initiates themselves offer a more obvious example of costume changes which both signify and accomplish their passage through stages of initiation. They begin as do all ritual actors with the basic cape or skirt over their shoulders. At dusk girls are dressed in an elaborate dance costume (borrowed from neighboring Kipsigis about twenty-five to thirty years ago). They hold a sapling which maintains a continuity with the traditional costume. At dawn, after excision, they are stripped and begin the first period of seclusion, during which they wear only blankets. After the first seclusion ceremony they enter the second stage of seclusion and wear clothing and a number of ornaments; they also paint themselves with white clay. On the day they come out of seclusion, they again wear the basic ceremonial costume, but in a way that serves to show their new adult status. Girls are anointed and adorned with beads, then dressed with beaded skirts around their waists—costumes traditionally worn by adult women.

Another illuminating contrast among ritual actors is introduced by the length of time they wear ceremonial costumes. Parents, initiates and ritual leaders all wear it continuously for some if not all of the ceremony. Those who lead the singing processions from the forest wear a cape only during that event. Others who might equally be considered ritual actors do not wear it at all. The first distinction is easily understood, for those who continuously wear ceremonial costume are those most centrally involved. But why does the young man who leads the opening

procession wear it while the young man who questions girls about their social offenses does not? Interestingly, men do not wear a ceremonial cape when they construct the *mabwaita* shrine or the *telocik* platform or when they make encouraging speeches at night. In fact, no elder except the father wears a ceremonial cape during girls' ceremonies.¹⁴ Several women who could also reasonably wear a cape (such as one who takes the mother's place to shave an initiate's head or those who support the girls' backs during excision) do not.

What distinguishes those who lead the processions is the nature of participation in the ritual event. All others who take some part in performing the ceremony do so in a way that makes their singularity as ritual actors clear: the woman who shaves or supports a girl is one, apart from others, as is the young man who questions her. Adults who make speeches are many, but they speak one at a time, coming forward to the place where the initiate and her mother sit. When the processions near home, however, they are met and joined by many women. The saplings or vines and posts are shared, and the processional file becomes a large gathering that sings its way to the *mabwaita* to be blessed. In the throng of general participation the ones who lead the event are distinguished by their costume. In a similar procession from the river, when initiates come from seclusion, the caped *matirenik* lead with the initiates still hidden under a blanket.

This example, along with the first one of the *mabwaita*, suggests the significance of basic iconic relations. The common costume worn by ritual actors unites them and is part of the complex of signs that creates a coherent Okiek ceremonial system. But that unity is also the background against which significant differentiation is shown. Distinctions in details of costume and in the manner of wearing it show the diversity in the social and ceremonial roles of actors. Costume differences are also part of the social transformation brought about by initiation, which simultaneously signifies and effects the process.

Verbal Themes

The first two examples dealt chiefly with visual icons, objects used or constructed in ceremonies and the iconic relations of which they are part. I now turn to an example of verbal icons—the repetition and reiteration of certain themes and phrases during Okiek initiations. The themes center around the initiates' coming trial of excision and they are always found in at least two places in girls' ceremonies. First, they are the call lines of songs which the girls sing throughout the ceremony at the *mabwaita* with younger girlfriends whose turn for initiation has not yet come and with

young adult female relatives, e.g., sisters or brothers' wives. Second, they occur in speeches made to the girls at night by adult men. Both songs and speeches are said to encourage the girls (the speeches in general are called *cerset*, encouragement), so the common themes are also linked by a common purpose. The speeches are absent from boys' ceremonies because, as males, they should be able to encourage themselves. One common call line in their songs is "*Ara maikoci kocerok cepyosook. . . con kaikai kocergee*" (Don't let women encourage you. . . those who should encourage themselves). Some of their other call lines are shared with girls' songs.

The lines cite the expectations people have both of the ceremony and of the celebration afterwards. They admonish the girls not to cheat and thus shame the many people who came to make their ceremony. They remind them that everyone else went through it and survived. And they count the time until there are no more words and promises of bravery but only the act of bravery to be witnessed by all. Call lines (or part of them) from the songs occur verbatim in some speeches. Sometimes the themes of a call line are further developed or personalized in a speech, though not necessarily repeated exactly as they are in the songs. Songs are answered by speeches.

[Song call lines]

*We'll go we won't die, otherwise those of
long ago would have died.*

*We'll go we won't die, otherwise everyone
would have died.*

*You go, then, no one dies, otherwise those
of long ago would have died.*

[Speech excerpts]

. . . Wait for initiation, my child. Something that's like a speck [in your eye], otherwise all these people would have died. They all were initiated, these women you see here, they waited for this ceremony. All these men were initiated, that you see in this area. . . . There's no one who died, you see yourselves. . . .

*Look at those decorations, you see they
are shiny/new/white, it's not right
to shame them.*

*Don't shame the lovely things, those that
have made your body lovely.*

*Don't shame the things of, the things of
the young men, that you didn't know
(Where they're from), that have
traveled miles, going around Nkaroni.*

. . . I ask you one thing, please. Don't shame those things of mine for me. I've tied [decorations on] a lot [of girls], not just yourselves. You don't even see that [the decorations] have become old. . . . There's A.N., he's died [going round looking for]

costume that is tied on. So it's you that shamed herself [and] those decorations of people's if you leave it, and you don't wait. . .

*I want a sapling, that comes from your
body,
We want a sapling, that I'll take to those
at home.
I want a sapling, that will come out at my
home.
We want porridge, that's warm like tea.*

. . . We want you to give us warm porridge tomorrow morning. And give me a sapling to take to whom? To take to your child, where? *Lolwo*. . . Have your heard-i? . . . We want tomorrow when we're going in the morning, to be going with a beautiful sapling. We don't want to be going in hunger without even having drunk dark water, going and cursing the world. . . . Are all these people usually here-i? It's you that invited them, till they came. Tomorrow they want to eat food, that you invited them for. So that it doesn't turn out that people leave, and leave this liquor that you see is in this house-i. You think Friend will finish this liquor by himself? If we leave it. . .

*We'll go until they rejoice, 'til they
rejoice for a month, a month and a week.
I'll go 'til they rejoice, 'til everyone
rejoices, that came to my home.
I'll go 'til he rejoices, 'til the one
who is passing by rejoices, that's
going on his trip.*

. . . So that we rejoice tomorrow morning early. We'll drink that porridge, and rejoice tomorrow morning early, so. . . . 'til we rejoice, saying "Truly, people's children went [i.e., were initiated]" *Iya!* To rejoice with all the people that went; [til] it comes out in that place near Narok, those going to Mulot. We'll say, "The children of people went." *Iya!*. . . .

The reiteration of themes emphasizes the anxiety of all concerned as dawn approaches and it also goes a long way towards creating anxiety. The lines also quite clearly create a similarity and coherence between verbal genres, and they form part of the cohesion of ritual events in the ceremony. A brief sociolinguistic look at the genres will give a clearer and more cogent view of the pragmatic role of the themes in these verbal icons.

Speeches are delivered to the initiates primarily by men, especially by their fathers (their own fathers and their fathers' age-mates). Until the time of the speeches, they have had virtually nothing to do with the girls apart from blessing the entire crowd of young people after the opening procession. In some ceremonies the initiates themselves were specifically excluded from the honey wine spray of that blessing. Women and young men stand outside and watch the girls sing and dance. Younger women sing along and exchange call lines with the initiates. In

the evening, initiates call certain young men and women forward one at a time to stand in the dancing arena, where they sing good-bye and give them cigarettes. Men sit in the house drinking beer through all this. They hear the songs in the background but do not stand in the crowd where they would be the center of attention. In a girls' ceremony such singing is not for them.¹⁵

The speeches, then, constitute their participation as individuals and fathers rather than as blessing elders. The speeches are their only direct communication to the initiates in the ceremonial events. The girls, however, do not answer. Even when a man calls her name or directly asks her a question, she sits silently. Her only verbal response is in song, a displaced dialogue with respect to these men. Her most definitive response, also displaced, is silence and stillness during the operation at dawn.

The iconic reiteration does not simply enhance the structural cohesion of the ceremony, but plays an important part in the pragmatic force of the ceremonial progression. Once the *mabwaita* is built, the morning procession arrives and thus begins the progression which moves inevitably to its climax the following dawn. The waiting and leisurely pace of the day picks up as dusk comes; time is getting short. Several ritual events happen at once or in rapid succession as the sun falls. The girls are dressed in dance costumes, their singing and dancing becomes more continuous and energetic and their friends and relatives become so worked up that some of them fall into fits (*tubuc*). As emotional tension heightens, the girls are brought inside for the men's addresses. Here the same message is repeated again, given the final force of legitimation by coming from fathers who have until now remained aloof from the girls.

It is personalized as each man takes his turn speaking and backs up his words with a gift. Speech after speech, in iconic series, tells the girls what is expected and what happens if they succeed or fail. The unanimity of all present at the ceremony is thus complete, its pragmatic thrust concentrating tremendous emotional pressure on the girls, which demand their stoic response to being cut and helps them fulfill the demand. Further emphasis to unanimity sometimes is added by heated harangues by women as the girls' heads are shaved and by a final song with which women announce the dawn before gathering to watch the girls' performance. Both include the same themes and phrases, adding another iconic link and emphasis.

Blessings

The final example to be discussed, blessing, involves both word and deed. Each blessing performed during the initiation

ceremony is done by two elders; four are required for the *mabwaita*. Each sprays a mouthful of honey wine four times on the people and objects and then calls out a spoken blessing. Those gathered answer each of his phrases. Four blessings are performed, one after each procession reaches the *mabwaita* and again on the completion of both the *mabwaita* and the *telocik*.

The first and most obvious thing to note is the proliferation of iconic *esinya* repetitions in two's and fours. Such repetitions, I have noted, are a constitutive pattern of Okiek ceremonies. Similarly, blessings are the definitive mark of ceremonial act. A blessing is said in various non-ceremonial contexts, but there is no such thing as a ceremony without blessings. In all circumstances blessings have iconic auspiciousness in their generic structure; a built-in verbal boost to the realization of prosperity and fecundity wished for its recipients.

Still, auspicious repetitions cannot guarantee a blessing's fulfillment or create the conditions of its fulfillment; blessings are not magical formulae. The pragmatic import of the blessings and their repetitions is metacommunicative, establishing that the occasion is a ceremony and indicating the general amicable tone that should prevail.¹⁶ Practically, blessings mean that no one should argue or fight. A blessing cannot be guaranteed, but it can be counteracted and its opposite brought about when disrespect spoils the harmonious ceremonial key that should prevail.

The use of blessings as a framing device and an indirect control of argumentative or disruptive behavior is not limited to ceremonies. The performance of blessings also links ceremonies to marriage discussions, men's meetings and occasions when arguments and anger are neutralized with apology and blessing. In each case blessings invoke an air of cooperation and mutual respect. Further, the entire iconic series represents and legitimates male authority on all occasions where children and property are displayed, discussed, safeguarded or exchanged. Elders stand with calabash in hand, spraying honey wine to bless and control their children, wives and property. The iconic chain going back in time establishes their tradition of authority and legitimizes it. Authority and progression of elders through time is sometimes invoked in spoken blessings when age-sets are named.

Blessings are spoken in any of three different languages or some combination of them; each has its own verbal style. Okiek say it is irrelevant whether said in Maa, Okiek or Kipsigis; the effect or appropriateness is the same. The choice of language may indicate local group affiliation, personal history or age of the blesser. Iconic relations across languages and styles of blessing

are limited to the general call and response form of the genre and the similarities of theme in prayers for children, women and cows.

Within a single blessing there can be immediate and multiple repetitions of a line, repetition after a number of intervening lines, as well as a short series of grammatically parallel lines. The Kipsigis style is characterized by the most consistent and exact iconic repetition. Its usual line structure is simple and the set of adjective and noun phrases that occur is fairly limited. Blessing lines are not a closed set in any style, but the majority of them are common, often repeated standards and the outline for improvised lines specific to an occasion is clear. There does not seem to be a clear pragmatic progression in the lines used in ceremony blessings; their iconic relations seem to be simply the similarities of form and theme which define the genre and style.

Shown in italics below are blessing/response excerpts from ceremonies in Okiek, Kipsigis and Maa. An accompanying English translation is provided. The response after each line is shown in parentheses. *Seri* and *nai* mean roughly "amen."

Okiek Blessing

ot kokonok Mungu sobondo (seri/nai)
May God give you a blessed life
ot kokonok Mungu sobondo (seri/nai)
May God give you a blessed life
kotoretok (seri/nai)
and help you
kotoretok (seri/nai)
and help you
kotoret logook (seri/nai)
and help the children
kotoret solootwek (seri/nai)
and help the bearing women
kotoret tuga (seri/nai)
and help the cows
ot kokonok tuga Mungu (seri/nai)
May God give you cows
ot kokonok logook (seri/nai)
May He give you children
ot kokonok kit ake tugul... (seri/nai)
May He give you everything...

