

Ritual Dynamics and the Science of Ritual

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Dr. Alexandra Heidle
Sonderforschungsbereich 619 Ritualdynamik
Wissenschaftliche Koordination und Geschäftsführung

Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg
Südasiens-Institut der Universität Heidelberg
Im Neuenheimer Feld 330
D-69120 Heidelberg

Volume II

Body, Performance, Agency, and Experience

Edited by Angelos Chaniotis, Silke Leopold, Hendrik Schulze,
Eric Venbrux, Thomas Quartier, Joanna Wojtkowiak, Jan Weinhold
and Geoffrey Samuel

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Section IV: The Varieties of Ritual Experience

Edited by Jan Weinhold and Geoffrey Samuel

Section IV: The Varieties of Ritual Experience

Geoffrey Samuel

Professor of Social Anthropology, School of History, Archaeology and Religion, Cardiff University

Inner Work and the Connections between Anthropological and Psychological Analysis

Although British social anthropologists have tended to emphasise external and observable aspects of social behaviour, and to stay clear of both psychoanalytic theory and of other modes of analysis developed by psychologists, “inner work” is inescapable in many ritual contexts. Anthropologists such as Gregory Bateson, Victor Turner and Bruce Kapferer have consequently developed their own modes of analysis of internal psychic processes and of the connections between these processes and their social and interpersonal context. Is it possible to work towards unifying psychological and anthropological approaches to the “inner work of ritual”? A starting point would be the body (or rather the psycho-physical complex) and its interactions with its environment, since this constitutes the field that both sets of scholars are working to map. Can we bring their maps into relationship with each other? These questions are explored in relation to a research project Geoffrey Samuel is undertaking with Cathy Cantwell, Rob Mayer and the lama Ogyan P. Tanzin Rinpoche on a set of Tibetan Buddhist practices for health and longevity originating in the early twentieth century and particularly associated with the late Dudjom Rinpoche.

Etzel Cardeña and Wendy E. Cousins

Etzel Cardeña is Thorsen Professor of Psychology, Lund University.

Wendy E. Cousins is Course Director, Health and Wellbeing, University of Ulster.

From Artifice to Actuality:

Ritual, Shamanism, Hypnosis, and Healing

Although hypnosis, shamanism, and performance are often thought of as mere fakery, they are all in fact activities that challenge a facile distinction between reality and illusion. Laboratory experiments on hypnosis, field research on shamanism, and participants’ experience in a ritual or a performance, all show that at least for some individuals, “believing so, makes it so” not only in the subjective realm, but in the physiological and socio-cultural domains as well. We review the relevant work on hypnosis and placebo, discuss the embodiment of emotions and cognition, and then move to more social areas. We also make the case that the boundaries between the intra-personal, the inter-personal and the trans-personal are as shifting as those between artifice and actuality.

Michael Winkelman

Retired, School of Human Evolution and Social Change, Arizona State University

Evolutionary Origins of Human Ritual

Evolutionary and comparative perspectives illustrate homologies of animal displays with human rituals. Hominin ritual commonalities included group integration through drumming and emotional vocalizations, and provided a baseline for evolutionary changes leading to human religion. Several stages of the evolution of human ritual capacities lead to the emer-

gence of shamanic practices in the Middle Paleolithic. Shamanism involved exaptations of hominin ritual capacities, illustrated by their similarities with chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes*) rituals: community integration through aggressive male displays towards “others;” upright charges; night-time group re-unification activities; vocalizations (singing) and drumming; and group protection and reassurance. Evolutionary developments leading to shamanism involved: emergence of mystical experiences as side-effects of ultra-running and trauma; expressive dance and mimetic enactments; and music and singing. Shamanic ritual capacities involved adaptations for enhanced experiences mediated by opioid and serotonergic neurotransmitter systems.