Kipsigis Blessing

baibai ole baibai (baibai)
Happy say happy
baibai ole baibai (baibai)
Happy say happy
tumi, kim ole kim (kim)
This ceremony, strong say strong
kim ole kim (kim)

Kratz: Chords of Tradition

Strong say strong
baibai ole baibai (baibai)
Happy say happy
mii baibaiyet ole mii (mii)
There is happiness say there is
mii kasinet ole mii (mii)
There is understanding say there is
kim ole kim (kim)
Strong say strong
king ole king (king)
Complete say complete
mii tuga ole mii (mii)
There are cows say there are
mii tuga ole mii (mii)
There are cows say there are
mii solootwek ole mii (mii)
There are bearing women say there are

Maa Blessing

mairuk Enkai le dukaya (seri/nai)
May God agree to the first [blessing just said]
mairuk Enkai (seri/nai)
May God agree
mairuk iltareto (seri/nai)
May *iltareto* [oldest living members] age agree
eseuri (seri/nai)
and *eseuri*
entaa oloisho (seri/nai)
May you become a neighborhood
entubulo (seri/nai)
May you prosper
entaisho naa kataisho (seri/nai)
May you bear many children
minjoki amaki non kulie (seri/nai)
May you not speak of those of others
[i.e., be not jealous of other's children]
mairuk Enkai iltareto (seri/nai)
May God agree to *iltareto* [old] age [this blessing]
... mete enaikuti (seri/nai)
May you have a ceremony [continuous because of children]
encoolepu (seri/nai)
Let them rise
matoboro enaisho... (seri/nai)
Don't curse the liquor
[i.e., don't fight, or the food & ceremony will be spoiled]

Iconic Signs:

Constitutive, Cohesive, Legitimizing and Juxtaposing

These examples taken from Okiek ceremonies illustrate the role of iconic signs in ceremonial structure. One primary function of the iconic relations is cohesive; they create cross-references

between ceremonies and between ritual events within a ceremony. Iconic signs provide a series of chords in different modalities—costume, songs, objects, acts—which together help constitute the ceremonial frame. Taken individually, these landmarks of the ceremonial system may occur on other occasions as well, and so bring to their ceremonial use more extensive indexical associations, such as the *mabwaita* in healing prescriptions or blessings in marriage talks.

In some cases iconic signs further establish a semiotic field in which other signs differentiate and particularize what iconic relations first unite as a set by their similarity. The best example of this is ceremonial costume, for which various differences laid over the basic costume not only distinguish between ritual actors but also help accomplish and show the ritual transformation of initiates. The *mabwaita* illustrates this kind of diversity within iconic unity as well.

Re-created in each enactment of a ceremony, iconic relations also establish ceremonial continuity across time. Tradition is perpetuated and legitimated at once. Though the changelessness suggested by iconic chords is belied by changes and variation in events and songs that fill out their outline, it is the image of continuity and constancy that stands out when the general markers of the ceremonial frame are considered. It is not only the tradition of ceremonial form which is thus continued and justified, but also the social roles, relations and authority upon which they are based and which they express. With this background of continuity and accepted tradition, the details of a specific enactment of a ceremony can be the center of attention and debate. The particulars personalize it making it unique and a topic of discussion and analysis for some time after.

Within a ceremony iconic relations can also help define equivalence or contrast between ritual acts, items or actors. The iconicity of ritual events align *mabwaita* and *telocik* as they occur in parallel positions. Juxtaposed in this way, the pair is brought into focus and symbolic contrasts and comparisons between them emerge. Likewise, the similarity and difference between ritual leaders and the mothers of initiates is brought into focus by iconicity in costume between them. One basic function of iconic signs in general is to create a focus through which indexical and symbolic relations can be defined. As a lens which focuses analogy, an iconic relation can select shared aspects which can become the basis for elaboration in other sign modes.

Iconic relations help constitute the ceremonial frame, define the key appropriate to part of a ceremony and carry important pragmatic force and emphasis. The examples discussed show that

iconic signs of different scales and in various communicative channels are an important part and foundation of the semiotic means combined in ceremonies. The patterns of their distribution and extent of iconic similarity contribute much to the texture, complexity, force and cohesion of ceremonies.

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NOTES

¹My initial research with Kaplelach and Kipchornwonek Okiek was done in 1974-75 with assistance from the Anthropology Department, Wesleyan University. Further research from 1982-86 was supported by the National Science Foundation (BNS 8112153), the Joint Committee on Africa of the Social Science Research Council and the American Council of Learned Societies, the Fulbright-Hayes program (022AH20034), the Wenner Gren Foundation, the Institute for Intercultural Studies and the University of Texas at Austin.

²The analytical problem is not so much to distinguish different kinds of signs as to unravel the layers of different modes of signification combined in a sign. The usual difficulty in analyses of the sort presented here, which concentrate on the structure and working of ceremonies, is that the life, motion, emotion and significance of their performative resources are not conveyed in their full wealth. Sketching in as much relevant context as possible in structural examples might give some indication of the experience and associations called forth by particular ceremonies.

³It may be the case that the coherence and repetition of ceremonies arise, as Bourdieu says, "because they are the product of a small number of generative schemes that are *practically interchangeable*, i.e., capable of producing equivalent results from the point of view of the 'logical' demands of practice" (1977:113, emphasis in original). Yet to say simply that the generative schemes are thus objectified and internalized in ceremonial practice as in other types of lived experience is not sufficient to describe or explain the complex scheduling and different patterns of ceremonial coherence and repetition. To do that, closer consideration of ceremonial enactment and participation and its practical and social functions is needed.

⁴Work on language in ritual is a good example. James Fox (1977) does close analyses of verbal iconicity and its variations in his work on grammatical parallelism in ritual texts from Roti. Silverstein (1981) carries things a step further, looking at the implications of discursive structures for a stated ritual end.

⁵In Peircian terminology different enactments are sinsigns of the same legisign, the general outline of the ceremony. The distinction is similar to that of token and type used in lexical studies. In most instances the type/token distinction is used to enumerate occurrences and frequencies of use—relations between tokens of a given type are not of interest. I specifically include iconic relations between enactments (tokens) of the same ceremony here because the differences between particular enactments are important and significant in a number of ways.

⁶They are called *pesenwek*, as in monetary debts.

⁷Though considering the *mabwaita* iconic to itself may seem pedantic at first glance, this reflexive iconicity is worth noting because of the basic link it creates between ritual events and, in some cases, between ceremonies. The *mabwaita* is a semiotically powerful object around which relations between events can be built. In some circumstances, a *mabwaita* is rejuvenated and reused when another could have been built because of the coincidences of residential histories. In such cases reflexive iconicity is of import because it emphasizes the sense of social continuity and unity represented by the *mabwaita*.

⁸The hearth is the other place.

⁹When pressed, people say that four is more *esinya* than two (cf. Moll 1980:83).

¹⁰In some cases the age-set is the same.

¹¹The common, ordered set of contrasts has different articulations and expressions in different cultures, of course, since they are applied as principles that structure, teach and reproduce very different social and economic relations.

¹²Shortage of required ritual resources provides a useful test of markedness, in this case of ritual actors. Four capes might be needed, but who wears them if only two or three are to be found? The historical patterns of actors who no longer wear ceremonial costume are revealing.

¹³The type of leaves used and certain other details of the father's costume are lineage indices.

¹⁴This distinction may be another reason men are willing quickly to discard it after they have fulfilled the role prescription by wearing it for the ceremony of their first-born. Carrying the wine-filled calabash similarly marks their role as father and host, but links them with the elder who blesses from a similar gourd rather than the women and children who most often wear the capes.

¹⁵In a boys' ceremony, however, men [including some of the initiates' fathers] are the main singers of *cepketilet* songs. Women also sing along, but call lines in a number of these songs are sung only by men.

¹⁶The four blessings are concentrated in the opening part of the ceremony, before ritual attention has really centered on the initiates. This is an appropriate time for them, since one of their main purposes is metacommunicatively to establish the ceremonial frame and key.

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MAKING SENSE OF THE AJE FESTIVAL: WEALTH, POLITICS AND THE STATUS OF WOMEN AMONG THE ONDO OF SOUTHWESTERN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The thrust of the paper is threefold. First, as a background for the Aje festival there is an ethnological and historical discussion of Ondo women leaders and Idoko male chiefs. Second, we will present an ethnographic description of a single Aje festival witnessed in 1985. Finally, the paper will analyze the role of ritual in the distribution of power between men and women.

The Ondo are one of the largest subgroups among the Yoruba. They reside in a forest conducive to producing cocoa, the principal cash crop of the area. In the city of Ondo are three aboriginal groups, the Idoko, the Ifore and the Oka. Although the Ondo were the last group to arrive in the territory, they nevertheless succeeded by using military and diplomatic tactics in establishing a political and legal authority over the aboriginal groups. Their control is not total. For example, the facial marks and rituals of each of the aboriginal groups are distinctive. The relationship of one of the aboriginal groups, the Idoko, with Ondo women in the festival of Aje is the subject of this paper.¹

The Aje festival is a celebration of wealth and fertility. It also enhances the role of women in lineage maintenance. Women help create the lineage through their fertility, and they ensure there are sufficient economic resources to maintain it. Women's control of Aje is tantamount to the acquisition of economic power through which factions can be mobilized rather loosely in order to demonstrate a "solidarity of the dispossessed" (Turner 1969:114).

The Aje's central role in economic and political relationships among the Yoruba has been neglected in the literature,² perhaps because Aje is regarded as a minor deity in Yorubaland (Fadipe 1970). Few Yoruba scholars give the Aje any serious attention. Lucas (1948) and Idowu (1962) do not give it any explicit treatment in their books. Even those concerned with femininity among the Yoruba (Odugbesan 1969) hardly mention it. Though the subject has attracted the attention of artists (e.g., Abiodun n.d.), these have linked it primarily with religion. Yet, available data suggest that the Aje's economic and political significance should be more critically assessed in terms of its power distribution. Writing on Yoruba women's economic activities, Sudarkasa (1973) noted that women have been involved in the distribution of goods for as long as the Yoruba have lived in urban areas and that the historical precedent for present-day trade by

women can be found in their participation in the markets within the towns in which they reside. The women's economic role is thus embedded in social and cultural matrices which shape the distribution of goods. The division of labor is related to the presence of sectors in the sociopolitical organization.

Ritual Performance and Women's Power

In his anthropological study of rituals in Ondo, Olupona (1983) stresses that women's right to kingship was lost when the first female king was replaced. Correspondingly, the descent system changed from matriliney to patriliney. Although the Ondo continued to emphasize matrifocality, descent became bilateral with an emphasis on patriliney.

The study of Ondo women's social and political activities raises questions about the relationship between descent and exchange ties. The supremacy of Ondo males, who dispossessed the aborigines of their property and usurped the kingship, is based on a kinship ideology that delineated and separated an intricate system of identity boundaries. Once the matriarchal system in Ondo was changed, new identities emerged. The consequent change in the division of labor and the exchange system affected politics more than the economic power of women. Women continued to have an autonomous economic role and to enjoy high socioeconomic mobility. Their power stemmed from their distribution of goods produced by men. Following Post (1972) and Clarke (1980) we might say that women's economic roles were influenced by a "peasantization" process with the following features: 1) a shift from a division of labor based on kinship to one with some other basis; 2) a shift from "pre-market" forms of distribution and exchange to the market principle; and 3) a shift from communal land ownership, with group or individual use, to individual ownership.

Economic transactions in Ondo depend on control of property. Such control influences kinship bonds, labor and the demand for goods. Ordinarily, if men and women have equal rights in determining the ideological premises structuring the parameters of economic exchange, then domestic and public powers will be coterminous (cf. Sack 1979). Yet the reality is that in many traditional African societies, women do not hold formal political office (See DiVale and Harris 1979).

Associated with political office are rituals from which women are barred. In these rituals, masculinity is associated with cleanliness, while femininity is linked to uncleanness. The clean are sacred and have political power. Women are unclean and,

therefore, controlled by men (cf. Gross 1980). Essentially, women's power is determined by their religious roles and statuses. Abiodun (25) gives a very succinct statement of this view:

It is reasonable to assume that much of the importance of, and status ascribed to, women is derived from their deified counterparts as they operate in the Yoruba religious belief system. The worship and propitiation of traditional deities like Yemoja, Osun, Oya, Iyamapo, Aje, Olokun, Osa, Ogbese and many others in various parts of Yorubaland are still very actively done. In addition to their specialized functions in different localities, these deities are approached for health, wealth, children, and protection, all of which constitute the most important benefits of life.

In the Aje festival women and femininity symbolize a liminal quality blending lowliness and sacredness, weakness and power, homogeneity and comradeship. The Aje involves a dichotomy between structural superior (the king) and structural inferior (Ondo women and Idoko male chiefs). The dominant line of descent confers the king with jural status, rights of inheritance, ritual privileges and obligations.