Jay Johnston

Senior Lecturer, Department of Studies in Religion, University of Sydney and Senior Lecturer, School of Art History and Art Education, COFA, University of New South Wales

Physiognomy of the Invisible:

Ritual, Subtle Anatomy and Ethics

This paper considers the apprehension of the inner “workings” of subtle bodies. Found in a variety of forms in eastern, western and esoteric philosophy/religion, a subtle body form of subjectivity proposes the individual as comprised of energetic networks that interpenetrate the corporeal body and extend out from it. Subtle bodies blur clear boundaries between “matter” and “spirit.” The conscious development of a subtle body, via the cultivation of the senses through ritual activities, proposes a form of self that is simultaneously embodied and disembodied, while being interwoven with the everyday lives of practitioners. The development and apprehension of subtle bodies is therefore a decidedly “everyday” form of mysticism. This paper considers the perception of the “inner” workings of subtle anatomy: how practitioners of various traditions, including Traditional Chinese Medicine and syncretic popular New Age practices, identify and “control” this energetic anatomy through ritual activity. In particular, it will focus on the ethical ramifications for the inner apprehension and movement of subtle energies. The extent to which personal ritual practice to direct subtle internal energies embraces a silent communal agenda.

Daniel Böttger

Research Associate and Doctoral Candidate, University of Leipzig

Empirical Test of the Effect of Facial Feedback on the Subjective Experience of Ritual

Looking at common mantras phonetically, open front unrounded vowels like “a” seem much more common than close back rounded vowels like “u”. Speaking open front unrounded vowels is physiologically very similar to smiling. Psychology has established that smiles, even forced ones, increase the potential positive emotional response of individuals. Further, it is well-known that repetitive sounds and motions are prone to induce hypnotic states, which heighten suggestibility and can intensify emotional responses. So might mantras tend to have vowels that make the singer feel better? This paper presents a new empirical study attempting to answer this question, and combines ritual study with unlikely fields like neurology, historical philology, and the experimental psychology of religion.

Magnus Echtler

Research Assistant, Study of Religion, University of Bayreuth

**A Real Mass Worship they will Never Forget:
Rituals and Cognition in the Nazareth Baptist Church, South Africa**

Isaiah Shembe founded the Nazareth Baptist Church (NBC) in 1911. He invented ritual practices, which included elements from both mission Christianity and traditional Zulu religion. In the following years he codified religious practices and strengthened his central position as the prophetically gifted leader. After his death, his successor continued this endeavor by publishing the “orthodox” proceeding for the daily prayers and weekly services. Regarding the transmission of religious traditions, these processes can be interpreted as a move towards the doctrinal mode of religiosity, but the NBC employed various types of ritual and became best known for the rather imagistic mass gatherings, taking place twice every year.

The decentralized imagistic mode is connected with spontaneous exegetical reflection (SER). Within the NBC the most common expression of SER are prophetic dreams and visions, but the centrifugal forces of SER are somewhat confined by the leader’s charisma. However, these forces reign in times of succession, and in 1976 the conflict between two aspirants to leadership led to a schism within the church. This provides an interesting test case for the application of Whitehouse’s modes of religiosity theory.

David Thurffjell

Associate Professor, Department for the Study of Religions, Södertörn University, Stockholm

Ritual, Emotion, and the Navigation of the Self

This paper deals with self-suggestion and ritual. It argues that ritualised actions can be approached as means by which individuals manipulate themselves in order to *feel* in a specific way and thereby strengthen themselves to follow a chosen way of conduct. Drawing on examples from emotional rituals in Pentecostal Christianity, the paper emphasises the way rituals, much like other aesthetic expressions, have the ability to create different *moods*. Rituals evoke emotional atmospheres, which encourage certain actions and thoughts whilst keeping others away. By focusing these moods rather than the verbalised content of ritual, the paper attempts to sketch a theoretical approach that may shed new light on meaning, function and agency in, not only ritual, but in individual religiosity at large.

Andreas Odenthal

Professor of Liturgical Studies, Eberhard-Karls-Universität, Tübingen

Ritual Experience:

Theology and Psychoanalysis in Dialogue about the Liturgy of the Catholic Church

Compared with the dictum of “symbolic experience”, the concept of “ritual experience” shall be evolved, applied to the roman-catholic liturgy. “Symbolic experience” defines the unchanging duty of the church dynamically to relate the experience of faith to the constantly changing reality of people’s lives. By an interdisciplinary dialogue between theology and psychoanalysis, certain elements of psychoanalytical theory serve to demonstrate

the connections of symbolic ritual practices to the fundamental inter-human experiences of life, which are discerned in ritual. The hypothesis describes a third level of reality, “potential space”, in which the rituals of the church belong, and which provides a link between internal experience and external reality. The link between theology and psychoanalysis will be constructed about the theological term of the paschal mystery. The Christian-Jewish tradition is rich in experience of the two dimensions: the search for protection is expressed in the Christian talk of salvation, the search to become oneself and the departure in the Exodus story. This understanding of ritual building on symbol theory integrates ritual into the psychic development of people, and thus into their own historicity.