Kingship and Exclusive Rights

What is unique about Aje festivity in Ondo is that, as a liminal festival with emphasis on power relations, it links Ondo women chiefs and Idoko male chiefs. The relationship between these two groups is complex and somewhat paradoxical. For instance, although the festival is held annually in the main Ondo market situated near the palace of the King of Ondo, neither the Osemawe (King of Ondo) nor his male chiefs are present. The Osemawe does, however, permit Ondo women to walk freely around the town while the festival lasts. In contrast, the next day when the Idoko celebrate Odunmoko, (the ritual of the Idoko cosmogony and of the purification of Ondo), women have to stay indoors. It is taboo for women to watch Odunmoko rituals.³

Cultural differences between Ondo women and Idoko chiefs can be traced to their migratory history. In this history, Ondo women are connected to Ondo men. According to Ondo origin myths (see Olupona 1983; Ogunsakin 1976; Johnson 1946; Ojo 1940; Leigh 1917), Ondo migrants, both male and female, met aboriginal groups upon arrival in their present territory. Among the migrants was Pupupu, one of the twins born to Oduduwa, the first Yoruba king of Ile-Ife, the cradle of Yoruba civilization.

Normally, Pupupu and her twin would have been killed, since Ife culture at the time of their birth abhorred the delivery of twins. However, for reasons not too clear in the mythological narratives, Oduduwa spared the twins but insisted they be taken out of Ile-Ife.

As if to add a royal touch, he commanded that the entourage be led by Ija, one of his palace guards. By the time the entourage reached Ondo, Pupupu had matured into a woman. She became the first Osemawe and ruled until, in old age, the people asked her to give them a substitute and she named her first son, Airo (in Yoruba, "a replacement").

The official palace version of the above story is different. According to the palace officials it was usual for Pupupu not to pay attention to state matters, since she had a preference for domestic chores. When Ondo men could not tolerate her lack of attention to state matters, they had to replace her. In essence women lost their right to kingship because female subsistence broke down as a result of division of labor.

What is *not* at issue in the replacement of Pupupu with Airo is the genealogical principle of descent. In Ondo, as in many Yoruba societies, the firstborn commands a greater share of prizes and spoils and a greater immunity from disagreeable services (which are given to those who are younger).

This political process raises an intriguing question about the system of government in Ondo and why it needed to be changed. The various versions of Ondo origin myths suggest that the government was matriarchal. This style of governance could have been patterned after that in Ile-Ife. Idowu (1979) suggests that Oduduwa, the primogenitor of the Yoruba, could have been a woman because of the prominent position which Yoruba women occupy in the traditional society and religious world view.

Furthermore, evidence based on Ondo myths indicates that there was a continual exchange of ideas between Ile-Ife and Ondo. Consider, for example, the events which marked Pupupu's exit from the throne. The ascension of Airo was marked by violence and other forms of civil disorder. There were poor agricultural yields. The women were barren and without homes. Disasters of unimaginable proportions destroyed homes and created family rifts. Overwhelmed and perplexed by the complexity of change, Airo sought help from Oramfe, a primordial deity in Ile-Ife who is identified with the wrath of Olodumare, i.e., God. When Oramfe appeared in Ondo, order was restored and peace was brought to the town.

Oramfe's choice was not accidental. He is known in Yoruba mythology as one who successfully arbitrated the personality clash between Oduduwa and Orisa-nla. In Idowu's words the dispute "was going to spell catastrophe for the world as, for a frightful moment, it appeared that all was going to be lost in the burning wrath of two implacable divinities" (1962:94). Had the personality conflict between Oduduwa and Orisa-nla persisted, it

would have had serious consequences for the social order and raised the issue of Oduduwa's political legitimacy. But the way Oramfe handled it restored the dignity of each of the fighters, revealing the expertise of a skillful diplomat (cf. Idowu 1962). However, even if Oramfe did restore Oduduwa's reign, it was clear that his intervention in Ondo political crisis did not return authority to the women. The Ondo have been ruled by men since the arbitration.

Like the Ondo women, there is evidence that the Idoko did not surrender their civic rights to Ondo men without a grudge. In the Osemawe succession ritual, in which the aboriginal groups are involved independently and collectively and in which the Ifore and Oka reenact the pledge of surrender to Ondo, Idoko protest becomes manifest. In addition to pledging to avoid the Osemawe forever, they also promise, while the Osemawe backs them:

that we would continue to perform the rites necessary for the well-being of the Ondo people, that we would solely be responsible for the ritual removal of the bodies of those who commit suicide by hanging in Ondo; that we would perform the burial and purification rites of women who die during pregnancy and childbirth; and that whenever a house is destroyed by natural fire [arson is not considered part of this] we would perform the rites necessary to appease the gods (Olupona 1983:132).

Nothing in the above pledge suggests that the Idoko do not want to fraternize with the Ondo. Rather, their grudge is directed toward those who occupy the position of kingship or authority, hence, the ritual of avoidance of the Osemawe. The civic roles the Idoko perform make them socially visible in Ondo, though they are hardly involved in the political decision making processes within the central male administration of the Ondo. The Ondo discourage them from competing for any of the traditional titled offices in the town. Indeed, one of the Idoko chiefs we interviewed told us that when he attempted to vie for an Ondo chieftancy he was told to be content with the Idoko chieftancy he held. By these exclusionary tactics Ondo males preserve their control of the kingship.

The Aje Ritual and Women's Rights

The political structure found throughout Ondo territory is similar. There is an hierarchical structure of chiefs. In the central male administration, the Osemawe is the most powerful. Among women the Lobun, also known as Oba Obinrin (the Queen), is most powerful. The word "Lobun" is derived from "Obun" and means "market." Constitutionally, the Lobun is in charge of the market. Among the other female chiefs subordinate

to her are Lisa-Lobun, Jomu-Lobun, Oragun-Lobun and Sasere-Lobun.

Titles such as "Lisa," "Jomu" and "Sasere" replicate chieftancies among the men. Even the aboriginal groups have used these titles, although at the top of their hierarchy of chiefs is the Oloja, the owner of the market. Hence, like the women, the Idoko have an Oloja and thus are symbolically connected with the market.

As the highest status a woman can attain, the office of Lobun is shrouded in mystery and hedged by taboos. The office holder is ritually pure, dangerous and ambiguous. Aged people are appointed to the office and they seldom live longer than the Osemawe whom they, by virtue of their ritual function, helped install in office. Nevertheless, a new Osemawe is not installed until a new Lobun is appointed to replace a deceased one. Several factors link the Osemawe and the Lobun. For instance, only the Osemawe and Lobun can order the market closed. The Lobun, however, has a greater say in the market activity than the Osemawe, because the Lobun has to make sure the market economy is stable and buoyant enough to support the demands of kingship as well as those of the entire populace. The appointment of a Lobun before the installation of an Osemawe is a means by which the society mobilizes itself for harnessing diverse resources for the creation and maintenance of a new political order.

From another perspective the Lobun and Osemawe may, as a former Lobun disclosed in an interview before her death (cf. Olupona 1983:142), be described as a mother-son relationship. Since a son cannot have two mothers, an Osemawe may never install another Lobun once the one that installed him has died. Also, as symbolic mother and son, a deep relationship between a Lobun and Osemawe may raise the spectre of incest. Thus, there has to be social distance between them. The mother-son metaphor also suggests that, as the Osemawe's ritual sponsor, the Lobun mediates between the ancient past (mother) and the present (son). The Osemawe, not wanting to remind himself of the past, must avoid any "mirror" that might point to descent, economic power and social distance as factors of political power.

The point is that there is a ritual of avoidance between the Osemawe and the Lobun. For instance, the Osemawe was not present at the Aje festival of 1985. The ceremony started about 5:00 p.m. in front of one of the female chief's house. The house is situated close to the Osemawe's palace and is in the vicinity of the Oba's market. In front of the house were three benches arranged in rows to serve as seats for the female chiefs. The sitting arrangement was not according to their status. Rather, each sat

on any available bench at the time of her arrival. The Lobun was not present, since the incumbent had died in 1980 and a successor had not been installed. Her death had nothing to do with the Osemawe's absence. He is never present at any Aje ceremony.

A few of the female chiefs were also absent from the ceremony. They were dead, indisposed or too old to walk to the ceremonial ground. In our estimation the crowd was about a hundred. Participants came from different quarters in Ondo and represented different lineages. The Aje was a piece of bowl which contained items such as cowrie shells, coral beads (*iyun*), native cloth (*aso oke*), white china plates and white bird dolls. The Aje was carried by a girl who had not reached puberty. According to native exegesis the white of the dove symbolizes the virginity and purity of the Aje carrier who had to lead her lineage members in a procession to the ceremonial site. As the procession moved slowly to the site, they were joined by an enthusiastic public, most of whom were curious to know the contents of the Aje.

From time to time, one of the celebrants, usually a woman, would perform a song. The crowd joined in clapping and dancing to the music. Three of the songs were as follows:

Aje sun le mo ri (Aje slept on my head)
Eni aje faraba o soni (Whoever Aje touches is made human)
Eni aje faraba o ni somo (Whoever Aje touches acts like a child)

Aje gbemi leke bi oba (Aje raised my status to that of a king)
ngo maa yo (I will forever rejoice)
Aje gbemi leke mi o je obu [owon] ((Aje raised my status and
I am a rich person)

Aje yo mo yo (Aje is happy and so I am)
Aje yo mo yo (Aje is happy and so I am)

These songs were also repeated on the ceremonial grounds. As a lineage troupe arrived, a spokeswoman mentioned their arrival to the female chiefs. And the chief who acted as chairwoman of the occasion then said prayers to thank God for their arrival. The Aje was lifted off the head of the carrier by one of the chiefs and then placed along with others on a table in front of the chiefs. The crowd broke into singing and the women who wanted to dance did so. This pattern was repeated for all the participating lineages.

In the evening, when all the Aje had arrived on ceremonial grounds, the Idoko chiefs came, led by the Sasere of Idoko, to bless the Aje. They prayed for the success of the individual lineages, as well as for the celebrants and the women in general. With a staff symbolizing divine power, they touched each Aje. They neither mentioned the Osemawe by name nor referred to his position as

king, just as the women had made no explicit reference to him in their songs. For a while the Idoko chiefs danced with the women. The joyous occasion was brought to a close with the Idoko chiefs' departure from the ceremonial ground.

Power Symbolism in the Aje Festival

The 1985 Aje festival conformed in structure and process to others held previously. The noticeable absence of the Lobun might have reduced the pageantry but not the substance of the festival. We cannot offer a description of her costume, however, Abiodun (22) provides the following description:

She wears the white egret feather in addition to a red parrot feather like any of her male counterparts in Yorubaland. She carries a white horsetail fly whisk to mark her high status, and wears an immaculate white outfit every day of her life. She wears red tubular coral beads on her neck, wrists and ankles on ordinary and important days.

The Lobun embodied the Aje spirit because the materials contained by the Aje were the same as those in her costume.

Because of the brief role the Idoko chiefs were asked to play in the festival, it seemed to us that the ceremony could have been performed without them. However, in various interviews with the Oloja and Sasere of Idoko respectively, we were given the impression that Idoko ancestors were hunters and powerful medicine men. Hunting and magical powers are connected in the Yoruba world view (Idowu 1962). Indeed, Yoruba hunters are fond of telling of their bravery and bravado in magical terms. Many hunters have seen animals changed into human beings and then wrestled with them. In some cases, the hunters themselves changed into animals to fight the animals on their terms. Because of their magical powers, many hunters enjoyed elevated status in traditional Yoruba communities (Ojo 1966). They were awarded chieftancy titles. They led battles against enemies. They were often requested to provide medicine to kill enemies or punish offenders (Fadipe 1970). They also performed the cleansing of the ritually impure. There is sufficient indication in the Aje festival in Ondo that this spiritual side of the hunting profession might have encouraged the Ondo women's identification with the Idoko rather than with the other aboriginal groups. After all, the Ondo do not regard the other aboriginal groups as magically superior to the Idoko.

The most sacred symbol among the Aje contents is the bird doll. On one hand, it is white and hence a representation of woman's purity (Turner 1967). On the other, this purity can be

associated with power. Women, when associated with the power of witchcraft and witches, perform as birds (Lawal 1985). Witches are known as *eleye* ("one with birds"). As birds they can dwell on land or in the sky. They neither belong to earth nor to heaven. They are liminal figures (Turner 1969). Their liminality is conceived of as strength; as the power to change destiny (Lawal 1985). Birds play a prominent role in Yoruba (as well as Ondo) rituals associated with *ori* or destiny (Lawal 1985). When a bird is used for cleansing an afflicted person, one's destiny can be positively changed so as to improve status or health. In Lawal's words:

Birds are celestial messengers, since they dwell on both land and sky and fly great distances across the water. Thus, sacrifices consumed by birds are seen as being collected for delivery to the appropriate quarters (1985:99).

The power or *ase* of an individual comes from Olodumare ("God"). *Ase* is invisible and immaterial and always flies like a bird. In Yoruba mythology it was a five-toed chicken that created the earth at Ile-Ife. And when Odu, the founder of witchcraft, left heaven for earth, Olodumare gave her a special *ase* in the form of a bird enclosed in a calabash (Verger 1965; Lawal 1985). On many of the staffs of authority of Yoruba kings there are birds said to symbolize their power of life and death over their subjects (Lawal 1985).

The women's *ase* in the form of bird and the Idoko's *ase* in the form of a staff symbolize their power over Aje; they symbolize control over the process of becoming wealthy and improving social status. The china plates, woven clothes, coral beads and cowrie shells are all symbols of wealth. Cowrie shells used to be the means of exchange for goods; they constituted Yoruba currency. Since they are collected from the sea they link Aje with the sea.

China plates are modern substitutes for the traditional mud plates. Only wealthy women in traditional society could afford to have such plates. Similarly, coral beads and *aso oke* ("traditional, woven clothes") are costly materials. The number of beads one wears signifies her social status as well as affluence. Those who celebrate Aje are economically successful and this explains why their songs signify that the Aje elevate their status to that of a king. Note also the reference to the mother-son metaphor in the song *Eni aje faraba o'ni somo* ("whoever Aje touches acts like a child"). Since Aje has "slept" with participants, they are metaphorically children. In this regard they change the motherly role as Lobun to that of an Osemawe who is a "child."

Without going into the controversies between Lloyd (1962, 1966, 1970) and Bender (1970; 1972) regarding the question

whether the Ondo had agnatic or cognatic descent (a controversy that is adequately treated by Eades 1980), it is pertinent to note that lineages own land in Ondo and that women excluded by patrilineal considerations from property ownership can only get small plots of family land from their maternal kin for planting pepper and cassava. Ondo males, who now control the land, normally plant agricultural products like cocoa, yams (*discorea*), maize (*zeamays*), beans (*virgna unguiculate*) and cassava (*manhot esculenta*). These materials are excluded from the Aje contents because, in our opinion, they do not relate to the issue of women's right to the power inherent in king-like status.

No doubt Ondo women have economic power. Such power lies in their control of trade distribution. The success of their role as distributors can be enhanced by witchcraft or anything which functions in the capacity of an *ase*. Indeed, when Aje is blessed with Idoko's *ase*, it is to facilitate that distribution of goods which the Idoko themselves as hunter-gatherers can supply. But women's control of production in labor-intensive cultivation is minimal if they have little or no land.

Conclusion

We have argued that their dispossession as well as their role as distributors brings Ondo women closer to Idoko chiefs. However, that such distributive power is not significant enough to change political processes is indicated by the Osemawe's non-participation in the Aje festival. The political and spiritual power of the Osemawe as king is, in the Yoruba world view, next to that of the gods (Idowu 1962). Hence, the Osemawe is superior to witches or hunters. Even the Idoko appear to have realized that, although economic and religious power can be linked by a celebration such as that of the Aje, the two are nevertheless independent. The day after the festival, when they demonstrate their religious power of purification as well as assert their unique identity, they bar Ondo women from any involvement in their rituals, as if to demonstrate that religious power makes their integrity and wholeness of a different sort.

In spite of their differences, the Idoko need the forum of the Aje to project their mystical powers in the form of *ase*. In contrast Ondo women need it to promote their interest in social mobility, a need created by the loss of political rights to kingship.

What unites the Idoko with Ondo women is their loss of control over land. By virtue of this loss both parties became politically weak, and in Turner's (1969) view, the power of the weak is projected in transient, sacred attributes such as low

status. Attributes such as *ase*, witchcraft and the purification of Ondo, set the moral and spiritual power of the Idoko chiefs and Ondo women against the power of the central political authority which can close the market and deny aborigines any right to Ondo chieftancy titles.

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NOTES

¹We acknowledge the contribution of Professor Babatunde Lawal of the University of Ife, who read this paper and gave us useful hints about Aje symbolism. We would also like to thank our wives, who continue to tolerate our occasional absence from home in the search for truth.

²There is a close resemblance between Ondo and Ijebu-Yoruba social structures, but the political significance of Aje festivity in any Yoruba town has rarely been discussed by any other author.

³We intend to analyze the symbolism of the Odunmoko rituals in a forthcoming paper.

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RITE EAST OF JOYCE'S "ARABY"

Frederick K. Lang

At the center of Catholic liturgy is the Mass, the ritual reenactment of the Last Supper—the ceremony whereby bread and wine are transubstantiated, so the faithful believe, into the body and blood of Christ. James Joyce declared that he hated the church and God as well (1966:48, 50). Yet the Mass was an archetype too valuable for the artist to lose along with his faith. According to Stanislaus Joyce, his brother insisted upon "a certain resemblance between the mystery of the Mass" and the transmutations he had attempted in his poems; James, we are also told, "understood the Mass as drama, [as a] tragedy of dedication and betrayal" (103-04, 168). And like snow in "The Dead," the Mass "was general all over Ireland" (Joyce 1967:223) "celebrated many times everyday." Not only a symbol of transmutation, the Mass was also a segment of the "daily bread of experience" to be transmuted by the "priest of the eternal imagination" (Joyce 1964:221). Not merely a particularly vivid drama, it must be in the background of any drama set in a Catholic city. That the Mass pervades the works of Joyce through allusion and parody reflects the daily pervasiveness of Masses in Dublin. Every serious reader of *Ulysses* knows that the beginning of the Mass begins the novel (3), though it has taken the ingenuity of Hugh Kenner to demonstrate just how very far this is from being a casual point of departure (1980:34-35).

Yet the Roman Catholic Mass is not the only Mass, and not the only Mass that Joyce appropriated. In Trieste he became familiar with the Byzantine liturgy, the central rite of the Eastern Orthodox Church (Joyce 1966:86,89; Ellmann:309). He is said to have found it "too slow. . . lacking in articulation, in concentration, and in expressive structure" (Mercanton:238); but this is in comparison with the Roman Catholic or Latin rite. In *A Portrait* Joyce writes that "the vague acts of the priesthood pleased [Stephen] by reason of their semblance of reality and of their distance from it" (1964:158). The Byzantine liturgy has more "semblance of reality" than the Latin rite: it is much less formal, even somewhat "homely" (Ware 276). Joyce wrote to Stanislaus that while attending a "Greek mass" he had thought "The Sisters" "rather remarkable" (1966:86). He was referring to the original version of the story. I have argued elsewhere that, when he

rewrote it, he stressed the correspondences with the Byzantine liturgy and added others as well (1968a). It is the very homeliness of that rite which enabled Joyce to incorporate it so readily and which also makes it quite difficult to detect. Moreover, he drew upon the Latin and Greek rites concurrently. As a result, imagery derived from the Latin rite overshadows that coming from the Greek. Though more distant from reality, the Latin rite is more familiar to Joyce's readers; the Greek, while closer to reality, is less familiar.

"Araby" typifies Joyce's propensity for insinuating the liturgical into the secular. He first mentions the story in a letter of October 16, 1905 (1966:123). This comes seven months after he described the Greek rite for Stanislaus and conjoined it with "The Sisters." The final version of that story opens *Dubliners* and contains its most explicit liturgical imagery. That "Araby" comes third prompts a comparison with "The Sisters." (The priestly figure in the second story, "An Encounter," ensures continuity). Comparing "Araby" with "The Sisters" and with the Greek rite as well as the Latin reveals that most of the story's central images are as liturgical in origin as any in Joyce.

In his analysis of "Araby," William York Tindall calls attention to both the liturgy and a celebrant, Father Flynn, in "The Sisters:"

A bazaar, Araby promises "Eastern enchantment" of the sort that surrounds Father Flynn in the boy's dream. The Church, after all, is a more or less Oriental foundation, and the ecclesiastical suggestion of Araby ("not some Freemason affair") is supported by metaphor. The boy, hearing "litanies" and "chanting" in the secular street, bears his "chalice" safely through the crowd, unlike poor Father Flynn (20).

Joyce's recent familiarity with the Eastern Orthodox rite may best account for this liturgical imagery. The Greek Church is much more an "Oriental foundation" than the Roman Catholic, and the ecclesiastical metaphors in the story seem distinctively Byzantine. The Greek liturgy is marked by a greater emphasis on litanies and chanting (Fortescue:418). The chalice has even more liturgical significance, since the congregation partakes of both consecrated bread and wine in communion (Ware:294). As the boy in "Araby" bears his chalice safely, so the priest must bear his in the dramatic procession which is part of the Greek rite (Fortescue:415).

In "Araby," as in "The Sisters," there are partitions and enclosures that recall the *iconostasis*, the high screen covered with images that divides the sanctuary from the main body of an Eastern Orthodox church. "The altar is not visible," Joyce wrote

to Stanislaus, "but at times the priest opens the gates and shows himself" (1966:86). Behind these gates hangs a curtain (Ware:276). In "Araby," the former tenant of the house in which the boy lives was a priest who died "in the back drawing room," and the air in all the rooms is "musty from having been long enclosed" (29). The boy watches Mangan's sister from behind a "blind . . . pulled down to within an inch of the sash" (30). In "The Sisters" the boy dreams of the dead priest, attempting to confess to him amid "long velvet curtains" and near "a swinging lamp of antique fashion" (13). In "Araby" the boy enters a dreamlike state while "in the back drawing-room in which the priest had died:"

It was a dark rainy evening and there was no sound in the house. Through one of the broken panes I heard the rain impinge upon the earth, the fine incessant needles of water playing in the sodden beds. Some distant lamp or lighted window gleamed below me. I was thankful that I could see so little. All my senses seemed to desire to veil themselves and, feeling that I was about to slip from them, I pressed the palms of my hands together until they trembled, murmuring: *O love! O love!* many times (31).

The surroundings here are "dark" as they are in the boy's dream in "The Sisters." As in the dream, there is a "lamp." In Joyce the image of a lamp often suggests the sanctuary or holy lamp, which burns perpetually to indicate the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, the "body" of Christ (Lang 1986b). Joyce's most explicit reference to the holy lamp is in the story, "Grace." During retreat at the Gardiner Street Church, the gentlemen who comprise the congregation "sat well back and gazed formally at the distant speck of red light which was suspended before the high altar" (172).

A kind of sanctuary lamp may attend the boy while he is murmuring his incantation "in the back drawing-room." His repetition of "*O love! O love!*" suggests a litany, especially since the palms of his hands are "pressed . . . together," as they would be if he were praying. In the Mass Christ is sacrificed, his death, reenacted. Since a priest (Christ's representative) died in the drawing-room, it seems ecclesiastical enough to serve as a church sanctuary. Perhaps the lamp is "distant" because this priest, like Father Flynn, will not be rising up. The distant sanctuary lamp in "Grace" attends the performance of a priest who cannot rise to the demands of his holy office. In "The Sisters" and in "Grace," women are left to function as the ritualists. In "Araby" the boy turns to a woman, expressing his adoration in ecclesiastical images. Just as the fireplace and the chalice are both empty at the end of "The Sisters" (15-17), just as the sanctuary lamp is a mere "distant speck" at the end of "Grace," so the light will be put out at the end of "Araby."

In "The Sisters" the boy is haunted by the image of Father Flynn, but until the wake he is physically cut off from the priest, unable even to discern a visible sign of him. In his dream he feels "very far away, in some land where the customs were strange" (13-14). The next morning he seems to remain at a psychological distance from everyday reality, removed from ordinary childhood experiences, and he finds the individual who informs his obsession enclosed beyond his reach. In "Araby" Mangan's sister tells the boy that she cannot go to the bazaar "because there would be a retreat that week in her convent" (32). As in "The Sisters," the individual upon whom the boy's interior world centers is somehow rendered inaccessible "here, too, that individual is literally walled off. In "Araby" all that is left is a mental icon which haunts the boy: "Her image came between me and the page I strove to read" (32).

But the bazaar seems to displace the girl as the focal point of obsession and the sensually visual image of the girl standing with the light behind her gives way to an auditory one of equal appeal for the boy. This image, too, seems to screen off the everyday world of play and childhood:

The syllables of the word *Araby* were called to me through the silence in which my soul luxuriated and cast an Eastern enchantment over me. . . . I answered few questions in class. I watched my master's face pass from amiability to sternness; he hoped I was not beginning to idle. I could not call my wandering thoughts together. I had hardly any patience with the serious work of life which, now that it stood between me and my desire, seemed to me child's play, ugly monotonous child's play (32).

The everyday world of schoolwork becomes an "image screen" which stands between the boy and his vision of the bazaar. Similarly, in "The Sisters," the boy is twice "distracted" by concrete objects and sensations. After reading the notice of the priest's death, he walks in the sun and looks in shop windows, momentarily abandoning his quest for the priest. The everyday world seems to intrude between the boy and his obsession. The boy feels a sense of freedom; and he does seem at least temporarily freed from his obsession, though his thoughts quickly return to the priest. Finally, perhaps prompted by the word "drapery" and the sight of the shutters, he returns in his thoughts to his dream of the night before (12).

Tindall writes that the boy in "Araby" is on a "disappointed quest, not for God this time but, plainly, for Ireland's Church" (19). Though he convincingly argues that Mangan's sister is a symbol of Ireland, he seems to overlook the fact that she is out of the picture by the time the quest is undertaken; she is in a convent on retreat. The boy does not seek her at Araby, but goes to buy her

something (32). And when he journeys to the bazaar, he finds himself in some strange, far away, almost Oriental land, as does the boy in "The Sisters" while dreaming of the priest:

I could not find any sixpenny entrance and, fearing that the bazaar would be closed, I passed quickly through a turnstile, handing a shilling to a weary looking man. I found myself in a big hall girdled at half its length by a gallery. Nearby all the stalls were closed and the greater part of the hall was in darkness. I recognized a silence like that which pervades a church after a service. I walked into the centre of the bazaar timidly. A few people were gathered about the stalls which were still open. Before a curtain, over which the words *Cafe Chantant* were written in colored lamps, two men were counting money on a salver. I listened to the fall of the coins.