Barbara Gerke

Postdoctoral Associate, School of Anthropology, University of Oxford

The Multivocality of Ritual Experience:

Long-Life Empowerments among Tibetan Communities in the Darjeeling Hills, India

A long-life empowerment, in Tibetan called *tshe dbang*, is a Buddhist tantric ritual that attracts large crowds of people in Tibetan Buddhist communities. Like other Tibetan Buddhist tantric empowerments, a *tshe dbang* generally involves a series of commitments from the side of the lama as well as the disciple. In practice, long-life empowerments are popular and frequently performed rituals in which these commitments are loosely interpreted by participants. Consequently, people’s inner experiences of the ritual do not necessarily correspond to the “inner work” prescribed and performed by the lama conducting the ritual. This paper is based on my participation in eight long-life rituals in the Darjeeling Hills and Sikkim during my doctoral research (2004–2006). The ethnographic examples show that by being removed from the ritual’s text and its content, lay people reinterpret long-life empowerments in their own terms. By highlighting the perspectives of lay Tibetans in ritual, which in the past has been underemphasised in Tibetan Buddhist studies, this paper presents a different perspective to the anthropology of Tibetan Buddhist ritual.

Angela Sumegi

Assistant Professor of Religion, College of the Humanities, Carleton University

Being the Deity:

The Inner Work of Buddhist and Shamanic Ritual

In Vajrayana Buddhism, all external components of ritual related to the invocation of deities can be seen as supports or means through which the participant aims to experience certain inner processes and transformations. Further, where the intended spiritual transformation remains unrealized, the ritual represents or symbolizes the actualization of inherent potential. Shamanic ritual actions related to invoking or communicating with spirits are also understood to be methods that produce effects but the intended effect is not the inner realization of a previously unmanifest spiritual potential nor does the ritual represent or symbolize the goal. In this paper, I argue that the methods and expected effects of the invocation of other-worldly personalities in Shamanism and Buddhism relate to ways in which selfhood is conceptualized. Further, I wish to show that the ambiguity and instability inherent in self conceptualizations affect, if not determine, the ways in which such rituals are

differently experienced and appropriated, from person to person within one tradition, from moment to moment within one person.

Beatrix Hauser

Visiting Professor, Karl Jaspers Centre of Transcultural Studies, Heidelberg University

Dramatic Changes?

The Experience of Religious Play in the Megacity of Delhi

This paper focuses on the intersection of religious and aesthetic experience evoked by ritual theatre in different social settings. Drawing on the example of the Indian Ramlila, the annual enactment of god Ram's life, I shall contrast different performance styles that at first sight might be branded as "conservative religious recitation" and "urban multimedia event". It will be shown that – regardless of performance style – Ramlila is conceived of as divine play that brings about intense feelings, above all devotional love. A person can frame the event in terms of ritual, theatre and spectacle, no matter whether other actors, spectators or organisers share this approach. Yet urban Ramlila performances do not merely convey "new wine in old bottles". This paper seeks to explore categories that may grasp in what ways the experience of these performances differ, looking at (1) the relation of religious and art discourse, (2) the habitus of seeing, and (3) the production of moods and sentiments. I argue that recent metropolitan Ramlila sites are largely determined by the preference for aesthetic realism and the visualization of emotions, apart from factors external to ritual (theatre) and its performance context.

Yolanda van Ede

Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Amsterdam

Differing Roads to Grace:

Spanish and Japanese Sensory Approaches to Dance

Spanish flamenco has become immensely popular in Japan over the last three decades, particularly its dance form. Although some Japanese dancers have gained a favourable reputation in Spain as well, Spanish perceive Japanese flamenco as a distinct style, and value it variably from mere strange to "fake imitation."