Remembering with difficulty why I had come I went over to one of the stalls and examined porcelain vases and flowered tea-sets. At the door of the stall a young lady was talking and laughing with two young gentlemen. I remarked their English accents and listened vaguely to their conversation . . .

Observing me the young lady came over and asked me did I wish to buy anything. The tone of her voice was not encouraging; she seemed to have spoken to me out of a sense of duty. I looked humbly at the great jars that stood like eastern guards at either side of the dark entrance of the stall (35).

The Eastern flavor of the bazaar recalls both Gorman's (143ff.) and Ellmann's (195ff.) descriptions of the streets of Trieste. "Araby" bears Trieste's imprint more than any other story Joyce wrote. But, as Tindall and others have pointed out, the imagery here is strikingly ecclesiastical. The bazaar hall itself suggests a church and the boy recognizes "a silence like that which pervades a church after a service." "Salver," or serving plate, suggests the communion plate; the falling coins here seem to mock the Eucharist, as do the Flynn sisters' cream crackers and sherry (15). The lamps recall the "lamp of antique fashion" in "The Sisters," as well as the sanctuary lamp of the Latin Church and the numerous lamps of the Byzantine.

The church-like interior is "girdled at half its height by a gallery," an image which suggests aspects of a Greek church, architectural and liturgical. Many churches have galleries, but "girdled" in this context recalls the noun form of the word, in the sense of a decorative sash or belt. There is something curiously feminine and alluring about this interior; Hugh Kenner calls it a "female symbol" (1962:54). The context makes such a reading probable. On a quest to please a young woman, the boy encounters another young woman whose manner underscores both the failure of his quest and its futility. To approach a young woman in "Araby" is to invite frustration. That Mangan's sister is in a convent brings to mind another meaning of the word. English herself, the young woman at the bazaar flirts with two young Englishmen. Although these two different women represent opposite ideas of woman, they are counterparts nonetheless. Like

the delights at a bazaar, the neighborhood madonna and the foreign tease are both untouchable.

The implications of an interior girdled by a gallery can be related even more specifically to the sense of female inaccessibility dominating the story. Again we see the result of Joyce's "moping in and out of Greek churches" in Trieste (Joyce 1966:89). In many Orthodox churches the men are separated from the women; either they remain on opposite sides of the nave of the church or the women have a gallery (Fortescue:403). This young lady is not in the gallery, but is standing in the nave of the hall at the door of a stall. Yet there does seem to be a connection between her and the gallery. Soon after she returns to the two young Englishmen, the boy realizes that his stay is useless (35). As he turns and walks away, he hears "a voice call from one end of the gallery that the light was out. The upper part of the hall was now completely dark" (35). His rejection by the girl—or at least his sense of rejection—seems dramatized in the extinguishing of the light. Darkness and rejection are obviously related here, and it is a call from the gallery which announces the darkness, a darkness which covers the upper half of the hall, the half including the gallery. It is worth noting that the word "gallery" may have its origins in the Medieval Latin *galilaea*, "porch of a church," which comes from the Latin *Galilaea*, "Galilee."

The boy always sees Mangan's sister dramatically "defined" by some light source, usually a "lamplight." It is an image of her "touched discreetly by the lamplight" that he carries with him (33). This lighting effect seems inspired by the lamps that hang in front of the *iconostasis*, especially since the figure of Mangan's sister is presented iconically. An icon (from *eikon*, "sacred picture") depicts the subject of veneration according to a carefully prescribed ecclesiastical pattern. Certain details are always associated with a particular figure. The boy keeps the "brown figure" of Mangan's sister always in his eye as he follows her (30). When the two of them talk about the bazaar:

The light from the lamp opposite our door caught the white curve of her neck, lit up her hair that rested there and, falling, lit up the hand upon the railing. It fell over one side of her dress and caught the white border of a petticoat, just visible as she stood at ease (32).

On the evening of the bazaar Mangan's sister is in retreat at a convent, but the boy looks over at the dark house where she lives and sees "nothing but the brown-clad figure cast by my imagination, touched discreetly by the lamplight at the curved neck, at the hand upon the railings and at the border below the dress" (33). Now all the details have been incorporated into the

boy's imagination and fixed in a definite pattern; at this point the image of Mangan's sister is totally iconic. And at the end of "Araby" the light illuminating the icon is extinguished after the boy's rejection by the young English girl whose mindless flirting and insensitivity deflate his romanticizing. Before he looked over at a dark house and saw the image of Mangan's sister cast by his imagination; now he gazes up into darkness and sees the reality of himself "as a creature driven and derided by vanity" (35). The extinguishing of the light dramatizes disillusionment, just as the extinguishing of the sanctuary lamp on Holy Thursday signifies the removal of the consecrated host—in effect, the absence of Christ.

I have pointed out that there is something Byzantine about the church-like hall which houses the bazaar. The imagery associated with the bazaar is as much ecclesiastical as "Eastern." The word "bazaar" comes from the Persian *bazar*, "market." Catholic churches often hold bazaars to raise money by selling various articles. If "Araby" is in part a critique of the Irish Catholic Church, then Joyce may be indicating that ecclesiastical corruption has sources which are both secular and Eastern, both contemporary and ancient. The boy in "Araby," like the boy in "The Sisters," finds the corruption seductive, at least initially. It is significant that the word "fall" is used twice in the last page of the story in connection with money: "I listened to the fall of the coins" and "I allowed the two pennies to fall against the sixpence in my pocket" (35). Not only is this church-like hall almost literally a temple filled with money-changers; it suggests a religious institution whose very existence depends upon accommodating itself to a fallen world.

After the young woman asks the boy if he wishes to buy anything, he looks "humbly at the great jars that stood like eastern guards at either side of the dark entrance to the stall." He murmurs, "No, thank you" (35). A "stall" is a booth, but the word also has specific ecclesiastical meanings: an enclosed seat in the chancel of a church, or a pew in a church. The chancel is the space around the altar for the clergy and choir. In a Roman Catholic church the chancel is enclosed by a lattice or railing; in a Byzantine church the same area is enclosed by the *iconostasis*, with stalls for the choir standing in the nave of the church just in front of the image screen (Ware:275). The stall the boy encounters suggests the *iconostasis*, the enclosed sanctuary in which the eucharistic rite is performed and into which a member of the laity cannot enter. The boy seems to feel that entry into this stall is forbidden him; the dark entrance is ominous, with great jars standing on either side like eastern guards. In describing the

bazaar hall the boy uses "stall" or "stalls" five times. Woven into this repetition is a simple dichotomy. Nearly all the stalls are closed (34). Among those still open is the young woman's stall. Together with "curtain" and "coloured lamps" (34-35), the specifying of "closed" or "open" recalls Joyce's reference to the *iconostasis*: "The altar is not visible but at times the priest opens the gates and shows himself. He opens and shuts them about six times" (1966:86). And all the images of closure here (the bazaar itself is closing) recall those in "The Sisters"—little dark room, shutters, coffin, confession-box. Perhaps, the young English lady is an ironic representative of Christ just as Mangan's sister is an iconic replacement of Christ; perhaps she is a kind of priestess officiating at a mock-communion—"coins. . . on a salver"—in this Eastern rite. That is, she may be a substitute not only for Mangan's sister but for the priest who died in the back drawing-room, just as the Flynn sisters seem substitutes for their dead brother.

Like "The Sisters," and like Joyce's (1966:87) description of the Greek liturgy ("The priest comes. . . and distributes lumps [of bread] to scrambling believers"), "Araby" ends in a parody of sacramental ritual and priestly function. And if this Saturday "night of Our Lord" (33) is related to the Saturday Vigil before Pentecost, as the date of the actual *Araby* bazaar suggests,¹ then the story's last lines evoke a vision of a world bereft of Christ and still awaiting a visible sign. "Gazing up into the darkness" (35), the boy sees only his own condition, not the idealized, iconic image of Mangan's sister. The light is now out, as the sanctuary lamp is extinguished on Holy Thursday to signify the removal of the consecrated bread. And, as in the Mass of the Ascension, the Paschal candle, a symbol of the risen Christ, is snuffed out in token of his departure from humanity.

In *Dubliners*, figures and symbols associated with communion with Christ in the Eucharist have been so diminished that they now imply Christ's inaccessibility. The priest, Christ's representative, may simply be absent; the one in the photograph on Eveline's wall "is in Melbourne now" (37). The priest may be incompetent, a Father Flynn; "travelling on his own account" like Father Keon in "Ivy Day" (127); caught in the act of selling out, a Father Purdon; or sexually perverted like the "queer old josser" in "An Encounter" who wears "a suit of greenish-black" (26, 24). In both "The Sisters" and "Araby," the priestly role seems to have fallen to "the Irishwoman, the accomplice of the Irish Catholic Church, which [Joyce] called scullery-maid of Christendom . . ." (Stanislaus Joyce:238). Their gender having already disqualified them from acting as Christ's surrogate, the women in *Dubliners*

who seem to try anyway are unlikely candidates—they are either anile or adolescent. And the lamp that should signify the presence of Christ's body is unlit, abruptly extinguished, or merely a "distant speck." As the law is lost to Kafka's court, so is divinity to Joyce's church. Dublin awaits the coming of Molly and Leopold Bloom, "Christine" and "Christicle" (Joyce 1961:3, 428).

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Frederick K. Lang holds a Ph.D. in English and Comparative Literature from Columbia University and is the first recipient of Columbia's Frances Steloff Award for Joyce Studies. He is assistant professor at Brooklyn College, City University of New York, and adjunct professor at New York University; he has also taught at Columbia and at other colleges in CUNY. He has published several articles on literature and pedagogy; among them are "Varieties of Literary Experience" (*The English Record*, January 1987), "Shooting Essays" (*Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, December 1986), "The Efficacy of Joyce" (*Freshman English News*, Fall 1986) and "The Sentence That Makes Stephen Dedalus Smash the Lamp" (*Colby Library Quarterly*, June 1986). He recently completed a monograph on D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love* and a book on James Joyce's *Ulysses*.

NOTES

¹On May 14-19, 1894, there was a bazaar called *Araby* in Dublin (Gifford:38). May 12, 1894, was the Saturday before Pentecost. The following Saturday, the last day of the bazaar, would be the day the boy attends. Yet the emphasis upon this being a Saturday, the aunt's reference to "this night of Our Lord" (33) and the imagery of watching and searching, all strongly suggest the Vigil of Pentecost. In the final version of "The Sisters," Father Flynn dies on the Feast of the Most Precious Blood, July 1st (12). A feast day may also be significant in "Araby." Joyce may have believed that Pentecost in 1894 had fallen a week earlier than in fact it did.

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REVIEWS

Oglala Women. Myth, Ritual, and Reality. Marla N. Powers. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986. xv + 241. Series Editor's foreword, preface, 35 photographs, notes, references, index. \$19.95 (hardcover). ISBN: 0-226-67748-6

Reviewer: William R. Clements, Arkansas State University

The stereotype of the American Indian as a war-bonneted, nomadic plainsman lording it over his drudge of a wife derives in large part from Euramerican distortions of the image of the Oglala, the largest subdivision of the Teton, one of the Native American groups commonly referred to as "Sioux." Observers such as Francis Parkman in the 1840's commented especially on the gender-based inequities he noted in Oglala life and the attendant degradation of women. Parkman's portrayal as well as similar contemporary depictions fostered an impression of Native American women that has persisted into the twentieth century.

In *Oglala Women*, Marla N. Powers persuasively counters this stereotype by demonstrating that women in this group have always enjoyed a complementary, not subsidiary role to men. Her thesis is that women have traditionally dominated in myth and ritual and continue to cooperate effectively with men in almost all aspects of daily reservation life. She supports her view in a two-part ethnography of the role of women in Oglala culture. The first part treats memory culture, the way of life for pre-contact women. Powers follows the Oglala woman through four life stages: girlhood, adolescence, womanhood and old age. At each stage, indications that women were not subordinate to men in the traditional culture occurred. For example, Powers cites from their memories of girlhood the shared play activities of girls and boys, from adolescence the reciprocity between the sexes in courtship activity, from womanhood the assignment of ownership of all domestic property to women and from old age the entrusting of ritual supervision to women.

The second part of the ethnography deals with contemporary Oglala life on Pine Ridge Reservation, where Powers has been doing research for over a quarter of a century. Women have retained their traditional complementarity with men. In fact, Powers suggests that women have more successfully adjusted to the innovations introduced by Euramerican dominance, for Oglala women effectively solve the problems of everyday living, while the men engage in often futile disputes with the federal government.

The notion of male superiority imputed to Indians, according to Powers' informants, derives in fact from the dominant culture. In reality Oglala men find themselves more and more dependent on women for economic, moral and spiritual support.

The importance of women in Oglala culture finds charter in myth and ritual. A central image in Power's book is the figure of White Buffalo Calf Woman. This mythic personage presented to the Oglala the sacred pipe, their central religious symbol, and taught them their fundamental values, including the complementary roles of the sexes. That a female culture hero dominates the Oglala provides persuasive validation of the Powers' brief against the conventional stereotype of the Native American woman. Moreover, Powers shows that women in traditional culture enjoyed an active ritual life which paralleled their roles in mundane, everyday affairs. Her descriptions and analyses of rituals are not as extensive as those of other sources, but her focus on women lends a new perspective.

One of the most interesting features for ritual specialists is Powers' account of the growing participation of women in rituals that had traditionally been reserved for men. For instance, women now go on the Vision Quest and enter the Sweat Lodge. Not only have women become involved in these previously male activities, but they are still participating in the rituals that have traditionally been their province—such rites as the Ghost-Keeping Ceremony (now called the Memorial Feast). Women also continue to participate in gender-defined roles in the Sun Dance and the *Yuwipi*, both of which flourish at Pine Ridge alongside Christianity and the Native American Church.

Oglala Women successfully reveals the falsity of the stereotype of the Native American woman. Since Powers uses the group whose misapprehended image generated much of that stereotype, her book must be regarded as a landmark in showing what Native Americans have been and continue to be. My only criticism of the book concerns the number of typographical errors that occur. The University of Chicago Press can certainly do a better production job than they have done on Powers' fine book, a work which deserves the press' best efforts.

Circumcision: The Painful Dilemma. Rosemary Romberg. South Hadley, Massachusetts: Bergin and Garvey Publishers. 1985. xxi + 454. 87 photographs, 10 illustrations. \$14.95 (paperback). ISBN: 0-89789-074-4.

Reviewer: Harriet Lyons, Wilfrid Laurier University

This is a lengthy, impassioned, and at times unpleasant book, but one which scholars interested in ritual operations on the human body probably should read. Its author, a member of INTACT, an organization dedicated to ending the practice of routine medical circumcision of infants in the United States, has assembled a mass of historical, medical and anecdotal evidence in support of her position. The bulk of this work deals with non-ritual circumcision of infants in American hospitals, and at first glance appears to have little direct relevance to students of ritual. But the author does discuss ritual circumcision in two contexts, with a chapter on the origin and history of circumcision and one on Jewish circumcision. The historical chapter relies largely on outdated and sensationalist accounts of the operation, many of them dating to a period when the anthropological literature on primitive circumcision was heavily tainted by racist sentiment. In the chapter on Jewish circumcision, the author knows she is treading on dangerous ground and is careful to note several times that she does not wish her work to be used to further anti-Semitism. She does express the hope that with increasing secularization Jews will voluntarily abandon infant circumcision.

Romberg mentions one anti-Semitic explanation for current American practice (though she immediately rejects it as insufficient to account for the universality of the operation), the argument that Jewish doctors have imposed circumcision upon all American males so that Jews might not be distinguishable from others because of circumcision. Though Romberg rejects this argument, apparently it is accepted by some members of her group.

Romberg provides lengthy descriptions with drawings and photographs of the methods used by both physicians and Jewish *mohels* (ritual circumcisors), as well as letters and interviews reflecting the unpleasant experiences of mothers who have had their sons circumcised. The pain endured by the infants is stressed and there is an exceptionally vivid chapter detailing complications of the operation. The book cites numerous studies published in medical journals all of which offer little medical justification for routine circumcision.

The value of ritual operations is contingent upon the symbolic statements made by such procedures. This aspect is likely to be dismissed or ignored by those conditioned to a Western, technical point of view. If social or spiritual status or power is to be gained, human beings are willing to undergo tortures far greater than those of circumcision. On the other hand, where the end result of pain and disfigurement is subordination, rather than elevation in status, there is likely to be resistance to traditional practices during periods of social change, as in the current controversy over clitoridectomy in Africa and the abolition of foot-binding in China.

To appreciate the context of Romberg's argument we must understand something about the relationship between routine infant circumcision and status and power in American society. Infant circumcision, as it is practiced in the U.S., is part of a widely criticized health care system in which control of the birth process, like much else to do with health, is in the hands of physicians and hospital staff. There has for some time been a movement to better attune infant delivery to the emotional needs of mothers and babies, with various forms of unmedicated, low-technology childbirth becoming increasingly popular. Romberg is an advocate of the Leboyer technique, in which childbirth is carried out under soft lights, without undue noise and with the avoidance of abrupt, startling transitions for the newborn infant. A constant theme in Romberg's own reminiscences and those of other mothers quoted in the book is the contrast between the natural childbirth they chose and the medical procedure of circumcision. The book contains many photographs of happy, trouserless, uncircumcised male infants, often posed idyllically with their mothers. The argument of the book is as much a product of a belief system opposed to modern medical culture as it is a result of the examination of factual evidence. Since modern medicine bases its claim to power on the provable physiological benefits of its treatments, it would appear it does have a case to answer in the matter of infant circumcision (if Romberg's medical data are correct).

For students of ritual, especially rituals involving physical suffering, the book may be a useful reminder of the needs of the body. Such needs have a tendency to become obscured in a discourse which accepts the claims of practitioners who, more consciously than Romberg, are motivated principally by considerations of faith.

Measures of Wisdom: The Cosmic Dance in Classical and Christian Antiquity. James Miller. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985. xiii + 652. 10 photographs with commentary. ISBN: 0-8020-2553-6.

Reviewer: Amanda Porterfield, Syracuse University

In the first of a projected two-volume work tracing the history of Plato's vision of the cosmos as a dance, author James Miller offers a history of Western metaphysical thought that centers on Plato's description of the choral dances of the stars and planets in the *Timaeus*. This volume charts the history of that vision from the Presocratic philosophers to the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius around 500 C.E. The second volume will trace the history of the vision from Augustine to Dante.

Each chapter begins with the author's translation of a text chosen to represent a stage in the evolution of the vision of the cosmos as a dance. Following a discussion of Plato's vision and its background, Miller turns to the first century writings of Philo Judaeus, which recommend an ecstatic leap from the visible dances of the stars and planets to the invisible God. Then Miller features the apocryphal writings of John, which reflect the "chilling" and "demonic" atmosphere of the second century and the loss of Plato's sense of the palpable orderliness of the cosmos. Plotinus recovered the idea of universal design but detached its meaning from visible reality. Next, Miller deals with the late fourth century Platonist, Calcidius, whose Latin translations of the *Timaeus* later philosophers relied on, then to the fourth century apostate, sophist and emperor, Julian, for whom the vision of the cosmic dance was a sign of initiation into religious mysteries. The late fourth century Christian theologian, Gregory of Nazianzus, had a vision of the cosmic dance which encompassed not only the material world, but paradise and hell as well. The fifth century Neoplatonist, Proclus, was interested in the magical and therapeutic effects of the vision. Pseudo-Dionysius reinterpreted Christianity in terms of a Neoplatonic vision of a complex, hierarchical and dancing cosmos.

Miller's intent is to demonstrate the importance and influence of Plato's vision of the cosmos for the history of Western philosophy in the millennium that begins with Plato's writings. This book demonstrates that a history of Plato's vision can be written, but this history may not be as representative of the main currents of Western philosophical thought as Miller implies. In his reconstruction of the history of Western philosophy in terms of a single passage in the *Timaeus*, Miller has actually produced a

history of Neoplatonic thought with heavy emphasis on the mystical philosophers of the fourth century.

In his charting of the history of Plato's vision, Miller emphasizes the tensions between philosophic rationality and aesthetic sensitivity and between appreciation of the material world and the desire to seek refuge from it. Miller contrasts Plato's confidence that reason created and rediscovered the cosmos with various Neoplatonic confessions asserting that material reality is not rational, or if it is, it is not comfortably so; happiness depends on a kind of aesthetic intuition that will transport initiates to a better world. As a result of this emphasis on the contrast between Plato and his successors, the reader sees that, despite his delight in philosophical speculation as an end in itself, the author is not entirely pleased with the mystical course of Plato's vision. The history Miller charts represents the dissolution of Plato's firm and splendid vision of the created world.

Miller is ill at ease with the aestheticism, privatism and instability of the second and fourth centuries and he longs for Plato's lost world. This may reflect the author's feelings about late twentieth century life and his nostalgia for a more stable and rational past. The author's dissension from his own time is reinforced by the surprising lack of intellectual interchange between Miller and the scholars of his own age. In well over six hundred pages of text there are few explicit references to twentieth century debates about the philosophies Miller discusses. This not only indicates the author's passion for his texts but his intellectual isolation as well.

At one level, this book has little to do with dance as a form of ritual activity. The book charts the history of dance as a metaphor for the cosmos, not the history of dance as a human art. Miller does include some discussions of dance rituals that accompanied or provoked philosophical reflection about the dance of the cosmos, but they are incidental to the book's main purpose. The book is relevant to ritual studies only insofar as the history of philosophy it charts is an intellectualized form of ritual activity, a scholarly sort of dance in which philosophers reinterpret the gestures and harmonies of previous philosophers according to the rhythms and moods of their own time. Because his own style of philosophical thinking is highly metaphorical, the author might accept the view that the history of Plato's vision he offers is a dance that could be described as a brilliantly intricate, philosophical solo.

Feasts of Honor, Ritual and Change in the Toraja Highlands. Toby Alice Volkman. Illinois Studies in Anthropology, no. 16. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985. xi + 2216. 32 photographs, 2 maps, glossary, bibliography, index. \$21.50 (paperback). ISBN: 0-252-01183-X

Reviewer: Richard K. Payne, Graduate Theological Union

The Toraja highlands lie in the southwest central area of the Indonesian island of Sulawesi. Volkman's study focuses on the funerary rituals of the Toraja, especially as these relate to social organization and social change. The history of social change among the Toraja is closely linked with the expansion of international trade and the imperialism of the Portuguese, the Dutch and finally the Japanese. After the Japanese left, independence opened the country to international corporations, industrialization and tourism. Through her discussion of the funerary rituals, Volkman clearly and sensitively discloses the effect of these latter cultural and economic influences on Toraja society.

One of the impacts of modernity on the Toraja was the abolition of slavery. Traditionally, slaves had responsibilities to their masters which included ritual functions. For example, during the funeral rites a surviving spouse would be subjected to a number of proscriptions, both dietary and behavioral. In the absence of a surviving spouse "this role is filled by a substitute, a woman or young girl—formerly a close slave of the family (86)."

Other aspects of modernization which have affected Toraja society and ritual include the spread of Christianity, the military (which gives no respect to highland status) and migration. Migration to urban, industrial centers has given the children of commoners access to more wealth than their families would have had previously. As migrants, they seek to maintain their identity as Toraja through the funerary rituals for their parents. With their increased wealth they are able to provide rituals on scale with those of nobles, which traditionally would have served to raise status. Yet for migrants the result is ambivalent, and their status in the highlands remains largely unchanged. Highland status, as opposed to Toraja identity, becomes less important as modernization increases.

Socially, the central action of the funerary rituals is the sacrifice of buffalo and the distribution of the meat among the community. It might be tempting to see these death rituals as simply a form of "protein allocation," the kind of interpretation

Marvin Harris might make. Yet, Volkman specifically rejects such a univocal interpretation:

When buffalo are sacrificed and their meat distributed the action is no mere protein allocation. If the live animal was a convenient symbol of the person and his wealth, the slaughtered beast becomes a metaphor for the unequal division of status in society and the reciprocal ties that bind unequal statuses. The animal's various parts—head, liver, thighs, ribs—their size and shape, and the order in which they are distributed, are all infused with status-related meaning (73).

Although Volkman herself goes no further in exploring this aspect of the rituals, the metaphoric quality which she ascribes to the buffalo's parts may provide a parallel to Mary Douglas' concept of natural symbols. Douglas looks to the human body as the source of natural symbols, yet there may be an analogy between the symbolic value of the human body and the symbolic value of the sacrificed animal's body.

Volkman's discussion of religion in Indonesia calls to mind Geertz' *Religion of Java*. However, given the comprehensive character of Geertz' classic, a fairer comparison is Geertz' "Ritual and Social Change: A Javanese Example." This is a comparison which Volkman herself makes in her chapter seven, "The Undertaker Becomes a Big Man," which examines the funeral of the former undertaker's wife. Before his purification, the undertaker was effectively outcaste, yet even after his purification the taint of his former status remains. As with the situation described by Geertz, the strains produced by social change become personally experienced around the emotionally charged question of what constitutes the proper performance of funerary rituals.

Volkman writes well, allowing us to feel something of her own experience in the Toraja highlands. Her many vivid images make this a memorable work of ethnography. Volkman excellently accomplishes her chosen task of examining the impact of social change on Toraja funerary rituals. But some readers may come away feeling that they have only gotten an appetizer. For example, I would have liked more information about the entire ritual culture of the Toraja and a more detailed description of the rites and their syntax. Yet Volkman did show the Toraja rituals as oral traditions under the dual assault of modernization and tourism. Since this may lead to a wholly artificial preservation of the tradition, the record Volkman has made becomes all the more valuable to scholars of ritual.

The Household of Faith: Roman Catholic Devotions in Mid-Nineteenth Century America. Ann Taves. Notre Dame Studies in American Catholicism. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986. x + 197. 7 tables, 4 appendices, bibliography, index. \$17.95 (hardcover). ISBN 0-268-01082-X.