This paper presents a plea for sensory analysis when investigating bodily practices in processes of cultural appropriation. In order to circumvent uncanny aesthetic/ethic discussions on imitation and (presumed) authenticity, I argue that a sensory approach is both necessary and fruitful. It redirects the focus of research from form and appearance (what) towards method and process (how), and will thereby lay bare cultural differences in learning and teaching that form the base of style differentiation. A first rude comparison between Spanish and Japanese flamenco suggests that the main difference between the two styles rests upon the application of two distinct sensory models. Whereas in Spanish flamenco sound (rhythm) is fundamental to the art, Japanese culture favours sight as its dominant sense in processes of transmission. The result of flamenco adaptation in Japan may be that here flamenco dance, because of favouring the visual, is more spectacle-oriented than Spanish flamenco, which has always been more of a concert between musicians, singers and dancers. In the context of flamenco's current development towards a growing institutionalisation of the art, as happens to many a "world music", Japanese

flamenco may turn out to be flamenco's most globalised style, and Spain's flamenco of the near future.

Gerard Poole

Professor of World Music at the Washington Institute of the Arts, Arlington, Virginia, and Executive Director of The Society for The Study of Music, Ritual, and Experience

**Emotional Cultivation and the Chaotic Emotion:
Towards a Theory of Ritual, Musical, and Emotional Parallel Morphology, as
Encountered in Andalusian Ritual Practices**

This paper will suggest that ritual experiences may be intimately related to the cultivation of emotional modalities, especially through musical rituals. I will propose a relationship between three key ritual elements: ritual structure, emotional mode, and musical form. Andalusian musical practices provide examples to demonstrate that the performance of a musical form often constitutes a ritual in and of itself while also serving to generate very specific emotional states. I will analyse a ritual morphological process between these three ritual elements based on my study of the evolution of the Andalusian Sevillanas Rocieras musical form. I will then present what I believe to be a key feature of emotional cultivation in Andalusian ritual, the deliberately generated chaotic emotional state ("controlled chaos"). In conclusion I will suggest that the generation and proliferation of emotional states through musical emotional rituals may have provided early humans with basic categories of thought and classification as a result of the generation of particular emotional modes, or "modes of being."

Sarah M. Pike

Professor of Religious Studies, California State University, Chico

Performing Grief in Formal and Informal Rituals at the Burning Man Festival

On a windy night in the Nevada desert, I am at the end of my shift as a "Temple Guardian" at the Mausoleum, a temple for the dead built annually and burnt at the end of the Burning Man festival. Ritual participants have been coming and going throughout the dark hours of the early morning, writing on temple walls, reading the messages of others, making altars, and weeping for the dead. While the formal burning of the temple is spectacular and most often cited as the penultimate ritual of collective mourning, I argue that it is the informal experience of intimacy with living strangers and dead loved ones in which participants most powerfully experience and express mourning. For a week leading up to the formal burning, the temple offers a space for ongoing conversations between the living and the dead and encourages personalized performances of grief that can take place any time. In contrast to the formal ritual burning of the temple, informal practices are silently communicated by imitating the actions of others. In this paper I explore participants' experiences of ritual behavior and boundaries through their descriptions of ritual conflict, failure and success, as they engage in altar-building and other memorializing activities.

Taking Japanese flamenco dance as a case study, sensory analysis, then, may offer valuable insights into the intricate complexities of globalisation and localisation, and a way to recognise otherness and sameness from a more dynamic and a more ethical perspective.

Jan Weinhold

Research Associate at the Institute of Medical Psychology and at the Collaborative Research Center 619 “Ritual Dynamics”, Heidelberg University

Navigating the Inner Work:

The Experience of Ayahuasca within Santo Daime Rituals

Various psychoactive substances have been used in ritual contexts around the globe for millennia. Substances such as psilocybin, mescaline, ayahuasca, and tobacco have played a part in divination, healing, communicating with spirits, or gaining religious knowledge. Since psychoactive substances can have a profound pharmacological impact on the “body-mind” a biopsychological perspective lends itself to understanding these “Altered States of Consciousness (ASC)”. However, in accordance with Zinberg (1984) and his model of “drug, set, and setting,” I will argue that the analysis of substance-induced ritual experiences cannot be primarily based on pharmacological assumptions. Ritual experience is an active construction and the result of an active process of perception and intentional cognitive and embodied activities, rather than merely a “passive” result or even by-product of the prescribed ritual performance. In this paper therefore, I will point out how participants make use of “navigational” strategies to control the substances effects and the flow of rituals. Empirically this argument will be supported with results from a study on the European Santo Daime church which uses Ayahuasca as the sacrament in their rituals.