Reviewer: James Dallen, Gonzaga University

Theologians and clerics have often shared a bias against folk religion and popular piety. It may strike them as too amorphous and subjective or too likely to detach people from organized religion. This detailed and fascinating study suggests that they should take a closer look at its rituals and symbols. Ann Taves examines their function in mid-nineteenth century American Catholicism to show that the standardized forms of popular or non-liturgical piety then developed helped establish a distinctive religious subculture with strong bonds to the institutional Church.

Although Taves does not detail the historical development of these devotions from earlier roots, she indicates the importance in the nineteenth century of mass education and printing in spreading local European devotions to a wider audience and standardizing their format. She also shows the role of parish missions and parish organizations in establishing and maintaining them and other factors that contributed to the popularity of certain devotions. (Tables and appendices provide data on the popularity and contents of prayer books and on types of parish organizations). These devotions thus became central to the religious life of American Catholic laypeople in the mid-nineteenth century, with devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and Mary the most important.

Such devotions provided a means of interacting with Jesus and the saints and developing affective bonds with them—a sense of family where natural ties (particularly of child to mother) were transferred to supernatural beings. Taves characterizes the result as a sense of being a "household of faith," a phrase she borrows from Frederick William Faber, a popular writer of the time. Both Faber and Alphonsus Liguori (an eighteenth century Italian writer also popular with American Catholics) were indebted to Francis de Sales (the seventeenth century Swiss bishop who wrote one of the first devotional works for the laity), but they adopted an approach to the lay practice of religion that gave greater prominence to emotion and affection than to action. Taves too briefly examines the differing appeal of such devotions to women and men to show how the devotions reinforced cultural

expectations while at the same time formed a distinctive Catholic identity.

Devotions did not establish bonds of affection only with supernatural beings. Church approval and regulation, particularly through granting indulgences for their use, also made them a means of attaching people more closely to the Church and especially to the pope. Often they centered on the parish church and parish organizations, were associated with the official sacraments (confession and communion) and included prayer for the pope. They thus symbolically and emotionally associated Jesus and the saints with both the local and universal Church and the Roman pontiff.

Taves contends that since devotionalism helped forge a sense of community among immigrant Catholics it also contributed to the isolation of American Catholicism from the mainstream of American life in the mid-nineteenth century. Devotions were authorized and promoted by the pope and local bishops, they centered on the parish church, they contrasted sharply with the devotional practices of Protestant Americans which stressed Bible reading and they emphasized doctrinal elements (the Eucharist and the saints) rejected by Protestantism.

Taves does not examine theological or social defects of devotionalism such as isolationism and indifference to social concerns. Neither does she indicate that nineteenth century devotionalism is probably a significant factor in the current estrangement of right-wing Catholics from the American hierarchy and its liturgical and social agenda. What she does well is to allow us to see the part that lay piety played in the formation of American Catholicism.

The work of such historians of religion is proof that students of Christian ritual impoverish themselves if they confine their interest to official liturgies. The restricted focus of this monograph prevents it from dealing with specialized questions of immediate appeal to liturgists and sacramental theologians. It would be interesting, for example, to explore in more detail how popular symbols interact with official liturgies and whether American Catholic devotionalism had affinities with that of American Protestantism. This careful and insightful study is nonetheless valuable for showing that even in an age when laity seemingly had no role in the official liturgy, they found ways of asserting their claim to it, realizing a communal identity and extending their faith into everyday life. Whatever the weaknesses of the devotions, can official liturgies claim greater success?

Horses, Musicians, & Gods: The Hausa Cult of Possession Trance. Fremont E. Besmer. South Hadley, MA: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, Inc., 1983. xiv + 290. Glossary, 26 musical transcriptions, 25 photographs with commentary. ISBN: 0-89789-020

Reviewer: Benjamin C. Ray, University of Virginia

This book describes the *bori* spirit possession cult among the Hausa people of northern Nigeria. Separate chapters are devoted to cult members, musicians, *bori* spirits and ritual performances. The approach is basically sociological, although the author rejects I. M. Lewis' functionalist view that the *bori* cult is to be understood primarily as a cult of social deprivation and deviance. Since the *bori* cult members consist of socially marginal people, such as divorced or widowed women and male homosexuals, its members are regarded as social deviants by the rest of Muslim Hausa society. The author supplements Lewis' deprivation perspective by seeing the *bori* society as cult of affliction and as a means of achieving new social and moral identity. The latter perspective is closer to that of the cult members themselves who joined in order to cure their illnesses and other afflictions. The new cult member then ministers to others with similar troubles and gradually assumes a place within the cult society hierarchy. From a sociological point of view, the author demonstrates, perhaps for the first time, how the *bori* cult provides a meaningful social and ritual home for an otherwise socially dispossessed group. He has gotten "inside" the cult—he sees its unique social and ritual dynamics. Thus he can argue that the cult creates an independent world of its own, not just a peripheral religious group.

Yet, from the point of view of ritual studies the book is disappointing. The author obviously obtained a considerable amount of information, but the performance aspects of the *bori* ceremonies are given little attention. For example, the complex six day initiation ritual is described only in general outline in the space of five pages and the chapter devoted to the cult musicians, who control the rituals by attracting the spirits and by inducing possession trance states, consists largely of sociological commentary. What is missing is a systematic analysis of ritual symbols and of performance contexts in their richly emotional, dramatic, symbolic, personal and social dimensions. While the studies of Victor Turner are frequently mentioned, the agenda for this work was clearly set by previous sociological studies of the *bori* in which ritual performance played a secondary role.

The Scapegoat. René Girard. Translated by Yvonne Freccero. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986. 212. Index. \$24.50 (hardcover). ISBN: 0-8018-3315-9.

Reviewer: Lee W. Gibbs, Cleveland State University

Owing to the turn-of-the-century work of Robertson Smith and James Frazer, scholars better understand humankind's attempts to ward off danger (in response to a world view in which evil is a constant threat) through various types of ritual activity, especially the ritual of sacrifice.

René Girard's new book is a profound analysis of the phenomenon of ritual scapegoating. It should be read as an extension of his argument in *Violence and the Sacred* (1972), where he also uses an interdisciplinary method to develop the thesis that "violence is the heart and secret of the sacred." In both of these studies, there are strong traces of the influence of such figures as Levi-Strauss, Frazer, Durkheim, Freud, Rudolf Otto and Mircea Eliade.

As in *Violence and the Sacred*, here Girard argues that all myths "have their roots in real acts of violence against real victims," (25) that "in rituals the faithful repeat the collective violence of their predecessors," (56) and that "all human language, and other cultural institutions, in fact, originated in collective murder." (193). The ultimate goal of Girard's work is to critically penetrate the "fog of mythology," thereby dissipating the demonic origin of human culture and the tendency to perpetuate violence through mimetic ritual.

Girard begins his analysis of scapegoating by examining a representative "text of persecution," namely, *Judgment of the King of Navarre*, a treatise written by the 14th century French poet, Guillaume de Mauchaut. A text of persecution is a document that recounts phenomena of collective violence from the standpoint of persecutors who are convinced of the guilt of their victim and are therefore convinced that their collective violence was justified. Mauchaut's treatise accuses Jews for the Black Death that ravaged France between 1349 and 1350. The Jews, who were believed to have poisoned the rivers that provided the drinking water, were murdered in mass after their crime was "discovered" by the population. Girard concludes that the accusation appears ridiculous and the mob violence unjust to the modern reader; nevertheless, the massacre described by Mauchaut was all too real.

On the basis of the Mauchaut text, Girard develops a brief but useful typology of "the stereotypes of persecution" which underlay

all myths and rituals and which may be found in virtually all societies: 1) persecution happens during a time of internal or external social crisis; 2) those accused and victimized bear "signs of the victim" (weakness, minority status, deformity, social deviancy, extreme poverty or wealth, etc.); 3) the victims are accused of crimes that attack the very foundation of social order (rape, incest and bestiality, desecration of the holy, ritual murder and cannibalism); 4) after the charges for the crimes believed to have caused the crisis have been placed upon the selected victim, the persecutors collectively destroy the victim or at least banish him/her from the community.

Girard compares persecution texts and the collective violence that is sanctioned by them with the myths and mimetic rituals that inevitably accompany them. He finds similar themes and structures in his analysis of the Aztec myth of the creation of the sun and the moon, the Scandinavian myth of the death of Baldr and the Greek myths of the birth of Zeus and the murder of the infant god Dionysus by the Titans.

The second half of Girard's book is devoted to establishing a very "Barthian-like" thesis: the story of Jesus' Passion in the Christian Gospels provides the revelatory insight and power to break once for all the power of mythology and its mimetic ritual of scapegoating. The Gospels achieve this momentous accomplishment through a radical change in the text from a perspective of the persecutors to that of the innocent victim. Girard refers to this Christian revelation of the scapegoat mechanism (and the consequent undermining of the whole mythology of persecution and of all human culture grounded in collective violence), as "the triumph of Christ over Satan" and "the victory of the spirit of truth over the spirit of falsehood."

Supporters and critics of Girard's former work have agreed that he has both a fertile and a combative mind. This new book will not change his reputation. His approach is fresh and scholarly and the work is literally filled with one intellectual *tour de force* after another. No informed person will agree with everything that Girard says, but even the most casual reader will find the mind challenged, emotions stirred and the imagination stimulated. Reading the book will be a rewarding, exhilarating and, at times exasperating experience.

Pacific Rituals: Living and Dying? Gweneth and Bruce Deverell, Editors. Suva, Fiji: Institute of Pacific Studies of the University of the South Pacific in association with the Pacific Theological College, 1986. xiv + 203. Line art.

Reviewer: Aletta Biersack, University of Oregon

Pacific Rituals is a tantalizing compendium of short essays written by Pacific Islanders in conjunction with study at the Pacific Theological College. Topics range from kava ceremonies to sacrifices, from first fruit offerings to marriages. Geographic coverage is uneven for Melanesia commands the most attention, although the book does contain papers on Western and Eastern Polynesia and on Micronesia.

With the exception of the volume's editors, all contributors are knowledgeable amateurs. This actually enhances the value of the volume. Instead of highblown and protracted essays striving to exhaust and perhaps kill a particular topic, these essays are short, challengingly incomplete, easy to read and absolutely fascinating in some of their detail. Outside observers, because of their lack of familiarity with the rituals or their difficulty with the language, might easily overlook a number of the subtle nuances that these writers call to our attention. Natives of the region—particularly those who care deeply about tradition, as these authors obviously do—know where the nuggets of gold are. In a description of the Fijian kava ceremony we are told that the kava bowl "is seen as a feminine entity, the bearer of water and plant from the earth mother" while the cowrie shell and the rope that attaches it to the bowl are seen as an umbilical cord. Stretched out in the space lying between the kava bowl and the paramount chief, the rope designates the chief "son of the land" (25-26). On Mare Island in New Caledonia, yams symbolize the island's unity through its common "mother," and land; and they also symbolize life (92). Further: "A yam has to be handled like a baby [A person] must not carry it by holding its head which is the sign of life and a yam without a head is never used in a ceremony. . . . On the other hand a yam must not be cooked with its head still on"(92).

Perhaps the most intriguing description is an account of bridewealth prestation on Grande Terre, New Caledonia. The bridewealth, we are told, is given in exchange for the "bud" of the genealogical tree—the bride" (129). Bridewealth is given as the bride's and groom's parties sit opposite each other, each within its own circle. After the bridewealth has been transferred to the bride's side, the bride's side unfolds several mats, displaying them in prestation to the groom's side. The first of these mats is called

"the whole of the road," and it symbolizes the union between the two sides the marriage is meant to promote. "A road is now being opened between the two circles which represents the alliance or union between the two clans" (132).

Where appropriate, the texts of relevant myths, speeches and poems are supplied. These usually appear in both the vernacular and in translation. An important feature of the volume is its line drawings. These serve to illustrate the text's descriptions, particularly when these become difficult to follow without such aids.

Surprisingly, the agenda of considering the relationship of Christianity to the thematic and symbolic content of indigenous religion never gets in the way of the scholarly task of recording and exegeting custom. This question preoccupies only some of the scholars and it is never belabored or intrusive. Those readers who have puzzled over the grip Christianity has achieved in the Pacific, as I have, will welcome the insights afforded from this aspect of the essays.

Uniformly well written and containing delectable morsels throughout, *Pacific Rituals* will please both specialists and casual readers. Pacific Islanders will surely be gratified to have more of their heritage so authentically and simply recorded.

Initiation: Ritual Drama and Secret Knowledge Across the World. Jean La Fontaine. Penguin Books, 1985. 208 pages. Index. \$5.95 (paperback). ISBN: 0-14-022124-7.

Reviewer: Jack Glazier, Oberlin College

During the nearly eighty years since the publication of Van Gennep's pioneering book, *The Rites of Passage* the anthropological study of initiation rituals has taken a number of turns. These range from decidedly psychological analyses, particularly by American anthropologists, to the functional, structural and symbolic investigations initially developed in England and France. Ethnographic coverage of rites can extend from Africa and Oceania to modern, complex cultures. While the anthropology of religion has benefitted from these theoretically varied case studies, the less agreeable consequences have been a fragmentation in our understanding of the ritual phenomenon and a retreat from the broad, synthetic effort which has given Van Gennep's work a place among anthropological classics.

The present volume makes important strides in reintegrating the study of initiation by demonstrating how narrow concerns have obscured similarities between various ritual performances. Some scholars have concentrated on initiands exclusively, without attention to the wider circle of ritual participants and thus ignore important continuities between what may otherwise appear as unique rites. Similarly, the alleged singular quality of female rituals has also shrouded the relationship of these enactments to other initiation rites. Accordingly, the author argues that beneath the seemingly diverse purposes of "maturity rites" (rites of passage from childhood to adulthood) and rites of admission into secret societies lie common recurrent elements ranging from oaths and affirmations to the transmission of restricted knowledge. Moreover, both maturity rites and rites of initiation into secret societies share a tripartite structure which provides a symbolic paradigm for the expression of abstract ideas about the order of nature and society.

She presents a convincing case that the conventional emphasis on the symbolic elaboration of maternity and reproduction in female rites has precluded interpretations which are derived from a view of male and female initiation as components of a larger ritual complex. In this broader perspective both male and female maturity rites reshape the social identity of initiands and communicate the legitimacy of an established moral order through a highly charged symbolism.

The first chapter reviews anthropological theories of religion and their relationship to the study of initiation. La Fontaine steers a sensible middle course between the analysis of the complex symbolism of rites of passage and the social framework which supports it. Thus, both the excesses of sociological determinism and disembodied symbolic analysis are avoided.

Chapter two examines the common features of secret societies and discusses the structure of and initiation into the Chinese Triad society and Freemasonry. Chapter three discusses both the spirit possession cult of the Nyoro of Uganda and the Mau Mau oath-taking among the Kikuyu as examples, respectively, of potential and actual threats to political authority. In chapter four the focus shifts to secret associations which are tightly woven into the political fabric, as among the Hopi of the American southwest and the Mende of Sierra Leone. Chapter five critiques psychoanalytic and cross-cultural studies of initiation and points out the limitations of overemphasizing the more dramatic aspects of these rites, particularly male and female circumcision, at the expense of understanding their more abstract social purposes and effects. Chapter six considers the distinct ways in which ideas about gender are socially constructed and ritually expressed, using as examples the Wogeo Islanders living beyond the northern coast of New Guinea and the Gisu of Uganda, whom the author knows directly from her extensive research. Chapter seven deals with East African male circumcision in maturity rites and it emphasizes the distinctions between generations and the validation of the authority of senior status and tradition. Chapter eight takes up the topic of female initiation which has received scant anthropological attention. La Fontaine argues that female initiation not only transforms individuals but also establishes a symbolic idiom to express the traditional authority and moral dimension of society. Female rites should no longer appear significantly different from other types of initiation.

A concluding chapter explicitly takes up one of the themes of the title—the dramatic aspect of rites and their relationship to plays; it also recapitulates themes developed earlier, locating the peculiar power of these ritual contrivances in their secrecy, symbolism and reiteration of authority.

La Fontaine never loses sight of the subjective, transformative experience of those who are initiated. This is valuable aspect of the volume, for ritual can then be explained without "explaining it away" in recourse to arguments which either trivialize the actual experience or reduce it to a mere residue of determinism. Her work reveals insights which have eluded more parochial efforts to understand this important and ubiquitous phenomenon.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

The *JRS* will acknowledge receipt of all books, serials and monographs that deal directly with ritual studies, yet receipt does not guarantee acceptance for review. Works to be reviewed are selected at the discretion of the editors. The *JRS* gratefully acknowledges receipt of:

Fletcher, Ruth. 1986. *Teaching Peace: Skills for Living in a Global Society*. San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row.

Fu, Shen, Glen D. Lowry and Ann Yonemura. 1986. *From Concept to Context: Approaches to Asian and Islamic Calligraphy*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution.

Hexham, Irving and Poewe, Karla. 1986. *Understanding Cults and New Religions*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Jackson, Michael. 1986. *Barawa and the Ways Birds Fly in the Sky*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution.

Newall, Venetia, Ed. 1986. *International Folklore Review*. Vol. 4. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities.

Miller, Ted, Ed. 1986. *The Story: From Adam to Armageddon*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House.

Wagner, Roy. 1986. *Symbols That Stand for Themselves*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.

KEY WORDS IN SEARCHING FOR DATA ON RITUAL

Ronald L. Grimes, *JRS* General Editor

Using computerized data bases to locate materials on ritual is not as easy as one might think. The Library of Congress headings are of minimal use and even though the newly published *Encyclopedia of Religion* (Macmillan, 1987) has some excellent articles on ritual, they can be exceedingly difficult to find; the cross-references are sometimes inconsistent or idiosyncratic. (Perhaps the forthcoming index volume will ease the difficulty).

The following list of key words may help both solve and illustrate the problem of doing elementary bibliographical searches. It is based on a variety of sources such as the Library of Congress headings, *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, *Religion Index One*, *Dictionary of Non-Christian Religions*, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* and *Encyclopaedia Judaica*.

First, of course, one ought to check general entries under "rites," "rituals," "ceremonies," "liturgies," "festivals" and "celebrations"—all of which are, unfortunately, used as synonyms. The next most productive headings are ritual types: funerals, rites of passage, weddings, etc. Or ritual actions, e.g., blessing, gift-giving, consecrating. One can search for data on a specific rite, but very few rites are catalogued in this manner. Examples may include: the Mass, Baptism, Sabbath observance, the Anthesteria (Greek), the Hajj, the Akitu (ancient Near Eastern) and a few others. These are not included in the list below unless they have become more generalized, less tradition-specific in their usage. A better alternative is to look for entries of the "rites/ritual in/among/of. . ." variety, thus netting "ritual in North America" or "rites of the Yakut," for instance. If in doubt whether materials are catalogued in singular or plural form (and one is paying for computer search time), it is usually possible to use a cut-off key word. For example, search for "ceremon" and avoid having to search for both "ceremony" and "ceremonies."

The list of ritual objects is quite long, so only a few are entered below. One sometimes finds important materials concerning rites as they are related to objects such as bells, candles, fire, water, stones, earth, etc. Likewise, many rites are catalogued under the names of deities to which they pertain. This method is typical of some of the best works on Greek ritual. For example, check "Dionysus" or even "Dionysus, rites of." Further, religious and political personages should not be overlooked: priests, healers,

rabbis, queens, chiefs, etc., for they are sometimes treated in terms of their ritual functions. The same is true of various group and gender designations, e.g., tribes, nations, women, men, children.

alchemical rites
almsgiving
altars
ancestor worship; ancestor cults;
 ancestors, veneration of
animals in ritual
anointing
architecture, religious
art, ritual; art, religious
baptism
birth rites
blessing
blood
body marks
bones
bread
burial
calendars; calendars, ritual;
 calendars, religious
canticles
carnivals
castration
cathedrals
celebration
ceremony
chant
churches; church architecture
circumambulation
circumcision
civil religion; civic religion;
 civil ceremonies
clitoridectomy
clothing, ritual
clowns, ritual
color, symbolism of;
 colors, liturgical; color in ritual

Appendix

confirmation
congregations
consecration
contests
coronations
cosmology, ritual and
costume, ritual
couvade
cremation
cult; cultic acts; cultus; cults;
 cult of the saints
curing, ritual; cures
curses; cursing
customs, religious
dance, ritual
dedication
desecration, the act of
devotion; devotional objects
divination; divination rites
domestic rites
drama, ritual and
dress, religious; garments, religious
 garb, liturgical;
earth
emperor's cults
enthronement
excommunication
exercises, spiritual;
 exercises, devotional
exorcism
experimental rites
family, ritual in the
fasts; fasting
feasts; feasting
festivals
fetishes
fiestas
fire, ritual uses of
foundation rites
funerals
games, ritual; Games, the Olympic
gates

gatherings, religious
gesture; ritual gesture
gift giving
glossolalia
goddess, worship;
 Goddess, worship of the
hair
healing; healing rites
hierarchy, ritual
hieros gamos ("sacred marriage")
holidays; holy days
hours, books of
household shrines
icons; iconography; iconology
images; idols
inaugurations
incantation
incubation, dream
initiation; initiation rites
interaction ritual
inversion, ritual
kingship, ritual
language, ritual; language, liturgical;
 language, sacred
liturgy; Liturgy, the; liturgies;
 liturgics; liturgical renewal;
 liturgical movement, the
magic; magical rites
mandalas
marriage ceremonies
masks; masking
mass, the
medals, devotional
medicine, ritual and
meditation
metaphor; metaphor in ritual
moieties (as custodians of ritual)
mortification
mortuary rites
mourning
movement, ritual; movement, liturgical
mudras

Appendix

murder, ritual
music, ritual; music, religious
mysteries (i.e., rites of Hellenistic
mystery religions)
myth; myth and ritual; mythology
nature worship
necromancy
new year festivals;
new year celebrations
nudity, ritual
numbers, ritual
objects, ritual; objects, ceremonial;
objects, devotional
occult, the;
occult, ritual dimensions of the;
occultism in ritual
Olympic Games, the
oracles
ordeals
ordination
orgies
pageants
parades
passage, rites of
phallus
pilgrimages; pilgrimage rites
play, ritual and
plays: mystery, morality,
miracle, medieval
possession, rites of
posture, ritual; posture in worship
potlatches
practices, religious; practices, cultic
prayer
prayer books
processions
puberty rites
puja
purification
pyres, funeral
reading, responsive; reading, ritual
rebellion, rites of

revitalization, rites of
rite
ritual studies
ritual-drama; ritual and drama;
 drama, ritual and;
 religious drama; liturgical drama
ritual; ritualism
ritualization
Sabbath; Sabbath observance
sacrament
sacred marriage (hieros gamos)
sacrifice; sacrificial rites;
 sacrifice, human
sacrilege
scapegoat
scarification
seasonality; seasonal ceremonies
sects, ritual in; sectarian rites
secular ritual
services (of worship)
shamans; shamanism; shamanic ritual
shrines
silence
smoking
sorcery
space, sacred
spells
sports, ritual in
stones
subincision
superstition (i.e., ritual practices
 in folk religion)
symbols; symbolism in ritual;
 ritual symbols
synagogues
temples; temple rites
therapy, ritual in
tombs
touching
trance (ritually induced)
vestments; vesture, liturgical
vigils

Appendix

war, holy; war, ritual dimensions of
weddings; wedding ceremonies
witchcraft
worship; worship services

READER FORUM

This space is donated to JRS readers, free of charge to: relay information about conferences, courses, meetings and other events concerning ritual; solicit information from others working in your particular area of interest within ritual studies; report new investigations or new directions in ritual study; direct attention to books, research projects or reports of special interest to ritual studies scholars.

FOLKWAY RECORDS, the best known commercial record publisher of folk and tribal music in the U.S. and publisher of a historically significant collection of spoken word recordings is now part of the Smithsonian Institution. Founded by Moses Asch in 1947, Folkways Records include documented recordings of over 700 native peoples of the world, readings from ancient and modern literature, songs and games for children and contemporary recordings of 20th century historical figures. Responsibility for Folkways Records will be shared by the Smithsonian Institution Press and the Office of Folklife Programs, administered under the aegis of the Assistant Secretary for Public Service, Ralph Rinzler.

IN HER OWN TIME, a film about the late Barbara Myerhoff's last fieldwork project in the Fairfax district of Los Angeles shows her at work and chronicles her tragic decline as she suffered from cancer. Funds are being raised for the proposed Barbara Myerhoff Film Festival which will screen ethnographic films and films dealing with women's and Jewish studies. Contributions toward the endowment for this event should be directed to JoEllen Pope, Office of the Dean, Division of Social Sciences and Communication, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA, 90089-4012.

CULTURE AND PERFORMANCE a new book series, seeks lively, original studies of ritual, ceremony, drama, festivity, entertainment, sports and other performative genres. Interdisciplinary approaches combining ethnography and theory are especially welcome. Two titles have been published in the series: *The Celebration of Society: Perspectives on Contemporary Cultural Performance*, edited by Frank E. Manning (\$14.50 hardcover; \$7.50 paperback); and *Voices: An Anthropologist's Dialogue with an Italian-American Festival*, by Richard M. Swiderski (\$8.95 paperback). Under the general editorship of Frank E. Manning, the series is published jointly by the Centre for

Social and Humanistic Studies, University of Western Ontario and Bowling Green University Popular Press. Address inquiries and orders to: Centre for Social and Humanistic Studies, Social Science Faculty, University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, N6A 5C2, Canada.

RITUAL STUDIES GROUP, AMERICAN ACADEMY OF RELIGION (AAR) will be meeting in Boston, December 5-8, 1987. For the Ritual Studies Division of the AAR, papers will be read on three topic areas: ritual healing, ritual expression and visualizations of the human body, and the process of change and development in ritual activity. For information on the Ritual Studies Group contact Thomas V. Peterson, Division of Human Studies, Alfred University, Alfred, NY 14802.

CORRECTIONS, *JRS* 1/1 1987

The publisher of William LaFleur's *The Karma of Words* was incorrectly listed on page 155 of 1/1. The book was published by the University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, and it sells for \$30 (hardcover).

